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Department of Anthropology & Sociology



**Negotiating Difference:
Exploring Masculinity and Disability in Contemporary Dance**



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A research essay submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree B.A, MA Anthropology, submitted to the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of the Western Cape

Declaration

Master's thesis submitted to Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Arts Faculty,
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I Coralie Pearl Valentyn declare 'Negotiating difference: Exploring masculinity and disability in Contemporary Dance' is my own work and has not been submitted to any other institution or department for publication.

Signature:

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Signature:

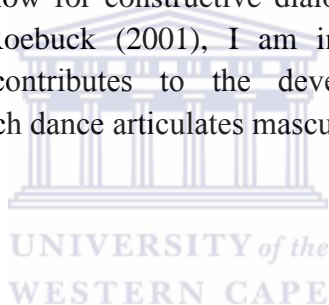
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Abstract

There is a theoretical gap in scholarship pertaining to masculinity and disability in dance. Existing scholarship on masculinity, disability and dance respectively, seldom bring these three themes into conversation with each other, missing opportunities to examine the nuances of masculinity. Through an ethnographic study, I endeavoured to capture the narratives of three professional disabled male dancers from different contexts and backgrounds. The phenomenological approach was selected in order to enhance understanding of my participants' experiences in an attempt to illuminate how these dancers negotiate and embody their masculinity in dance spaces. The nuances of masculinity, disability and dance are therefore interpreted through a phenomenological framework and seek to foreground the intricacies of negotiation and subjectivity. Through face-to-face in-depth interviews, watching performances and rehearsals as well as less formal conversations, this project aims to illuminate the lives of Marc Brew (Scotland), David Toole (England) and Zama Sonjica (South Africa) as disabled male dancers. I am particularly interested in disability's ability to challenge normative ideas around dance, identity and masculinity. I argue the need to change limiting perceptions of hegemonic masculinity and the male dancer's body to advance the artistic medium of dance and allow for constructive dialogue around issues of access and inclusivity. Furthermore, like Roebuck (2001), I am interested in the ways in which contemporary dance works "contributes to the development of a more sensitive understanding of the ways in which dance articulates masculine identity" (Roebuck, 2001: 1).

Keywords

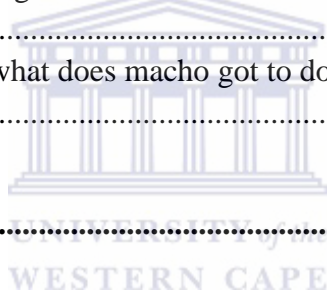
Masculinity, disability, Contemporary dance, integrated dance, embodied subjectivity



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Prelude

Queering the Space

So for me, putting my fickle body into a room that is dancing, queers the space: I use queer as a verb not to mean gay, but to mean twists it and turns it and makes it something different, new. (Mazique, Axis SI participant, August 2012)
(Valentyn, 2012)

Queer: Unexpected, unusual, surprising (English Oxford Dictionary, 1998)

The disabled body in dance is unexpected because it is “the cultural antithesis of the fit, healthy body” (Cooper Albright, 1997: 57). By implication, this unexpected body transforms the normative space into an unexpected performative space, arguably queering the space (Valentyn, 2012). Inspired by one of my honours¹ research participants Mazique, I used the word “queer” deliberately, not to mean a sexual orientation but rather to foreground the ways in which disability radically changes the performative space in unanticipated ways. As my quote above by Mazique suggests, disability in the performative space, “twists, turns and makes new” existing ablest conceptions of the dancing body. I thus retained the original meaning of queer as unexpected, unusual or surprising. Thinking about dance and disability as queering the space enabled me to critically engage with previously taken-for-granted categories such as dancer and ability², allowing for the reconfiguration of the category of dance itself, albeit momentarily.

Queering the Space (Valentyn 2012) was interested in exploring human experiences around dance, disability and embodiment. I thus made the methodological decision to engage in an ethnographic study, deeply informed by what I termed personal participation. By “personal participation” I meant the combination of my personal dance experience with the ways in which I conducted research; more explicitly, drawing on my previous dance training to participate in dance classes with integrated³ dance companies Remix⁴ and Axis⁵. I therefore

¹ Valentyn, C. 2012: ‘Queering the Space: Exploring Dance, Disability and Embodiment (Honours thesis)

² As in Queering the Space (2012), I understand ability to exist along a continuum, rather than ability and disability existing as dichotomies

³ Integrated dance companies are professional dance companies comprising of dancers with and without physical disabilities

⁴ South African professional integrated dance company, based in Cape Town. I participated in open dance classes with the company over a period of three months, watched performances around the city and interviewed company dancers

⁵ One of America’s most well established integrated dance companies, based in Oakland California. Axis hosts an annual integrated dance workshop known as the Summer Intensive (SI) in which I participated. Additionally, I interviewed artistic director Judith Smith, other company members and Intensive participants

used personal participation, rather than participant observation, to signify not only the ways in which I was physically and emotionally involved in my project as a dancer but also my investment in it as a researcher. I introduced my research interest against the backdrop of the unexpectedness of dance and disability, the politics of the body and the anthropology of disability. I argued that anthropological scholarship lacks theoretically compelling approaches to understanding dance, disability and embodiment. I drew on agency and embodiment as conceptual tools to better understand the dancing body and made explicit my interest in the ways in which disabilities contribute, change, and open up a range of unseen artistic possibilities within the continuum of dance (Valentyn, 2012).

I explored the unexpectedness of disability in the performative space and suggested that it is this 'queering of space' that allows for the creation of interesting and innovative movement. I argued that disability not only creates new possibilities in dance but in choreography particularly. The vocabulary of movement is radically expanded, which allows choreographers to experiment with different bodies and modes of mobility to create interesting movements. I also explored the role of Contemporary dance and Contact Improvisation (CI) as pre-empting the development of integrated dance companies. Developed by Steve Paxton, CI is spontaneous movement during which contact is at all times maintained by two or more people. In this regard, I unpacked how embodiment is centralized in integrated dance companies, situated within a phenomenological framework and deeply informed by what disability means to individual participants. I suggested that the idea of being a "conscious dancer" becomes equally important when considering how you feel while you are doing certain dance movements. While feeling strong and graceful at one moment, you could feel weak or not in control in the next (Valentyn, 2012). These oppositions, referred to by Cooper Albright (1997: 57) as "fit and frail bodies" are not limited to dancers with disabilities, nor to dancers over a certain age. They are rather a constant negotiation that many, including myself, had to be aware of at all times.

Furthermore, I explored the creative possibilities that disability offers choreography as well as detailed the choreographic process within an integrated company. The notion of agency was introduced, which includes, but is not limited to, "making interesting choices", a concept which both dance companies, Remix and Axis value. Moreover, I suggested that agency is about honesty; understanding which movements are right for your body. As a dancer you take responsibility for your own body as well as the movements you choose. The ability to make interesting choices, honesty and taking responsibility for your body, are elements unique to

Remix and Axis and these elements, among others, are what makes integrated spaces such safe environments to dance in.

Finally, I considered the ways in which I engaged the visual aspects of my project while simultaneously exploring how photographs can be productive spaces of meaning making and interpretation. I argue that my responsibility as a researcher and dancer is to critically engage the visual aspects of my project. Through doing so, I, the researcher continually strive to understand the social relations and subjective agendas through which visual images are produced and the discourses through which they are made meaningful (Pink, 2001).

Negotiating difference

Building on the above, this research project explores notions of masculinity, specifically within integrated dance environments, and in relation to Contemporary dance. Through an ethnographic study, I endeavoured to capture the narratives of three professional disabled male dancers from different contexts and backgrounds. The phenomenological approach was selected in order to enhance understanding of my participants experiences, in an attempt to illuminate how these dancers negotiate and embody their masculinity in dance spaces. The nuances of masculinity, disability and dance are therefore interpreted through a phenomenological framework and seek to foreground the intricacies of negotiation and subjectivity. I am therefore particularly interested in how disabilities challenge normative ideas around dance, identity and masculinity. I argue the need to change limiting perceptions of hegemonic masculinity and the male dancer's body to advance the artistic medium of dance and allow for constructive dialogue around issues of access and inclusivity. Furthermore, like Roebuck (2001), I am interested in how contemporary dance works "contributes to the development of a more sensitive understanding of the ways in which dance articulates masculine identity" (Roebuck, 2001: 1). I therefore suggest that the notion of subjective masculinities, a theme that emerged from my data, provides a meaningful entry point into exploring the nuances of masculinity.

1.

Redefining dance. Redefining men

1.1 Introduction

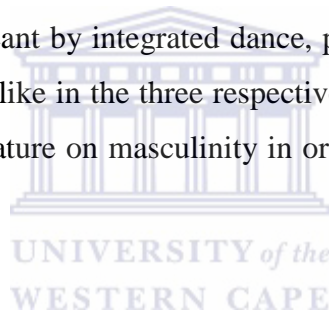
An increasing number of studies indicate an emerging interest in dance and masculinity (Roebuck, 2001). This being said, almost no literature exists which thoroughly examines notions of masculinity in the physically⁶ different able dancer, within the context of an integrated dance company. There is thus a theoretical gap in scholarship pertaining to masculinity and disability in dance. Existing scholarship on masculinity, disability and dance respectively, seldom bring these three themes into conversation with each other, missing opportunities to examine the nuances of masculinity. By using a gendered lens, notions of masculinity could be explored to better make sense of male dancing bodies within integrated dance environments. A focus on gender therefore allowed me to explore how notions of masculinity inform identity construction within these spaces.

The aim of this thesis was firstly to explore, in depth, the lived experiences of three professional disabled male dancers, in integrated dance companies. The focus was on the ways in which masculinity, disability and dance together inform the experiences of my participants, while remaining cognisant of their differing localities and realities. Notions of masculinity, and its consequent cultural meaning, tend to be context specific, this study therefore attempts to shed light on the ways in which masculinities are constructed in different spaces. This in turn advocates a more nuanced understanding of masculine identity, not only within dance spaces but also more broadly. I wish to make a contribution to existing scholarship on the topic, using lived experiences of my participants as the impetus of the study. Exploring this has significance for differently able dancers more generally, and differently able male dancers in particular; because of the ways in which gender norms are manifested in choreography and more interestingly, the ways in which this is potentially destabilized in integrated dance environments. I argue the need to challenge traditional representational practices in dance and the need to examine, in anthropology, the ways in which masculinity, disability and dance intersect, as almost no anthropological scholarship exists which addresses this issue. Like anthropologist Anna Aalten, whose work specifically looks at the dancer's body in relation to embodiment and phenomenology (Aalten, 2007, 2005), I employed the anthropological tradition of "focusing on the human subject as the

⁶ The words 'physically different', 'differently abled' and 'disabled' are used interchangeably

creator of his or her world” (Aalten, 1997: 44). As an anthropologist I am interested in gaining a better understanding of notions of masculinities as perceived, produced and experienced by differently able male dancers in integrated dance companies. Although other dance genres may offer fascinating insights, this study is limited to Western theatrical⁷ dance, with a particular focus on Contemporary Dance within the integrated dance environment.

Through face to face in-depth interviews, watching performances and rehearsals as well as less formal conversations, this project aimed to illuminate the lives of Marc Brew⁸ (Scotland), David Toole (England) and Zama Sonjica (South Africa) as disabled male dancers. In addition, I interviewed Adam Benjamin (England), a pioneer in integrated practice, dance practitioner and co-founder of Candoco, who planted the seed for professional integrated dance in South Africa. The link between my participants and their respective companies is explored later in the chapter. Below, I discuss the importance of understanding the visual in anthropology in an attempt to contextualize my methodological approach. Thereafter I explicate what is meant by integrated dance, providing a brief synopsis of what the integrated dance scene looks like in the three respective countries of my participants and review some of the existing literature on masculinity in order to provide a backdrop for this study.



2.1 Understanding the visual in anthropology

Before discussing dance within the context of Western theatrical settings, it is useful to understand the role of visual anthropology in examining social practices such as dance, over the years. Central to the discipline of anthropology is visuality, and the subsequent appreciation of visual representation. Although the discipline inherently values written ethnography, visual forms of representation have been slowly incorporated into ethnographic practice (Strong & Wilder, 2009). Early anthropological scholarship on dance focused on cultural demonstrations of movement, mostly associated with rituals, rites and ceremonies (Spencer, 1985: Kaepler, 1978). However, the crisis of representation (Strong & Wilder, 2009: Rhode, 1998) ushered in more critical ways of engaging visual practices and has called for more reflexive and re-developed approaches to visual ethnography. The discipline’s history of “Othering” provided the impetus for scholars like Rhode (1998) to engage in

⁷ Western theatrical dance includes dance genres commonly performed on the theatre stage such as ballet, modern and Contemporary dance. Due to integrated dance having developed as an offshoot of Contemporary dance, this study focuses on the experiences of disabled male dancers within professional integrated Contemporary dance companies

⁸ Full names will be used to introduce participants after which only their first names will be used

projects with the possibility of self-representation in which lived reality and experiences are accounted for. In turn, such projects shift the power relations characteristic of earlier modes of representation and instead, allow for more reflexivity and inter-subjectivity. The act of “seeing” is thus understood as being embedded in particular social, cultural and political contexts. Shifts in the discipline therefore facilitated changes in the way dance is understood and subsequently examined (Thomas, 2003). Anthropologists are now paying particular attention to dance ethnography within context (Thomas, 2003: 4). Anthropology consequently offers exciting ways of understanding the moving body in contemporary society. Pink (2001), calls for reflexive approaches to ethnography while simultaneously locating trends within broader theoretical shifts and discourse.

I suggest that ethnography should be understood as a practice and not a method. The use of visual practice took on new meaning for me while reviewing some photographs taken during my fieldwork with regard to my Honours project. This changed the power dynamic (and gaze) as I was not always the one taking the photographs but rather on the other side of the lens. Intricate power relations were therefore revealed and became rich terrain to explore in the context of visual ethnography.



Photograph taken with my camera by a friend during the trio which I, on the left, Adrienne (SI participant), in the middle and Joel (Axis company dancer), on the right, choreographed for the open showing during the SI

The above photograph was taken during the showing at the Axis Summer Intensive (SI), the workshop I participated in as part of my 2012 fieldwork. The SI lasted for a week and comprised three two-hour classes a day on technique, improvisation and composition. We were also asked to choreograph a piece which reflected themes explored in the classes such as balance, weight sharing, lines, repetition and shape. Not only was I a dancer and researcher

in the photograph, I was also in a wheelchair -a choreographic decision that I suggested. My relationship with the wheelchair, albeit temporary, changed from ambivalence to an attachment and deep appreciation for my new mobility. I refer to my experience in the wheelchair as a “new type of mobility” because, as explicated in other aspects of my research, dancers with disability have their own kind of mobility. In this sense mobility is not limited to having legs; rather, wheelchairs and other equipment provide dancers with different ways of moving. Below is an extract from my thesis detailing the ways in which I tried to make sense of the visual aspects of my work during the choreographic process:

In groups of three we had the opportunity to choreograph new work which we shared at the end of the week. The showing was open to friends and family of the participants as well as the larger Oakland community. Admittedly, even on the day of the performance, I had anxieties about dancing in the wheelchair and what being seen in the wheelchair meant. Although during the week I had become more comfortable with moving in the wheelchair, it was still only among SI participants. The performance was open to a larger audience and I was unsure whether my decision to dance in the wheelchair would offend those not participating in the Intensive. Moreover, this photograph, like any other, is an incomplete ‘snap shot’ of reality - alluding to the ways in which the visual can be taken out of context and calling for critical engagement which situates the visual appropriately (Edwards, 2011). Lastly, because this is a photograph of a choreographed performance it takes on a different meaning to capturing an ‘everyday’ social interaction and should be understood as such.

(Valentyn, 2012: 34)

Similarly, I recognized the importance of understanding the value of visuality in this project and continued to engage meaningfully with the visual aspects of my research. As an anthropologist, I value integrated dance highly for the possibilities it offers not only to anthropology, but other disciplines. This next section begins to explore what is meant by ‘integrated dance’ and offers some explanations of its development and value in existing⁹ inclusive dance communities globally.

⁹ The words integrated dance and inclusive dance/practice are used interchangeably

3.1 A glimpse into integrated dance

For me, that's the beauty of the disabled body – the disabled dancer doesn't let us get away with categorizing dance, it keeps breaking things, it keeps not doing what it's supposed to do.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

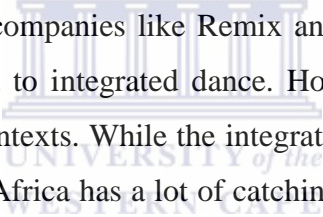
During my interview with Adam, we discussed a number of issues pertaining to dance and disability. More specific to a discussion on integrated dance, and in response to my question about the ways in which disability expands the choreographic possibilities in dance, he explicitly stated that disability destabilizes dance. The above quote speaks to the ways in which he sees disability as a means of rethinking which bodies occupy dance spaces. This in turn alludes to the fact that integrated dance more generally and disabled dancers in particular, are still considered anomalous. Similarly, Cooper Albright (1998) suggests that although we tend to be more familiar with the work of disabled writers, artists, and musicians, physically disabled dancers are seen as a contradiction. While conducting research for my Honours thesis, this became more apparent. I found that the visual takes on particular significance, because dance is such a visual mode of expression and dancers with disabilities are so visually unexpected: many people do not have a context within which to locate them. When I asked people to imagine someone, without legs dancing, they could not do so: audiences need to see it to believe it. According to Mitchell (2002) we are “seeing animals” and thus the social field takes on a particular visual character. Possibilities are consequently determined visually. Cooper Albright (1998) similarly argues that it is precisely this quality that makes dance visible within the representation itself. When we look at dance with disabled dancers, we are looking at choreography and disability, product and producer (Cooper Albright, 1998). Disrupting the image of the dancer as an ethereal, disembodied sylph, disabled dancers force the viewer to confront the cultural opposite of the classical body—the frail, material body. The visual availability of the body in dance makes it a unique form of cultural production, which is amplified in an environment like an integrated dance company, where such differently abled bodies interact, sometimes in very intimate ways (Cooper Albright, 1998). Thus for the audience who have never seen a dancer without legs, the moment of seeing him or her on stage allows for a radical moment of disrupting the visual cues of traditional dance, thereby ushering in new possibilities in seeing and subsequently, in imagining dancing bodies.

Having taken years to develop into what they are today, integrated companies are therefore the epitome of “the unexpected” in performative spaces. In a forum discussion about integrated dance, Axis founder and artistic director Judith Smith described a global dialogue in the early 90s about “what to call this work?” This was in response to increased awareness around integrated dance. Cooper Albright (1998) similarly discusses this with reference to Adam and the creation of Candoco, London’s first professional integrated company. She writes about how Adam felt uncomfortable with the term integration as that implied that there was already an existing norm, which people with disabilities needed to fit into. Rather, the work of Candoco was aimed at challenging and dismantling existing structures to make way for something entirely new. Eventually some consensus was reached about calling the work “integrated”, which Adam and others felt was more aligned with their philosophy, and thus efforts to professionalize this new movement began. However, many of the challenges of the 90s remain the challenges of today. Although the number of integrated companies has slowly increased over the years, only a few professional integrated companies remain globally and few universities or colleges offer a dance degree or training in integrated dance, adding to the problem. Also, funding is limited for integrated companies, a reflection of the marginalized status of many disabled communities.

