This chapter investigates the use of cities as settings in seven dance films and videos. It is based on the premise that space, and the related concepts of travel and mapping, are constructions which are gendered and consequently invested with power (Briginshaw, 1995). Since cities are particular kinds of constructed spaces, the ways in which they are gendered and invested with power have implications for the interpretations of dances set in them. The treatment of city spaces by the choreography and filming in these dance texts is examined to determine the extent to which the cities are positioned as 'natural' or constructed; hiding or revealing key constituents of that construction, such as gender.

The postmodern city, like the postmodern subject, is fractured and fragmented, it is falling apart and full of contradictions. It is utopian and dystopian, attracting and alienating. It is constructed as labyrinthine, free-flowing and uncontrollable, but also as containing and trapping. The first half of the chapter examines ways in which the choreography and filming in the dance texts contribute to the construction of some of these connotations associated with the postmodern city. Constructions of the city are inextricably bound up with constructions of subjectivity. Consequently in the analysis of the dance texts, particular attention is paid to the ways in which the dancers' interactions with the urban environments contribute to these construction processes and the role gender plays. In some of the dance films examined the male or masculine gaze contributes to the construction of cities and subjects, and so the implications of this for the gendering of these sites of meaning are also outlined.

Metaphors of travel and mapping have been employed in postmodern discourse to reposition or orientate fragmented, displaced subjects (Briginshaw, 1995). The second part of the chapter examines the roles travel and mapping play in the construction of subjects and cities in the dance texts.
Reappropriations of these metaphors are suggested to illustrate the ways in which some of the texts reveal and explore the constructed and gendered nature of cities and subjects, whilst others use the city as a backdrop for dance, without paying attention to the 'complex web of power, space and difference' within which the 'public spaces of the city and the private lives of its inhabitants must be understood' (Bell & Valentine, 1995, p. 113).

CONSTRUCTIONS OF CITIES AND SUBJECTS – INSCRIPTION AND INTERFACES

One of the attractions of the postmodern city is that because 'it is mainly about the production of signs and images' it provides an exciting arena for representations. It has been likened to 'a theatre, a series of stages upon which individuals could work their own distinctive magic while performing a multiplicity of roles' (Harvey, 1989, p. 5). The city's plasticity allows and invites interactions of many kinds which can open up possibilities for a shifting kaleidoscope of identities. It is perhaps not surprising that this 'soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare' (Raban, 1974, quoted in Harvey, 1989, p. 5), which fires the imagination, has become a favoured setting for recent dance texts.

The particular ways in which cities and subjects 'mutually define' each other are evident when interactions of dancers with urban landscapes are examined. Bodies and cities can be seen to 'inscribe' each other; 'there is a two-way linkage that could be defined as an interface' (Grosz, 1995, p. 108). This 'interface' provides a space in which identities can be discovered, forged and played with. 'In learning a city (as “city”) we learn ourselves' (Preziosi, 1990, p. 262).

'Cities' and 'ourselves', whose identities are forged, played with and constructed in this sense are not therefore neutral or 'natural'. Rather, they are traversed by a complex web of power relations, determined by the ways in which the world is seen and conceived, and one strand of this conception and construction is gender. Space tends to be feminised deriving from Plato's notions of the female chora. The associations that result have similarities with descriptions of the soft, postmodern city (Raban, 1974, in Harvey, 1989). In Plato's view space is conceptualised as 'a bounded entity', 'a sort of container' associated with the female body, particularly with that of the mother (Best, 1995, p. 182). He states 'it [the receptacle/space] . . . is a kind of . . . plastic material on which changing impressions are stamped by the things which enter it making it appear different at different times . . . . We may use the metaphor of birth and compare the