

**NASI GORENG AND HOT DOGS:
LIVING/WRITING/TEACHING/DANCING BETWEEN CULTURES**

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Dedication

Aum Sri Krishna Arpanam

Abstract

The purpose of this project is to explore my life through dance and text. It is an autobiography of my life as a human being, an Indonesian woman, a Classical Javanese dancer and teacher, and a mother through the transition of becoming a person who has learned to view life in freer and more independent ways. This was facilitated by the combination of my dance, my move to Canada with my three children, and the opportunity to study as a graduate student in education. I have created a dance piece, *Nasi Goreng & Hot Dogs*, as part of the process of re-educating myself. Although Javanese culture remains a very important part of me, I have discovered a new vision, an inner freedom and knowledge, which have added fullness to my life. This process has been a personal journey that has inspired my teaching.

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Anjoged/Anjoged: Beginning the Dance

My Names

I was born as Maria Darmaningsih.

In my country, Indonesia, it is a common thing to have one single name.

Everyone has her/his name.

And we don't have to have a family name.

For instance: Sarsito is my grandfather's name.

Corilah is my mother's name.

Saptodewo is my father's name.

When she was young, as a half Dutch woman her name became Corilah Sarsito. Her mother, a Dutch woman, had brought her custom to have family name. When my mother was married to my father, she became Corilah Saptodewo. Saptodewo became a family name.

My sister was named Jani Saptodewo, my brother was Janto Saptodewo and myself, I was Maria Saptodewo.

Saptodewo became a label.

It brings some attitudes.

It means that we came from a royal family.

It means we are so respectful.

It means we shall marry certain people.

It means certain behaviors.

When I got married to Hoetomo Djoko Wijoto, I became Mrs. Hoetomo

It was not Mrs. Djoko or Mrs. Wijoto, and in fact it was not a family name.

It is just his name

At that time, I just copied what my mother did

I became Maria D. (armaningsih) Hoetomo

After some years of marriage, it did not work

I went "home" to my original name, my birth name.

I am becoming one with myself

I am Maria Darmaningsih

Summer 2000

Anjoged is a Javanese word. *Njoged* means to dance. *Anjoged* refers to the dance with its implicit meanings. I chose the word *anjoged* for the introduction because dance is my life and my writing. Dance is the beginning of all my stories and life. I start anything I do in life by dancing. It is the dance of life.

I am a dancer and dance teacher. My dance is based on Javanese dance, which I have been learning since I was six years old. While learning dance I always want to be a good dancer. And to be a good Javanese dancer means someone has to be humble, to be patient, to let things go, to be in a state of zero, nothingness and yet fullness. In Javanese we say, *kosong nanging isi* (empty and yet fulfilled). I have heard many times about it. Aoki (1996) said: “There can be no-thing without thing,” and “There can be no thing without nothing” (p. 4). I have been searching for the meaning of *kosong nanging isi* in my dance and in my teaching.

I light the incense and pray. Praying for me is to say good things, to say my aim and my will. I remind myself of my mother, ancestors and Gurus. My mother, because through her life, I was born, and she gave me experiences of the Love. My ancestors connect me to my background, my history and my story that has brought me to this life. My gurus, who have given me knowledge about life through teaching me how to dance. By doing this, it brings me to the awareness of my being. At this moment I take my time to be by myself. This is the time of loneliness, nothingness, quietness, and stillness, which allows me to be in zero and without having many thoughts.

Spring 2000

Since I moved to Lethbridge, away from my own culture, I have had the chance to reflect on and see more of my own culture clearly, without judging, as I used to do. I have been dancing my own movement in a free way, not indicated as Javanese movement but just the way it is. Also, being forty-five years old, I am becoming more aware and close to *kosong nanging isi*. Being a single mother, and a student in the Masters program in Education at the University of Lethbridge, I have had the opportunity and time to write and reflect on my dance and life and to look deep into my own being.

I just love the prairie...

As I was walking through the hallway at the University of Lethbridge, I am looking out of the window.... The landscape of the prairie... I love it, I feel that one day I will leave this place and I feel sad, almost on the verge of tears...

I just love the prairie...

In 1998 when I first came to Lethbridge, for three weeks... I decided to come here, just like that... at once!!!

I did not have the desire to live in the USA, even though the Ford Foundation was the one who gave me funding for studying...

I did not want to live in a big city...

Then I just applied to get a scholarship to go to the U of L...

That was it and I am here

Just like that

I love experiencing the changing of the seasons,
I enjoy the snow, the trees, which are dying for the time being...

I love spring and summer...

I just love the prairie...

I come from a really warm country, with the same weather year after year...

I come from a coconut country, beach, mountains, green everywhere...

I do not know where my place is...

Now I am reading the book "The diary of a Yogi" by Parahansa Yogananda... after reading it I just want to go to the Himalayas... will it be my place? I want to go there and retire.... Retiring from being a mom, being a teacher, being a student, being anything...

One day...

My place is in my heart
I love being with me wherever I am
I just love the prairie...

Summer 2000

As part of the background of this project I will write about *bedhaya* dance, as the most important genre in female dance in Javanese culture. Many dances were and are choreographed based on *bedhaya* dance. The most sacred one is called *bedhaya Ketawang*. I will write more about it in *Grudha/Grudha* on page 15, because of the connection between this particular dance and my life story.

I will look at my own life history as a part of my writing project, I as a dance student, a Javanese girl and woman, a dance teacher and a mother, and a student of education. I will write about my relationship with my writing and dancing-how I learned about myself by rereading and rewriting my own stories and reflecting on my life through writing and dancing. I will also write about my relationship with the Javanese culture and dance—an unbreakable relationship.

While I am writing this introduction I realize that the important thing for me is to be in zero, in *kosong nanging isi*. I am confident to write about it, because that is the place that I have been searching for for many years through doing either the Javanese or my own dance.

When I was little, my mother used to hug me and say: "How can you grow so big? You used to be in my womb, tiny little baby, what a miracle that I could make you come out of my womb." I did not realize then that in a way she was teaching me to know that as women, we are so privileged to be able to get pregnant and become a mother. She would put my hand to her abdomen and say: "You were here one time, and I used to rub you, pray for you, and talk to you." Last year I wrote about being a woman:

To be a woman

I was in her womb.
 Did I choose to be her daughter?
 Most likely I did...
 What do I have to learn by being her daughter?
 What do I have to learn in this lifetime about my being?
 Life is like going to school, we shall learn and learn...
 I believe that I have to learn a lot of things in this time of my life.
 When the time comes, I shall go "home" and there will be time to be
 reborn...
 Will I be? I do not know for sure...

When I was pregnant...
 I was proud to become a mother.... I was part of the Universe that gives
 birth, giving something to be alive....
 What a miracle

And I remember you, ibu (mother)... you used to tell us, that you always
 had a good thought when you were pregnant, you did not lie, you did
 not think about bad things, you prayed and stayed calm.... And you
 always talked to your inner mind, and to the thing that was alive in your
 womb.

You also said, "It is not a pain, it is just a miracle, it is a natural thing that
 the Universe looks after....
 Always..."

"Don't worry, just stay calm and the time will come....
 And when you see the baby, the only thing you feel and realize is love
 and Love"

I was in her womb once,
 Once they were in my womb.

Spring 2000

By living here in Canada, especially in Lethbridge, Alberta, I have the space to be alone and speak to the I that was living in silence. To ask her, to hold her hand and talk, play and dance with her. Living here in Lethbridge, and being a student in the Master of Education program, where professors and colleagues who have been encouraging me to write about my life have surrounded me, has changed me to see life in a different perspective. As Hanna (1979) said,

The action, or existential flow, of dancing is inseparable from the dancer: a people's values, attitudes, and beliefs partially determine the conceptualization of dance as well as its physical production, style, structure, content, and performance. Dance comments reflexively on systems of thought, sustaining them or undermining them through criticism of institutions, policies, or personages.

Thus action and awareness merge. (p. 3)

Here, there is space to be, to grow, to choose what I want to be. Being here in Lethbridge, a city of 70,000 people, a clean space to breathe, quiet, big sky with four seasons, and cold, has given me time to realize that I was born, live and will leave this world by myself, that I have the chance to choose and be responsible for my own choice/choices. My own dance movement has become more free and bigger. The big sky always gives me the message that there are many possibilities and yet only one I can choose at a time. The four seasons have taught me the lesson - every time I see the birth of the buds and the falling of leaves - that there is birth and death in every living thing. Here I see that trees without leaves are as nice and as strong as the trees with leaves. In my country we never have trees without leaves.

Now I have come to a place where I am seeing myself as a woman who was being silenced by the Javanese culture and dance. Movement styles, structure, and purposes reflect patterns of group interaction (Hanna, 1979, p. 69). In the *bedhaya* dance, the gaze of the dancer always is focused downward. This can seem like submission, in being silenced and quiet. However, I also realize the value of Javanese dance, such as patience, not to show off, and to see deep into ourselves.

I am back in Lethbridge

Toronto, three million people, crowded, multicultural,
 dirty, fascinating,
 colors, colorful,
 restaurants,
 pubs, entertainment...
 enjoyment,

Lethbridge, seventy thousands people, quiet, silence,
 prairies, boring, dull,
 brown, no color,
 loneliness,
 alone
 a meditative place...

I am back in Lethbridge,
 let it be my bridge,
 go down to the Oldman river,
 the Old woman river, my gut...

Coulees...? what is it, they kept asking me without wanting
 to know

it does not matter...

Coulees are like a valley, looking down, instead of up
 look down into my heart and gut...

with pain, hurt and joy...

to see myself while I am walking down through the coulees
 to the Oldman river,
 into my own gut...

I am back in Lethbridge,
 a bridge going into myself,
 With all my heart and gut.

Spring 2001

I am doing this writing about my life, my dances, my being as a dance teacher, woman, dancer, and mother because I want to know and to get closer to myself. I want to know what I am bringing to dancing, teaching, what I am questioning through my dance and writing. What do I want to say, teach and share through my dance and life? By doing writing and reflecting through my dance, I am coming closer into myself, to know who am I. Hemingway said that if a writer knows something, even if he/she doesn't write it, it is present in his/her work (Goldberg, 1990, p. 13). By revisiting my own writing and dancing I hope I will understand more about who I am, what I have learned by living as I have as a dancer and what I want to teach my children and students. Leggo (1995) said,

In writing...I have learned many lessons about narrative and the value of narrative writing, lessons about connections between narrative and lived experience, lessons that inform my story-making and my teaching of writing and my attitude about the value of narrative as a way of knowing and be/com/ing.

(p. 5)

By being closer to my own writing I realize how I be/came and am be/com/ing. Goldberg (1986) said that her Buddhist teacher told her, "...Why do you come to sit meditation? Why don't you make writing your practice? If you go deep enough in writing, it will take you every place" (p. 3). I go into every place of my life through my writing and dancing. When I write, I sit down, relaxing and centering myself, and I feel by doing this I will be able to go to many places of my life as a girl, woman, mother, dancer, wife, companion, teacher, student and, after all, as a human being.

The writing bellow has many layers of time through my life.

For him

I miss you...yes I know that, I miss you in this moment...
 I do not know tomorrow or later...
 I never know what is coming next...
 I only know in this moment I miss you so much...

I love you...yes I know that, I love you in this moment...
 I also know that I love him and him...
 I love them...
 I do not know tomorrow or later...
 The only thing that I know for sure is that I don't know what is
 coming...

I love you, but I don't want you or me to be attached by those words
 I don't want to be attached and to attach others
 I don't want to hurt anyone as I did to him and another him
 I had not been honest to myself
 I did not know how to say "No"
 I did not know what I wanted
 I only knew that I should be a Javanese girl, Javanese woman and wife
 I knew that I should be as "good" as she as a mother
 I should be as "good" as she as a wife

Then

I used to go to my safe place, when I was so quiet and said nothing
 My safe place that was able to please my father
 My safe place to please him and him and him

Now

I know I had been lying to myself
 I know how to be honest to myself

I know that first of all I shall please myself
 Before I can please others

That is why now in this moment, I know that I love you
 And yet I know that I never know what is coming next

Spring 2001

I found that through writing I am able to heal myself and live in awareness of being alive at this time of my life. I hope to share my experience with others who are also seeking and questioning about their own lives.