My first engagement with integrated dance was in 2012 during fieldwork for my honours degree. I refer to this study, because it formed the basis on which I did my MA research, as indicated above. Having danced since the age of six, there were certain cultural codes that I had become accustomed to, for example needing to look like a dancer and being able to execute movements in a way that makes the movements look effortless - dancing with disabled dancers was not part of this cultural code. My experience with Remix was both exhilarating and terrifying: it forced me to rethink everything I thought I knew about dance. What follows is a journal extract from my last class with Remix that year:

We started off moving around the room and making eye contact with everyone that we passed, then eye contact became physical contact and eventually built up to two or three dancers maintaining contact for up to two minutes at any given time. The task was to continuously create movement while staying in physical contact with any part of another dancer’s body. There was a stage where four of us were moving in unison, there was a stage when Andile did beautiful lifts with me, Zama put me on his shoulders and did turns and Malcolm and I moved together while in his wheelchair. Zama was out of his wheelchair and Andile was in Zama’s

wheelchair. Every movement was experiment based and we all had the chance to play around with not only the bodies (and wheelchairs) of other dancers but also our own. It was very clear that we were dancing with different bodies or as Zama refers to it ‘differently abled’ bodies and not ‘disabled’ ones. At first this idea scared me [contact improvisation]; it seemed to come so naturally for everyone else while I was over-thinking all my movements. Only once I truly let go, could I feel how liberating the experience was. It’s not about pretty pictures, or lines, rather its allowing yourself to be vulnerable enough to try things which may not work. Not all lifts are successful and sometimes you fall out of your position, but that’s the point. I think being comfortable with the other dancers is also a very important part of contact improvisation; you also need to be very comfortable with yourself. I allowed Zama to carry my full weight instead of being concerned that I was too heavy for him or that I would hurt him, treating him like I would any other dancer. (Journal entry, 27 July 2012)



The experience of dancing with companies like Remix and Axis has changed me and I am grateful for having been exposed to integrated dance. However, integrated dance takes on different meanings in different contexts. While the integrated dance scene is well established in a country like England, South Africa has a lot of catching up to do. This being said, South African integrated dance company Remix has over the years collaborated with a number of international integrated companies. My study participants know each other and have to different extents worked together, either in South Africa, or another part of the world. In particular, David has on more than one occasion worked with Remix while Marc continues to choreograph for Axis. Adam, as stated in other sections, was responsible for kick-starting David’s dance career while also planting the seed for professional integrated dance in South Africa over a decade ago. There is thus a link between integrated dance projects, and practitioners, globally. In this next section I briefly look at integrated dance in the three countries that my participants work in. It may not be their home countries but it is where they are currently living and working as Inclusive dance practitioners.

3.2 SA to UK

Remix and Unmute (South Africa)

Remix was a contemporary dance company. I found out about it through a friend, Cilna Katzke, a local dance practitioner and choreographer. Cilna became one of my research participants due to her choreographic interest in challenging normative and traditional representations of dance. After doing an internet search of my own, I discovered that Remix offered open dance classes once a week at their resident venue, Hodgson Hall in Rondebosch. When I walked in on that first day I did not know what to expect, but I remember being warmly received which slightly put me at ease. The weeks that followed challenged me in often surprising ways. More than anything I had to become comfortable in my own skin, appreciating my own body before I could learn to appreciate someone else's "differently able" body, a term I first heard from Zama, another of my participants. I found the experience of dancing with Zama, the newest company member, to be one of the most liberating. For the first time I was moving with and being moved by someone with no lower body, and I was intrigued by his mobility despite not having legs. Each week thus allowed me to shed an extra layer of doubt: not about whether dancers with disabilities could really be called dancers, rather, self-doubt that I could after two years without dance training (and having a body which reflected it) still be called a dancer. Remix has taught me much about myself, but more importantly it has given me a renewed appreciation for dance that I had somehow lost along the way. Although the initial entry into the field was tricky at times, mostly due to personal issues around my body, the dancers always made me feel welcome. I can understand why Zama, in our first interview, referred to Remix as his second home and the dancers as family. In retrospect, I realise how important this trusting environment was for me to be able to shed those layers but also feel comfortable enough to fully participate in Contact Improvisation, a technique which often necessitates constant and sometimes intimate contact.

Unfortunately, Remix was forced to shut its doors due to lack of funding at the end of 2012. Since then, Remix dancer Zama, along with Andile Vellem, Nadine McKenzie and newcomer Themba Mbuli, have started their own integrated company, Unmute, also based in Cape Town. Unmute has been slowly gaining recognition and popularity after taking its first performance 'Unmute' to a number of festivals and theatres such as Artscape. The company's repertoire continues to grow and gain support in Cape Town and surrounding areas.

Candoco and Marc Brew Company (United Kingdom)

Integrated dance has its roots in the United Kingdom. From founding company Candoco in London to Marc Brew's more recently established company in Scotland, integrated dance has flourished here thanks to the dedicated work of practitioners and choreographers who are passionate about inclusive dance practice. In our interview, the co-founder of Candoco, Adam stated that it took a long time to get to this point and described a lot of the early work as 'condescending':

[T]here was integrated dance going on but most of it was in a kind of cocooned environment so that it was still being seen as "good work" but actually it wasn't good work. It was condescending, poorly conceived, it was riven with inequality and it had very little aesthetic or ethical integrity. So there were a couple of companies trying to do stuff. It wasn't like it wasn't there – it was there, people were trying but it was too cocooned in good intention and there wasn't enough real collaborative work.

Candoco was thus created in direct response to the lack of critical thinking at the time:

Well for us, it was Celeste Dandeker and myself, first of all we went and saw lots of work and because a lot of what we saw just didn't make sense. Yeah you can say it's great that people are doing something and making an effort but actually as mature artists we were completely turned off. And it was that more than anything that made us say someone has to take this to the next logical place which is that we apply the same criteria to this work than we do to any dance, we not in a place where we just sympathising. And it was that discussion that formed the driving force for Candoco.

Celeste Dandeker, who had trained at The Place with London Contemporary Dance Theatre, and Adam, who had come through his own professional training, were fairly critical of the integrated work that was being produced at the time. They were eager to create integrated work which, rather than be condescending, demanded the same criteria as other professional dance. Marc Brew Company in Scotland was created as an opportunity for founder and artistic director Marc Brew to express his choreographic interests:

I got to the point where I was dancing with other companies and I needed to create an opportunity for my voice to be heard with regard to my creative outlet and being

able to do the work that I wanted to do, work with who I wanted to work with. So with the Marc Brew Company it's very much about me producing the type of work that I want to produce and having the quality of work that I want to present.

Due to its well established tradition of integrated dance, the UK has a number of institutions offering dance programmes and support research on integrated dance. However, the creation and professionalization of these companies in different parts of the world has still not entirely placed dance and disability on the scholarly agenda, nor has it necessarily facilitated discussion around the participation of disabled male dancers. The next section considers literature on masculinity and disability respectively and draws attention to existing gaps in scholarship. Masculinity and disability have gained increasing interest in the social sciences over the past ten years. Research on disabled masculinity has shifted away from static understandings of both disability and masculinity, toward a more dynamic conception of the “articulation and interaction between the two social structures” (Shuttleworth et al, 2012: 186). This shift is partly due to changes within social science disciplines as well as the increased use of ethnography to study disabled men's lived experiences (Ibid: 186). In order to support existing literature on masculinity and disability, this section is accompanied by two distinct theoretical frameworks, masculinity and phenomenology. These frameworks work together to illuminate the connections between masculinity, disability and dance and offer a new way of conceptualising male dancing bodies. Furthermore, masculinity and phenomenology as theoretical frameworks draw attention to complexities and contradictions of the body as a site for meaning-making and interpretation.

4.1 Making sense of masculinity

The concept of masculinity can be considered a relatively recent construct (Connell, 2005: 68). Cultural productions of the concept of masculinity render it relational. Its meaning and associations are understood within a specific context and it needs to be recognized as being part of a bigger structure (Ibid: 71). In other words, masculinity does not exist in a vacuum or in isolation, nor is it fixed (Morrell, 1998). This being said, Connell (2005) argues the need to understand the “processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives” (Ibid: 71). It is thus a positional concept which is brought to life by the ways in which men and women engage the gender order, the practices that are made meaningful through this engagement and the effects of these practices experientially and culturally (Ibid:

71). Due to more nuanced appreciations of the complexity of masculinity, there has been a shift in understanding masculinity as multiple, compounded. Reference is thus made to masculinities rather than masculinity (Connell, 2014). However, Connell (2005) suggests recognizing the existence of multiple masculinities is only the first step. We need to go further and explore the numerous relations between these multiple masculinities. With specific reference to hegemonic masculinity, Connell (2005) argues that hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed or static character type (Ibid: 76). Rather, it is the masculinity that occupies the dominant position in a given pattern of gender relations, not stable but always contestable (Connell, 2005: 76). Therefore, as difficult as masculinity is to define, hegemonic masculinity can be understood as the structure of gender practices which seek to make explicit a dominant position of power (hegemony over women and hegemony over subordinate masculinities), referred to by Connell (2005) as “embodying a currently accepted strategy” (Ibid: 77). Because of its relational nature, one needs to consider other existing masculinities which, according to context, serve either to challenge or maintain hegemonic masculinity. There are thus particular gender relations of dominance and subordination amongst groups of men (Ibid: 78). Connell (2005) argues that in many parts of the world, heterosexual men dominate homosexual men, rendering homosexuality to a subordinate position. This subordination is not limited to stigma but rather manifests as a material practice. However, homosexual masculinity is not the only subordinated masculinity. Some heterosexual men are also “expelled from the circle of legitimacy” (Ibid: 79), reinforcing the problematic nature of distinct categories and calling into question notions of normative definitions of masculinity. This leads on to Connell’s discussion on complicity. Although most men benefit from the existence of hegemonic masculinity, many of them do not necessarily conform to the normative standards of hegemonic masculinity. It becomes clear that hegemonic masculinity is a cultural ideal which, Demetriou (2001: 342) argues, is continuously promoted by civil society through the production of archetypal masculinities.

4.2 Performing masculinity

The production of archetypal masculinities speaks not only to the social construct of masculinity, but also the ways in which masculinity needs to be performed in order for it to be legitimised. The body as the site of construction and performance of masculinity thus needs to comply with normative standards of masculinity in a given context (Lipenga, 2014).

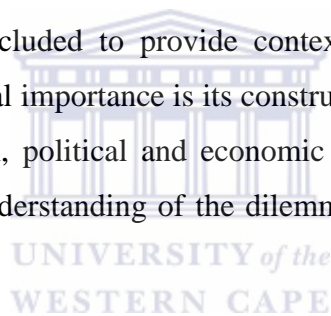
Doing hegemonic masculinity then would differ in different contexts and under different conditions. A critique of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is the dualism between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinity (Demetriou, 2001: 347). Demetriou argues that treating these two categories as distinct configurations of practice seeks to disassociate internal hegemony from external hegemony. He uses this critique as a means to introduce his theory of Masculine bloc, which unlike hegemonic masculinity, suggests a non-reified and non-dualistic understanding of masculine practice and power (Demetriou, 2001: 348). For Connell, hegemonic masculinity primarily comprises white, heterosexual, presumably middle class men, with exceptions (eg. black or homosexual men) seen as contradicting or challenging this hegemonic order. Although my study does not focus on sexuality, it is useful to begin to ask to what extent male dancers in countries like America and England are rejected for presumably challenging hegemonic masculinity. What about the male dancer is such a threat to this hegemonic order and why is this prejudice particularly prevalent in the West? What about the male dancer makes him an exception likely to neatly fit into Connell's category along with black or homosexual men? Considering masculinity only in hegemonic or non-hegemonic ways limits our understanding of the ways male dancers (which arguably form part of the black male and homosexual male category, which according to Connell contradicts this hegemonic masculinity) present new possibilities for being men. For Demetriou (2001), it is exactly this aspect of hybridity which makes the Masculine bloc dynamic and accessible over time and place. Drawing on the work of Demetriou (2001) offers potential to better understand how disabled male dancers negotiate their masculinity. It is therefore more useful for me to engage the theory of Masculine bloc than to think of masculinity only in hegemonic or non-hegemonic terms.

4.3 Masculinity in the South African context

Within the South African context, studies on masculinities have shifted from a focus on discourse to a focus on practice (Rosenkrantz Lindegaard, 2009). In other words, recent scholarship has become more interested in practices and behaviour that men *actually* engage in as opposed to what men *say* they engage in (Ibid). This distinction is important when considering that many of these studies are focused on violence or the culture of violence supposedly associated with South African men. Not acknowledging any difference between groups of men homogenises masculinity and reinforces notions of a shared culture of

violence (Ibid). Within the context of HIV and AIDS, Mfecane (2012) has argued that men in South Africa have generally been portrayed negatively due to their role in the spread of AIDS, particularly in terms of practising unsafe sex and gender-based violence. Mfecane (2012) argues that such portrayals reinforce perceptions of masculinity as static and disregard the ways masculinities are changing, particularly in terms of unemployment and the AIDS epidemic (Mfecane, 2012, 2). Ratele (2008), in turn, argues that in South Africa, a heterosexual, patriarchal, capitalist masculinity is the dominant (hegemonic) masculinity which most South African men aspire to. Lipenga (2014) maintains that the hegemonic masculinity model must be used with caution, especially in the South African context, due to the array of intersecting social influences. Morrell (2002) in his work entitled ‘Men, movements and gender transformations in South Africa’ similarly argues that any analysis of men and gender politics should be sensitive to different understandings of gender and location within the current gender order.

The preceding sections were included to provide context for further discussions around masculinity. What remains of vital importance is its constructed nature and the ways in which this construct is rooted in social, political and economic meaning. This then provides the backdrop for a more nuanced understanding of the dilemma of disabled masculinity further explored in the next section.



4.4 The dilemma of disabled masculinity

A much-cited point by those who study the intersection of gender and disability is that masculinity and disability are in conflict with each other because disability is associated with being dependent and helpless whereas masculinity is associated with being powerful and autonomous, thus creating a lived and embodied dilemma for disabled men.

(Shuttleworth, et al, 2012: 174)

The above quote is indicative of what Shuttleworth et al (2012: 175); refers to as the “competing cultural expectations of disability” and masculinity. Their article entitled ‘The dilemma of disabled masculinity’, considers how men negotiate and experience the ways in which these two social categories intersect by reviewing existing scholarship on disability

and masculinity. Similarly, Gerschik and Miller (2000: 125) argue that the image and reality of men with disabilities destabilises cultural beliefs about men's bodies and physical ability. What becomes clear is the existence of a masculinity that serves as the standard against which all other masculine behaviour and ideals are measured. Behaviour which deviates or challenges this standard is deemed problematic. Shuttleworth et al (2012) explain that, for Connell, hegemonic masculinity is culturally elevated and exists as a structure of dominance and oppression within the gender order. Also drawing on Connell's scholarship on masculinity and disability, Gerschick and Miller (2000) developed a typology of three types of relational responses to hegemonic masculinity termed the "Three R Framework". The framework constitutes reliance, reformulation, and rejection. Reliance involves a continued dependence on hegemonic masculine ideals in order for men to attain a sense of self. Reformulation implies the negotiation of hegemonic ideals in line with their limitations. Rejection entails the renunciation of hegemonic masculinity, formulating instead an alternate masculinity for themselves (Shuttleworth et al, 2012: 177).

According to Gerschick and Miller's study, men who relied on dominant conceptions of masculinity tended to internalize feelings of inadequacy, identifying themselves as the problem, rather than perceiving the social structure as problematic. This in turn perpetuates the gender order. Those men who reformulated masculine ideals did not challenge the gender order because they still understood their dilemma as a personal project, even though they distanced themselves from hegemonic masculinity. Gerschick and Miller argue that rejection offered the greatest opportunity for change linked to a socio-political model of disability, wherein disability and masculinity are understood to be socially constructed (Shuttleworth et al, 2012: 177). These studies are important because they highlight both the "insidious power and limitations of contemporary masculinity" (Gerschick and Miller, 2000: 135). With specific reference to their study, Gerschick and Miller stated that the gender practices of some of these men demonstrate alternative visions of masculinity, which are obscured but nonetheless available to men in [Western] culture (Gerschick and Miller, 2000: 135). Lipenga (2014) uses two texts from the autosomatography genre to examine the representation of disability by disabled black South African men. He specifically makes reference to the Three R Framework when analysing how the two narrators negotiate their masculinity within the post-apartheid South African context. In both instances the narrators engaged the reliance and reformulation models. This is clearly articulated when he states:

What emerges is not necessarily a novel model of masculinity, but rather a position that re-asserts the subject's belonging to the elite club, whilst also emphasising some normally marginal aspects of hegemonic masculinities. The ableist rejection of masculinity in connection to the disabled body is therefore on the limited grounds of the ideal masculine body, which hardly even exists. This entails that the denial of the disabled body within the realm of hegemonic masculinities is more a feature of ableist attitudes than anything else.

(Lipenga, 2014: 7)

Building on these “alternative visions of masculinity” available to men, Shuttleworth et al (2012: 189) suggest that existing scholarship on masculinity and disability has become more dynamic in the sense that researchers acknowledge the varying contexts and intersecting identities which may affect disabled men's sense of masculinity. This being said, what remains a conceptual problem is the continued emphasis on masculinity and disability as generic categories, “rather than on how masculinities intersect differently with various types of impairment” (Ibid: 188). What they mean by this is the need for researchers' continued exploration of intersectionality to better understand the range of bodily, cognitive, intellectual and behavioural impairments in their interactions with masculinities. They encourage a more explicit understanding of how context contributes to this dynamism (Ibid: 188, 189). Theorists like Merleau-Ponty would argue this as accounting for the materiality of existence. Phenomenology would therefore be a useful conceptual tool to enable thinking through masculinity and subsequently male dancing bodies.

5.1 Phenomenology: an embodied subjectivity

The individual body is the domain of phenomenological analysis as it studies the “lived” or embodied experiences people have of their bodies.

(Van Wolputte, 2004: 254)

Within the framework of a rigid subject-object relationship, where the subject is reduced to an object perceived purely in a socially constructed way, the agency of the subject is denied; the potential of the subject to move beyond, challenge and change the perception is not appreciated. Embodiment, alternatively, places the subjects in a somatic environment in which they are moving, challenging and engaging with the space (Valentyn, 2012). In terms

of post-structuralist discursive models, Gard (2006: 22) suggests that a possible consequence of bodies that exist only within discourse is that they assume passive and highly malleable forms. He thus agrees with Connell's (1995: 60) claim that theories which privilege discourse continue to adhere to the Cartesian split between body and mind, in turn making bodies objects of symbolic practices but not participants. Gard (2006: 21) goes on to argue that one of the most serious shortcomings of post-structuralist theories is the focus on discursive meaning, rather than the material experiences of embodied selves. Similarly, emphasising the body as the source of meaning, anthropologist Csordas (1990) suggested that, rather than being situated on the level of discourse, embodiment is situated on the level of lived experience. Embodiment is intrinsically part of our being-in-the-world and is consequently capable of collapsing the difference between subjective and objective (Ibid). While recognizing the important claims made by social constructionism and post-structuralist theories, I wish to incorporate a more rigorous and active conception of agency and embodied subjectivity. I thus acknowledge the tension between the *constructedness* and the *embodiedness* of the body but choose to foreground the material body as articulated through lived experiences of my participants. It is the experiences of embodied selves which Gard (2006) and Csordas (2004) allude to which interest me.

Foregrounding embodied subjectivity has significance for bodies in general, and disabled bodies in particular. This is due to dance requiring a certain level of physicality, which in turn requires us to think about what constitutes movement and more importantly, the creative possibilities inherent in all types of bodies for movement. Moreover, according to Gard (2006: 21), employing embodied subjectivity as a conceptual tool offers one of the most sophisticated resources for a better understanding subjectivity and identity construction. Embodied subjectivity can be further developed within the framework of phenomenology. Aalten suggests that the shift away from the body treated as object to an appreciation of bodily experience was facilitated by the turn to phenomenology, particularly the work of Merleau Ponty, in advocating embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology (Aalten, 2007: 111). Phenomenology is the study of how the world is perceived. It is a way of describing the world as we live in it (Merleau-Ponty, 2007). Phenomenology, as a philosophical approach, centralizes the body as an aspect of lived experience. Merleau-Ponty's work in particular, is interested in our 'being-in-the-world'. A large part of "being-in-the-world" includes an understanding of our somatic and perceptual senses (Cooper Albright, 2011: 8).

In this regard, for instance, Stein (1989) describes the relationship between touch and vision as an embodied one and refers to the experience of the living body's ability to feel as the "double given-ness of touch". This fusion of touching and being touched is a visible one. However, for Husserl, there is a touched-touching but not a see-seeing (Parviainen, 2002) - which Merleau-Ponty (2007), in turn, attempts to reconcile. Touch, in particular, has much to contribute to ways of knowing and experiencing what Marks (2008) refers to as the "material world". Touch is indeed a sense that brings that material world into and onto our bodies. For Merleau-Ponty (2007) this - ability to bring the material world into and onto our bodies- can be achieved through vision. Vision does not function in isolation from other senses, nor does it exist in a vacuum. Every time we are seeing, or perceiving something, it is acting on us with all senses, not just vision, but also the body. In this sense there is no clear divide between vision and the object being viewed. Instead, what is viewed becomes embodied and interpreted, a process made possible through the activation of all senses. Merleau-Ponty thus restores the parallelism between touch and vision.

Although Merleau-Ponty drew on Husserl's work, he also departed from it in a number of ways. Most relevant to this study is how Husserl focused on describing the lived world from the viewpoint of a detached observer while Merleau-Ponty was interested in ways of being in the world. His work therefore was less infused with transcendental qualities and more grounded in the material existence, a more corporal engagement (Pakes, 2011: 35). Merleau-Ponty's work therefore, more than Husserl, is relevant to dance studies and my topic in particular. Merleau-Ponty thus understands the reality of our existence by recognizing that our perception is interactive with the world (Cooper-Albright, 2011: 8). He thus calls for experiencing the materiality of existence as opposed to just the consciousness of it. Our thoughts derive from our bodily experiences. This reasoning breaks away from the elevation of the mind over the body. Phenomenological philosophy consequently involves both object and subject, perceiver and perceived (Hughes, 2005). Thus, like Connell (1995), phenomenology tries to problematize a strict divide between subject and object. It is understood that body and mind cannot be neatly separated but rather, are constantly informing each other. Similarly, Aalten (2007) argues that the phenomenological approach holds much promise for the study of dancers, given the extent to which their work is bound up with their bodies. I hope to shed light on the ways in which the body is bound up with notions of identity, masculinity, ability and disability in an attempt to enhance further discussion on the disabled male dancer.

Chapter Two entitled ‘A new frontier’ explores my methodological approach, particularly foregrounding the phenomenological and embodied nature of the study. While Chapter Three historicises and problematises the participation of men in dance in the West, Chapter Four begins to piece together the fragmented history of theatre dance in South Africa. Chapter Five entitled ‘Subjective masculinities’ begins to explore the lived experiences of my participants, foregrounding the intricacies of negotiation and subjectivity in identity construction. Lastly, Chapter Six offers concluding thoughts for the ways in which we can begin to better make sense of the nuances of the differently able male dancer.



2.

A new frontier

1.1 Introduction

Little research has been done on masculinity and disability in Contemporary dance - either globally or, more importantly to this study, locally. By foregrounding masculinity, this study suggests that there is a need to challenge traditional representational practices in dance, calling into question the ways in which masculinities are produced, reproduced and maintained in these spaces. In many ways this study pushes existing boundaries around limiting conceptualisations of masculinity. By acknowledging the ways in which male dancers have been doing masculinity for the last few decades, it helps to forge new insights which in turn, create new frontiers. Chapter two details my methodological approach and research sites. I include profiles for each of my participants in an attempt to contextualize their narratives and experiences. I consider the implications of an ethnographic study and begin to explore how this approach can enhance future studies of this nature. Lastly, I consider two dance conferences that I attended in June and July respectively. Presenting papers at both conferences was for me a way of venturing into a new frontier and advocating for inclusive dance practice and scholarship both locally and globally.

2.1 The method to my madness

My approach is qualitative as it seeks to explore lived experiences around masculinity and disability in Contemporary dance through the use of a mixed-method, ethnographic study. This study employs a phenomenological approach. It is situated within a framework of personal perspective and subjectivity and is focused on interpretation (Saenz, Bukoski, Lu and Rodriguez, 2013:9). The phenomenological approach was selected in order to enhance understanding of the experiences of my participants in an attempt to illuminate how they negotiate and embody their masculinity in dance spaces. This approach, of using the phenomenological lens, is significant and made meaningful by focusing on the “lived experiences of social and psychological phenomena shared by participants” (Saenz, Bukoski, Lu and Rodriguez, 2013:9). By conducting face-to-face, in-depth interviews with my key study participants, as well as with a range of people involved in dance and dance-making, watching performances and rehearsals, through less formal conversations, spending time with

dancers and participation in conference activities, this project aimed to particularly illuminate the lives of Marc Brew (Scotland), David Toole (England) and Zama Sonjica (South Africa) as professional, disabled male dancers. In addition, I had the privilege of interviewing a pioneer in inclusive practice, dance practitioner, choreographer and co-founder of Candoco Adam Benjamin, who first planted the seed of professional integrated dance in South Africa.

I felt a strong need to conduct an ethnographic study, which for me meant travelling to Wales and England to conduct personal interviews and observe my participants in their respective dance spaces. Moreover, it was an opportunity for me to engage with my participants in an invaluable way. I was able to learn more about them as individuals, not just as performers or choreographers. It should be noted that apart from the UK, interviews were also conducted in Cape Town as well as another South African city, Johannesburg. Due to the nature of my topic, data could not merely be collected from books and online sources. Rather, interviews had to be arranged well in advance, flights and accommodation had to be booked (and paid for in advance) and communication with my respective participants had to accommodate their changing schedules. I made use of additional sources like video footage, photographs, observations, notes, pamphlets, posters, performances, rehearsals, informal conversations, participation and in one instance archival material. Over the past year, engaging with my participants via email, or when in South Africa telephonically, has enabled me to maintain relationships – with promising collaborations on the horizon.

Below I provide profiles for each dancer; I also detail my fieldwork experience (which includes presenting papers at two dance conferences) in an attempt to more clearly depict the ethnographic and embodied nature of the study.

2.1.1 Marc Brew

I suppose I just tagged along to dance class and enjoyed it. Before I knew it I was choreographing on my fellow students during lunch breaks.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

Born in New South Wales Australia, Marc started dancing when he was quite young. He was very active as a child, involved in running, swimming and gymnastics, but he soon fell in love with dance. At the age of 11 he left home to study dance in Melbourne. Before

completing his studies he was given the opportunity to do some dance work in South Africa. It was there where he had the car accident which resulted in his paralysis. Only a few years later - while in the United States - did he meet and start dancing with another wheelchair user who was a trained dancer. He worked with Infinity Dance Theatre based in New York for a while, after which he found out more about other dance companies in England, like Candoco. After a few years of dancing and touring with Candoco, Marc decided it was time to begin his own company and subsequently the Marc Brew Company was created. He is currently based in Glasgow, Scotland but continues to commission work for companies like Axis in other parts of the world. In 2015 Marc was brought in to facilitate the well-known Axis Summer Intensive (SI) in Oakland, California.

Marc and I met in Wales where he was directing a dance production called Stuck in the Mud. The production formed part of the annual Llandudno Arts Festival and featured dancers from Ballet Cymru, a professional ballet company based in Cymru, G dance (Community Cast) and two freelance dancers, one of whom had been part of Axis for a few years. Stuck in the Mud comprised several vignettes, taking the audience on a journey around the town. The performances all took place in public spaces such as the train station and art gallery. Marc wanted to get people who were stuck in a certain way of thinking about dance to experience new ways of understanding dance and dancing bodies, both in relation to previous conceptions of dance and dance in public spaces.

I was fortunate to spend a week with Marc and the cast. I sat in on rehearsals, I engaged in conversation with the dancers, I conducted an in-depth interview with Marc; I even participated in a ballet class. Additionally, I was able to watch, record and photograph the performances. I also volunteered to assist when needed. Spending so much time with Marc and being able to closely observe rehearsals was a wonderful opportunity to immerse myself in the research. It gave me better insight into his creative processes and helped me to connect with the content of the performances in a more profound way. More than anything, it allowed me to better understand his dance philosophy as he opened up to me about his life experiences, which included but were not limited to dance. I could therefore more meaningfully make sense of certain choreographic choices, like the choice to cross-dress dancers in one of his pieces. In this instance his desire to challenge conventional gender norms manifested in a female dancer dressed in a tuxedo and a male dancer in a wedding dress. This speaks to Marc's broader interest in disrupting existing representational structures in dance through movement as well as costumes.

My discussions with Ballet Cymru dancers were also illuminating and allowed me to think about ways in which ballet differs from Contemporary dance generally and integrated dance in particular:

It was interesting having these conversations [about integrated dance] with ballet dancers who seemed interested but are not necessarily engaged in integrated dance apart from 'Stuck in the Mud'. Ballet as a genre is new to inclusive dance, made evident by a different kind of consciousness around movement and bodies, differing from Axis and Remix. Thus while the genre is progressing there is still much to be done in terms of changing audience and dancers' mind-sets. On the one hand Ballet Cymru includes dancers with disabilities which makes it more inclusive (arguably, this is because of Marc as artistic director of the production more so than from the side of the company). On the other hand integrated dance, and its accompanying principals, is not necessarily an underpinning philosophy embraced by the ballet dancers. Nor do they necessarily share a consciousness of their bodies and the bodies of others in the ways that Axis and Remix dancers do. These companies [Axis and Remix] encourage a consciousness of your body and the ways that you inhabit your body, not only as a dancer, but also as a holistic being.

(Journal entry, 17 September, 2014)

Similarly, watching the technique classes in the mornings allowed me to relive my participation in integrated dance during my honours research with Remix and Axis, reminding me how even simple things like warming-up can speak to dance conventions and cultural codes – often taken for granted:

This was interesting to watch as the ballet company members tended to do more of a traditional ballet warm up which usually includes excessive stretching. The freelance dancers however, (Alice who is in a wheelchair and Indra who is partially blind) gravitated towards warm ups resembling those done with Axis which tended to be more conscious of your body and focused on being present in your body: silently sitting and focusing on breathing rather than only doing more typical stretching movements.

(Journal entry, 18 September, 2014)

More specific to my own study on masculinity, Ballet Cymru consists of nine dancers, five of whom are male. They are strong and athletic in build. Questions around how the athleticism and power of the male body is challenged by dance, disability and heteronormativity can be raised. None of the male dancers have a disability; in fact, none of the company members have a disability, once again speaking to the ways in which classical ballet, as a genre, still needs to progress in terms of inclusion.

2.1.2 Zama Sonjica

I never danced before; I was never even introduced to *this* kind of dancing. Like for instance I am a traditional person, so I used to dance traditionally [laughs], so I never knew that there was this kind of dancing.

(Zama Sonjica, June 2012)

Born and raised in South Africa, Zama never imagined himself as a dancer. Growing up in the townships of Cape Town, he was never exposed to the type of dancing that has now become his career. In fact, his friends and family are still unsure about what it is that he does. Born with his disability, Zama became accustomed to his way of life and was always up for trying new things. He accompanied his friend to auditions that Remix was holding. His initial intention was to merely observe. Instead, he became involved, participated and a few weeks later joined the company. He was, at the time, the newest member and enjoyed the challenge of learning how to dance. After Remix had to shut its doors due to financial reasons, Zama was one of the dancers who was involved in creating the new company Unmute, also based in Cape Town. Zama is also involved in other projects, most recently a production by Underground Dance Theatre, which toured to the KKNK festival earlier this year.

The first time I interviewed Zama, it was at Remix's resident dance space in Rondebosch during rehearsals for their latest production. We later met at the Artscape theatre where he was rehearsing with fellow Unmute cast members. I have interacted with Zama on a number of occasions – two in-depth interviews and discussions after a number of their Remix performances – so I felt confident during the interview. We sat comfortably in one of the studios and were able to talk freely about his experience as a differently abled male dancer.

2.1.3 David Toole

I did the first day and it eventually took me about half a day to be involved, I was very sceptical but once I let myself get involved I quite liked the idea.

(David Toole, September 2014)

David too never imagined himself dancing as a career. Born in England, he had been working as a postman for nine years when the opportunity presented itself. Candoco hosted a workshop and he decided to join out of curiosity. Shortly after the initial workshop, Candoco did some work in Leeds, which happened to be David's home town. He became involved more regularly and the company choreographed a piece which later went on tour. Adam Benjamin managed to secure funding for David to move to London and study dance at renowned school Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. After seven years of dancing with Candoco, David moved onto other things. He is currently dancing with StopGap, an integrated company in Surrey. David has worked with both Axis and Remix in the past as well as with Lloyd Newson on a number of projects, including 'The cost of living' a critically acclaimed dance film tackling issues of identity, gender and sexuality.

My interview with David took place in Farnham, about four hours and three station changes away from where I was staying at the time. After getting hopelessly lost, I eventually found the church hall where David and the rest of the Stopgap cast were having class. I felt particularly anxious about this interview as there was a mix-up with dates¹⁰ and cities. I also had never met David before, thus walking into their rather private rehearsal space felt intrusive. Feelings of being the nosy researcher started to emerge. I made the decision to be as discreet as possible, hoping that if I sat still enough, they would forget that I was there. Of course that did not happen, and as it turned out, it did not need to. During one of the breaks David took a moment to greet me and introduce me to the rest of the company members. Everyone smiled their tired dancer smiles, some even reached out a hand. My initial observations were simple: number of dancers, men to women ratio and so forth. After some time, I was able to unpack what was unfolding before me in more detail. For instance, I noted in my field notes that in terms of exercises, the movements did not seem necessarily geared towards David's abilities; rather there were a lot of movements involving legs. This is perhaps the result of only having one physically disabled dancer – Chris; the other differently

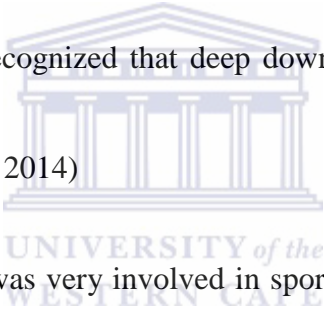
¹⁰ Originally I was meant to interview David in London during their performance week but a miscommunication lead to us having to reschedule

able dancer has Down syndrome. David's movements were all upper body and included a lot of turns and lifts out of the chair. About an hour later, the rehearsal for their newest production started. Starting to feel a bit more comfortable, I edged closer, until eventually I was on the floor, in the same space as the rest of the dancers. I even felt confident enough to ask if I could record the duet with David and artistic director Lucy Bennett. After the rehearsal, David and I strolled to another location to do the interview – this gave us a bit more time to talk and get to know one another. Although the place was a bit noisy, I managed to get through the interview. Once again I was alerted to the sensitive nature of conducting an interview. Everything from wheelchair accessible buildings to our positions and postures while talking became important because of the power relations involved and the potential it has to effect interactions.

2.1.4 Adam Benjamin

In the back of my mind I recognized that deep down I was probably more of an artist than an athlete.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)



Adam was born in England and was very involved in sports, athletics and martial arts when he grew up. An awareness of his body revealed that he was more of an artist than an athlete, facilitating his transition to dance. His interest in Contact Improvisation allowed him to experiment with new ideas and enhanced his own dance practice. Together with Celeste Dandekar, he founded the integrated dance company Candoco, one of the first companies for disabled and non-disabled dancers. He was involved with Candoco as director and choreographer for a number of years, establishing both the company and himself. He is known as a pioneer in inclusive practice, dance practitioner and choreographer. Adam was also founder of Tshwaragano, the in Touch Integrated Dance Project out of which Remix grew in 2000. He went on to perform with the all men dance troupe '5 Men Dancing' founded by Thomas Mettler. Currently, Adam teaches dance courses at Plymouth University and continues to be involved in dance works which address social issues. I met with Adam in his office in the new performing arts building on Plymouth campus. We were able to tour the new building, which as it stands, is one of the most accessible buildings in England, built largely due to Adam's efforts.

The next section details two dance conferences that I attended this year. Presenting papers at both conferences was for me a way of venturing into a new frontier and advocating for inclusive dance practice and scholarship both locally and globally.

3.1 Conferences: confrontations and contradictions

In June 2015 I was fortunate to attend and present a paper at the joint Society of Dance History Scholars (SDHS) and Congress of Research in Dance (CORD) dance advocacy conference in Athens, Greece. I found out about the conference in 2014 through SDHS chair, Ann Cooper Albright. The significance of hosting the conference in Greece, a country hit especially hard by the global financial crisis, was to affirm dance as scholarly endeavour and professional occupation as well as to support the local dance community in Athens. In addition to Ann Cooper Albright, other renowned dance scholars such as Ramsey Burt, Susan Foster, Jenifer Fisher and Janet O'Shea were among those in attendance. The conference took place at the beautiful Hellenic Centre of the International Theatre Institute between 4-7 June and comprised presentations, plenary discussions, workshops and dance classes. The conference theme was 'Dance Advocacy in the Age of Austerity' with discussions around how local exchanges operate within a global economy. The following questions were of particular significance: how different countries allocate value to the labour of dance, and whether dance scholarship can increase that value. There was also emphasis on the kinds of dances crafted in the midst of shrinking resources and the ways in which lack of governmental support compels dance makers to devise new approaches to movement composition and dance performance (www.athensisdancing2015.com). Lack of governmental support for the arts in Greece and other parts of Europe (and arguably the world) were of interest, given that a similar situation exists in South Africa (see Chapter 4:3.1 and 5.2). Other points of importance for me were around the continued need for critical dance scholarship, cognisant of different localities and realities as well as the global interest in South African¹¹ dancers and choreographers. Also of import, given the nature of my research, were observations regarding male involvement within the conference at large. There seemed to be a lack of male participation in terms of presenters, participants, moderators and organizers, reflecting the marginalized status of male dancers and practitioners in Europe.

¹¹ There were a number of international presenters researching the likes of Mamela Nyamza, Gerard Samuel, Jay Pather and Dada Masilo to name a few

To bring the conversation back to South African soil, I was fortunate to also attend and present a paper at Confluences 8, the eighth dance conference hosted by the University of Cape Town Dance School between the 16th-18th July. The conference theme was Negotiating Contemporary Dance in Africa. Confluences 8 attracted four attendees from the SDHS/CORD Athens conference – suggesting that local conferences of this nature not only have an international appeal but also that those across our borders are interested in grappling with notions of who and what Africa is and how this Africa should be represented in dance. Topics on the agenda were therefore not surprisingly around representation, identity and politics – all loaded terms in any given discourse but particularly pertinent when discussed in the context of the moving body. While in Athens, the emphasis was on the value of dance and dance scholarship in the midst of the shrinking economy, Confluences 8 brought issues of racial stereotypes, voyeurism, power, privilege, responsibility and expectations sharply into focus. These issues were brought to light by various examples by South African dancers and practitioners. Most apt in this discussion was a comment made by renowned local dancer and choreographer Mamela Nyamza. She stated that even though she has been trained as a classical ballet dancer and has toured all over the world, she has never been asked to choreograph for a South African ballet company, saying “*They don’t trust us to teach ballet*”. Imaginations around which bodies occupy which spaces therefore remains a reality and for many continue to hinder professional development of the art form. Similarly, the differently abled dancer, as will be argued in other parts of this thesis, continues to be marginalized. I was disappointed to be the only presenter speaking about integrated dance at the conference, additionally, integrated practice did not form part of any discussions about Contemporary dance in the African context. This would have been the ideal space to examine integrated dance (and its future) and have Unmute perform in one of the evening performance slots. Dance and disability not being on the agenda of one of South Africa’s major dance conferences confirms its marginalized status and the need to further engage in scholarship in this regard.

4.1 Ethics, Self-reflexivity and Anticipated Problems

In order to conduct sound ethical research in practice and govern behaviour during the research process, anthropology, like most disciplines in research, is guided by a set of codes and rules which must be adhered to. In South Africa, these are in the form of Anthropology Southern Africa (ASnA) and in this instance, The University of the Western Cape Ethics Committee, both of which were considered for this study respectively.

All of my participants were over the age of 18. My research was conducted ethically in that participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and be fully informed of the goals of the research prior to their participation. This was done via a consent form in which it was explained that participation is voluntary and that participants may withdraw from the research process at any point. The consent form also guaranteed that all the data will be kept confidential and that participants' identities will remain anonymous. Moreover, the use of an information sheet was provided to ensure that these individuals have sufficient information regarding the aims, objectives and general procedures of this study. The fact that the dancers occupy an already public space, the stage, during performances addresses some of the possible ethical concerns around privacy. Considerations pertaining to self-reflexivity and anticipated problems are further explored below.

Anthropology places particular emphasis on reflexivity. This implies that an anthropological researcher is very aware of how one's position as a researcher affects one's research. This pertains to gender, class, religion, age and many other categories that carry social meaning. Going into the study, anticipated problems included language as I intended to conduct the interviews in English. This was something that I only really struggled with while interviewing Zama. It was not so much that he did not understand me; there are just certain expressions and language conventions that you take for granted when conversing with people who share the same first language for example, certain idiomatic expressions as well as the ease with which you can communicate. Another anticipated problem was gender - as I thought the male participants may not feel comfortable to fully disclose information - especially with my focus on masculinity. I did not find this to be an issue; rather my interest in masculinity intrigued my participants. Lastly, the fact that I was interviewing people with a disability also came up as another possible sensitive concern. I think the fact that I have conducted research with disabled dancers before was definitely an advantage but I still needed to remain mindful of potential problems that may arise such as different cultural norms as it was my first time conducting research in England and Wales.