In the process to doing this project, I found that I needed to put my writing in different fonts. I used *Bradley Hand ITC*, *Curlyz M1*, *Lucida Handwriting* and *Garamond* when I felt the writing is more private, as I was writing in my journal. I used *SCRIBBLE* and *MS Mincho* when I felt the writing is a playful writing, something that is me. I also used *Palatino Linotype*, *Century Gothic*, *Courier New*, *Monaco*, *shopping List*, *Ocr A Extended* and *Akbar* I used these fonts creatively and randomly to express different moods and styles. Sometimes I wrote in poetic style and sometimes I did free writing or wrote narratively. I included selections from my writing from independent studies that I took. I also revisited, reread and rewrote the writing that I had done since the first time I came to Canada. I juxtaposed the different types of my writing that were similar and yet different. When I reread my writing, sometimes I found that I was not there any longer, and yet I am still in the same place in an other way. I place my free writing with mindfulness and playfulness.

For every chapter title, I have chosen Javanese words: *Anjoged*, *Gruda* and *Wedi Kengser*, for chapters one, two and three, I with an explanation about them in each chapter. In chapter four I used the Indonesian word *Tarian-Ku*, which signifies my dancing. For chapter five, *Ardhanaarishwara* is a Sanskrit word for an image that consists of half Shiva and half *Shakti*. I put every word in non-italics and italics, because for me it is not a foreign word and yet in English it is.

MARIA IS MY NAME

MARIA WAS MY GRANDMOTHER'S NAME.
HER NAME WAS MARIA SCHAVERS.
SHE WAS A DUTCH WOMAN AND WAS BORN IN LIMBURG,
THE NETHERLANDS.

SHE DIED IN DECEMBER 1955
FOUR MONTHS BEFORE I WAS BORN
MY PARENTS LOVED HER SO MUCH
SO THEY DECIDED TO GIVE HER NAME TO ME
WHEN I WAS BORN, MY PARENTS LIVED IN PART OF A BIG
HOUSE
THE NAME OF THE OWNER WAS MARIA ULFAH
SHE WAS THE FIRST INDONESIAN WOMAN WHO BECAME A
LAWYER IN LEIDEN, HOLLAND
SHE WAS THE FIRST WOMAN MINISTER IN THE TIME OF
SOEKARNO (1945-65), INDONESIA'S FIRST PRESIDENT.
THEREFORE MY PARENTS GAVE ME MY NAME FOR TWO
REASONS

I WAS BORN AS MARIA DARMANINGSIH
DARMA IS A SANSKRIT WORD, DHARMA, D H A R M A
DHARMA.... IS THE RIGHT WAY, IT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND
LIBERATION
IT MEANS THE WAY OF LIBERATION OF THE SOUL

NING IS A SHORT FOR BENING
RENING IS A JAVANESE WORD FOR PURE
OR CLEAN AND CLEAR..

AND SIH IS A SHORT FORM FOR KASIH
KASIH IS AN INDONESIAN WORD FOR LOVE

DARMANINGSIH, IS THE WAY OF DOING WITH A PURE MIND AND
LOVE
IS IT?

I DO NOT KNOW, I JUST LOVE MY NAME AS IT IS.
MARIA DARMANINGSIH

SUMMER 2000



Figure 1: *Sembahan*
Picture was taken by Fendi Siregar

Grudha/Grudha: Looking Deep at the Big Picture

Dalai Lama

He is the kingdom
And yet he is the people
He is firm and steady

And yet he is peaceful and simple

I saw his picture in the Lethbridge Herald newspaper. This picture speaks a lot to me. I have an aristocratic background from my grandfather, who was the great grandchild of one of the Kings of the Mangukunegaran Palace in Solo, Central Java. What does it mean? I am not sure, but let me start opening it and begin digging it out. My grandfather was one of the first engineers in Indonesia. He went to the Netherlands in 1919. When he came back home he was married to a Dutch woman. He built a lot of the roads in Solo and the surrounding village.s. He built the first radio station in Solo and was the key person in starting the sugar factory.

My family lived in a big city in West Java. We went to Central Java once or twice a year. As his granddaughter, every time we went to Central Java, the people there treated us special. They bowed to us a lot. They served us. They did everything for us.

My grandfather used to tell us, as Ningrat (aristocrats) we should respect other people as much as they do. We should talk in the high level of Javanese language. There are four levels in Javanese; the highest one is for speaking to the King, the second for speaking to the higher people, the third to an equal person, and the fourth to children and servants. He spoke the lowest level to his servants, but he always spoke the third to other people that he did not know very well, for instance to the people in the market or in the store. In this case, when I got older as a dance student in Central Java, I found myself feeling strange. It is not common to speak high Javanese to people in the market, but I did. Then I found that they respected me more because I was doing this.

As I got older, I found that as an aristocratic woman, there was an expectation for my behavior. I should marry someone who came from an equal family, who had his degree, and so on. Also the men from the ordinary level would not come close to me. I found this happened when I was living in Central Java, where the kingdoms are still strongly respected.

To be Javanese woman...what does it mean to me? What I knew from my mother is that a Javanese woman should be quiet, look after the family, be ignorant when the husband plays with other women, and look after the

children. My mother was a half-Dutch woman, but she really did what Javanese women do. I think she really worked hard and did this until she thought it was enough. She died when she was 54 years old.

I was not sure for a long time, but being far away from that culture,
I am building up my own strength as a woman.

**He is the kingdom
And yet he is the people
He is firm and steady**

And yet he is peaceful and simple

Spring 2000

Grudha is a Javanese word meaning “the eagle.” This is a basic Javanese dance - in Yogyakarta’s style - movement that we have to learn. *Grudha* exists in almost every dance in Javanese dances. In Yoga there is a pose called The Eagle, which means to look at the big picture. That is why I used this name, as a symbol of the basic movement and cultural background of my life, and as a Javanese woman I have been looking for the big picture of my life.

When I was little I used to dance different kinds of traditional dances, such as from Sumatra, Borneo, Bali, Celebes, Java and West Java (Sunda). After finishing high school I went to the Indonesian Institute of the Arts in Yogyakarta, Central Java, to become a dance student. I specialized in Javanese dance, and I have been teaching Javanese dance for almost 25 years. Twelve years ago I started to break up my classical movements. I found that I needed to express myself through my own movements. At first this was very hard and painful. It was so difficult for my body not to do classical movement. It was extremely painful to look straight, not to have my head go down and my eyes look to the ground. It took me three years of practicing and dancing following my heart until I found my own place to express myself and to have confidence not to do Javanese movement. I find that by living here in Canada, I get the opportunity to look closer at the I who has been living as a dancer in this life. Now I am finally able to dance both: classical dance and my own movement with all my heart.

Below is my writing from the fall of 1999. At that time I was not sure what I was doing with my dance. There were a lot of questions, and I was questioning the meaning of my dance for other people.

My Dancing is the Dancing

I am a dancer and a dance teacher. I have been dancing since I was six years old. After so many years of doing dance, I am still questioning myself concerning my dance. For example, when I moved from Jakarta, to Lethbridge, Canada, I asked myself if I would be able to do my dancing. And if I had the chance to dance, would it be useful or meaningful for other people? I do not always get the answer right away, but I know that, as a dancer, I would have the time and space to dance. Because dance is my life and my life is dancing. When I get the time and space to dance, I know that there is the time to share what I have and I hope that it will be as meaningful for others as it is for me.

When I am dancing, my thoughts never stop thinking and my emotions never stop feeling. A lot of things come to my thoughts at one time. It interests me so much to know what is happening in my thought and mind. That is why I would like to write about what is in my mind and thought when I am dancing. What is my feeling telling me while I am dancing?

I would like to refer to my experience when I danced for the 1999 Conference "*Brave New World: Arts in the Next Millennium.*" It was held on September 24, 25, and 26, 1999 at the University of Lethbridge. The conference consisted of five disciplines. There were Art, Music, Dance, Drama and Integration. I was one of the presenters in Dance.

There were about 40 different classes and about 150 teachers who attended the conference. The whole idea of the conference was to provide different ideas about how to teach the arts in schools. I thought about what to do and what to share with the teachers who attended my class. As a result, in the Conference book, there was information written about the dance session and me.

Dance in the Far East - Traditions in Court Dance of Java, Indonesia

Javanese dance is mystical, meditative and spiritual. It can be used like Yoga as a physical and mental practice. As you learn this calm and relaxing movement form, Maria will explain how her dance demonstrates her culture, how men and women dance differently showing their societal roles. This session speaks to the idea that through understanding the arts of other cultures we can better understand each other and as teachers we can better communicate to our students tolerance and understanding.

My aim for dancing in this class was to provide understanding about the arts of other cultures. Through this understanding we will be able to have a better communication among us. With this kind of thought I prepared myself one week before the performance. Preparation is really an important thing for me, because it gives me chance to be able to dance with balance and peacefulness.

I would like to write about my private preparation, public preparation, and the dancing and reflection of the dancing. In these writings, sometimes I will refer to my thoughts that I have written to my advisor, Leah Fowler, through e-mail. Sometimes I will refer to my thinking about parts of my life that exist while I am dancing. I will write those e-mails and thoughts recursively.

Private Preparation

One week before the performance, each night I turn on the music for my dance. I also turn on the music every night before going to sleep. When I listen to the music I think about the movements. I sing quietly while listening. Through listening to the music, I find myself getting more into the dance and into the awareness of the movements.

Hi Leah,

Yesterday I danced my classical dance. I have forgotten some of the movement. So I was picking up the movement by remembering and watching the video of the dance. Every time I listen to the music I feel that I am "home." Sometimes I drop my tears, I don't know why. Sometimes I feel that some special Javanese dance music moved me. I don't have to move or to dance right away, but I feel in my heart that I have to do something. I feel that the blood in my veins was shaking, trembling and moving. And I know I have to do something. But I do not know what do I have to do. After that moment, I come back to my being, and tell myself: it is okay maria, you do your job today, and the rest will come by itself in the right time. I try to surrender.

Another aspect of preparation involves watching the video of the dance. I do this for a couple of times to get more into the "time and space" of the dance. Sometimes I just sit down and watch it. Sometimes I dance while watching. By doing this, I get the timing back to my being in Javanese dance. The Javanese music is very graceful and slow. Living here in Canada I have learned to live in a different time to the one I used to. That is why by watching the video several times I get the sense of traditional timing back into my mind.

Even while I am cooking, being with my children or just walking to the University, I am also preparing by focusing my intention to the awareness of my dance. While doing this, a lot of questions come to my mind. What can or shall I give to other people through my dance? What can or shall I share with others? How important is it for others? What could they get for their life by seeing the dance? After such difficult questions I arrive at a place where I am able to make it just as simple as saying, all right I have something that I would like to share, and just hope that it would be a useful thing for other people. I only can hope that something is happening. And again I surrender.

When I am cleaning the kitchen, my thoughts also focus in thinking about cleaning my being, myself. I would like to clean my thoughts, and tell myself not to think too much, just go for it and do it. I want to be cleaned, just be a natural person without thinking too much. I am purifying myself by cleaning the kitchen. I call my thinking into question: Is it true? I do not know. I am just trying to do so. It reminds me of one of my gurus, who said, if you are worried or unpleasant, sweep your floor with the broom. Sweeping the floor also means to clean your heart and your mind. In Indonesia, as a warm country, we always open our windows and doors. It means that we always have dust everywhere, so we have to sweep our floor twice a day.