In this chapter, I have suggested that the study of masculinity, dance and disability pushes existing boundaries around limiting conceptualisations of masculinity, forging a new frontier, similar to the ways in which male dancers have been doing for the last few decades. I outlined my study as qualitative as it sought to explore lived experiences around masculinity and disability in Contemporary dance through the use of a multi-site, mixed-method ethnographic study. Within the study, I employed a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was selected in order to enhance understanding of my participants in an attempt to illuminate how my participants negotiate and embody their masculinity in dance spaces. I provided profiles for each dancer, also detailing my fieldwork experience in an attempt to more clearly depict the ethnographic and embodied nature of the study after which I ended the chapter with a section on ethics, self-reflexivity and anticipated problems.



3.

Problematizing the male dancer

1.1 Introduction

Although in some parts of the world dance for men is a usual and even highly valued cultural and social practice (Fisher and Shay 2009), in dominant Western paradigms theatrical dance training and the social meanings associated with it have traditionally been perceived as a female activity and art form (Risner, 2009: 6). This is articulated by Roebuck (2001: vii) with reference to male ballet dancers:

Within the binary codes of Western culture, any man who pursues a career in dance automatically reflects an investment in a feminine economy. In contrast, men involved in other performance arts such as theatre and opera, as well as those who take to the concert platform, are not subject to the same stigma. Theatre dance performance remains unique in this sense, for its female legacy and association with physical spectacle are seen as a betrayal of what it means to be a man. (vii)

Even though strides have been made in attempts to make dance more inclusive the male dancer remains a minority figure in a predominantly female arena (Roebuck, 2001: Gard, 2006). There are a number of reasons for this. Roebuck alludes to one when he speaks of an automatic “investment in a feminine economy” (vii). Dance has thus been produced and maintained as an activity which favours the female body, limiting participation for both men and women¹². Risner (2009: 6, 7) further argues that when men have been encouraged to participate it has historically involved the idealization of noteworthy heterosexual male dancers such as Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire, with a focus on masculine comparisons between presumably heterosexual male athletes and male dancers. Moreover, participation of male dancers has been predicated on minimizing or ignoring the significant population of gay men in dance, in order to encourage greater involvement by heterosexual men. Regarding the idealization of heterosexual male dancers, Fisher (2009: 35) suggests that conflating heterosexuality with stereotypes of ‘manliness’ is perhaps a way to bolster the reputation of ballet men in general. In ‘The Male Dancer’, Burt (2007) comprehensively explores the cultural, social, political and economic history of masculine representation in dance. He focuses specifically on the Western construction of prejudice toward male dancers. He also

¹² Female dancers may not want to be associated with a practice which despite certain efforts, continues to exclude certain bodies

examines the homophobia that continues to surround gay as well as straight men in dance (Risner, 2009: 47). Scholars have thus started examining male dancers and the ways in which the male dancing body challenges dominant discourses of masculinity and gendered bodies (Risner, 2009: 7). Moreover, this research has significance for the ways we understand sexual orientation, privilege and the body more generally (Risner, 2009: 57). In order to better understand social attitudes and perceptions about boys and men involved in dance, it is important to locate the discussion within broader historical and cultural contexts (Owen, 2014). The next section begins to situate male dancers in an attempt to better understand how time and place shape the perception and participation of men in dance.

***2.1 “It’s not just poofs Dad. Some ballet dancers are as fit as athletes. What about that Wayne Sleep? He was a ballet dancer”
(Billy Elliot, 2000)***

The above quote is an extract from the well-regarded English movie Billy Elliot, which is set against the backdrop of the 1984 British miners’ strike. In his work, Owen (2014) uses the movie to discuss the crisis of masculinity in post-industrial England. Arguably reflecting a time of industrial decline and economic instability, the movie seeks to foreground the crisis in masculinity that men were experiencing because they were no longer able to provide for their families. Billy’s father is portrayed as experiencing a crisis in masculinity at the thought of his son taking ballet classes. The quote forms part of the conversation between Billy and his father, who discovers that Billy is taking ballet classes. His father is furious and insists that ballet is “not for boys”. Billy disagrees and refers to well-known British personality Wayne Sleep, which only makes his father angrier. Dance for men was therefore, as Adam Benjamin put it in our interview, “not part of the English psyche”. This prevailing attitude may have encouraged the shift of male dancers towards Modern dance, which from around 1891 was considered a more experimental dance genre and one in which choreographers could create a space for male bodies. Billy’s comparison between dancers and athletes echoed the need for socially accepted, predominant male figures in dance. I explore this in more detail in the next section. What follows is a look at two notable choreographers whose work to a large extent inspired parts of my own study. Their work is informed by particular moments in time and represent different understandings of the male dancing body.

2.2 To be (manly) or not to be (manly), that is the question

There are a number of choreographers whose work could be considered when writing about notions of masculinity in dance. For purposes of this study, I will focus on the work of Ted Shawn and Lloyd Newson. These choreographers shed light on the ways in which masculinity can be articulated through dance, and the implications that this has for broader conceptualizations of masculinity.

Ted Shawn was born and raised in Kansas City. During his third year at university as a theology student, he contracted diphtheria, which among other things caused temporary paralysis. To rebuild his stamina and physical strength he took dance lessons, which in turn changed the course of his career (Foulkes, 2002). In 1915 Shawn went on to co-found the Denishawn Dance Company. He predicted changes in dance as early as the 1920s. Shawn was different from other white modern dancers of the time. By and large, they strongly advocated racial justice because – “modern dance at this time revealed prejudice against African Americans, immigrants and the working class” (Foulkes, 2009: 79). Shawn’s quest, rather, was to bolster the artistic value of modern dance as informed from his particular place in society, as a white, middle class, Christian male. He and other leading choreographers of the time recognized the need for professional male dancers, as articulated by Foulkes (2002):

As gay predominantly white men, they advocated for more men in modern dance as a way in which to legitimize a predominantly female art form in the predominantly male arts world seething with the innovations of modernism. Shawn’s notion of dance for men relied on an emboldened masculinity. In his effort to challenge the prevalent link of dancing and effeminacy and to counter the dominance of women in the dancing field, he upheld distinctive, essential differences between men and women and heralded masculine traits.

(Foulkes, 2012: 80)

What becomes clear is that through his work, Shawn wanted to challenge notions of male dancers as “investing in a feminine economy”. He went on to found his all-male dance company, ‘Shawn and His Men Dancers’. They toured around the US during a time when consciousness around white male middle-class identity was heightened (Fisher and Shay, 2009: 95). According to Au (1998: 96), the work of the company was committed to proving that dancing was a highly masculine activity. To diminish the association of male dancers with effeminacy, Shawn preferred working with athletes who had little if any dance training.

He found their movements and physique to be more traditionally masculine. The dancers wore little, if any, clothing during rehearsals and certain performances, to enable every muscle in the body to be seen working, to ensure that the dancing bodies were visibly available and to prevent any association with the female dancing body. This however, did not arouse homosexual imagery:

Hyper-masculinity of the dance troupe diminished the homosexual implications of the bare bodies because it did not fit into the societal framework of homosexuality as fey, effeminate inversion.

(Foulkes, 2002: 94)

This being said, Shawn was still in an era governed by conservative, 19th century Christian doctrine, an American ideal which held together cultural identity. He therefore had to operate within this framework in order to gain acceptance by the dance community, and to establish male Modern dance within the heteronormative masculine ideals of the time. Shawn's desire to legitimise male dancers through hyper-masculinity and association with sport has a lingering legacy. In our interview, UK-based dance practitioner and choreographer Marc Brew discussed the emerging comparison between dancers and athletes, a shift undoubtedly influenced by Shawn and similar dance-makers of his time:

But there was also this shift as well when there was this comparison of male dancers with footballers and that level of fitness so there was this comparison that started happening between sport and dance...and the male dancers always come out stronger, more flexible, more agile probably have more power. They can jump higher, more partnering skills. Yeah, but you know footballers gets this higher stature, I suppose celebratism. Yeah, so there were those relationships and connections that were starting to be made which I think helped dance and men getting into dance more.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

In the chapter entitled 'Is dance a Man's sport too?', Keefe (2009) explicitly argues that within the American context the move toward a more athletic aesthetic served to disrupt persisting anxieties concerning the effeminacy of male dancers (Fisher & Shay, 2009). US choreographers have at times drawn inspiration from athletes and their abilities in an attempt to validate dancers on the concert stage. In these instances, the comparisons between dance

and sport seek to reinforce ideas about dance being an athletic endeavour which further seeks to validate the participation of men. An important consideration then is the grounds on which these comparisons are made. Keefe (2009: 92) speaks of dance and sport as embodied practices in which the strength, grace, agility, technique, performance and endurance are admired by an audience. Dyck and Archetti (2003) in their book entitled 'Sport, dance and embodied identity' write:

Bringing together sport and dance as ethnographically distinctive but analytically commensurable forms of body culture and social practice represents a departure from previous ways of thinking about these two fields within anthropology and other disciplines. Sport and dance are conventionally viewed in the West as residing within separate and even opposed cultural realms. Yet they share not only a common status as techniques of the body (Mauss, 1973), but also a vital capacity to express and reformulate identities and meanings through their practised movements and scripted forms. Sport and dance spark widespread participation, critical appreciation and endless interpretation by performers and their audience. Indeed, the embodied practices of athletes and dancers afford not merely pleasure and entertainment but powerful means for celebrating existing social arrangements and cultural ideals or for imagining and advocating new ones.

(Dyck and Archetti, 2003: 3)

In his book "Men who dance", Gard (2006) uses the example of the children's' storybook "Jump", to illustrate the perceptively innocent ways in which boys in dance are normalised. In the story, the young boy is only accepted as a dancer because "dance emerges as a primarily athletic activity" (44). His desire to jump is deemed appropriate because of the ways in which it mirrors the strength and prowess of athletes. The fact that the boy excels in jumping also legitimises his participation in dance, garnering support from peers and family. Gard therefore argues that in "Jump", dance for the male child is only acceptable when it is "predicated on developing athletic skills or is in some way connected to sport" (44). Similarly, in his article entitled "No thanks! I'm too busy rehearsing masculinity": Choreophobia in Boys' Dance Culture, Edward (2010) describes his experience of what he terms "choreophobia". As a boy participating in dance class he was not only an anomaly among his peers; he also had to contend with teachers explicitly rejecting any association

between dance and masculinity. Instead, sport and sportsmen were used as a means to legitimise creative movement:

Boys would be asked to align their 'creative movement' with some favourable male sports personality to whom they could relate. They were reluctant to participate in dance making, but they could express themselves physically and creatively by assimilating their movement material through space on this sports personality pretence. They were, in other words, boys and teachers, entrenched in some form of innate 'choreophobia'.

(Edward, 2010: 2)

Keefe (2009), Dyck and Archetti (2003), Gard (2006) and Edward (2010) all point to the ways in which we are socialised to value certain bodies. In all the instances, it is the comparison to sport that legitimises dance, not the artistic endeavour itself. On the one hand, this comparison allows male dancers - to a certain extent - to be appreciated for the athletic prowess they possess. On the other hand, continuing to compare dance with sport may hinder an understanding of the art form as legitimised in its own right. The Ted Shawn heritage of emboldened masculinity was necessary in order to challenge perceptions of dance as an effeminate endeavour, but we should consider novel ways of conceptualising male dancing bodies going forward. Fisher (2009) in her article entitled "Maverick men in ballet: Rethinking the 'making it macho' strategy", puts forward an interesting alternative to the macho discourse associated with sports and dance. She suggests that we refer to male dancers as mavericks rather than macho, because of the potential that this offers: mavericks are by definition individualists, rebels of sorts. They redefine what is considered the norm, making room for alternative imaginations. A choreographer doing just that is Lloyd Newson.

From embodying hyper-masculinity in dance to addressing issues of masculinity through choreography, Newson, through his work, challenged prevailing attitudes and conceptions of male identity. In 1986 Newson, along with an independent collective of dancers who had become disillusioned with the direction of most Western dance, formed DV8 (Leask, 1995). DV8 built up its reputation as an issue-based dance company, producing work related to sexual politics and specifically to "queer" sexuality. This was in particular a response to homophobia and the AIDS crisis in the 80s (Leask, 1995; Burt, 2007). This subject matter, among others, has remained a central concern for the company. One work in particular, "Enter Achilles", desired to move beyond issues of sexuality to foreground what constitutes

masculinity (Leask, 1995). Newson's choreography is Contact Improvisation-based and plays with the subtleties, ambiguities and what Laesk (1995) terms the "fragility of masculinity". At this point it is perhaps useful to begin to explore the shifts in thinking pertaining to men dancing. While the last quarter of the 20th century has seen dramatic changes concerning the appeal of men in Contemporary dance, informed by what Roebuck (2001: 1) and other scholars refer to as a discontent with limiting gender models, this has not always been the case. The next section traces the shift in thinking about male dancing bodies in the West, followed by a detailed discussion of the South African perspective in the next chapter.

2.3 The professionalization of male dance

Like Gard (2006), I see the value in historicising the male dancer as a means to better understand how he is presently constructed. This journey also sheds light on the ways we make sense of the participation of male dancers, in their respective contexts, and their involvement in dance presently. This is not an attempt to provide a detailed account of male dance from its inception; rather, I begin my journey much later, in the 20th century. Gard (2006: 51) however, explores the demise of male ballet dancers in early 20th century Europe, concluding that it was the "athletic male body which would prove crucial in the reappearance of Western male theatrical dancers". I therefore use this line of thought as my point of departure.

Until around the early 20th century, dance was largely condemned in North America—especially by religious authorities. Dance for men was particularly conflated with homosexuality and effeminacy (Fisher & Shay, 2009). It was only years later that these dominant conceptions started to shift. With specific reference to American male dancers at the end of the 20th century, Burt (1995) describes the leading role that America played in establishing Modern dance for men. While Russia had for some time amalgamated ballet and to a large extent male ballet dancers into its cultural identity, America led the way in terms of male participation in Modern dance, deeply informed by "Anglo-Saxon Protestant values" (Burt, 1995: 102). The shift in values manifested in choreographers, such as Ted Shawn's, imagery of "heroic masculinity", directly linked to social ideas pertaining to "nature, heterosexuality and religion" (Burt, 1995: 102). The male Modern dance movement was thus informed by a particular moment in American history – a moment in which the cultural identity of the American man was predicated on specific heterosexual masculine ideals. It

was for this reason and due to the work of choreographers like Shawn that male dancers in the late 20th century started gaining prevalence. Roebuck (2001: iii) refers to this shift in both scholarship and within performance spaces as a shift towards “the concern with masculinity”.

In Europe, dance for men was considered a noble and acceptable pastime. Prior to the 19th century, this form of dance was primarily a courtly pastime in many European countries with prominent figures such as Louise XIV, an accomplished dancer, participating. Dance for men was thus highly acceptable (Pike, 2012: 281). The male dancing body therefore only became an “object of distaste” during the first half of the 19th century (Burt, 2007: 24). This had mostly to do with the objectification of the female dancer who provided visual pleasure to the male spectator. Male dancers on stage therefore detracted from this viewing pleasure. Over time, theatrical dancing and ballet in particular, became more strongly associated with the female body, consequently rendering dance a female endeavour. In turn, the presence of accompanying male dancers on stage resulted in discomfort for the audience as this challenged normative homo-social behaviour. Men who watched other men dance was no longer considered acceptable, informed by changing social attitudes around masculinity. Consequently, homophobic prejudices against male dancers grew, as explained below in Risner’s summary of Burt’s seminal text, “The Male Dancer” (1995):

Burt charts the development of homophobia as a means for males to rationalize their close attraction to one another. In this scheme, men can bond socially (which one would think is a reasonable human endeavour) only when homophobic attitudes accompany such intimacy. In other words, although men might enjoy watching other men dance, in order to do so, they must profess an absolute repulsion for homosexual desire or attraction. Straddling this important boundary between acceptable homosocial bonding and repressed homosexual attraction is the crux for the heterosexual male spectator watching men dance.

(Risner, 2009: 60)

At the start of the 20th century, presumptions about the effeminacy of professional male dancers became prevalent in the UK in particular. With regards to this, Owen writes “[T]he feminization of dance in the UK persisted throughout the 20th century, and led to years of limited male participation in dance classes and a lack of male dance teachers” (2014: 18). At the start of the 21st century, however, a gradual shift in the acceptance of male involvement

re-emerged in the form of Latin American and ballroom dancing. This shift was mainly facilitated by media popularization of shows such as *Strictly Come Dancing* (Owen, 2014). During my interviews with Adam and Marc, they described what the professional dance scene was like for men at the time when they entered the profession as dancers and dance-makers:

I guess there was still a reluctance to think that men could dance - that men did this thing called dancing. The kind of explosion in street dance hadn't happened and the things that followed on from that in the UK, the notion of young guys dancing and that was okay hadn't happened. So still if you were a dancer you were doing things that most men don't do, certainly don't own up to doing. I think there was still the sense that that's an effeminate thing to be doing so I guess there is a greater acceptance now. Hugely changed environment because of the popularization of dance in the media here – things like *Strictly Come Dancing*, those kind of populist things, so dance is kind of creeping back into the English psyche.

(Adam Benjamin, September, 2014)

I think definitely when I started out there weren't as many [male dancers], I think there are a lot more men now dancing, a lot more opportunities for men. And there was still that stereotype when I was growing up that every male dancer is gay - yes I happen to be, but not all men are. There are a lot more men dancing now and even the stereotype of all men dancing being gay is being challenged. So yeah, I think there are a lot more men dancing now than ever which is great.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

Adam and Marc described the dance scene for men as limited when they first started dancing professionally. They both allude to greater male participation over the years within dance spaces and also more broadly – within the English psyche. The next section further explores the lived experiences of my participants, who discussed their formative years as young dancers as well as their experiences around their professional careers. They also described their anxiety of attending dance class at school-going age and detailed how it was their love for dance that enabled them to continue both as young dancers and later on in life as professionals. Their responses can thus be understood within wider discourse as well as being situated within broader scholarship pertaining to male participation in dance. The preceding

section thus offers background for making sense of the ways in which my participants answered questions around their identities as dancers and how they negotiate this identity.

3.1 The only boy in the village dancing

As discussed in earlier parts of this chapter, in the West the emergence of men in Contemporary dance came with its own challenges. Mostly, male dancers struggled to gain acceptance in what was predominantly considered a female art form. Recent scholarship on male youth in dance foregrounds various kinds of social stigma, including narrow definitions of masculinity and internalized homophobia (Risner, 2009: 57).

Marc, who acquired his disability, has a very different experience of coming into dance than David and Zama who were born with their disabilities. Marc, who was exposed to dance from a young age, was physically active before and after his accident. Adam, as an able-bodied dancer, was similarly exposed to movement from a young age, facilitating his transition to dance later on. David and Zama however, came into dance rather haphazardly, with little or no exposure to physical activities. When I discussed this with my participants, all described the difficulties encountered when they first started dancing. For Marc and Adam, movement was a part of their lives from a young age. They were boys when they started to dance and explore with movement. They articulate the difficulties attached to dancing as young boys, particularly with regard to the types of activities that other boys their age were participating in:

But I very much started in sort of the jazz dance when I started but then I gave it up after a year or so because I was getting teased at school, because being in a small country town, the common thing for boys to do is sport, football or cricket. I was the only boy in the village who danced so yeah, I was teased quite a lot so I gave up for a while but then I went back because I really enjoyed it and the girls that I was with in the dance class would sort of protect me in a way if I was teased at school.

(Marc Bew, September 2014)

I remember having to be in the studio with lots of girls, there weren't many guys around at that time and I remember having a recurring nightmare which was that all

the guys that I played sports with were watching through the window while I was doing this stuff and I struggled with that in my early days of dance.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

In the chapter “What we know about boys who dance”, Risner (2009: 58) explores the limitations of contemporary masculinity and dance education. He writes about the ways in which schooling profoundly impacts the understanding of identity from a young age - which is itself informed by social norms and cultural values. More specific to dance study, Risner suggests that gender and social construction are fundamental in the formation of students’ participation and attitudes concerning dance (Ibid: 59). It therefore becomes clear that for both Marc and Adam, there were certain perceptions attached to dance. They experienced various degrees of discomfort, even tension. This tension was not reconciled through being accepted by their male peers, but rather through their love for dance and how dancing made them feel. Marc decided to go back to dance despite being teased and Adam chose to continue dance despite the flack he feared from his male peers. Through their commitment to their craft Marc and Adam, like other young men passionate about dance, provide an opportunity to challenge limited conceptions of masculinity in which the boy child is only encouraged to pursue what society values as an appropriate male endeavour. Referred to by Pollack (1999) as a “gender straightjacket”, these limited conceptions of what it means to be a man, have profound effects on identity construction and can damage self-worth. It thus becomes important that these issues get addressed in schools and other social spaces early on, to create safe environments for participation in dance and other art forms. This being said, overcoming the isolation of being a young male dancer is not limited to the school environment. Rather, it prevails among adult male dancers as well. Although efforts to professionalize male dance have made significant strides over the years, a career in dance (in many parts of the world) is still not considered the norm for men.