Public Preparation

Each presenter at the conference got one and a quarter hours to teach a class. My class began at 3:00 and lasted until 4:15 p.m. in W 480. I started my dance class by giving information about Indonesia, and then the island of Java. In Central Java there are four palaces, each of the palaces has its own dance and music. There are likenesses, but each one has its own uniqueness.

After my introduction of Indonesia, I played the video of Javanese Dance and Culture from the Dancing Series. I wanted them to get some information about the dance and culture of Java. Then, I explained more about what was in the video and gave more contextual information, before they started to learn the movements themselves. After the video I started to teach the basic movements of Javanese dance.

I taught the basic pose, hand movements, hand movements with *sampur*, and head movements. *Sampur* is a scarf for dancing that we hold tight in our wrist and it flows down to our feet. While doing these basic movements, I am always centering myself, because I have such respect for the movements. Those movements are important for my being, my life. By doing this movement with respect, I hope that the others also can get or receive something from doing it. It reminds me of my Yoga guru in Indonesia; he said as a guru, we have the responsibility to bring our energy into teaching. The learner or student will get any energy that you bring while you are teaching. Then, as a finishing section of the class, I prepared myself to dance for the people who came to the session.

I explained the dance I was going to do. It is called *Bedhaya Ela-ela*. Nine females dance *bedhaya*. According to *Babad Nitik*, Sultan Agung (1613-46) created this composition. *Bedhaya*, as a court dance, has been danced outside the palace since 25 years ago. A lot of the dance masters and choreographers have worked to create a dance that is based on *bedhaya*. One of them is *bedhaya Ela-ela*. The choreographer was inspired by the story of Bima, one of the heroes of the Mahabharata epic, from India. The story is about Bima when he was swimming to the ocean in search of himself. At the bottom of the ocean he met Dewaruci, the small man who represents Bima himself. After the fighting between them, they became one.

I do this dance by myself even though should be danced by nine female dancers. This dance has spoken to me a lot, particularly in the climax when Bima is meeting Dewaruci. It is like myself is meeting the part of me within my being.

The Dancing

When the introduction music comes on, I center myself in my being. Then I start to walk slowly and continue to center myself. I respect the place; I also respect the people who were there with me. I feel the room and sense where I should sit down. After I find the right place, I sit down and again listen to the music. I bring my awareness by paying attention to my breath. Then I listen more to the music, as I pay attention to my breath. I start the movement with *sembahan*. *Sembahan* means to put my two hands together and take them to the center of my face (to my nose). I think about awareness of my self and my being. And again I say my prayers for good will, good thinking and sharing.

Leah,

Last night was the audition for the fine arts students to be cast in the *Now Showing* performance, in March 2000. I was so nervous about what I had to do. I prayed, and centered myself, and I asked myself: "What is performance for? Why do I have to work or choreograph a piece for March 2000?" Then I tell myself, okay I would like to do something. I am so grateful that I had and have gurus that had taught me so much. Most of the things that they gave me were not all about dancing but also about life. So I would like to work with others and share what I have. Performance is not just a performance. I always want or hope that performance can give something to the audience. Some good feeling? Or love? Something that they can bring home? Something for a better life? And am I learning to share and to give something without an expectation? I am trying to.

After the introduction part of the dance, I stand up and start the dance. The costume that I wear consists of *jarig*, a kind of sarong. Inside the sarong there are petals of flowers. Every time I do *debeg* and *gejug*, a pair of foot movements with which I kick the long *jarig*, the petals are flung out of the *jarig* and spread out to the floor. When I look towards my back, I feel that there is a kind of spirit existing. I am not really sure what it is, but I sense it. For me it is something significant, but I do not want to lose my dancing; instead, I pay more attention to my breath, to the sound of the music, and to my dancing.

Surprised by flowers in my dance, my daughters come to me. Ratri and Sita, my daughters, went to Betty Poulsen's garden to collect flowers for my dance. They brought them to the University and prepared the flowers to be petals. I felt grateful that they wanted to do that. I felt grateful because they are part of myself. I want them to experience the dance as well as me; even though they do not have to dance themselves.

The climax of this dance was when the music and movements were really slow. I should say that the slowest part of the music and movements were the climax of this dance. When I came to this climax, I paid more attention to my breath, the music and the slow movements. For me this was the hardest part of the dance. When I was doing this I felt that I was in a different time and space. And yet I was still there and had the awareness of myself.

The closing is the easiest part of the whole dance. I do it in a lighter and relaxed movement. The last part is just a walking away in a quiet fast speed. And I need a moment to release...to say thank you and I go back toward the audience. While the audience is clapping, I stand up and bow and say thank you.

Reflection

After the dance I reflect upon myself as a dancer, a performer, and as a teacher. I find that I do not give much information about what the students should pay attention to in the video. In my culture, teachers do not always explain why they want us to do something or why we have to know something. And we shall get the answer by ourselves. In the traditional way we could ask, but we never know whether we will get the answer or not. But now I have come to the understanding that as a teacher I should explain why and how that connects to the way of my teaching. On the other hand I also realize that many things in our life could not have the answer as we wish.

In teaching dance movements, I always feel the joy by doing it. Maybe, because those movements are so meaningful for me, that every time I do it, the joy comes out of me. I want to share with everyone who likes to learn, to do, or to experience it. I remember my beloved guru who was teaching in the United States of America. When the movements frustrated his students, he said, it is all right not to get the movement, but please learn to be patient by doing these movements. Patience is more important than any of these movements for our life. In teaching dance, I believe that we are learning something from each other; it is beyond the movements themselves.

As a dance performer, I always want to be able to share something with others through watching the dancing, something that is very important for me, and for my life. There is something that is ineffable about dancing, inexpressible except by experiencing it. I wish that I could bring more understanding among people. As I learn more about Javanese culture, I come to understand that every culture in our life brings something for us. Each culture that we meet in our path can give us more understanding about life, and also give us more respect for our own and for others' cultures. I hope that the teachers who were in the class with me will be able to bring something into their teaching.

After I started my dance and after doing the *sembahan* (when I put my two hands together and touch my nose), I felt that I was being present. Afterwards I felt the joy to dance. But I had to remind myself not to be too happy, nor to show

off. Sometimes I find that it is difficult to do. Because when I feel good in my movements, then my feeling is going towards showing off and being arrogant. And if it happens I go back to my being and center myself, pay attention to the breath, and to the music. This is what I call the awareness.

Afterwards I felt relieved and hardly could stand properly. Then I realized how much energy I spent to get the dancing done. But it is not something that is done. For me, dancing is my life and the life. Dancing is also my spirit, my religion and my belief. It is a never-ending path.

Spring 2000

I was raised in a Javanese family that used to live on the island of Java in Indonesia. Java is one of the five largest among 13,000 islands, which are part of the immense archipelago known as The Republic of Indonesia. However vast these islands may be geographically, the people in Indonesia were united together through a long history in which many cultures evolved and developed their own values, beliefs, and traditions. Java has strong cultures and an old history. Most of the people who work in the government are Javanese. Four presidents out of five since the Independence Day in 1945 have been Javanese.

Since the 8th century Java has been considered as the center of trading in South East Asia. Therefore many western countries came to Indonesia to do business and to control the country. In 1602 the Netherlands came to Java and introduced a political concept called “divide et impera” – divide and conquer. Their aim was to divide the country into smaller regions and to therefore be able to control Indonesia. One of the examples of “divide et impera” was Perjanjian Giyanti (Giyanti’s Treaty), which divided the Mataram kingdom (which existed since the 17th century) into Surakarta and Yogyakarta in 1755. The Surakarta and Yogyakarta palaces, which are in the two main cities in Central Java with the same names, remain the two main palaces, which keep the tradition intact and

strict. Both are considered the central Javanese dance styles, the Surakarta and Yogyakarta style.

Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam have influenced Javanese culture. One of the most important elements of Javanese culture is dance. In Java, where I was born and raised, dances are all important to the people. Nearly every day there is a ceremony in which dance is part of the event. Dance in Java is part of our everyday life and of ceremonies such as harvest, weddings, life cycles, the crowning of the king, and getting rid of sickness. One of the important dances in Java, which still exists today in the Surakarta palace, is *bedhaya Ketawang*. As I mentioned earlier, this dance reveals a great deal about Javanese ideas about being a woman.

Bedhaya Ketawang is a dance with many layers of symbol and meanings and it is performed once a year by nine female dancers on the Coronation Day of the King in the Surakarta palace, in Central Java. It is a sacred dance that only a virgin is allowed to perform. In our tradition we believe that a woman who is not married remains a virgin. Kuhnt-Saptodewo (1998) said,

Bedhaya Ketawang has strict taboo rules attached to its performance's, taboos the dancers and musicians had to observe. The dancers must be virgins and they must not be "impure" (menstruating) when performing. They have to fast and they have to stay awake the night before the performance; after the dance they are adorned like brides. (p. 382)

This is why in rehearsal there are always more than nine dancers. So that there will be at least nine females who are not having their period when they have to perform. They

start to be dressed, have their hair and make up done the night before the performance day. The dancers have to sleep in those costumes, hairdo and make up for the night. In the morning when they get up, they have to wait for at least three hours until the King is ready to be in the ceremony.

This dance is the most refined dance in Javanese dance. The *bedhaya* is the most elaborate and difficult form for women, given its slowness and duration – it last ninety minutes at this rehearsal. The dancers move as smoothly and effortlessly as possible, unceasingly; as a movement phase (*beksa*) ends on the strike of the large gong, a wrist turns or the neck undulates. (Hughess-Freeland, 1997, p. 475)

My experience of dancing *bedhaya* is that we should not express any kind of feeling while we are dancing this dance. No smile, no mood. We should be pure and clean. In performing this dance we must not look straight ahead, we always have to look down, and the movements are downwards, almost touching the ground. As we dance with eight other dancers, we must have the awareness of the other dancers. We are nine and yet we are one. We always have the same costumes and make up, as this represents oneness. Our body flows into the sound of the music.

Bedhaya dance is the most important dance for me, because of its content. According to the old Javanese chronicle *Babad Nitik*, this composition was created by Sultan Agung (1613 - 1646). He was the first king for the Mataram kingdom in Central Java.

Bedhaya symbolizes the nine human orifices, like those of the Royal Javanese palace, which had nine main entrances. The Yogyakarta palace also has nine main entrances. Beginning from the north side: (1) Pengurakan; (2) Tayub Agung; (3) Bramagangan Gate; (4) Srimenganti Gate; (5) Danapratapa Gate; (6) Kemagangan Gate; (7) Gadhungmlathi

Gate; (8) Kemandhungan Gate; and (9) Plengkung Gadhing Gate (Soedarsono, 1990, p. 67) This dance composition was also associated with the structure of the human body; each dancer is a character associated with a body part, i.e., a heart, a head, a neck, two arms, a chest, two legs, and a sex organ.

This association can be identified by looking at the names of the characters and the composition of the *bedhaya sanga* [nine], consisting of *endhel* (representing desires emerging from the heart), *batak* (head with the mind or soul), *jangga* (neck), *apit ngajeng* (right arm), *apit wingking* (left arm), *dhadha* (chest), *endhel wedalan ngajeng* (right leg), *endhel wedalan wingking* (left leg), and *buntil* (sex organ)...The leading roles of the *bedhaya sanga* were *batak* (representing mind or soul) and *endhel* (desires). (Soedarsono, 1990, pp. 80-81)

The aim of the dance is to achieve balance between mind and heart. As a dancer I have experienced dancing this genre of dance, where I did the subtle movement for almost one hour and at some point I was coming into zero, nothingness, without anything in my mind. Suharto (1990), who was a court dancer in Yogyakarta for 35 years before he went to do his thesis at the University of California from 1987 to 1990, stated:

By totally surrendering one's self to reach a level of emptiness or nothingness, one reaches the bottom of the circle, freedom, which is the state in which the dancer is said to have reached both inner and outer transformation. Freedom then is the resultant unity of microcosmos (dance performer) and macrocosmos (Supreme Being) and the unity of the inner and outer aspects of dance. By attaching the word freedom to the bottom of the circle which in one representation

means the absolute or unlimited, there is also no limitation put on the meaning of freedom. (p. 67)

For me, when I dance, I am being in the stage of freedom, without thinking of my movements, and yet I am transforming myself into nothingness. This is what I mean in Javanese writing by the phrase *kosong nanging isi*; in English I say that the content of *Bedhaya* dance is to be in zero and yet in fullfilment.

Rama Sasmina

he was always refined
calm and quiet
he didn't talk so much

he touched my back to get the right
position in my dancing
he touched with a feeling of patience and
love

he talked when i asked questions
he encouraged me by being patient
and accepting me as i was
he didn't say a word when i left my
classical dance

to develop myself in contemporary
dance

he accepted me when i came back and
again learned

the classical dance with a new perspective

he died in April 26, 1996 in Yogyakarta,
he died when I was watching a group of teenagers
dancing the classical dance drama in Jakarta,
600 km away, the metropolitan city.
is it a sign of never ending tradition?

i went to your funeral,
i didn't say goodbye,
i know you are still here,
i go to your place just to talk,
i believe that your soul is always around,
is always here when i need it,
you've encouraged me,
you are always my Guru.

Spring 1999

Rama Sasmina was the master dancer of Yogyakarta style that has influenced my life very much. He choreographed dance pieces and dance drama for the Yogyakarta palace and had taught in the US and Europe

However, as mentioned, there are two kinds of Javanese classical dance styles, Surakarta and Yogyakarta. They both have influenced my dance. The Yogyakarta style is also known as *joged Mataram*. *Joged* is a Javanese word for dance. Mataram is the name of the first Islamic kingdom after Demak (16th century), before it became the Court of the Sultanate. In the case of Yogyakarta dance, Prince Suryobrongto (1914-1985) said that *joged Mataram* is the content and the Yogyakarta style of dance is the container. He described *joged Mataram* as four principles:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. <i>sawiji</i> | focus, concentration |
| 2. <i>greget</i> | inner dynamics without being coarse |
| 3. <i>sungguh</i> | self-confidence without being arrogant |
| 4. <i>ora mingkuh</i> | discipline, without retreat in facing difficulty. |

(Suharto, 1990, p. 15)

With this content, as dancers we have to listen to the music, which is called *gamelan*. *Gamelan* is an orchestra which consists of 15 to 25 musicians and singers. The music is considered important in a dance performance and ceremony.

Javanese culture is a patriarchal society. As a Javanese woman and dancer, I now realize that I was defined by this culture and dance for many years. I remember many times when I heard people say to my mother that she was lucky to have a daughter who is a good dancer; it meant that I had a good attitude, all my everyday movements were beautiful, and that I would be a good wife. People said, “She has a good manner because she is a Javanese dancer.” Rama Sasminta, a dance master, said:

Pada jaman kecil saya kecil, masyarakat sudah punya anggapan bahwa dengan belajar menari di Kraton maka juga sekaligus belajar tata susila. Dengan demikian maka ini suatu bukti bahwa dalam tari klasik gaya Yogyakarta diakui masyarakat bahwa memang mengandung nilai-nilai luhur yang amat berguna bagi tata kehidupan masyarakat Jawa pada khususnya.

When I was young, Javanese society held the belief that, by learning to dance at the palace, one would learn ethics and good conduct at the same time. It was thus acknowledged that the Yogyakarta style of classical dance indeed contained moral values supremely beneficial to the life structure of the Javanese people in particular.

(Widaryanto, 1999, p.17)

As a dancer, I felt that my manner had been controlled by Javanese dance movement. As Hanna (1979) said, “an individual’s dance is shaped both by cultural involvement and a unique set of experiences within the patterns of group behavior” (p. 69). I had to look down, to not express myself, to be quiet, to accept whatever came, to not say what I felt and thought. Many of the women dance teachers were always quiet, and kept their sadness, their disappointment about some attitude of their husbands hidden. They acted as if everything was all right, because as women we have to be silent and know something but say nothing. I felt and thought that that was the only way, just to be silent, as my mother had been for many years.

One night in March 1993

One night in March of 1993, my husband asked me to celebrate our eleventh wedding anniversary. He came home early that night to pick me up. Most of the time he came home after 10:00 p.m. and sometimes after 01:00 a.m. Going with him in the car, in Jakarta, a city with 10,000,000 people, made me feel tired. As soon as I got in our Peugeot 1990, I fell asleep.

After about thirty minutes of driving, the car stopped and I awoke. The first thing I saw was a billboard with a sign "Menteng Hotel."

Oh what is it? Why is he bringing me here? This is the place where he always spends his night in the bar.

And I asked him, "What is this, why do you bring me here?"

He answered calmly, "Because I want to introduce you to someone. I will show you something."

My heart was not happy at all, but as usual, I could not say anything, because I did not know what to say. At that time I did not know what I wanted. I just knew that I was not happy. So again I just followed him with my feet and body, without my heart and my being.

As soon as we got to the main doors, there were three young sexy girls welcoming him, "Hi, Mr..., how are you?" One of them was welcoming him with her sensual voice, touching his shoulder. One of them asked who I was.

And he said, "She is my wife."

"Oh, she is beautiful," she said. And I just smiled and again followed him.

It was a dark place, a lot of people, crowded, music and romantic couples around. I asked myself what kind of place this was. Was this my place? Was there any better place to celebrate our wedding anniversary? But what should I do? And again I just followed him. And we sat down in a place that he had reserved for us. For us? No, not just for the two of us. There were his friend, his name was ... and his lover. His lover was a hostess who worked in that bar. We sat down, the four of us.

Suddenly he asked me to stand up. He was going to show me something.

"I want you to see her, come here." And again I was just following him.

"She is there, her name is.... She is a good dancer...she is dancing with someone." I tried to look in the dark... is the darkness picturing my heart? Do I see what I do not wish to see? How am I feeling? I did not know, I just was not happy.

I thought: Gee she is beautiful, long hair, skinny and sensual...now I know why he always asked me to have long hair as long as she has...yes she is beautiful.... And who am I? I did not know. I questioned my feeling. I did not know. I did not know anything. I just knew that I was standing there to see a beautiful woman that my husband had been talking about - a woman that had made him fall in love with her, a woman that made him stay late and spend the night in the bar where she worked. Did I hurt? I did not know really. I respected him, as he was honest to me. Is it wrong to fall in love with someone to who is not your wife, husband or partner?

We sat down and there were more people coming to our table. Some other men that I did not know came with their hostess. Hostesses surrounded me. They were nice and kind and asked me some questions. Were they bad women? I did not think so. But then I asked myself: Who am I? Am I a better person than they are? Am I? I did not know. I just knew that they were working as hostesses to earn some money for their life. They did it to survive.

Everyone was enjoying himself/herself, having drinks and cakes...yes our wedding anniversary cakes that he bought for us. What about me?

I was so lonely.... I was just by myself.... I did not know what to say...I did not have any words to say. I was alone and lonely. And my mind and thoughts went away to another place and another person.

I remember him.

Who is my friend. Who makes me a cup of tea. Who shares with me..

He who fills my heart with his compassion,

I need to fill my heart with love.

I need it so I am able to share my Love with my three children.

I know I need it so much, to survive .

Perhaps both he and I sought comfort outside us? This anniversary showed our separations not our togetherness.

What is the difference between us, me and the hostesses who were sitting around me? They were working as hostesses to survive So why did I feel uncomfortable sitting with them? Who am I? I did not know. What I knew was that I was his wife, a mother, and I was a woman who was always lonely. I was a human being that did not know what was happening to her own life as a Javanese wife, mother, and woman.

My heart was screaming, I was crying so loud, but no one heard my voice. He would not hear me at all. My voice was never

heard. I used to say to him when he got home after 1:00 am and made him a cup of tea.

" I am lonely...I am lonely...and I am lonely".

He could not hear it. He just said, "You have to do some activities so you will not get lonely. Or do you want me to stay home the whole day and do not work at all? I am so busy...and you are frigid."

"Yes I am frigid, because you just want one part of my body. I am not just one part; I am a woman who would like to touch and to be touched. I am a woman who needs to love and to be loved. My heart was never there when you asked for one part of my body, you never treated me as a whole being."

A Javanese woman...what does it mean to me? What I knew from my mother is that a Javanese woman shall be quiet, look after the family, ignore when the husband plays with other girls, looks after the children. My mother, as a half-Dutch woman, she really was doing what Javanese women do. I think she really worked hard and did this until she thought it was enough. She died when she was 54 years old.

A part of me was doing the same as my mother. It was what I knew about being a Javanese woman. A part of me could not accept it, so I was not always at 'home.' I needed to love and to be loved, outside my role of Javanese wife so I was able to share love with my children. It was really a big conflict for me, because I love my children so much.

One week after that night in 1993, I got sick. And I knew that I was hurt inside. I did not have love for myself or for anyone. I was desperate. I felt that I was nothing. I even felt nothing compared to all the hostesses that were sitting with me that night.

Again I asked myself how could I survive? What did I have to do? My mind and heart were crying and screaming without any sound.... What did my mother do?

*And I remembered you, ibu (mother)
I still need your love,
I am a mother, but I am just a human being that wants to be loved,*

*Where are you, ibu ?
You were so strong as a wife and as a mother,
But you always had been sick for years,
You survived until the time came,
You said to our nanny, "It is enough,. Maria, my youngest one, has
already a job*

as a dance teacher. I am done."
And you left us behind.
Is it a sign that you were not happy?
I am sick now, and I feel your sickness,
Were you always hurt as I was?
What I do know is that you will never stop loving me as I am...

It was a memorable anniversary present. Since then I know there is nothing left between us. We were just hurting each other more and more.

Above all, you are the father of my children, and nothing could change that.

Spring 2000

MY WORDS BECOMING SILENT
MY SILENCE BECOMING MY WORLD

I AM ALONE AND LONELY,
IT IS AN EXERCISE TO BE IN THE TRUE LONELINESS

TODAY I WAS IN TEARS
THE TEARS FROM
AND FOR MYSELF
THE TEARS THAT I HAVE KNOWN BEFORE
THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL

IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS I HAVE BEEN IN TEARS,
THE TEARS THAT I DID NOT KNOW FROM AND FOR,
THE TEARS THAT HAVE A LOT OF PAIN AND HURT,
FROM MY PREVIOUS LIFE AND LIVES,

OLD PAINS AND HURTS,
THAT I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE,
YET THEY WERE THERE TO BE RECOGNIZED.

I HOPE I HAVE PAID HIM MY KARMA
HE WHO WAS ALL OF SUDDEN IN MY LIFE
WHO WAS LOOSING HIMSELF
IN REAL PAIN AND HURT

AND
HAS BEEN MAKING ME CUPS OF TEA
I WISH I HAD DONE MY DHARMA

I AM IN A BLAST OF A MOMENT
A MOMENT OF BIRTH AND DEATH
A BIRTH OF BEING ALONE
A DEATH OF BEING TOGETHER

I AM ALONE AND LONELY,
I AM IN THE PATH OF THE TRUE LONELINESS,

MY WORDS BECOMING SILENT,
MY SILENCE BECOMING MY WORLD

DECEMBER, 2001



Figure 2: Flowing and Following the Path

Animal

As a writer, I am like a *kutu* (louse)

I am opening up the skin of a head.
I am walking slowly through the skin, paying attention to what is happening.
Paying attention to small things that maybe could not be seen.

As a *kutu*, I shall be patient to see and wait with patience what will come...

As a writer, I am like an eagle (*garuda*)

To see the big picture, what is inside the skin.
What does it mean? What can I learn from a tiny small experience.

As an eagle I shall pay attention to the big picture that exists...