3.2 You’re a man and you want to dance, what’s that about?

The transition from dancing as a boy to dancing as an adult is not always an easy one. Although for most the decision to pursue dance professionally was a certainty, societal expectations about which careers were appropriate for men at times tended to shake that certainty:

I remember people asking me ‘what you doing now?’ and I remember saying doing movement things...doing stuff with movement...It took a long time to comfortably say that I’m a dancer or I’m a choreographer.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

There weren’t that many guys dancing then, I think there are more now. But growing up, whenever you saw dance on TV, you’d think it was a...hmm...what’s the right, politically correct way of saying this? Alright, real men didn’t dance – let’s put it that way. There was a bit of that when I went off to do it, people were like you going to do what? It wasn’t the actual dancing it was more like you’re a man and you want to dance, what’s that about? Someone even said I didn’t know you were gay and I’m going, as far as I know you don’t have to be gay to be a male dancer.

(David Toole, September 2014)

I’m from rural areas so I never thought that men could participate in dancing. Because for us, I mean where I came from, dance is a ladies thing.

(Zama Sonjica, December 2014)

Adam, David and Zama explicitly describe the challenges they experienced when transitioning to professional dance careers as adults. While Adam felt discomfort when articulating his chosen profession, David was confronted with stereotypical prejudice. Zama, coming from a South African township, had not been exposed to theatre dance. Similarly, those living around him were confused about dance as a viable career path for men. Familial support thus becomes fundamental in encouraging this chosen profession. However, as in the case of Zama, loved ones did not know that dance was a worthwhile career choice at the time, as further described by Adam and Marc below:

I think they were all a bit nonplussed originally that I should be doing this thing [dance], but again I think there came a point when they saw what I was doing with it, particularly the early Candoco work, that they realized that I hadn’t gone skipping around for the rest of my life, that I was actually doing something that had some kind of significance, some sense, some not just artistic integrity but social integrity as well. I think that was a moment when everybody got it.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

They were supportive, especially coming from a small country town where I was teased all the time; they did support me all the way through it. I don't think they knew what it was, what it meant, even now. I don't think they knew I could make a career out of this. They would come to a dance performance when they could but I don't think they really understand how much discipline it takes and how much training is involved, you know? But of course they supported me, yeah definitely.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

Adam's family may not have been familiar with the type of work he was pursuing but the fact that he was engaged in work with what Adam terms "social integrity" allowed them to see the significance of what he was doing. Marc similarly articulates how his loved ones supported him despite their lack of knowledge of integrated dance. In both instances it was the faith that their families had in them to become successful and the significance of the work that enabled their loved ones to support and encourage their chosen careers, despite not really understanding the profession. For David's friends and family there were concerns not only about dance as a viable career option for men but also leaving behind the security of a stable job:

My sister was brilliant; she said yes, you should do that because she knew how miserable I was in the work I was doing. My mom was worried because like I said, it was a safe regular job and I was unlikely to just walk into another one, I say walk, obviously not [looks down at wheelchair he is sitting in and giggles]. But generally my friends were really good. But yeah, nobody knew how it was going to work out. I would have still done it though, even if everybody had said no, because that's the kind of stubborn person I am I guess. At the time I said I would rather try and fail than spend the rest of my life at the post office.

(David Toole, September 2014)

David's mother alludes to the stigma attached to people with disabilities and the difficulty they have finding permanent employment. For many, this stigma is compounded by social expectations for men, to be able to provide for themselves and their dependents. Despite his mother's concerns, she still supported him as did the rest of his family. Other than the support from loved ones, pursuing a career in dance is also facilitated by changes in dance practice itself, in terms of dancers and dance trainers as well as those engaged in dance scholarship.

The next section begins to consider the ways in which Contemporary dance disrupts existing gender norms within movement, allowing for a more dynamic engagement between male and female dancing bodies.

4.1 'He doesn't necessarily see the male and female, he just sees the bodies'

Shifting from how my participants experienced dance early and later on in their careers, this section explores the role that Contemporary dance plays in challenging traditional representational practices in dance. Choreography for male dancers traditionally sets them up as enablers, supporters and carriers - enabling the female dancer, carrying the female dancer. Contemporary dance arguably disrupts this, providing alternative ways of male and female engagement on stage, taking on particular significance in integrated spaces. In my interviews, I was interested in the possibilities that Contemporary dance offered for finding more balanced power relations between men and women on stage and other spaces of interaction. Below, some of my participants describe the role that they think Contemporary dance plays in providing alternative engagement between male and female dancers:

The best example I can give you is a piece that Stopgap is doing at the moment called Awakening. It's choreographed by Chris who you met today, who has Down syndrome. Now Chris thinks in a completely different way, so he doesn't necessarily see the male and female, he just sees the bodies. So within the piece you'll have Amy lifting Thomas who is not a small guy so there is equal weight and carrying and supporting so there isn't any major gender-divide within that piece. So that's interesting because it comes from someone like Chris who doesn't see it.

(David Toole, September 2014)

Here David suggests that because Chris 'thinks differently' about ability, he doesn't necessarily fall into the choreographic trap of conforming to traditional gender representation. Rather, he sees bodies that are equally able to lift, carry and support one another. Similarly Marc alludes to the equality present in Contemporary dance, which he feels is absent in ballet:

Contemporary dance is about breaking away from that ballet mould and perfection, being a 'perfect' way. What Contemporary dance did was find other ways of

working with your body. There is also more of a balance between men and women where in ballet it is always the men who partner the women and the men who are the strength, making the women look like a sylph and light and glide. Where as in Contemporary, it is about the strength of both men and women and about the sharing of weight and ways of working together.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

Adam spoke more about the ways in which Contemporary dance provides new choreographic possibilities for men in terms of having access to a wider vocabulary of movement such as softness and fluidity. With specific reference to renowned Israeli born, UK-based choreographer Hofesh Schechter, Adam describes a shift away from the heritage of Ted Shawn and Lloyd Newson, to embrace a more dynamic portrayal of male dancing bodies:

Lloyd Newson in a way shifted that with his early work. A lot of it was sort of tough, brutal, if you think *Monochrome Men*, kind of his early work. But then if you look at Contemporary choreographers like Hofesh Shechter, he has a very fluid often rhythmic style but there is a kind of softness and fluidity in the way that he uses the male body in particular. So I think there are lots of alternative portrayals of the male body. So it's about what happens to the male body when we are released and how does that change our interaction as men on stage. So Hofesh makes work that is often very political, that is often about conflict and yet the movement in the dancers' body is often very fluid and very different to what we would expect from sort of the Ted Shawn heritage.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

After watching Youtube videos of Schechter's work, I was better able to understand what Adam was referring to. A lot of his work tends to not be gender specific in that the men and women move in very similar ways. In a follow-up interview with Adam, I asked if he thought that the choreographic decision to have male and female dancers move in similar ways contributed to Schechter's ability to achieve fluidity and softness. He stated that in much of Schechter's early work women were absent, or if present, they were not noticeable. He agreed that his movement material blurs gender distinctions. Apart from the fact that in performances such as 'Fragment' and 'Shelter' the female dancers are in dresses and the male dancers are in pants, there is little distinction between the female and male dancers' aesthetic.

In pieces like 'Under a rock', both male and female dancers are in pants, making this distinction even more difficult. Schechter has thus managed to create movements which shift away from traditional gender representations of masculinity and femininity in dance. More than anything, the fluidity and softness he creates has broadened the scope for male dancers – creating a movement vocabulary which foregrounds both tenderness and conflict. This is in contrast to Lloyd Newson's 'Dead Dreams of Monochrome men' in which movements tend to be rigid and as Adam states more 'tough' and 'brutal'. In this piece, the all-male cast of DV8, endeavours to explore the darkest areas of sexual and emotional despair which include violent extremes of action and conflict. The presenter, who introduced the performance on Britain's televised South Bank Show, had this to say about the piece:

Four men enact a series of developing relationships. They experience desire and fear, jealousy and distrust, frenzy and desolation. Each encounter between the characters seems to carry them further out towards the far extremes of loneliness.

Although there are moments of tenderness shared between the male characters, this usually involves the subjugation of one man by another. Other scenes include men frantically running and climbing to the top of a wall, using the other men, standing at the bottom of the wall, as a means to do so. This could be representative of the anguish men experience from societal expectations to be successful and to always be on top, regardless of who they need to step on to get there. Shifting from the on-set relationships between male dancers, the next section explores the relationship between able and differently able dancers and the ways in which disability challenges conventional understanding of dancing bodies.

5.1 'I'm not what you would call a traditional dancer and thank God for that! Because I wouldn't be here if I was...'

Disability creates new possibilities in dance, particularly in choreography. The vocabulary of movement is radically expanded and allows choreographers to experiment with different bodies and modes of mobility to create interesting movements (Valentyn, 2012). Similarly, the participants in this study allude to the ways in which disability challenges conventional understandings of dance and dancing bodies:

You ask your average person what a dancer looks like, 9/10 times they'll say a ballet dancer because that's what the world thinks is a dancer. Or now it's all about

Strictly Come Dancing, so it's all about ballroom, ballet and maybe hip hop if you're lucky or even tap dancing because you have River Dance. But I don't fit into any of these categories so when I tell people what I do for a living they think I'm mocking them. I've had to show people – I've had to get out my chair and go I can do this and this and this then they'll sort of understand it. But yeah, I'm not what you would call a traditional dancer and thank God for that! Because I wouldn't be here if I was.

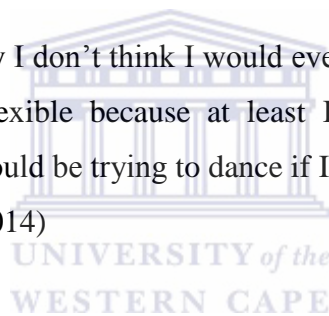
(David Toole, September 2014)

There is still, you know, the perennial question what is dance and we fall over ourselves trying to figure out what that one is and so the disabled body just really throws everything into question in the most fantastic way.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

I think if I were an able body I don't think I would even know how to start dancing. I think now I am more flexible because at least I lose some parts of myself [laughing]. I don't think I would be trying to dance if I was able [bodied].

(Zama Sonjica, December 2014)



David, Adam and Zama all articulate the ways in which disability disrupts traditional understandings of dance and the bodies that should be dancing. David and Zama both allude to the possibility of them never becoming dancers if they were able bodied, indicative of the possibilities that disability offers dance and movement. The film “The Cost of Living” directed by Lloyd Newson and starring David, beautifully depicts the intricate interaction between able and differently able dancers. It also interestingly disrupts traditional gender representations due to the female dancer being able-bodied and David being differently able. The scene begins with a room full of ballet dancers at the barre doing typical warm-up exercises. The camera is positioned so that only the dancers' legs are visible, immediately drawing attention to them. David who is outside in his wheelchair, peeps through the window and decides to join. Hopping out of his chair, he enters the studio and makes his way to the barre where all but one dancer is continuing with the leg exercises. The dancer not at the barre is stretching on the floor. David makes his way to her passing the other dancers, their legs still being the focal point. Immediately you become aware that David does not have legs.

The fact that he is surrounded by long limbed ballet dancers highlights this even more (see below).



The 'The Cost of Living': David Toole and Tanja Liedtke
(Photographs taken from the internet – Google images)

The duet is a wonderful exchange of movement between David and the female dancer Tanja: she lifts him, turns him and carries him on her back while he moves between her legs and over her torso. The movement never stops and they make it look effortless. In this instance common conceptions of only the male dancers lifting and turning, carrying and enabling are disrupted to allow for a more complex web of interactions. Here David is lifted and carried but he also facilitates certain movements, such as turns, using his upper body. The unique vocabulary that David offers dance creates interesting movements and like I have argued in previous work, allows for new imaginations of dancing bodies (Valentyn, 2012).

While in Farnham, I was able to observe integrated dance company Stopgap during their class and the rehearsal of what was at the time their most recent piece 'Billy and Bobby', a duet with David and artistic director Lucy, inspired by the musical comedy "Swing Time". Typically performed outside, the piece comprises three small vignettes and takes the audience on a playful journey through a long-gone era. 'Billy and Bobby' is intriguing not only because of the wonderful acting but also the ways in which the choreography allows for playful exchanges between dancers. Like the studio scene in 'The Cost of Living', 'Billy and Bobby' contains moments of artistic brilliance; however, unlike 'The Cost of Living', the piece does little to challenge traditional gender norms. This is perhaps due to it being a depiction of iconic dance partners, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, during a time when particular gender cultural norms were entrenched. David and Lucy thus generally remain within typical 1930s convention both within choreography and demeanour. Below are two of the photographs that I took during the rehearsal. The piece begins with both dancers in the

bath tub. In the first photograph David is positioned on Lucy's back while she moves her legs from side to side, first one at a time and then together. David then climbs down her legs to get onto the ground. In this particular piece Lucy does all of the dancing while David watches. In the second photograph, David and Lucy look intently at one another. The moment captured is at the end of the last vignette in which David begins with a solo to the song Blue Moon. His movements are subtle and conservative, consisting mostly of arm gestures and upper-body turns. Lucy then joins him and they begin dancing together. The duet conforms to movements resembling those typical of male and female dancers, in which the man and woman face each other, mirroring the others movements. There is a gentle quality in the way they partner each other, David's touch initiating most of the Lucy's turns. In this particular scene, David being out of his wheelchair is perhaps the unconventional aspect of the dance. While the choreography remains true to its time, David brings in the unexpected element not only because of his disability but also the choreographic decision to perform this piece out of his wheelchair.



5.2 ‘So you had this guy with no legs and this girl with the longest legs in the world making this weird thing called dance’

Although not always - as in the case of ‘Billy and Bobby’ - Contemporary and modern dance for the most part allows for the disruption of traditional gender roles. Female dancers have arguably taken on stronger and more masculine movements, collapsing the notion of only male dancers being the enablers, carriers and supporters. I was interested in how this manifested in an environment where a male dancer without legs partners a female dancer with legs. Could one argue that she then takes on the role of the enabler, carrier and supporter or do these distinctions fall away completely to make way for alternative interactions and exchanges? In our interview, with specific reference to the studio scene in ‘The Cost of Living’, David described how it was less about intentionally setting out to disrupt gender norms and more about achieving the choreographic task of moving across the space. Alternative interactions and exchanges between him and his female partner were thus a result of the different bodies involved in the piece which, as David states, are bodies that move in completely different ways. He explicitly describes the equality present in the movements and suggests it to be the responsibility of both dancers to move from point A to point B. He also foregrounds the dynamic of partnering a female with “the longest legs in the world” and alludes to how this creates “weird” yet interesting movements:

I think there has to be a different dynamic. Purely physically we move in completely different ways. When I think of the piece in “The Cost of Living” with Tanya in the ballet studio, that was purely about travelling, you know there was no agenda, it was merely get from there to there in the fastest way you can. So it kind of came from that and it actually came from another dancer who did the original version of the show, who was much taller than Tanya, she had the longest legs in the world. So you had this guy with no legs and this girl with the longest legs in the world making this weird thing. When you watch it purely from a movement perspective it’s equally divided between how you get from point A to point B. She’s not carrying me all the way and I’m not carrying her all the way either. I manipulate her, she manipulates me. She carries me on her back and stuff. But that basically comes from a task. It could have been two guys, if one of them had legs and the other didn’t, you’d get the same thing - I think to a certain extent - but because it’s a man and a woman already there is a story there.

(David Toole, September 2014)

David also interestingly alludes to the significance of the male/female interaction when he speaks of there being a “story” there. This points to broader understandings of the relationships set up between male and female dancers in performances as well as the gendered expectations which have become almost inherent in dance spaces. The same expectations may not be present between male dancers or between able bodied dancers which makes this scenario even more unique. Referring to early integrated works, Adam spoke specifically about the dangers of falling into the choreographic trap where integrated dance reinforces the very perceptions it is trying to dismantle. This is done through portraying the disabled dancer, whether male or female, as in need of help from their fellow able bodied dancers:

In terms of the early work, in the late 80s, that was some of the stuff that you would see. You would see somebody in a wheelchair and an able female dancer kind of really acting as carer and supporter, um, and it’s still very easy, it’s really easy to not get that right because of the positioning of the person in the wheelchair. Um...there is an immediate projection – two people on stage, one’s in a wheelchair, one’s not, the one in the wheelchair is being helped by the other one. So choreographically you have to be super smart and super sensitive in order to unhook the audiences’ preconception of what’s going on, on stage. And if you’re not smart then you never do unhook, and the able bodied female dancer will always appear to be the helper.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

Zama articulated the true nature of integrated dance to be about exploration and finding new ways to engage with each other. For him, partnering entails equal participation and the freedom to experiment with movement and weight sharing:

I think we both need each other. We have to explore, I mean we need each other. You cannot say we are doing a duet while you are standing waiting for me to lift you up. You have to by all means try, I mean I can also help you by lifting myself, by pretending as if you are lifting me up. We have to help each other, that is what integrated dance is all about.

(Zama Sonjica, December 2014)

My question then was around the implications of such trends for disabled male dancers. If female dancers are taking on the role of enabler, carrier and supporter, where does that leave male dancers? What role do they then occupy? For Adam this moment, if not negotiated thoughtfully, results in the emasculation of male dancers:

To be emasculated is what you get. You see someone who is not there in their own right as an individual artist and whenever we see that in which ever context it's disquieting. When people are not given their own voice, anywhere, it's disquieting. It's not a place I would want to be. I don't think it's a place anyone would want to be.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

He therefore confirms the importance of equality between male and female dancers in these spaces, which in turn creates opportunities for the audience to unhook certain preconceptions about male and female dancing bodies, as well as ability and disability.

In this chapter I have articulated the problem with male dancers as discussed by a number of dance scholars in different contexts. I then attempted to historicise the participation of men in Western theatre dance as well as broader societal perceptions regarding male dancers by looking at the works of two notable choreographers Shawn and Newson. What followed was an exploration of the lived experiences of my participants with regards to their formative years as young dancers as well as their experiences around their professional careers. The section described the anxieties of attending dance class at school-going age and detailed how it was their love for dance that enabled them to continue both as young dancers and later on in life as professionals, despite dance not being a popular career choice for men. The chapter shifted from how my participants experienced dance early and later on in their careers, to the role that Contemporary dance plays in challenging traditional representational practices in dance especially with regard to integrated dance. Lastly, I explored the importance of gender equality within the integrated performative space to allow opportunities to change the way we understand the relationship between able bodied and differently abled male and female dancers.

4.

New imaginaries in South African dance

1.1 Introduction

The arts in South Africa have emerged from, and been shaped by, a history of colonialism and apartheid. Both the colonial and apartheid regimes devalued indigenous African culture reducing it at best to ethnic curiosity. In dance in particular, the apartheid government, despite being free from the bonds of colonialism, chose to value and fund British ballet as a high art form above all forms of dance.

(Friedman, 2012: 1)

As discussed in recent local dance forums, such as Confluences 8, South African art forms can seldom escape its colonial history. The above quote comes from a chapter written by Sharon Friedman in her book entitled “Post-Apartheid dance: many bodies, many voices, many stories”. The book provides a backdrop for understanding the development and shifts in South African dance, underscoring the role of colonialism and apartheid in the emergence of particular art forms. While the previous chapter provided a brief overview of the development of theatre dance in the West, this chapter begins to explore the development of Contemporary dance in South Africa. I draw on my interviews and interactions with renowned South African dance critics, dance practitioners as well as the dancers themselves in order to piece together the history of dance within the unique context of post-apartheid South Africa. Against the backdrop of Contemporary dance, I explore shifts in the dance landscape as well as the development of integrated dance. Toward the end of the chapter I argue the need for scholarship and conversation around the differently able male dancing body in South Africa.