As a writer I am like a *kutu* and yet a *garuda*

Summer 2000

Wedi kengser: *wedi* means sand and *kengser* means sand bank. *Wedi kengser* is a Javanese dance movement in the Yogyakarta style. It pertains to foot movement, to shifting position. Yogyakarta is a coastal city. There are piles of sand that always moves with the wind. There are always different patterns that are changing every moment with the wind. This symbolizes the movement of my dance and life. I have been moving from one place to another place by following the wind and flowing with the wind. In this way, my writing/dancing constitutes a phenomenological inquiry into my lived experience in relation to times and spaces.

I have been writing autobiographical narratives, such as stories and poems, about my life in Indonesia and Canada. In my first year of living in Canada, I started to write reflections throughout my courses. The first course I took was *Understanding Professional Practice & Professional Development* with Richard Butt. In that course I learned how important it is to open up to my background, to the story of my childhood, and to write about it. Eisner mentioned, "All experience is the product of both the features of the world and the biography of the individual. Our experience is influenced by our past as it interacts with our present" (as quoted in Pinar, 1995, p. 515). While I was taking the course I wrote a lot about my childhood, my mother, my father, my dance in my early age. Then I found that I enjoy writing, I have the need to write, to see where I am at this time of my life. The more I got into writing the more I realized that writing was helping me to heal myself, to recognize my anger, enjoyment, my hatred, love, disappointment and satisfaction. I found that as I wrote, I was being introduced to the I inside me that for many years was so quiet, did not know how to choose, to decide, to say what she wanted, and was living in silence. As a teacher I feel that it is important to study

our selves as a component to understand the world, as Connelly & Clandinin wrote, “There is no better way to study curriculum than to study ourselves” (as quoted in Pinar, 1995, p. 515).

My mother

Her name was Corilah Sarsito. Cori means, "door" in Javanese. I feel now that it's a good name for her since I realize what she has done for me. She was a door to my life. As a woman who was half Dutch and half Javanese, who had married a Javanese man, she always wanted her children to be Javanese. Her less fortunate childhood experiences of being half Dutch in Colonial times had probably made her strong in this particular issue. So even though she spoke Dutch to my father, she didn't let us speak Dutch. She always spoke Javanese to us. Javanese became my mother tongue. It has been a good thing to do, for I know and I feel a strong self-identity: I'm Javanese first, then I'm Indonesian, and above all, I'm part of the universe.

As a young child who lived in Bandung, West Java, I grew up with a culture, which was Sundanese, but we spoke Javanese. My mother invited a Javanese dance teacher to our home once a week, because she wanted us to become familiar with Javanese culture by learning Javanese dance. As a young couple, my parents also invited a dance teacher into our home for waltz, Cha-cha, and other ballroom dancing once a week.

My mother also invited an art student to teach us drawing and painting as well as Batik, the traditional Javanese painting. She used to ask other children of her friends to come to do these activities at home, as we lived in a house with a large garden and a playground.

My mother insisted that we learn to play piano as well as gamelan, the instruments which make up a Javanese orchestra. We had a gamelan at home, unlike most Javanese families. There is a story about how we got that gamelan. In 1962, my uncle was the Minister of Education for Indonesia; it was the time of the rule of Sukarno. As a minister he went overseas introducing Indonesian dance and music. Once he went to Japan and bought us each (I have one sister and one brother) Seiko watches. In those days it was such a luxurious thing to have that we were not allowed to use them. My brother was 12 years old. Because of my mother's cultural influence he thought it was better to sell his watch and buy a gamelan with six instruments. Thus we had our own family gamelan and the children all played it.

That was the way I was brought up. My mother was the door to my life. Through her love, patience, intelligence and spirit, she made me realize that as a Javanese, as an Indonesian, as part of the universe, I'll do my best for humankind.

Spring 1999

From this first writing I realized what my mother did for me, what she taught me by doing what she had done. As a teacher that has been taught by being my mother's daughter, I found that by doing reflective writing about her, I am still being her student and her daughter and yet I am also a mother and a teacher. I am also aware that through reflective writing, I am asking questions that do not necessarily have an answer, a difficulty that does not mean being blocked, as Erika Hasebe-Ludt (1999) says,

My year of living reflectively in the pedagogical landscape has created many beginnings. It has marked a *Kehre*, a turn - but also a renewed understanding of *kehren* in the sense of *caring* and the recognition of *difficulty* as an essential and not necessarily negative component of learning. (p. 46)

I am caring for myself to grow, and by becoming a writer and different kind of dancer and teacher I will be able to carry my students, my audience and others.

When I am writing, I am centering myself into my heart. Centering myself means to be in zero, without thinking, in no mind, and then it is like digging out something that has been buried for years. Something that I remember/do not remember, and recognize/do not recognize, but I am not familiar with it anymore. Sometimes I find something that is so painful and hurtful, but some other time I find something that is so joyful and happy. Some other time there is something beyond happiness and hurt. Sometimes I just feel safe and loved. Carl Leggo (1999) said,

We can never keep the heart out of our writing. The heart is always there. I want to seek the fire and grow the heart in my writing. Knowing it is always there, I want to reveal it as there, pumping and bloody and life-giving. We can pretend

that we are keeping the heart out of our writing, but we are only pretending, and pretense is a tense way to live. (p.10)

In many ways I keep some of my heart, something hurt or joyful deep in myself, as it is a part of my life, a part of my being and becoming the woman I am today. All this is part of my life, has made me come to this place in my life.

To be a Virgin

Her name is Satyawati, and she is called Wati. I knew her when we were both twelve. She is an *Indo*. In Indonesia *Indo* means someone who is half Dutch and half Indonesian with the father Dutch and the mother Indonesian. But who cares, every time they see some kind of a mixed blood they call them *Indo*. I am called *Indo* too. Sometimes it can be *Indo* German, it means half German and half Indonesian, or *Indo* American.

Once we knew each other, we just came together right away. I remember the first time I met her, "Gee, what a serious face, doesn't she like to smile?" I asked myself. "Whatever, I have to play with her, because my mother is visiting her sister-in-law, and Wati's mother is there too." And they said we had to play. So we started to play cards, and then played and played. In the afternoon, when my mother told me we had to go, we felt upset.

She lived in Jakarta. I lived in Bandung, about 200 km apart. Every time we had holidays we got together, either I went to Jakarta or she came to Bandung, and we always had sleepovers for either a few days or weeks.

In her place, we got up at 11:00 am, and took a bath for hours. We just talked and talked and talked. Sometimes her brother got mad because we were laughing too loud. It kept him awake and he would say: "Just be quiet." We could be quiet for some minutes and again we talked and laughed and talked and laughed.

One day, when I got my first period...

"Oh, you are fourteen."...

"Yes."

"You are too old."

"Yes I am, what can I do?"

Finally I became an adult after all,
even though I was not sure what it meant.

When I was washing, I said to myself:

"Goodbye my little things.

One day you will be my baby."

"Oh, what are you doing?"

"Just saying goodbye."

"You know, I want to be a virgin until I get married."

"What?"

"... Just want to be like that."

"I want to give it to my husband, to my man."

Eleven years later...

"I am not a virgin anymore, and he is my husband."

Yes, something was living inside my womb

I was proud of myself

I became a mother...

I was a part of the Universe

giving birth,

giving something to be alive

What a miracle.

And I remember

He asked me why there was no blood.

I did not know then that I should have asked him if he was a virgin.

I still do not understand what it means to be a virgin.

Who cares? But at least I did it because I wanted to.

Or because I did not have myself,

My culture had me

Or did I have the culture in my mind?

Who had whom?

At least now I have myself,

I still have my best friend Satyawati, or Wati, who lives in the Netherlands.

I have three children, Bhisma, Ratri and Sita,

And I have my heart...

Spring 2000

When I am dancing, I am centering myself into my heart. I sit cross-legged or in the Japanese sitting style, close my eyes and become aware of my whole body before I start my dance. I pay attention to my being. When the music starts I follow the flow of the music. At times I disappear, there are just music and dance that seem to have no connection with each other, and yet they are becoming one. I sometimes feel that I am playing the music with my movements, my being. I do not control my movement. I let it flow with the music. Forshay (2000) said,

I was fourteen years old. Coming from my English class to the high school auditorium, I took my place in the balcony for the regular midweek assembly program. It was customary for William George Alexander Ball, the music teacher, to begin matters by leading the high school orchestra in an overture. The babble ended as he raised his baton and began "The Poet and Peasant." A strange thing happened to me. My classmates, the auditorium, my sense of time and place, all disappeared from my consciousness. I was completely absorbed in the music. My world, for the time being, consisted entirely of the sound of the orchestra and me. When they ended the piece, I had a distinct sense of coming to. (p. 127)

For me when I am disappearing, it is what I have called being in zero, nothingness, and yet I am full, in Javanese *kosong nanging isi*. In that moment, the movement flows by itself; there is nothing to control or to be controlled. It happens and is happening, I am becoming full and yet zero.

My experience in dance has made me realize that whatever I do in my life, it has been based on my experience in dance.

Dance is the starting point for my life. Stinson (2000) explained,

Dance gives me a center, a place to start from: curriculum is the continuing journey. When I say that dance gives me a starting place, this recognizes my awareness that all insights, including those in curriculum, begin with personal knowledge what we know 'in our bones'.... My study of body therapies has led me to marvel at how the body is constructed, so that a dancer's job becomes to understand the internal connections and release into them, not to control natural impulses ... Control is as much an issue in curriculum as it is in dance: we fear that institutions, as well as bodies, will not work without control. From my dance experience, I know that understanding relationships, and releasing into them, provides an alternative to control that allows, rather than inhibits, movement and growth. This knowledge guides my thinking about curriculum and teaching, as I seek to find relationships to my students that allow us to work together without my attempting to control them. (p. 190)

In a dance class, I teach in relationship with my students. We start the class by sitting in a circle. We touch our whole body from our feet to our head, giving love to them. We hold hands with each other, with eyes closed, giving time for us to be together, to feel the relationship and connection between us. When we open our eyes we smile at each other, as we say "hi" without speaking to every member of the class.

For the closing of the class, again we stand up in a circle holding hands, closing our eyes, and just are silent in the moment. We can say whatever we would like, for instance saying thank you for being with each other. The circle is zero. It is the oldest number that was found in India. A circle is empty and yet full. Again it is a way to be connected to the Existential Source of the Universe, because silent is the personality of the Universe. In

silence we get the opportunity to pay attention to our own breath. That is why when we pay attention to our breath we will be in a silent moment, as the Universe is.

“I am with Ashelyn”

I AM HERE IN THE LAKE...I MEAN NOT INSIDE THE LAKE, BY THE LAKE...
(this is the problem being an ESL person)

THE WATER IS FLOWING, DANCING AND SINGING...
The water never stops moving,
Flowing with the wind, and following the wind
THE BREATHING OF THE UNIVERSE...

I hear and listen to the sound of the leaves,
They are also following the wind
THE BREATHING OF THE UNIVERSE...

“Alam Takambang jadi Guru”

(The nature that exists is the teacher, is the example)

I am learning by,
I am learning with,
I am learning in the Nature, the Universe, the One...

I am learning and living with the wind,
Breath and breathing in the Universe...
I am in the Universe breathing...

I AM WITH ASHELYN IN THE BREATH OF THE UNIVERSE

Summer 2000

To go deep into myself and trust my heart, from the experience of dance and dancing, this is what I do in writing, teaching, and my everyday life. I trust, I surrender and I let go of what comes in the moment. I am not in control of anything, instead I am working together to be in a relationship with my body, the music and my writing, to create out of a working together and a relationship.

In the summer of 2000, I took part in an institute called “Writing Teacher's Lives,” with Carl Leggo, Erika Hasebe-Ludt and Ted Aoki. At that time I had developed deeply into writing. Being in this particular writing class has made me realize that there are many ways to write a thesis and or project that have academic value. It does not have to be in the traditional way of writing that I have known for many years. That is why for this study I am confident to put my autobiographical writings along with my dance into my project.

My Reflections: It is all about Yu-Mu (Erika's fault...hahaha)

After I finished the institute on Friday, I went to Recreation Services in the Student Union building to check my program as I am going to teach Javanese Dance in the fall semester. My CV was not there like the others were... so I asked if I was still able to write something about me before it was printed. The person said all right, but I had to finish it in 1 or 2 hours. I started to write, and my writing was this:

Maria is a dancer and has been dancing Classical Javanese Court dance since she was 6 years old. At the age of 30 she started to brake up the boundaries and dance her own frees movement and joined a Contemporary Dance Theatre. She has been dancing in Europe, Asia, Australia, and the US as a contemporary dancer and yet as a classical dancer. In this institution she would like to share her dance experience, living in a dance space and sharing our being as humans.

As I was writing it down, I was aware that the institute that I called Erika's fault has influenced my writing ...(I hope you don't mind Erika, I just love playing with people that I love so much and I love you, Erika...). I was so happy and relieved that I could express myself in that way...that I could ask people to dance, to enjoy life through dancing, and sharing our being as humans.... I did not have to write about my ability, my achievement, to prove myself as a dance teacher, to say my experience is blah, blah, blah.... I am just a human being that loves dancing, and asks people to dance...as Carl asks us to write, to be a writer, to do free writing...to wonder and wander...to be and to write on a blank piece of paper...

Gee, as I am writing this section I remember your voice and voices, Carl, your voice is flowing like water... I am listening and following your voice... I remember when Kathy was telling us how she was paying attention to her walking, and she also mentioned about how Carl was flowing in front of us, when he was explaining something...flowing from this end to the other end... a beautiful image and imagination....

This morning when Erika was going to leave Lethbridge, we had our conversation.... I told her that as a young child and teenager, I never liked to go to school. I just did it because I had to, no excitement, no encouragement, and no joy. When I went to the dance academy, it was the first time in my life that I enjoyed being a scholar, I had the courage to do the best I can do. Fortunately I got a scholarship for three years because I was good as a student....gee how come I was good as a student...?! Some years ago I finished my degree in dance anthropology with again a boring kind of education, but I did it.... This time of my life as a student in a graduate program in the Faculty of Education and especially as part of this institute, again I feel that I have been accepted as I am, I recognize myself as someone who has something and I am worth it.... I have the confidence to be whatever I am. I have the ability to write in my dancing and to dance with my writing. Thank you Big Ted, Little Ted and Erika's fault....

I love you, Ted, Carl and Erika... with all my heart.

I appreciated so much when John was reading his writing about making love... with my heart I want to talk about it, with my heart I hope no one will be insulted by my writing... For many years I kept asking myself why I was and I am always in tears in that particular moment? Was and am I sad? What was and is it all about? For years I just lived with those questions...

Two years ago I met my guru; his name is Anand Krishna, an Indian Indonesian spiritual teacher. I was thinking to ask that question, but before I did it, he suddenly explained (as if he knew my question) that the lowest level to meet Him, Her, the Mother Earth, the Buddha, the One...is when you are in that particular moment, in the ecstasy moment... Oh thank God that now I know, that is why I always want to be in that moment....hahaha. That is when we stop everything in one moment, when we are meeting with the Only One...with and in the Love, with and in the One....

Why do I write about this? Because it is part of my life that I most of the time cover it up, keep somewhere that I do not want to see...do not want to face, but it is living with me as a human. The meeting with the Love and in the Love can bring us to living in love and carrying each other as human. For me it is not about power, force, it is about working together, giving and receiving in a good space.

Ted, Carl and Erika...you are the Yu –Mu...

In Javanese we say, *Guru, digugu lan ditiru*. A teacher is to be followed and to be listened to.

There is a lot of meaning in those words. But I mentioned it because I feel that we are as students following and listening carefully to the teachers. The three of you, Ted, Carl, and Erika were caring, teaching, learning, with watchfulness and with your heart. You were working together, asking questions and questioning.... And we were there listening and following all of you.... Your feeling of love among you, your caring, your laughter, and your courage have made me part of it, made me feel good about it, made me feel free to express myself in my own way, in my voice and voices.

All of you were being Yu-Mu; and you are still in Yu-Mu...

You were there but you have given us permission to be part of it...

You were there but you were not there to control...

You were there but you were not there to be the only teacher.

Summer 2000

When I committed to doing a project for my Masters degree I knew I needed to dance and write. I could not do only one of them. Dancing and writing are both becoming the process of my being, my growth and my teaching. I am creating my own life the way it is good for me as a teacher, student, mother and woman. I am creating dance as I am creating writing, and through this double movement of dancing/lifewriting, I am creating and recreating my life.

In the process of putting together the piece for the dance project, I talked with Betty Poulsen a couple of times. One weekend Betty invited me to come to her house to have hot dogs in her garden, and I said, "Okay, then I will bring *nasi goreng*" *Nasi goreng* is an Indonesian food, it is fried rice. She shouted on the phone, "That would be a good name for your piece." And I said, "Nasi goreng and hot dogs, as it is an intertwined process of being Indonesian who is living as Canadian in a way." A person who is Indonesian and yet living in the Canadian culture. That was how I got the name for my piece: "Nasi Goreng & Hot Dogs."

The dance performance I have created consists of six parts: Part One, the opening, where I will clean the space, and my two daughters will come in and bring some flowers. They will spread flowers on the floor. This represents making the space beautiful as we are going to offer a dance piece to the audience and yet to my own life. After my two daughters go out of the space, I will start to walk across the stage. I am going to walk from the left to the right and come back, in increasingly fast movements. It represents that one time in my life I was working, and doing things without really knowing where I was going and why I was doing it, over and over again.

Part Two is when Ratri, my older daughter, will make a soft noise with a musical instrument, which would make me awake and become more confused and unsettle. I stop in one corner where I have put all my classical dance costumes. Then I will start talking to Ratri and Sita, telling them about my story as a young Javanese girl in the Javanese language. They will dress me in the classical costume while listening to my stories. After this I will turn around to the audience and speak in English and say: " Yes, I am a Javanese woman. I did not know how to say no, I always said yes and yes." Then while I am putting on lipstick I say: "Yes" to myself, "Yes, I am a Javanese woman and I will do everything as a wife."

In Part Three, I will be walking to the center stage nervously and half-heartedly, while the Golek Dance music starts to play. When I get in the center I will say: "Yes, I am a Javanese woman" and I will put my head down, looking down as I start dancing the Golek, a classical Javanese dance. While I am dancing part of it, there will be the sound of an electric guitar, played live by Dale Ketcheson, who has been collaborating with me for the music of my dances.

For Part Four, the electric guitar will be becoming louder and louder, with my movement becoming chaos. I will start taking off my accessories on my ears, head, arms, one each at a time. I will take off every symbol of the culture by removing all the accessories and costumes from myself. It represents my breaking down the Javanese culture and Javanese movement. Then the last one will be my Javanese jacket and I will put it in a respectful place together with the Javanese sarong.

In Part Five, Ratri will play the piano while Sita is going to do ballet dance. This represents their life in today's world, and my relationship with them as my daughters.

They have their own path and dignity. They learn ballet and piano, which represent the Western culture. After this I help them put on part of their traditional Java costume, and they will perform the Peacock dance, as a symbol of their roots. As a mother I give them these roots as a place to stand and to start.

In Part Six, I am going to dance in the coulees. It represents my life here in Lethbridge. I will dance to Dale Ketcheson's music, a composition called *Rondena*, based on the Flamenco. Paul Walker will play the saxophone and Mohsen Seyed Mahmoud plays Middle Eastern drum. I do not choreograph the piece but instead I will improvise the movements from and with the music. Improvisation represents my everyday life, to be here and now and listen to the music and be with it. The Western music represents today's music.

A Cup of Cafe Latte

I am here in Esquires...

Having a cup of cafe latte *yang enak rasanya*

Small one...

It costs me three bucks...

It means Rp 15,000 (fifteen thousands rupiah).

It is a lot... it was the amount of money that I used to give to Sum, my lovely helper. In the morning she would go to the market near our house in Jakarta, Indonesia. It took her 10 minutes to get there to buy meat and vegetables. She would come back one hour later with stories about people who lived in our neighborhood. She knew and met more housewives and helpers who lived in our surroundings than I ever did. She came home with fresh chicken, vegetables: spinach, potatoes and *tempe*, fruit: sometimes banana, papaya or mango and ingredients... and of course fresh stories, gossip... that I never remembered.

She cooked for us after she washed our clothes... That money, fifteen thousand rupiah would feed us for lunch, dinner and some leftovers in the morning, if there were any. We were five in the family, plus one helper who was becoming our driver and herself...seven of us. In one day I would spend the same amount that I just did for a cup of cafe latte *yang enak rasanya*...

Am I disappointed? Am I regretting? No, I am not, because...

I know in this time of my life, I need a cup of coffee to accompany me while I am here in the coffee house doing writing and reading. I need a cup of coffee to accompany me. The part of me who has been learning to enjoy being alone, to be independent, to pay attention to my heart, within...

Sooner or later, I know I will not need a cup of coffee to keep me company...I know I will not depend on anything else except the Supreme Being or whatever you call it, which already exists, everywhere and anywhere...

Now, in this moment, I am not there yet...

I am here in Esquires... having a cup of cafe latte *yang enak rasanya*...

Small one...

<i>yang</i>	<i>enak</i>	<i>rasanya</i>
which	nice, good	taste

Winter 2001



Figure 3: My Life

Summer 2000

I love you, who is dwelling in my being
 Here I am in this moment
 I am picturing myself in the picture that I will never be
 I am in silence, unspoken word and word...
 I am here with my quietness
 I am a dancer and dancing with myself
 I am writing to clean up, cleaning up the edges
 I am dancing in my free word and world...
 I am expressing myself
 in my writing with my body and heart
 in my dancing with my word and world
 I am quiet, silent, in unspoken world/word
 I am dancing and I am the dancer
 who is never still
 never quiet
 as water,
 silent and yet never quiet
 I am cleaning myself
 and
 I am the cleaning woman that will never be just clean
 Here I am in this moment
 Summer 2000

Tatian-Ku/Tatian-Ku: Dancing is my life

Tarian-Ku: *tarian* is an Indonesian word for dance and *ku* means mine. In the last chapter I have written about the dance project from outside. In this chapter I reflect on the performance that I created as part of this study. I will write the reflection from inside. That is why I call this chapter as *Tarian-Ku*, my dance.

July 22, 2001. Before I started the performance, I felt that I wanted to go to the shrine for a little while. I felt that it was my space to start dancing. I prayed for a little while before I started to celebrate my life. Afterwards I went to the stage and cleaned the floor, just to see if there was any dirt. This is a way of preparing the space. Then I looked at Ratri and Sita who had a bowl of flowers. They came to the stage and scattered the petals on the ground. Again this represented preparing the space. After a few minutes, they sat down close to the *Golek* dance costumes, and I started to walk. The rhythm of my walk was getting faster and faster. This scene represented that in life I often just walk, and walk and walk, without reflecting where am I going and why, just work, work and work.

As I started walking some people came in and spontaneously I said, just come in, here are some places for you. I did this because I knew there was a place for them and for me my performance is not something that I have to be too serious about. At that moment I had not started the next scene, so I thought it was all right to say that. I realized that by doing this, I had my own concept of performance. Because the stage and the audience were at the same level, I found that there was not a big difference between the performer and the audience, between the performance and everyday life.

When I found myself ready to start, I did walk to the left and right, and left and right. I kept going faster and faster. After a while Ratri rang the bell and I was awake, I

said to myself, “Oh what is happening? Where am I going? Who was I, who are you?”

And the movements were fast: I ran to the side, to the front and back, I was in chaos.

Nasi Goreng & Hot Dogs

Hello Friends!