Piecing together the trajectory of dance in countries like America and England was relatively easy; however, the same could not be said about the South African context. With the exception of Friedman (2012), few sources document the development of dance in the country with even fewer scholarly attempts to historicise the shifts in the South African dance landscape pre and post-apartheid. There was therefore a need to discover this history through identifying and interviewing the pioneers of South African theatre dance and Contemporary dance in particular – those who have been around since its inception and indeed those who helped birth the genre in South Africa. I felt it necessary to dedicate a chapter of this thesis to

the history of South African Contemporary dance because of the ways in which this history has shaped the present dance landscape. Understanding the nuances of theatre dance in South Africa today sheds light on issues around male participation in Contemporary dance, constructions of masculinity in dance spaces as well as the re-appropriation of the black dancing body. Moreover, this section details the development of integrated dance in the South African context, foregrounding its pioneers as well as the difficulties encountered over the past decades. What follows is my attempt to bring together the voices of those who have been at the forefront of South African Contemporary dance to illuminate the country's unique dance history. Individuals who have contributed to this discussion include the head of the UCT dance school and dance historian, Gerard Samuel, renowned South African dance critic Adrienne Sichel, founder of one of South Africa's first racially integrated dance companies Sylvia Glasser and South African integrated dance pioneer Gladys Agulhas, to name a few. Interviews took place in Cape Town and different parts of Johannesburg during May 2015. Adrienne was instrumental in connecting me with Johannesburg-based dancers and practitioners. She also gave me access to important materials such as newspaper clippings, books and proposals housed at the WITS Ar(t)hive, a South African dance and theatre archive that she co-founded. Face-to-face, semi-structured in-depth interviews with my participants together with the Ar(t)hive material and Friedman's scholarly reflection on post-apartheid dance allowed me to begin to piece together this otherwise fragmented history.

2.1 A brief background

The above quote by Friedman (2012) points to the ways in which cultural practices, like ballet, were valued due to its inherent links with Western ideologies of 'civilization'¹³. This set the scene for the establishment of ballet as a "high art form" in South Africa (Friedman, 2012). This was further illuminated by the funding that the apartheid government made available for the Arts, almost exclusively designated for classical ballet, referred to by Gerard in our interview as "receiving the lion's share of funds from performing arts councils". Little provision was made for the growth and practice of local South African art forms (Friedman, 2012). Ballet is therefore an art form inextricably linked to a colonial past. Within the context of apartheid, this distinction was further emphasised by segregation laws such as the Group

¹³ Western notions of civilization often included the need for the colonized territory to amalgamate with the cultural practices and values of the colonizers. These cultural practices and values were considered to be superior and there was little regard for existing indigenous social practices.

Areas Act, which sought to deliberately prevent people of different racial classifications¹⁴ interacting. Dancers and dance audiences were for the most part kept separate, limiting participation for dancers of colour and further maintaining ballet as an exclusionary practice (Friedman, 2012).

Against this backdrop, Contemporary dance was, according to Gerard, a “Cinderella on the outside”- always on the periphery and in the shadow of Classical ballet. Individuals like Sylvia Glasser and Alfred Hinkel were among the first to professionalize the genre by founding Contemporary dance companies and developing Afro-fusion. In our interview, Sylvia described the difficulties she encountered when trying to find central places for the dancers of her company, Moving Into Dance Mophatong (MIDM), to work. Because there were black and white dancers in the company - at a time when laws regulated which bodies occupied which spaces - she had to find creative ways of getting the dancers together. She was therefore at the forefront of racially inclusive Contemporary dance. In the Cape, the province in which classical ballet was first established in South Africa, notable directors Dulcie Howes and David Poole were among those who strongly advocated for more inclusive approaches to dance, ballet in particular. Through their efforts, ballet was able to reach more communities which, Friedman argues, “provided a blueprint for its survival” (Friedman, 2012: 4). Dance-makers were clearly disillusioned with the state of dance and started pioneering works and establishing theatres and companies which directly challenged the lack of critical engagement of dance and other art forms of the time. In 1988, PACT (Performing Arts Council of Transvaal), included the first Contemporary dance company to receive apartheid government funding. Although this remained a largely isolated case¹⁵, attempts were made by dance-makers to critically engage with notions of African identity, moving away from “simplistic replication of the mostly American modern dance techniques” (Friedman, 2012: 3). The 1980s was consequently characterized by discussions around what constituted South African dance and the ways in which a more definitive South African style could be created through fusion, blending African and Western inspirations. Like Sylvia, Alfred Hinkel, founder of Contemporary company Jazzart, created pioneering work which reached across cultural spaces. Gerard described Jazzart as “an inter-racial dance company trying to articulate the social political scene of its time”. He went on to describe other dance projects happening in other parts of the country, stating that:

¹⁴ While many people have accepted these racial categories – formalised by government racial classification – as scientific and natural, anthropologists understand race, and any subsequent racial categorization, to be socially constructed. I thereby use these terms only to signify the context in which events took place

¹⁵ Most other companies at the time continued to not receive government funding

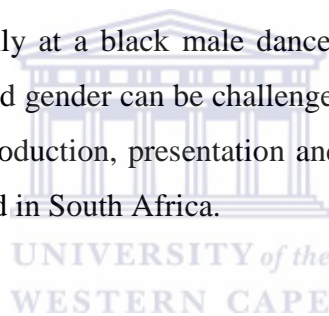
All of these things form part of what we can term the Contemporary dance scene in various periods and it's a shattered glass picture, fragmented islands that are connected and disconnected by their physical and geographic distances.

(Gerard Samuel, May 2015)

In post-apartheid South Africa, the quest for grappling with identity in dance continues. After 1994, dance-makers were able to engage with notions of citizenship and belonging, ancestry and heritage with new vigour and meaning. Black choreographers especially were able to address issues around inequality and the legacy of apartheid, which continued to haunt many South Africans. These dance-makers were also beginning to reconstruct the black dancing body. A Masters thesis by Samantha Pienaar (1996) explores the works of renowned South African dancer and choreographer Boyzie Cekwana with a distinct focus on the black, male dancing body:

By opting to look specifically at a black male dancer, social appreciations of the body in terms of ethnicity and gender can be challenged. This latter area of research -the role of gender in the production, presentation and appreciation of the dancing body- is largely unchallenged in South Africa.

(Pienaar, 2006: i)



There was therefore an emerging academic interest in the forms which dance was taking in post-apartheid South Africa. Samuel (2012: 137) attributes this development in dance to the “climate of radical political change’ and a “new culture of human rights” ushered in by the demise of apartheid.

3.1 Mapping the landscape: uprisings and comfort zones

The system would have been classical ballet – ballet was representative of the system. Certainly for people an apartheid system but it would also have represented all things that is dance. So you would have concert theatre dance being understood to mean ballet whereas today, concert theatre dance is not only ballet. All the other forms are desperately trying to raise their head and be seen, recognized and respected as art forms.

(Gerard Samuel, May 2015)

Having briefly discussed the colonial history of ballet and its legacy in South Africa, I turn to Contemporary dance. Gerard points to an important issue regarding the legitimacy of other theatre dance forms in a country which, for the longest time, has arguably been in the shadow of Classical ballet. As previously discussed, Contemporary dance as a genre not only created opportunities to break away from the ideological constraints of ballet, it also in many ways challenged the apartheid system that ballet represented for many. Ballet was therefore perceived as synonymous with whiteness, much in the same way rugby was. Moments such as winning the Rugby World Cup in 1995 presented an opportunity for South Africans to come together in solidarity – despite differences. Similarly, in companies like MIDM and Jazzart, dancers of different social and cultural backgrounds were dancing and performing together for the first time. Seeing this on the concert stage allowed audiences to begin to imagine bodies different to their own in novel ways, which at the time was exactly what South Africa needed. This task, however, was not an easy one. Almost all my participants expressed the vigour and passion that was required to create work which challenged the status quo. Adrienne reflected on how - as a racially classified white woman - she needed a permit to be in certain areas, although she never had one. Instead, she was connected to local people who informed her if it was too dangerous to go into certain areas. She referred to these relationships as providing her with access and attributes this to her contacts in the community. She went on to discuss the ways in which dancers from companies like MIDM and Jazzart were activist artists at the time. They helped to put together task teams and created the National Arts Council (NAC). They also lobbied to put in place the Department of Arts of Culture. There was thus a fighting spirit among dancers and practitioners alike. According to Sichel and founder and director of The Dance Forum and the FNB Dance Umbrella, Georgina Thompson, the problems started when this fighting spirit subsided. According to Adrienne, post-1994 the NAC had company funding policies in place to assist with the development of dance companies, yet when the activism subsided so did the funding. Similarly, local dance companies, that had previously been funded by international agencies, no longer received funding after the country's transition to democracy. These international agencies instead gave funding to the South African government for distribution – funds that never made it to grass-roots companies and organizations.

According to Adrienne the survival of Contemporary dance was further complicated by South Africa's "conservative ministers and a traditionalist president". Here she speaks to the ways in which Contemporary dance in South Africa has, until recently, been portrayed as culturally

alien and was not considered a profession. Dancers who referred to themselves as Contemporary dancers did not receive funding. This problematic is confirmed by renowned South African issue-based choreographer and founder of Contemporary dance company The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative, Peter John (PJ) Sabbagha. Moreover, content censorship¹⁶ by the government once again dictates what sort of dance is created, by whom and for whom:

We wouldn't be the vibrant community we are now if there weren't people in the 80s working and pushing the fringes, forcing things in new directions. Unfortunately different types of funding are different types of censorship – *what* can be said and *how* it can be said. I think we are at a strange place as a country; we are almost in a moment of nationalism. It feels like we need to assert a national identity and it's all about holding the country together, social cohesion and nation building and not questioning anything as long as it affirms major things on the agenda.

(PJ Sabbagha, May 2015)

PJ reiterates the ways in which early dance-makers pushed boundaries but also alludes to the need for this type of activism in the arts today. Georgina similarly stated that “in the past state censorship fuelled creativity and critical engagement with issues of the day whereas now, it stifles it”. PJ argues that South Africa is in a “moment of nationalism”. This perception is shared by other participants and is an idea I explore further below. With restrictions around funding and with ‘censorship’ of the arts on the political agenda, it can be argued that Contemporary dance is once again in a position where it needs to fight for survival.

One choreographer whose work constantly engages with issues around identity is Gregory Maqoma. His work challenges superficial national sentiments in an attempt to deconstruct notions of what it means to be African. In ‘Cultural cocktails: the choreography of Gregory Maqoma’, Kodesh (2006) articulates the importance of dance-works as platforms to engage and promote social commentary. She states that “democracy cannot be critically evaluated without considering the dialogue offered by contemporary artistic performance” (Kodesh, 2006: 39). Her article uses Gregory's dance-works to examine the ways in which contemporary performing arts in Africa produce social interpretations.

¹⁶ South African dance-makers have commented on governments ‘content censorship’. This refers specifically to the types of dance-works that receive funding. Dance-works which do not align with the political agenda of the day will either not receive funding, or dance-makers will be asked to change the content of their work in order to receive funds.

Earlier issues raised around the legitimacy of Contemporary dance in South Africa are strongly linked to notions around nationalist sentiments, the desire to create what Kodesh (2006) refers to as “neatly delineated representations of the nation”. Furthermore, the renunciation of Contemporary dance is deeply rooted in the art forms’ ability to challenge “the official cultural establishment”:

Maqoma’s questioning of the contradictions in South African society challenges the ways in which the official cultural establishment attempts to create a national identity. In his refusal to conform, he throws open new possibilities for dealing with identity in a changing social context. Tensions arise between those who push for a unified, certain, neatly delineated representation of the nation, and those, like Maqoma, who subvert this ideal. What becomes clear is that his work is perceived as a threat that disturbs essentialised images of the nation. In making visible what is hidden, Maqoma breaks through this façade to a deeper engagement with what it means to be in a new democracy.

(Kodesh, 2006: 40)

Gregory’s desire to use his choreography to strip away pretence and, instead to deal with the realities of living in a constantly changing South African social context has led to his exclusion from events such as the opening ceremony of the World Summit for Sustainable Development, hosted in Johannesburg in 2000. His bid to choreograph the opening ceremony was denied: his work was supposedly not ‘African’ enough. Questions around what is African, who decides and what is the intention behind such portrayals have been asked since the inception of Contemporary dance and continue to manifest in various ways. Gregory and other choreographers who are interested in using the personal wounds, desires, hopes and fears of dancers to share their stories will continue to be side-lined by those who wish to be the exclusive arbiters of the complexities of living in South Africa today. Gregory is nonetheless identified as a dance leader in his generation. He continues to push boundaries through his work and creative processes. The next section begins to explore the participation of other male dancers in Contemporary dance within the South African context.

4.1 If you think South African dance, you think men

The notion of effeminacy being attached to dance is not necessarily a global experience. Often when we talk about dance we are unconsciously placing dance in its Eurocentric frame, so *where* and *who* becomes important.

(Gerard Samuel, May 2015)

As discussed in the previous chapter, the male dancer, in many ways, remains precarious in the West. In countries like America and England for instance, stigma and issues around effeminacy continue to haunt many who pursue professional careers in dance. But as Gerard correctly points out, the “where and who” is essential in any discussion involving masculinity and dance. I was therefore interested in what the situation was (and is) for South African male dancers.

There are more male than female dancers in many of the South African Contemporary companies today – Gerard argued that this situation is quite unusual compared to other dance companies around the world:

When I travel I therefore state that we don't have a problem getting men into dance studios and companies – it's more about getting support and funding for dance more generally. We are therefore not as harassed about which dancers are on stage in the same way that this might be an issue for North America.

(Gerard Samuel, May 2015)

This sentiment was echoed by Adrienne:

With the male dancers it was an interesting thing that happened – because we're in Africa it's not a stigma for a man to dance but the big no-no is to wear tights. But soon it became evident that dance was a way to be educated and also there were more men and still are more men than girls. It's a bit better now but at one point it was completely male dominated. All the stars were men, the people like Vincent and Boyzie, if you think South African dance you think men.

(Adrienne Sichel, May 2015)

What then became of interest to me was why this was the case. After reflecting on my interviews I was able to get a better understanding of this phenomenon. Firstly, as stated by Adrienne, there is less stigma around men who dance in South Africa. Adam similarly stated that men in Africa “dance more happily” than men in Western countries. The environment for

dance was (and is) therefore more conducive for male participation. Secondly, as described by Sylvia and Adrienne, once dance became more accessible in terms of geographic location,¹⁷ it was the male dancers from, e.g. Soweto and surrounding areas that were sent for training. Adrienne remembers the lack of female participation from the 80s and early 90s:

What I picked up very quickly, especially in the black, coloured and Indian community was that girls were very badly affected - had the most wonderful talent but when they reached puberty they were gone. They faced certain social issues...

(Adrienne Sichel, May 2015)

In a conversation with a colleague about this very issue, PJ was able to put forward reasons as to why young boys were being absorbed more readily into dance programmes. He stated that to a large extent, boys have more freedom and liberty than girls to engage in after-school programmes. He touched on an important distinction in the gendered ways that children are socialised:

When you are young, boys have the time to be in these youth groups while girls have to go home and do housework, that's their place. It's an archaic way of thinking but it's real. And that's why men dominate this sector. Boys are also taken more seriously, if a boy or man tells his family that he wants to pursue dance they will listen to him and they might even take a moment to try and understand his perspective. But if a woman or girl wants to pursue dance it might not be supported because she needs to do what the family expects of her.

(PJ Sabbagha, May 2015)

This is an important consideration in the South African context where we arguably operate in a patriarchal society. Young girls were given permission by their families to participate in dance training and after-school programmes only until they reach a certain age. After that the expectation often is that they begin to function in the domestic sphere, thereby limiting their further involvement in dance training.

For the young men interested in dance, it was an opportunity to rise above many of the socio-economic constraints experienced on a daily basis. Adrienne described how exposure to

¹⁷ For example, once MIDM started operating from premises in Braamfontein, Johannesburg

renowned Russian ballet dancers Baryshnikov and Nureyev, inspired dancers like Boyzie Cekwana to fully commit to their craft:

If you think about it these were very virile, very talented, energetic men. Television made a huge difference in this country – the minute people like Boyzie saw Baryshnikov and Nureyev they wanted to do that, which is a very odd, strange, thing. Suddenly people were leaping on concrete floors – I couldn't figure it out but that's what happened. Those were the role models and they wanted to be like them. Suddenly there was something beautiful and something that they really wanted to do.

(Adrienne Sichel, May 2015)

Against this backdrop, I further consider the implications of the male black dancing body at a time when democracy was characterised by ideas about 'race'. Although the dichotomy of 'African' dance and 'Western' dance has been challenged in recent South African scholarship, Contemporary dance arguably consisted of a mixture of traditional African dance and modern dance from the West. This took the form of black male dancers partnering white female dancers, which was not always easily accepted. Adrienne explained:

Boyzie was a pioneer because when he started dancing with white girls suddenly audiences were taking note. He was a pioneer because he was an exceptional dancer who happened to be black. Boyzie was and still is a very pioneering choreographer. But he had a lot to overcome – Boyzie was criticized for dancing a white mans' art, he could have been killed for it but because he knew how to negotiate his kind of 'hood', he was okay. But he was heavily criticized for doing a white mans' art as the country became more politicised.

(Adrienne Sichel, May 2015)

South Africa - as opposed to other parts of the world - may have had a more conducive environment for male participation in dance, but there were still issues that needed to be contended with, racial prejudice being one of them. Theatre dance was understood to mean ballet. Its subsequent link to a "high art form" associated with whiteness, prevailed. The black dancing body thus deconstructed imaginations around which bodies had access to which spaces and more importantly, in terms of partnering, which bodies had access to which

bodies. The next section begins to explore whether the type of dance affects the extent to which dance for men is accepted.

5.1 Men dancing was okay...as long as they didn't wear tights!

It's quite complex but men dancing was okay...as long as they didn't wear tights. A lot of boys did Gumboot dancing and Pantsula, and that sort of thing so dancing was part of the culture.

(Adrienne Sichel, May 2015)

In this chapter thus far I have touched on the development of Contemporary dance in South Africa. I have suggested that due to dance being understood as part and parcel of 'African culture'¹⁸, men were able to more easily pursue professional careers in theatre dance and to receive some of the best dance training. Moreover, due to other social factors such as exposure to international dance stars, young men have role models to which they can aspire. Lastly, due to South African Contemporary dance having its roots in traditional African dance, it is not surprising that black, young male dancers gravitate towards this genre. This being said, it must not be taken for granted that these male dancing bodies are readily accepted by dance audiences and society more broadly. In my interviews, I was interested in ascertaining social attitudes concerning professional male dancers and if it is considered a viable career option for men in South Africa. What came out most clearly was the fact that attitudes toward male dancers could not be generalised and that there was no homogeneous response to those pursuing careers in dance. Adrienne's comment about dance for men being acceptable as long as these men were not in tights, points to associations with ballet and the stigma attached to that style of dance. Gumboot dancing and Pantsula for example do not have the same stigma and are in fact a celebrated part of South African dance culture. I was therefore interested in more contemporary dance styles and whether these dances were subject to the same criticism:

It would be really interesting to ask black mothers what they think of dance and if the type of dance matters to them. When their child is doing ballet are they dealing with something different to if their child was doing hip hop. My sense is yes, it is quite marked in that way that the form itself attaches certain kinds of stigma. In my

¹⁸ Not to be understood in a reified, static sense, but rather as dynamic and constantly changing

experience with dance I have noticed all of it – from people being very nervous of their sons going into the dance world, that this would be a life of homosexuality etc., to celebrating that the child is learning something completely different outside of their cultural framework.

(Gerard Samuel, May 2015)

Here Gerard reiterates the ways in which respective dance forms “attach certain kinds of stigma”. As the head of UCT’s dance school, he has encountered a range of reactions from the loved ones of those who wish to pursue dance. While a young man who wants to train in ballet may meet a lot of resistance, a career in hip hop or tap dancing may not necessarily elicit the same response. Again, this needs to be explored on a case-by-case basis and depends on the support structure of the dancers themselves. Most of the participants I spoke to admitted that their families were concerned about them pursuing a career in dance, not necessarily because of stigma, but rather due to the instability and unpredictability of the arts, especially in South Africa. For PJ, the type of conversation very much depends on the circles in which the conversation is taking place. While dancers may more comfortably be secure in their identity within dance spaces, this may not necessarily be the case in broader society where PJ argues, it may get a little bit more awkward:

I think that for a lot of men who are professionals in the community of their dance industry they have come to have conversations but they are a little bit removed from the broader community in which the conversations get a little bit more uncomfortable. They don’t feel as confident communicating what their career choice is. So it depends where you are placing the conversation – of course when you are talking about traditional or cultural dance the conversation is very different because there, those forms have a place within a specific culture and value system and they have a role and a function to perform in terms of the way the society functions and so then men are men. But the moment we talk about dance organisations and dance training and being a professional, performing on stage...that whole conversation begins to shift a little bit.

(PJ Sabbagha, May 2015)

Here, PJ echoes Gerard when he reiterates that the type of dance plays a central role in the acceptance of or resistance to male participation in it. While “traditional or cultural” dance is recognised as masculine, theatre dance potentially challenges normative ideas around

manhood. This idea is further explored in the next section which considers the ways in which South African Contemporary dance challenges traditional representations of masculinity.

5.2 (Challenging) traditional representations of masculinity in dance

We were living in very abnormal times. So when you are looking at masculinity you need to look at the cultural background and how it has influenced them as artists and as men.

(Adrienne Sichel, May 2015)

This section investigates whether there are traditional representations of masculinity in South African Contemporary dance and if so, how they are manifested. Some questions which informed this interest include, firstly, the extent to which South African dance-makers engage with issues around identity and more specifically, masculinity. Secondly, are these understandings aligned with Western pedagogy or do they diverge to create completely new understandings. In an effort to avoid essentialism or assumptions around an ‘African’ aesthetic, I grounded my questions in the creative processes that my participants, as male choreographers, engaged in.

I was fortunate to catch up with Gregory Maqoma while he was rehearsing for ‘Rain Dance’; a piece he created as part of the Department of Art and Culture’s ‘We are Africa’ anti-xenophobic initiative. For Gregory, African masculinity is about being vulnerable and strong, finding strength *in* vulnerability. “It is not always about having to be this strong ‘African’ male dancer; rather it’s about breaking that boundary to portray men in different ways”. He calls for the need to allow dancers to tap into themselves, making it about truth and authenticity. For Gregory, tackling issues of masculinity allows dancers and audiences to grapple with notions of masculinity, constructing new notions and sometimes deconstructing old ones. He argues that male dancers need to be trained to explore the nuances and intricacies of dance – the softer, feminine qualities. It is something that must be instilled in dancers so that it is not just about the physicality but also about balancing strength and vulnerability. The freedom to explore these and other concepts was one of the main reasons Gregory left MIDM and started his own company, Vuyani Dance Company. Choreographers, like Gregory, who are interested in deconstructing and portraying men in different ways are what Adrienne refers to as those ‘defying masculinity’:

That is one of the things we are known for –that deviation. For instance, the way Gregory uses his sexual identity, but also interrogates history and his own heritage through his choreography. PJ, again has a body of solos while Vincent deals a lot with his African identity in a Western frame. It can all be very radical, and a big departure. The depth and complexity of what people are dealing with kind of defies masculinity and sometimes it is way ahead of what people are doing elsewhere.

(Adrienne Sichel, May 2015)

Here Adrienne alludes to the ways in which dance-makers, by virtue of creating dance in South Africa, have access to a wealth of material. The country's unique history has created opportunities for choreographers to delve into complex and sometimes painful realities in order to explore pertinent issues. The "deviation" which Adrienne speaks of can then also be interpreted as innovation in the sense that South African dance makers, like Gregory, are not confined to existing representations. If anything, there are few conventions which govern representation within dance spaces. As PJ explained, one of the advantages of Contemporary dance being relatively new in South Africa is the freedom and ability to explore, something he terms "the space for diverse representation and voice":

I think because we are such a new and young sector I don't think there is a norm within the South African Contemporary dance frame. I think men are quite free and are in a position where they are able to present almost anything and people will respond to it. Of course it depends on the platform and audience - what you present and how it will be received. But if you look at the way Gregory Maqoma or Boyzie Cekwana how they present themselves and their image and thinking around men, there is space for a lot of diverse representation and voice. So we're quite fortunate in that sense. Of course if you are working at the Johannesburg Ballet then it's a different conversation all together. But in terms of the little Contemporary industry that we have, people are very receptive, but that's within the sector and within the kind of focused dance audience and media, not the general public. So we need to educate new audiences to be open and receptive. However, the notion of being self-sufficient in the arts often prevents the creation of work which challenges normative representations – bums on seats becomes the main objective. Companies are trying to survive.

(PJ Sabbagha, May 2015)

PJ touches on two other important considerations. Firstly, the extent to which dance-works that challenge normative thinking around masculinity are accepted, can only truly be measured by the response of broader society. Those already in the sector or the ‘focused audience and media’ tend to be open-minded enough to critically engage with dance-works from the outset. Dance however, becomes truly transformative when it reaches the general public and is not limited to the ‘expert’ audience comprised of dancers, choreographers, practitioners and dance scholars and critics. We therefore need to continue to create works in public spaces in order for more people to be exposed to dance. This ties into the second consideration PJ raised. On the one hand we are advocating work which challenges normative representations; on the other hand, dance-makers are constrained by what PJ terms a ‘bums on seats’ objective. The serious issue around lack of funding in South Africa has in a way given audiences and funders the power to determine the content of dance projects. From government it comes in the form of bureaucracy, censorship, constrained funding and as previously discussed a nationalist agenda. Where then does this leave new initiatives, like integrated dance, which has developed as an offshoot from Contemporary dance? As stated in Chapter Two, professional integrated dance company Remix was forced to close its doors due to lack of funding in 2012. Is it a fair assessment to say that after over a decade the value of integrated dance has still not been recognized in South Africa?

The next section explores the development of integrated dance and its struggles. I argue that dance of this nature not only provides a model for nation building and reconciliation but also the ways in which nuanced aspects of masculinity can be understood.

6.1 Integrated dance: pioneers and gatekeepers

Gerard sketched the development of integrated dance, in South Africa, starting from the early 90s. Integrated dance first took the form of ballroom dance, where societies for the blind had activities for young blind people. With regards to Contemporary dance, it was in the mid-90s that Gerard, for instance, started to notice disabled dance emerging in the form of dance projects and workshops. Contemporary dance itself was becoming more visible, particularly in the three major cities in the country. In Johannesburg, a critical moment was Adam’s visit in 2000¹⁹. The British Council assisted Adam in coming to South Africa and together with

¹⁹ Gerard was part of a generation that came prior to that 2000 visit, when in 1995 and 1996; people like Jasmine Pasch come into the country. Jasmine was one of the first to introduce dance to young disabled people and specifically children and high school learners.

people like Gerard Samuel and Gladys Agulhas, developed the Tshwaragano project at the Dance Factory in Johannesburg. Out of that particular workshop series grew dance performances that Gladys and Adam created, the first of its kind in South Africa. In my interview with Gladys, she reflected on those years with nostalgia. At the time she had already created her own dance company, Agulhas Theatre Works (ATW), but her focus was on women's issues. It was only through the initial workshops with Adam that she shifted the company's focus to integrated dance. She recalled what an exciting period it was and how fortunate she felt to be a part of inclusive dance practice from its inception:

I was Adam's assistant so it was wonderful, being able to work with disabled people and not knowing what I was going into but just knowing that I was going to learn something new and something different that would enhance my teaching and my dancing but also open up another door. So that's how the integrated scene started and it was wonderful because it was people from all of the provinces, so it meant that it would spread.

(Gladys Agulhas, May 2015)

Gladys explained how being the director of Tshwaragano allowed her to gain first-hand experience of creating integrated work. Soon after, Tshwaragano was invited to the UK by Adam to participate in Celebrate South Africa. This opportunity exposed Gladys to inclusive dance practices and practitioners. What they were doing, was unique:

In the disabled or special needs schools there probably were teachers teaching movement but I don't think they were very inclusive of able bodied people or other able bodied dancers. So it was only probably for those special needs learners in that particular school or they only used disabled kids but to integrate that was a different story.

(Gladys Agulhas, May 2015)

Tshwaragano followed Adam's integrated model, and became a pioneer in its ability to integrate able bodied and differently able bodied dancers. Years of behind the scenes preparation with Gerard, Adam, Gladys and others culminated in the creation of integrated work for South African audiences. Yet the process was not easy. In Gauteng, the first integrated performance on a mainstream dance stage also came out of the Tshwaragano

Project. This happened when Gladys, with two other dancers from the project, created and performed the first locally produced integrated dance-work. Gladys remarked, “I think people in the audience just didn’t expect to see an integrated dance piece”. Subsequently she was invited to run workshops in Sweden, India, Thailand and a host of other countries. People around the world were interested in inclusive dance practice and Gladys was one of the individuals at the forefront. She constantly desired to learn and develop her own techniques and methodologies.

Within the South African context, Gladys described the struggles she encountered in regard to funding for dance-work that “people just didn’t understand”. Those that were interested nonetheless wanted her to run workshops or perform for free. She said:

People also wanted it for free which is what I kept on fighting because you can’t get this work for free - dancers need to be paid and there are expenses, it’s like any other art. We always had funding coming from outside, British Arts Council etc. I therefore needed to rely on other countries to support what I was doing.

(Gladys Agulhas, May 2015)

At around the same time, Remix was founded by Malcolm Black and Nicola Visser in Cape Town. In Durban, Gerard formed a youth dance company Left Feet First Dance Theatre. These were ripple effects from the work of Adam with the Tshwaragano Project at the start of 2000. Funding constraints for these South African companies did not necessarily prevent integrated work from continuing, but it did however hinder progress, which for the arts, is often measured by professionalization:

To speak of a professionalization then, the implications would be that there are full time dance companies that exist, where male dancers are able to find jobs as either choreographers or dancers. Given the state of dance companies in South Africa more generally, very few dance companies operate as full time dance companies, rather they tend to work on project-to-project basis, as they get funding. So there are questions around whether there is in fact a large professional space for dancers who have disabilities and male dancers who have disabilities.

(Gerard Samuel, May 2015)

Added to this was the South African government's unwillingness to commit to integrated dance projects. Gladys described instances where she was asked to spearhead initiatives only to be side-lined once the research and proposals were complete. She emphasises that a lot of corruption and politics were involved. Today, only Unmute, the integrated company created by Remix dancers Zama, Andile and Nadine, still exists. Unmute is currently based at the Artscape theatre in Cape Town, a home which will hopefully assist in the company's sustainability. The next section begins to consider the ways in which integrated dance in South Africa can speak to normative conceptions around identity more generally, and masculinity in particular.

6.2 Commercially viable masculinities

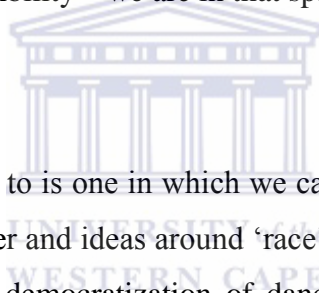
When I am working with someone who is disabled, I am interested in not only the character that person is representing but also what that process allows the dancer to experience. We therefore have the possibilities in dance to shift mind-sets. When you see someone who is an amputee or born without legs, some very profound things go on in your head about what you perceive to be your own body and other peoples bodies in general.

(Gerard Samuel, May 2015)

Gerard reiterates Gregory's desire for dancers to tap into the experiential elements of dance through a consciousness of process, rather than just product. Gerard goes further to link this idea to the ways in which dance can shift mind-sets, particularly with regards to disability. As discussed throughout this thesis, the ability to challenge normative ideas around dance, identity and masculinity through disability underpins my research endeavour. I am therefore interested in the "very profound things that go on in your head about what you perceive to be your own body and other peoples bodies in general". Tied up in understandings of our bodies and the bodies of others are, as suggested in other parts of this thesis (see Chapter 1:4.4 and Chapter 5:3.1), constructed notions of ability which are intrinsically linked to understandings of masculinity. Disability thus destabilizes, or deconstructs these understandings. Integrated dance consequently allows for radical moments of deconstruction as well as invaluable opportunities to reconstruct:

I think this idea to destabilize and deconstruct is an important exercise. When you are looking at how masculinity has been constructed in dance and what sort of representation we present of that so called ideal, it's important to deconstruct and destabilize and say is this actually what we want for how men or man is presented? What are the multifaceted ways that man can be shown? So what's the norm and what's the deviation from the norm and why do you think that deviation exists? The presence of the disabled man is already showing us it is possible to be these things, so the questions might be even more layered in, so even for him, what are his confines as a disabled man? In those instances maybe it's his strength; ideas about fatherhood, how do you place that on stage? Unless we have the courage to place that body on the stage we unconsciously push the person to the margins. We need to be insightful about the ways in which we can expose the normative behaviour that goes on in the society about people that are disabled. And I think that's where dance and the arts provide that possibility – we are in that space.

(Gerard Samuel, May 2015)



This “space” which Gerard refers to is one in which we can grapple with notions of identity, sexuality, ability, disability, gender and ideas around ‘race’. These, among others, are of vital importance when discussing the democratization of dance in South Africa. Similarly, the discipline of anthropology is predicated on understanding these social categories, and at its heart, seeks to make sense of representation, power and politics. I argue that these mutual underpinnings deem dance and anthropology to be useful ways to engage these and similar topics. Together, they speak to the intricacies of the body and the ways in which bodies occupy contested spaces, spaces in constant need of negotiation.

5.

Subjective masculinities

1.1 Introduction

Dance scholarship has for a long time turned to phenomenology to better make sense of the ways in which dancers and the audience experience dance. Phenomenology as a philosophical practice has thus created a means for scholars and practitioners to engage with concepts like embodiment and materiality made known by thinkers like Merleau-Ponty and Husserl (Warburton, 2011)(Cooper Albright, 2011)(Pakes, 2011). I explored phenomenology with a particular focus on bodily intentionality (Valentyn, 2012). My interest lay in the ways in which bodily intentionality could be understood within a multi-sensorial framework, focusing specifically on Merleau-Ponty's reconciliation of touch and vision. Moreover, within integrated dance and Contact Improvisation (CI) specifically, I examined how an experiential model like phenomenology serves to enhance our understanding of the ways in which dancers are bound up with their bodies (Aalten, 2007). Phenomenology can thus be understood as more than a way of thinking, it creates possibilities in which experience, embodiment and consciousness culminate to produce a way of understanding the world and living in it. Merleau-Ponty refers to this as putting the essence back into existence (Merleau-Ponty, 2005). Attracted by his emphasis on corporality and materiality, dance scholars have gravitated more towards Merleau-Ponty's theorization of phenomenology as opposed to Husserl's (1970) endeavours, which tend to be more transcendental. Dance scholars have argued that this is because of his lack of engagement with the lived experience of reality. This is articulated by Pakes (2011: 36):

Because it appears to be more concerned with the nature of thinking, and less with the experience of embodiment, the transcendental approach developed by Husserl is a less obvious point of reference than, say, Merleau-Ponty's poetic reflections on corporeal facticity.

For this reason I align myself with Merleau-Ponty's (2007) understanding of phenomenology as an analytical lens through which to explore the experiences of my participants. The nuances of masculinity, disability and dance are interpreted through a phenomenological framework and seek to foreground the intricacies of negotiation, subjectivity and lived experience using phenomenological methodologies.

2.1 Stuck in the mud: negotiating masculinities

‘Stuck in the Mud’ refers to the production created and directed by Marc during the Llandudno Arts Festival in Wales in 2014. I was privileged to attend performances in various public spaces around Llandudno and also spent time with cast and crew in the days leading up to the festival. For creator and artistic director Marc, ‘Stuck in the Mud’ speaks to the ways in which people get fixed in their ideas and perceptions about dance, often becoming complacent as an audience. Integrated dance breaks stagnant moulds and requires the audience to really engage with the work, taking them on an exciting journey of what dance is and can be. The idea of being ‘stuck in the mud’ can also be applied to narrow societal understandings of masculinity which tend to take on new meaning within integrated dance spaces. To get ‘unstuck’ therefore demands choreographers, dancers and audience to rethink limited perceptions about what masculinity is and can be. More generally however, society still seems ‘stuck’ when it comes to certain perceptions around masculinity and manhood. As discussed in Chapter One, masculinity and disability are two social categories which do not sit comfortably together. Shuttleworth et al (2012) refer to these as competing cultural expectations of disability and masculinity. The expectations associated with masculinity value independence, productivity and leadership, thereby rendering disability problematic. When discussed in the context of dance, disability and masculinity become even more polarized, making the disabled male dancer an anomaly. I was interested in whether my participants thought that disability challenged conventional expectations placed on men, firstly in a more general sense, and then specifically as dancers:

We have an expectation that men will be leaders, supporters, role models, strong, all of these notions, as if women never are. So a man in a wheelchair, at the most basic level, drops in terms of stature. There are questions over all sorts of things that come with that position, that physical position.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

Here Adam speaks to the ways in which disability is perceived socially. The notion that disabled men ‘drop in stature’ points to our limited conceptions of masculinity. The “physical position” that Adam refers to tends to emasculate disabled men rather than challenge our understandings of what it means to be a man. Similarly, these limited conceptions of masculinity feed into masculine metaphors. Expressions such as “having a backbone”, “being an upstanding man” or “standing up for oneself” all reinforce ideas about what is considered

masculine and in turn, what is valued. Adam went on to describe an instance during which a consultant who had invited him and David to run a workshop, blatantly ignored David and chose to speak to Adam about David and his wheelchair, as if David was not there. Adam referred to that instance as the moment that David became an ‘object’ and ceased to exist in his own right. Marc similarly detailed how disability challenges conventional understandings of masculinity. In a personal account, he described how before acquiring his disability he felt strong and capable whereas after the accident, he felt as if he had lost some of that strength and ability:

There is that traditional perception of men being the provider, being the protector, being strong which shifts even as a gay man. But within disability it challenges the disabled person, so someone like myself who was strong as a non-disabled person – I think it’s also different if you acquire your disability as opposed to being born with it – so within that you feel that you lose your strength and the way that you did things before your disability, the way you were perceived and are perceived now.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

Marc brought up an important distinction between being born with a disability and acquiring a disability. For a dancer this is particularly significant because of the transition from having an able body to having a differently able body. He spoke about a certain strength and prowess that he possessed as an able bodied dancer, some of which he felt he had lost as a differently able dancer. He also touched on the issue of perception. He is perceived by some as not being able to physically do what he could do prior to the accident. This once again speaks to the competing cultural expectations of disability and masculinity. Not only is Marc’s ability questioned in terms of being a dancer, it is also questioned in terms of his manhood and his ability to be a man because of his disability. For David, his masculinity was not challenged in the conventional sense, rather he spoke about the difficult time his father had coming to terms with his disability.

Zama explicitly equates masculinity with the ability to provide for his family. His disability thus challenges his masculinity due to the perception that he survives on disability grants as opposed to earning an income:

I think when I was born my dad had the hardest time, guys want sons, it’s the way of the world, I don’t know why, so he finds out his got a son but he finds out he gets

me so all the things he was expecting to do with his son suddenly go out the window, I don't know... play football, go drinking, whatever. So I think it took him a long time to get to terms with that.

(David Toole, September 2014)

Here in SA, once you are having a disability, no one is expecting you to provide for your family as a worker, they expect you to earn a disability grant. That's what they thought of me as well. Lots of the people that live around me are not aware that I am working by doing this [dancing]. They think maybe I'm just here to keep my body fit or I'm here to be trained not to think a lot about my disability. They are not aware that I am here because I am also working and earning an income.

(Zama Sonjica, December 2014)

In both instances social expectations of a man's responsibilities are challenged. David's disability strained his father's hopes for traditional father and son bonding activities such as playing sport. Zama's disability raised questions around his ability to earn an income and support his family. These examples point to the ways in which hegemonic masculinity shape our understandings of manhood and what is considered acceptable for men. The fact that David could not participate in sport in the conventional sense served to interrupt normative understandings of an expectation of young boys. Similarly, the assumption that Zama cannot provide for his family, because of his disability, disrupts understandings of the role of the man in the household. Living off of a grant in this instance is not considered an appropriate way for Zama to support his family – not because the grant is not enough to meet his family's needs but rather because of the ideas attached to Zama's dependence on others, ideas which are in direct conflict with the independence and autonomy expected of men in most societies.