You are warmly invited to attend the showing of my final project
“Hotdogs & Nasi Goreng” (Fried Rice)

Thursday, July 19, 2001

6:00 p.m. Room # W 420

University of Lethbridge

(30 min. presentation with discussion to follow)

The work is an autobiographical fusion of classical Javanese dance and contemporary movement, with live music by “Neda,” Dale Ketchson, Paul Walker & Mohsen Mahmoud. My daughters Ratri & Sita will also be accompanying me.

As you may already know I am a classical Javanese court dancer and teacher, and have performed all over the world. My training and experiences have given me many opportunities. These include lecturing at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts, sitting on the Jakarta Arts Council and founding the Indonesian Dance Festival. In Indonesia I worked with, danced in, and produced major productions both independently and with Sardono W. Kusumo and Sulisty. In Canada I have taught at the University of Calgary and created and performed several works, including Gotong Royong (1998), Cycle of Life (for the U of L Dance Project 2000), the CanAsia Dance Festival 2001 in Toronto, accompanied by the Gamelan Toronto Orchestra, and most recently performed in the Battery Opera’s work in progress, “Spektator”

I am currently pursuing my M.Ed. at the U of L and developing a new dance vocabulary based on classical aesthetics. You will see this influence in the work I will perform. My dance today is my own expression of my gratefulness to be here, in Canada, with my daughters and my respect for my past life. It is an expression of my acceptance of myself as I am and my surrender to the future. It is my declaration that the refined, graceful and continuous quality of Javanese dance is not a powerless quality because it symbolizes the power of movements.

It would be an honor for me to share this evening’s presentation with you.

love, maria

I stopped in front of the *Golek* dance costumes and decorations. As I was breathing very hard, I started to tell Ratri and Sita stories of my childhood in the Javanese language, while they were putting on my sarong, velvet jacket, *sampur* (scarf), and belt. After a while I turned around facing the audience and was saying my reflection about my childhood, my past and being a Javanese woman in English. Ratri and Sita were putting on the accessories, head decoration, bracelet, necklace and ear accessories. I walked slowly to the center of the stage with my unsure feeling, as the *Golek* dance music had started. When I got to the center, I said, "I am a Javanese woman," and at once I looked down to the ground and started to dance.

And I remember...

Who was I then?

Who am I now?

The Last Meeting
1997
Singapore

I was sitting here, and you were sitting there

I
asked you
“where are you going?”

“I don't know”

you are my dance guru
you are my love
you are you

I was sitting here, and you were sitting there

I said,
“You are a solitary man”
“Yes I am”
“I enjoy being alone”
“I enjoy company,
sometimes”

“How to enjoy here-and-now?”

“Just being
here
and
now”

I was sitting, and you were lying down

I touched you
You touched me

I asked:

“Where are you going?”

“I
do
not
know”

1979
Singapore

*I was here with him, my father
He knew of my first love
He told me not to be with him
and
"You can buy whatever you want"
"Just enjoy your life"
"Do not think about him anymore"
"He is just an artist"
"He was married once"
"He is...."
"He
is"
"He"*

*I was flying through things
Esprit?
Aigner?
Mark & Spencer?
Clothes?
Shoes?
Perfume?
All materials?*

*I was there,
but
I was not there
I got sick*

*He came to my place
In Bandung, West Java
I was there with her, my mother
She told him to stay
Mother, you let him come
I was better
and
better*

*Oh, my love....
What is it?
That made me alive?
love?
or
Love?*

1997
Singapore

September
Gleneagles Hospital

I was sitting here and you were lying down

I was massaging your foot

My heart is here
My heart is there
My heart is everywhere

Oh my love,
My first love,
Where are you going?

You are smiling,
You are here,
You are there,
You are everywhere,

I dropped my tears
You dropped yours
One by one
“Oh, my love, where are you going?”

“I do not know”

We are touching our hearts
We are looking at our eyes
We are smiling to each other

There was a lot to say
And
Nothing came out

Oh my love,
You are...
You are....
You
Are

1997
Jakarta

The phone rang
There is a sound from Yogyakarta,
Central Java
His place

Yes I hear,
Yes I know
Yes it is
Yes
And
Yes

It was the time
Cancer took him away
His life and his time

“Have a peaceful journey”
I love you
And
Love

Benedictus Suharto
Born June 9, 1944 – died December 27, 1997
He was a classical Yogyakarta court dancer for 35 years
In 1992 he started to become an avantgarde dancer
He taught dance in Indonesia, Europe and the USA
He died and yet his spirit of dance never dies.

1997
Yogyakarta, Central Java
April

On a long drive
“What is faithful?”

faithful is being honest to your way, your own path
listening to your heart,
following,
yours
and
Yours

Spring 2000

After a few minutes, there was an electrical guitar sound coming into the Javanese music. The Javanese music became slower, while the guitar became louder. My movement was like electricity, I felt that the movement of my hands came out by itself, and I could not recognize it. The movements were becoming bigger and bigger like the sound of the electrical guitar. It became chaos, and I took off my bracelet, the accessories on my head, and finally I took off the head accessories, and threw them on the floor. It was really hard to do so. After the chaos built up, I took off my sarong and stopped in the middle, and raised my two arms up in the air. I was also looking up, and slowly looking straight to the audience and stopped for a moment. A moment of satisfying myself, that I finally was able to look straight without any other feeling than the feeling of confidence.

Finally I am able to look straight...

I am able to face myself...

And to accept myself as I am...

Slowly I took off my Javanese jacket and put it in the left shrine, in the respectful place. While I was doing so, Ratri started to play the piano, Sita was dancing ballet with Ratri's music. I was watching them with a feeling of acceptance; they are the future of their lives, and ballet and piano represent the world of today, the global world. I am allowing myself to watch with mindfulness what they are doing and where they are at this moment of their life.

This performance is dedicated to:

Betty Poulsen who I met in Jakarta in '93, who invited me to the U of C in '94, she went
back to Java in '95,
again invited me to the U of L in '98 and our lives have
been intertwined ever since,
Carillon Cameron who has always been a good friend and has been helping me
adjusting to my life in Canada,
To my mother and The Mother for their Love.

I am grateful to Bhismo, Ratri and Sita, my children who have
chosen me as their mother.

"Hot Dogs and Nasi Goreng"

I was a Javanese classical dancer,
I didn't know how to look up or even to look straight ahead,
I used to look down, my arms were always down,
my being was underneath ...
I am a Javanese dancer,
looking down for me now is to look to my inner self,
looking straight is to face myself, to face life,
looking up is to feel gratitude to the Universe,

I am aware of my being...

I am a dancer, who always dances and is dancing with-in life ✨

~Maria Darmaningsih~

July 19' 2001

This Evening's Program

Tari Golek/Golek Dance:

choreographer Romosasminto Dipuro

danced by Maria.

Tari Merak/Peacock Dance :

choreographer Cece Sumantri

danced by Ratri and Sita.

Ballet dance:

choreographed and danced by Sita

piano piece, study no. 7 op. 139, no. 49 by Carl Czerny

played by Ratri.

'Rondena'

composed by Dale Ketcheson,

danced by Maria Darmaningsih

Performers:

Maria Darmaningsih and her two daughters,

Ratri Hapsari and Nursita Tyasutami (Sita).

Musicians:

Dale Ketcheson, Paul Walker, Mohsen Seyed Mahmoud.

Sound and lighting: Deonie Hudson.

Production assistant: Heidi Born.

Thanks to:

Lisa Doolittle, Erika Hasebe-Ludt,

James MacDowell, Teresa Sawchuk

to Ruth, Janice, Shelley, and Lis-ann who helped me backstage

Last but not least thank you to all of you who are here tonight to celebrate a journey of life.

Afterwards my daughters danced the Peacock dance from West Java. I have taught them to dance it. It represents my role as a dance teacher and also as a mother. They like dancing Indonesian dance as much as they like ballet, jazz, and hip-hop. The last part was my free movement dancing in the coulees with live music by Dale Ketcheson, Paul Walker and Mohsen Seyed Mahmoud. It represents my life today here in Lethbridge, in the coolees. I feel the freedom of being what I want to be, to do what I want to do and just be myself.

There was a beautiful moment...

WHEN I WAS LOOKING TO THE SKY...

I could not express what it was,

My words aren't able to describe,

I just remember ...

It was a Beautiful Moment...

For a couple of days after the performance, I felt hurt by my own action, throwing away my head accessories. It was really a ritual act for my life. For days I did not want to talk about it, and I did not want to write either. Now I feel that was it, I have done it, but I would never do the piece again. I was breaking up with part of myself, and it hurt. On the other hand I know that I had to go through it before I could accept a part of myself in my being, to be a Javanese woman. The piece that I did for my dance project is just a onetime performance.

I realize that I had to do that piece, because it was significant for my life, but if I had to do it again, I would have to do it with mindfulness. I feel now that the piece was a symbol of a moment of birth and death, the birth of my new relationship to the Javanese dance and the death of my hatred to the Javanese movements. Now I realize that the Javanese dance and I are in an unbreakable relationship.

I have been being reborn by the piece that I did in the summer. There was a lot happening, but the one thing that is important for me is the transformation of myself inside me. I am a Javanese woman with Javanese movement in a different quality, such as when I look down now, I do so to see my own self inside me, to see with my gut and heart - to be connected to myself, to have the confidence of the quality inside me and therefore I take challenges and risks in my life.

I was/am invisible

Today I went to a place where I used to go

As a girl growing up,
I felt
I should not talk out loud,
Not to have free movement,
Not to show myself.

*My dance was a Javanese movement,
My movement was a Javanese dance.*

I was a beautiful young woman, who was always quiet,
silent,
smiled,
made others happy.

I was invisible.

Today as I am writing about being invisible,
This moment I realize that:

I am becoming invisible.

I miss you, Anand Krishna, my spiritual Guru

*For a couple of days I have been closing my eyes... do you know why?
At this moment there are too many things on my plate. I have to
extend my stay in Canada, have to wait for my visa to go to Ohio as I
got a job and it will start on January 14, 2002, and I do not have
an employment visa yet. I have to finish my writing by December 15,
2001. I have to pay health insurance, rent, telephone bills, visa fees
for staying in Canada and the USand I have no money to do all
of that!!! What can I do? What do I have to do?
Same questions over and over again.*

Then I close my eyes.
I go to the place
Where I become in zero,
In the stage of being no mind.
No mind is a place that is placeless,
A peaceful place,

A place where,
I surrender to the Source, the Supreme Being,
As I know I am not in control of anything.
I am only able to breathe with the breath of my being,
My breath that keeps me dancing,

Dance with the music of the Universe...

*My dance is a Javanese movement,
My movement is a Javanese dance.*

There is the Dance and Music,
I no longer exist...

I am invisible.

October 22, 2001



Figure 4: Becoming One

Does it matter?

It is up to you to decide whether it does or it doesn't matter.

You have your own choice and choices...

She said: 'I didn't tell him when my birthday was. I just like to buy myself a present. I don't need other people including my boyfriend to buy me anything...'

I said: 'Gee, I am learning something, I used to tell everyone when my birthday was, at least there is someone who will say happy birthday...'

I used to get a bunch of flowers on my birthdays until I was married.

Does it matter?

What does matter to me is, I realize now, that I am able to buy myself a present without feeling guilty.

It is important for me to buy myself flowers anytime in my life...

She said: 'My mother moved 60 times in her life. I moved 12 times in 9 years.'

She said: 'I have been living here ever since I was born until now I have three children.'

I said: 'I have lived here in Lethbridge since 1999. I used to live in Jakarta, Java, Indonesia. Jakarta is the city where I was born. However, I have always felt that I was born in Yogyakarta, Central Java, where the palaces are, where the Javanese dances are, where I attended the Dance Academy a long time ago. Where I met him, my first love. I danced in the palaces, villages. I danced everywhere when I was a professional dancer...'

I was independent; I got the position at the Dance Academy as a dance teacher...

Until one day my father told me to move back to Bandung, West Java, where my parents were, at once. I did not have any choice or other choices... I did not know how to say: No.... That was it...

Does it matter?

What does matter to me is now I am living here in Lethbridge, Canada, with my Javanese dance, as a Javanese woman who is becoming her own human being.

He said: 'No, I am not from a Royal family.'

She said: 'Just say yes, make it real.'

I said: 'I am. I am a member of one of the Palaces in Central Java. It is called Mangkunegaran Palace. I was respected; I was expected to behave in a particular way.'

And I remember the words spoken to me as a child:

'You know that you are from a "royal family"... do you?'

'Are you the daughter of so and so?'

'Oh I see, so you are the granddaughter of so and so? He was the first engineer who built this and that. He built the first radio station, electricity, roadways, irrigation in Tawangmangu, Central Java....aha.' So.... blah, blah, blah, and blah, blah, blah.

Does it matter?

What does matter to me is I am a human being who is learning to be a better person, everyday.

You said: 'you are wonderful, because you are so open, and sometimes being naked...'

I said: 'You are wonderful, how you keep your secrets, your pain and sadness...'

I am learning not to be naked all the time, to keep my secret, my enjoyment in my heart...'

You said: 'when nothing else in the world matters, when we surrender our bodies to the pleasure, intimacy, joy, and happiness of... ..'

When we are sharing our being, hearts and within

When the world is becoming in peace...the words are becoming whispers...

Does it matter?

What does matter to me is I do whatever I am doing with all my heart,
It is an act of worship.

It is up to you to decide whether it does or it doesn't matter.

You have your own choice and choices..

Winter 2001

Ardhanaarishwara/Ardhanaarishwara

Ardha means half. *Naari* means female energy. *Ishwar* represents male energy.

Ardhanaarishwara is an image representing a combination of half male and half female in the form of *Shiva* and *Shakti*. The male energy is named *Shiva*; the female energy is named *Shakti*. *Shiva* is a god in the Hindu tradition. *Shiva* is not alive without *Shakti*. He is just a body - a dead body. Life has two sides comprised of female and male energy. *Shiva/Shakti* in the Hindu tradition; Yin/Yang in the Chinese traditions. I chose this title because it is related to my being now, to be fulfilled and content. Part of me is becoming independent and has been growing since I moved to Lethbridge. Another part of me is standing graciously as a Javanese woman.

On November 21, 2001 my two daughters and I performed a dance at the Atrium of the University of Lethbridge. The International Student Association hosted the event; it was called *The Continental Focus: Indonesia*. This is the invitation that I sent through email:

Dear everyone,

I am Maria Darmaningsih, a dancer from Java, Indonesia who is finishing my degree of Master of Education at U of L. (Yes Java is an island in Indonesia, and we have tons of coffee, that is why there is a word Java for coffee...just want to be recognized?!) I came here with my children in January 1999, and am going to be done by December this year. In this case, I hope my supervisor, Erika Hasebe-Ludt, would like to kick me out, so I will be finished by then...?

My dance is my life, ... so what?
 Okay, this is our life story, since we are moving down to Ohio in January 2002, (thank goodness I got a job at Denison University to teach Javanese dance for the Spring

semester). My two daughters and I would love to perform this dance as an offering, an expression of saying "Thank You" to the people and the space who have been very kind and helpful to accept and to share with us in those years of difficulties and joys. To the professors who have been helping me so much in every course that I have taken, to have the understanding by accepting me, as I came from a different culture.

To our friends thank you: for their kindness and beauty.

Therefore we would love to invite you to be part of this offering, on
Wednesday, November 21, in the Atrium, level 6, U of L, at
12:15 - 12:45pm.

I attached a poster with pictures of our dances.

Thank you for your time,
Warm regards,

Maria Darmaningsih
Ratri Hapsari,
Nursita Tyasutami.

As I was rereading the invitation, I realize how much I have grown in the past few years. When I came I was never sure what I should do with my dance. Many questions came over and over again. Now I realize that dance is just in my being and life. Wherever I go I would be dancing.

I had not danced Balinese dance for 20 years. In that performance I did dance Balinese, which is totally different from Javanese dance. For many years I did not want to dance Balinese. I felt Balinese is too energetic and fast for me. But now I feel comfortable doing it. I felt I am able to put the energy in it and feel confident with fast movement, and I felt I was dancing with the fast and energetic music. I was just following the music and the fast energy in my body.

The last dance was an improvisation with Alex Dea's music, played by Dale Ketcheson. Dale and I decided that we would play three parts of the music, which is based on *gamelan* music. The first part was calm, and I danced with my hands and fingers. The second part was light, and I danced with a silk scarf. I played with the scarf as I played with the music. The third part was joyful; I danced with a white fan. I did a lot of jumping, soft running, and varied of foot movements.

When I was dancing with the live music, I just listened and played with the music. Sometimes I felt I was playing the music with my movements. Deep in my heart, every time I dance free movement or classical movement, I always say my wish; I hope the audience will enjoy the dance.

Finally I am becoming one with myself within as I accept myself as I am. I am not searching something out of me, but I am here to serve myself and others. I would bring the dance wherever I go, share it with people who want to learn and to receive the dance.

I am a dancer who is living with/in the dance always.

Oh Tuhanku...*matur nuwun sanget...*

Oh God...no, it doesn't sound right to me...
Tuhan that is it...it means the same, but
 God? It is like something so big, so huge, so far from
 myself...

Tuhan is something so close to me; she stays in my heart
 since I knew her well...
Tuhan is my friend, my close friend,
 My mother, sometimes my father,
 My being, sometimes my heart

I talk to her
 Smile, cry,
 I beg her, and laugh a lot with her
 Yes I laugh every time I do a stupid thing, such as
 when I was not aware that she is always with me...
 I cry when I am insecure
 And I laugh; when I realize about that there is nothing to
 be insecure and unsafe...
 She is always here with me.

She or he...*dia*,
Dia is the third person in Indonesian...
 It does not matter if *dia* is he or she...
 It is easier to say *dia* for *Tuhan*
 Okay it is done!!!

Oh *Tuhanku*...
Matur nuwun sanget

<u>matur</u>	<u>nuwun</u>	<u>sanget</u> (Javanese)
to say	thank you	very much

<u>Tuhan</u> <u>ku</u>	(Indonesian)
God	mine

Spring 2001

Puisi dari dan untuk seorang Penari
(A Poem from and for a Dancer)

*kau di sana,
 aku di sini..*

*kau menari di awan, bersama awan..
 kau menari di dalam tanah, bersama tanah..*

*aku menari di angin, bersama angin..
 aku dan kau menari di dalam nafas, bersama nafas..*

*dalam tarian hidupmu, kau kadang sangat besar dan juga
 mungil..
 kau kadang sangat maskulin dan juga feminin..
 kau kuat dan sekaligus lembut..*

*engkau adalah Yu dan Mu,
 absent and present,
 *tiada dan ada.**

*Engkau adalah seorang penari yang menari
 dalam nafas kehidupanmu.*

*Mas Harto, kau adalah guruku, sahabatku, penariku dan ke-
 Kasih-ku..*

ke-Kasih-Mu

*Mas Ben, kau adalah guru kami, sahabat kami, penari kami
 dan ke-Kasih kami..*

ke-Kasih-Nya..

*Kau senantiasa ada dan tiada dalam nafas tarianku, tarian
 kami dan Tarian-Nya..*

*(You are always present/absent in the breath of my dance, our
 dance, and His/Her Dance...)*

Augustus 2000

W!NTER 2000

! AM WITH HER/H!M...
W!TH!N
!N THE MOMENT,
OF BEING ONE

A WOMAN WHO !S BECOM!NG A MAN WITH!N

! AM A HUMAN BEING
A CREATURE OF THE UNIVERSE
!N THE MOMENT OF B!RTH AND DEATH

! AM HERE WITH MY BEING
AND ANOTHER BEING
WHO AM ! ... ?

! AM WITH THE CREATURES OF THE UNIVERSE
!N THE AURA OF THE EXISTENTIAL LOVE...
WHO AM ! ... ?

! AM WITH HIM
WITH ANOTHER BEING
WHO AM I... ?

BEING ONE

Thank Him/Her

Thank him
 who is my father,
 my brother,
 my ex-husband,
 my son and sun,

Thank her
 who is my mother,
 my sister,
 my daughters,
 my stepmother,

Thank him,
 who told me he loved her instead of me,
 who made me realize that prosperity is not the important one,
 who has been running away and closing his heart after intimacies,
 who i knew since we were five and was always there when i need,
 who has given me warmth in cold nights,
 who gave me the lesson that love does not mean to control,
 who has made me cups and cups of tea.

Thank him who has been my guru and never wants to be known as Guru
 who always writes his name as anand krishna instead of Anand Krishna
 who has opened my heart to the Supreme Being

Thank Him who has once lived as Sri Krishna, Buddha, Lao Tze, Jesus,
 mohammad, zarasustra, Rumi and Ramakrishna,

Thank Her who has once lived as mary, Radha, magdalena, Fatima,
 Lakshmi, Shakti, mirabai,
 who sacrificed their lives for human kind and human being

Thank Him, The Supreme Being

Thank Her, The mother Earth

For having me as his lover and her daughter

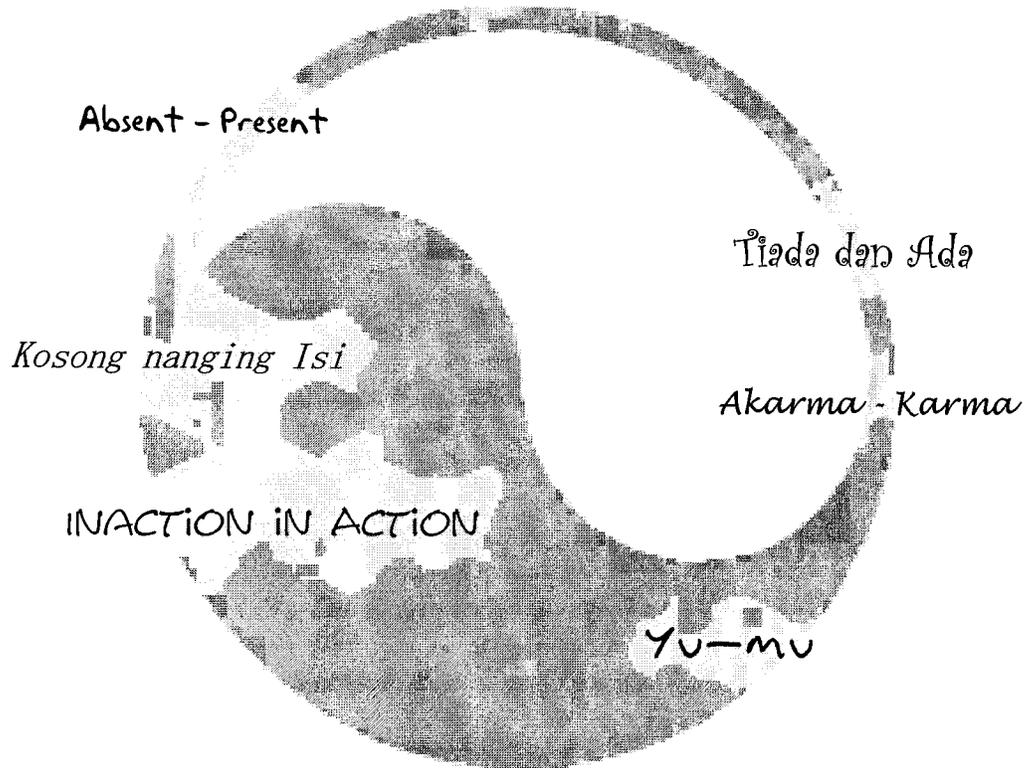
As i am living with/in Love.

winter 2001

PS:

This poem is unfinished.

As I remember...



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