Disability does not only defy normative understandings of masculinity more generally, it also informs perceptions about participation in other spaces. Speaking about the ways in which disability challenges what a dancing body is expected to be able to do, Marc reiterated the possibilities that disability offers dance. This is particularly significant because as stated, Marc became a professional dancer before acquiring his disability. His frame of reference is therefore not just his current dancing body but also the "strong", trained able body prior to his accident:

Dance doesn't need to be defined by our bodies and diversity creates opportunities for growth and development of the art form. No one moves like I do as a disabled person and it's interesting. It redefines what dance is and what it could be. My disability has opened up my own mind about what dance is and about what dance means to me.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

Having only been exposed to traditional dance during his training, Marc speaks to the ways his disability has changed his perceptions about movement, opening up his mind to the potential it offers dancers and dance-makers. Although Marc at times feels like he has lost some of the strength he had before, he has come into his new body and has discovered new ways of dancing and a new understanding of what dance is. His embodied experiences have opened up a new physicality and a new vocabulary of movement, not limited to moving with one's legs. With specific reference to his mental and embodied processes, Marc related the shift that needed to take place internally for him to accept his new physicality. This process resulted in a more nuanced understanding of what being a dancer feels like, alluding to a deeper consciousness of dance as an embodied practice:

I had to go through a real mind shift regarding how I saw myself physically and perceived myself as a dancer. I had to try to stop being or hoping to look like the Marc as a dancer standing up on two legs but focus on my internal being and expression as a dancer and what that meant for me as a disabled dancer using a wheelchair. I retrained as a dancer using a wheelchair in New York under the guidance of Kitty Lunn and ballet teacher Madame Peff Modelski in which I stopped looking in the mirror and focused on how it felt and how I wanted to express with my body. I had to rediscover my body and explore new and interesting ways to move. The training and dancer mentality will always be embedded in me but I had to become familiar and confident with my body and the way I move now and stop living in the past of how it was.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

What Marc refers to as his "internal being", his "expression as a dancer" and by focusing on how dance makes him feel, connects with notions of embodiment and an understanding of one's body. This consciousness of self is not something that should be taken for granted in

dance spaces and is something which I have come to appreciate since I started exploring integrated dance. Integrated dance, at its heart, encourages being connected with oneself in order to connect with others. It thus necessitates a phenomenological approach in many ways, centralising the body and experience in movement. In order for me to capture this, I had to centralise the experiences of my participants.

The next section therefore begins to explore masculinity and disability in dance as accounted for by my participants. I begin firstly by looking at the work of Vida Midgelow followed by a more focused exploration of the ways in which my participants make sense of masculinity within integrated dance spaces.

3.1 The elephant in the room

As already stated, there is a gap in scholarship pertaining to masculinity, disability and dance. One of the few scholars writing about this topic is Vida Midgelow. In her chapter entitled “Reworking the ballet, stillness and queerness in Swan Lake, 4 Acts”, Midgelow (2010) touches on masculinity and disability in dance towards the end of the chapter. In speaking specifically about disabled dancer Raimund Hoghe²⁰ in Swan Lake 4 Acts, Midgelow states:

Hoghe’s homosexuality, disability and profession combine to emasculate him. Hoghe is a man rendered not-male, for here masculinity collides with disability to contradict masculine privilege.

(Midgelow, 2010: 56)

Although this is within the specific context of ballet, Midgelow alludes to the ways in which dance more generally renders disabled men effeminate due to the space their bodies are occupying and the activity their bodies are participating in. She ends the chapter by exploring the ways in which Hoghe reappropriates his ‘not-male status’ and draws attention to the ways in which disability destabilizes the aesthetic in dance, arguing that categories such as gender and sexuality are provisional (Midgelow, 2010: 56). Linking what was previously said about phenomenology (see Chapter 1:5.1 and Chapter 5:1.1) to masculinity, Filiault and Drummond (2007: 176) in their article entitled “The hegemonic aesthetic”, similarly argue that

²⁰ Born in Wuppertal, Germany, Hoghe started his career as a writer. It was only in 1989 when he started creating theatre pieces for various dancers and actors. In 1994 he produced and performed his first solo. He has since gone on to win numerous international awards including Dancer of the Year award from Ballet-tanz in 2008. To date, books about his theatre works are published in parts of Europe, the UK as well as the United States

masculinity as a construct is not stable and needs to be understood as such. What this means for phenomenological researchers is the need to engage with concepts like hegemonic masculinity appropriately in that “hegemonic masculinity, as an umbrella concept, should be deconstructed to components that actually do reflect the essence of individuals’ experiences”. This necessitates an understanding of hegemonic masculinity as socially constructed, unstable and open to resistance. This point of departure is important for the following sections of this chapter which focus on notions of subjective masculinities and the ways in which my participants negotiate their masculinity in integrated dance spaces.

4.1 Subjective masculinities – what does macho got to do with it?

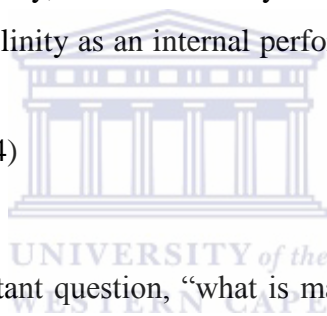
Before embarking on a journey which has subjectivity at its heart, I draw on the work of Gard (2006) in “Aesthetics, athletics and the art of masculinity” to better understand the implications of foregrounding subjectivity in relation to dance. Gard, (2006: 202) interested in the discursive resources that male dancers employ to negotiate their identities, conducted in-depth interviews with various male dancers. His findings suggest that [his participants’] “identities as dancers are not separable from the experience of doing dance,” he therefore understands subjectivity to be epistemological in nature, “embodied, performative and influenced by bodily sensation” (Ibid: 202). With specific reference to pleasure, Gard found that the pleasure that male dancers derive from dance is produced in “complex and context-specific ways” (Ibid: 202). Gard (2006) goes on to argue that what is considered pleasurable in terms of ‘feeling good’ or ‘feeling right’ is embedded in social relations. Therefore subjectivity needs to be understood not only in the embodied sense, but also in the ways that account for “the investments people have in being particular kinds of subjects”. Understanding subjectivity in this way becomes useful for my study because of the ways in which masculinity is also embedded in social relations. Like Gard (2006), I try to avoid presenting a typology of the male dancer by focusing on subjective meaning and embodied experiences. Yet, I am mindful of the ways in which this subjectivity can be shaped by wider social relations.

In trying to better understand how disabled male dancers negotiate their masculinity in integrated dance spaces, I asked participants to discuss the implications of maintaining or deviating from traditional representations of masculinity in Contemporary dance. What came out most clearly was something which I have termed subjective masculinities. More than

anything, this refers to the idea that masculinities take on personal and subjective meaning. Marc referred to the internal qualities of masculinity:

There is a question there for me as well about what is masculinity? Is it a visual representation or is a physical way of moving? You talk about Ted Shawn who, as you said, preferred to work with more athletic men, more buff men, who looked stronger and had a certain physique and for me that may be a visual representation of masculinity but I think masculinity is deeper than that. I think Lloyd goes more that way, the internal qualities of masculinity rather than the societal view of what masculinity looks like with regards to physique as opposed to performance quality and movement, textures and layers. So for me...masculinity...obviously I'm a very skinny person [laughs] and my physique would not be a sports, athletic masculinity but I think through my own movement vocabulary I deviate into all those areas of masculinity, softness, femininity, I like to be a layered performer and cross over all those forms so I think masculinity as an internal performance quality is part of who I am in my work.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)



Marc begins by posing an important question, “what is masculinity?” Already he alludes to the fragile nature of constructs like masculinity and suggests that it can either be understood in conventional terms, by means of “visual representation”, or more subjectively by means of a “physical way of moving” or being. With reference to more traditional understandings of masculinity, Marc uses Ted Shawn as an example of a choreographer interested in working with dancers with an athletic physique. This physique, as stated in earlier discussion about Shawn (see Chapter 3:2.2), would be more representative of traditional conceptualisations and representations of masculinity. Marc however does not necessarily subscribe to this narrow definition and in turn offers a more dynamic understanding of masculinity. He suggests it to be “deeper”, something more personal. With regards to his own work, Marc understands masculinity to encompass softer, more feminine qualities and as a performer he enjoys collapsing these boundaries to create work that is more “layered”.

Adam considered more of the social implications for the way we understand masculinity. He alludes to existing perceptions of masculinity as being problematic because of the ways in

which these definitions exclude mutually respectful relationships between men. Reciprocal respectfulness in relationships mean that men neither dominate nor harm each other:

I think there is something that goes on when you have men on stage dancing. That's a nice kind of pairing Ted Shawn and Lloyd Newson. Ted Shawn's work is about this very masculinized, traditional male dancer while Lloyd takes us to another extreme. He's often interested in the experiences of gay men. There is something in between those two points. Neither of them are necessarily that helpful in establishing what masculinity might be and what the male dancer might be. If we can see men in close physical contact who are neither dominating each other nor harming each other, this for me is perhaps one of the most significant representations of masculinity that we can have.

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

Adam went on to articulate how men within close proximity, supporting, caring and trusting one another offered a significant representation of masculinity for society:

While I am a great admirer of Lloyds work the men that he portrays are often men in conflict or men in positions of oppression, either self-imposed or imposed by others. But perhaps the simplest portrayal of men happily in contact, supporting, lifting, trusting – that's a really hard thing for our society to wrap its head around. This is what holds for me: is it possible to establish a culture in which men can be in physical proximity without having to be gay or harming each other. Is there any other territory that can be inhabited and if there is then what a relief that is!

(Adam Benjamin, September 2014)

Adam points to an important issue regarding the problem with male dancers. He argues that as a society, we need to create a culture in which men can occupy the same space without the assumption of homosexuality or the need to dominate each other. If we could establish this culture then perhaps the male dancer would be less of a threat to hegemonic notions of masculinity. This in turn allows for the reconfiguration of limited understandings of masculinity, resulting in an environment more conducive for the participation of men in dance and other art forms. Against the backdrop of discussions around hegemonic masculinity and the expectations attached to this way of thinking and being, I employ the

notion of subjective masculinities as a way to make sense of the lived realities of my participants. I suggest that although a normative, hegemonic masculinity exists, and at times even shapes our understandings of masculinity, there are subjective masculinities at work which resist limiting conceptions of manhood and provide alternative ways of engaging the topic.

4.2 I feel, therefore I am

There are disabled men who do feel they need to prove their strength and their manhood, I don't particularly feel like I need to do that anymore – I did. And even when I acquired my disability I thought that I have to push myself, work hard and I had to prove how strong I am.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

The above quote from Marc speaks specifically about the shift in his understanding of masculinity. He referred to the need disabled men often have to assert their manhood and prove their strength in order to feel like men and to be perceived as men. He also admits to feeling this way when he first acquired his disability. Prior to his accident, Marc understood the male dancer in very visceral terms in relation to dance. For him, the male dancer represented strength and prowess made possible through their ability to execute physical feats. After his accident, Marc had to find new ways of discovering what masculinity meant. At first he felt the need to push himself and work hard, but as he became more secure and comfortable in his new body, his confidence grew, as did his understanding of what it means to be a man.

A central concern of this research endeavour therefore, was around the ways in which my participants negotiate their masculinity as disabled male dancers. I was interested in what they understood masculinity to be and how this informed their experiences as dancers. What came out most clearly was an acknowledgement of a hegemonic masculinity which exists, but which my participants did not necessarily subscribe to. Rather, it became clear that masculinity takes on more subjective meanings and is consequently different for each participant. Building on that, I was interested in how these experiences inform the

choreographic processes of my participants. In our interview, Marc alluded to the ambiguity of masculinity in his creative practice:

To be honest, I don't know if I am always aware of my masculinity. It's a part of me as an emotional being and as a quality... [long pause]. And it does bring back that question of what is masculinity? Is it about a look or aesthetic or is a quality and emotion? You know?

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

Here Marc suggests that there are a variety of ways that masculinity can be expressed in dance. He also alludes to the different ways those masculinities are read and interpreted by an audience when he states: "I mean I could have strength and masculinity in a movement and in a gesture that has that intention, but does that read as masculinity?" This goes back to the notion of subjective masculinities which becomes subjective not only for the choreographer and performer, but also the audience. What is "read" as masculinity will differ over time and place, once again speaking to its constructed nature. The ambiguity of masculinity thus allows choreographers more freedom to express their understandings of masculinity through their work. For Marc, it is about finding ways of combining strength with softer, more tender qualities. It is not something he is necessarily always aware of - rather, these qualities inform his understanding of masculinity and are therefore infused in his work:

I don't think I'm always aware of my masculinity – yes I'm a male and yes my work is very physical, I mention physical strength and that does come from being a man I suppose but also I love the tenderness and softness and quality as well. I don't go out and make a piece about showing my masculinity – I don't need to do that. Masculine is not always about physical strength or power. It could be about the way you hold your body, the way you look with regards to a presence rather than physicality.

(Marc Brew, September 2014)

Speaking specifically about 'Remember when', a solo he choreographed and performed numerous times, Marc refers to the emotional quality of the dance. He remains in one position on stage in his wheelchair and performs mainly hand gestural movements about "pathways, placement and replacement". Here it is about the intention behind each movement and his presence on stage, a presence which Marc establishes within the first few seconds of

the dance. There is an intensity in his eyes which is captivating and strong. There are also moments in the dance where he looks vulnerable, particularly when he folds the upper half of his body forward, resting his chest on his legs, with his head down. These are the tender qualities I imagine he is speaking of when he refers to the tenderness and softness he enjoys incorporating into his performances.



‘Remember when’: Marc Brew
(Photographs taken from the internet – Google images)

Zama on the other hand equated masculinity with strength and improvement. For him, feeling masculine while dancing is about being able to do all that is required of him as a dancer. If there are things that he cannot do at first he simply has to work harder in order to execute those movements. When asked about the ways in which he negotiates his masculinity as a disabled dancer, David spoke more about the role of the choreographer:

I don’t honestly think about it. Whoever is working with me or employed me at the time, what they ask me to do I will do. It’s down to the person who creates the work.

(David Toole, September 2014)

This points to the responsibility that choreographers have of, as Adam says, “unhooking the audiences’ perceptions” of what constitutes masculinity. David as a dancer is in less of a position to determine the content of performances than a dance-maker. He executes movements as directed and the extent to which the movements are ‘masculine’ or not, are determined by the choreographer. There are seemingly different dynamics at play when speaking of subjective masculinity in dance. There are the dance-makers who have their own

understandings of masculinity and who set out to either intentionally or unintentionally address issues of power and identity through their work. There are the dancers themselves who also have their own understandings of what masculinity entails, which may or may not come through in the execution of certain movements. Lastly, the audience have specific filters through which they engage with the performances being viewed, which in turn shape their understanding of masculinity. Subjective masculinity is therefore a complex web which needs to be negotiated on various levels.



6.

Concluding thoughts

South African dance scholar Leanne Loots reminds one that even the position of who can be called a dancer, is highly contested given our colonial and apartheid heritage. Many of the questions raised all those years ago still seem to remain and increasingly resonate outside of the South African space. Confluences 8 seeks to address when does the work, as spectacle, happening before us qualify as African? Whose dance is this – who does it belong to?

(Gerard Samuel, Confluences 8, July 2015)

Given that disability signifies the cultural antithesis of the fit, healthy body, what happens when visibly disabled people move into the role of dancer, the very same role that has been historically reserved for the glorification of an ideal body? Does the integration of disabled bodies into contemporary dance result in a disruption of ablist preconceptions about professional dance? Or does the disabled body "transcend" its disability to become a dancer?

(Cooper Albright, 1997: 57)

In the opening plenary session of Confluences 8, the director of UCT Dance School Gerard Samuel, set the tone for what turned out to be three days of robust discussion about negotiating Contemporary dance in Africa. His questions must be understood against the backdrop of earlier discussions around the 'whiteness' of ballet contrasted with 'traditional' and presumably more static 'African' dance (see Chapter 4:2.1 and 3.1). These dichotomies, as foregrounded during the conference, are contentious because it tends to reinforce ideas around 'whiteness' as progressive and superior, while the black body is trapped in 'tradition' and consequently cast as the antithesis of the classical, contemporary and modern body.

Similarly, Cooper Albright (1997) argues disability to be the "cultural antithesis of the fit, healthy body". This once again raises questions around which bodies are privileged and why? These polarities, white/black, ability/disability, Western/African are not helpful in trying to critically engage with issues around the body, nor do they offer theoretically compelling

approaches for making sense of the complex world we live in today. Samuel and Cooper Albright thus urge us to grapple with the nuances of identity in more productive ways. I hope through this study to have added to the limited yet dynamic scholarship from the global South, to advance what Connell (2014) terms “world centred” masculinities. I hope to have challenged some of the limiting perceptions of hegemonic masculinity and the male dancer’s body to advance the artistic medium of dance and allow for constructive dialogue around issues of access and inclusivity. Furthermore, like Roebuck (2001), I hope to have alluded to the ways in which contemporary dance-works contribute to the development of a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which dance articulates masculine identity. The rest of this section is dedicated to reviewing what I have put forward in previous chapters. It summarizes pertinent points and encourages reflection and critical engagement around identity construction more generally, and the differently able male dancer, in particular.

I located my interest in masculinity, dance and disability within the broader scholarly endeavour of integrated dance, established in my Honours thesis. I foregrounded the gap in scholarship pertaining to inclusive dance practice generally and masculinity, dance and disability in particular. I suggested that using a gendered approach within this context offers an opportunity to examine the nuances of masculinity. I therefore argued the need to challenge traditional gender practices in dance as well as for more theoretically compelling approaches to understanding differently able male dancers. I outlined my aim of exploring the lived experiences of professional disabled male dancers, by focusing on the ways in which masculinity, disability and dance together inform these experiences.

The role of visual anthropology in examining social practices, such as dance was articulated and I suggested that more reflexive and re-developed approaches to visual ethnography offer anthropologists exciting ways of understanding dance in contemporary society. Other exciting developments in dance include the creation of integrated dance spaces globally and locally. Integrated dance companies allow for new imaginaries of dancing bodies, challenging perceptions regarding which bodies should occupy dance spaces.

With regard to integrated spaces, I briefly described their development in the respective countries. While in the United States and United Kingdom the integrated scene is well established, South Africa still has a long way to go and continues to struggle with issues around funding and bureaucracy. I also claimed that the creation and professionalization of these companies in different parts of the world have still not entirely placed dance and

disability on the scholarly agenda, nor has it necessarily facilitated discussion around the participation of disabled male dancers. There is therefore a need for anthropological research which foregrounds the experiences of differently able male dancers which can assist in broader reconceptualisations of masculinity. Building on that, I discussed the limitations of hegemonic masculinity, arguing for a more dynamic approach to understanding the complexities of male identity. I suggested the work of Demetriou (2001:348), which unlike hegemonic masculinity, suggests a non-reified and non-dualistic understanding of masculine practice and power, to be more appropriate for my study. Drawing on the work of Demetriou offered the potential to better understand how my participants negotiate their masculinity.

By using South Africa as an example, I reiterated the need to be context conscious when speaking of masculinities. Histories of colonisation and the ways in which these histories continue to shape present socio-cultural practices need to be accounted for. This approach may assist in preventing the homogenization of men. I used this basis as a point of departure for discussing masculinity and disability, using literature to support claims of the image and reality of men with disabilities destabilising cultural beliefs about men's bodies and physical ability. What became clear is the existence of a masculinity which serves as the standard against which all other masculine behaviour and ideals are measured. Behaviour that deviates or challenges this standard (alternative masculinity) is deemed problematic. Although alternative visions of masculinity available to men speak of a shift in theory and arguably practice, what remains a conceptual problem is the continued emphasis on masculinity and disability as generic categories. Rather, Shuttleworth et al (2012) encourage a more explicit understanding of how context contributes to this dynamism. Theorists like Merleau-Ponty would argue this as accounting for the materiality of existence and I included a discussion on phenomenology, suggesting it to be a useful conceptual tool to enable "thinking through" masculinity and consequently male dancing bodies.

I suggested that the study of masculinity, dance and disability pushed existing boundaries around limiting conceptualisations of masculinity, forging a new frontier, similar to the ways in which male dancers have been doing for the past decades. I sought to explore lived experiences around masculinity and disability in Contemporary dance through the use of a mixed-method ethnographic study. Within this context, I employed a phenomenological approach. It was situated within a framework of personal perspective and subjectivity and was focused on interpretation (Saenz, Bukoski, Lu and Rodriguez, 2013: 9). The phenomenological approach was selected in order to enhance understanding of my

participants in an attempt to illuminate how these dancers negotiate and embody their masculinity in dance spaces.

In the study I tried to gain nuanced insight into the lives of my participants. Because they are all professional dancers, it presented particular problems for me in relation to access. Nonetheless, through face-to-face, in-depth interviews, by observing performances and rehearsals as well as having many conversations and discussions, with a variety of people, this study could particularly illuminate the lives of Marc Brew (Scotland), David Toole (England) and Zama Sonjica (South Africa) as professional disabled male dancers. In addition, I interviewed a pioneer in inclusive practice, dance practitioner and co-founder of Candoco Adam Benjamin, the person who planted the seed for integrated dance in South Africa. Because I felt strongly about conducting an ethnographic study, I travelled to Wales and England to personally conduct interviews and observe my participants in their respective dance spaces. More than that, it was an opportunity for me to engage with my participants in many ways. This thesis involved a multi-sited, ethnographic study and enabled me to experience the ways in which my participants embody masculinity as dancers. I argue that this approach can enhance future studies similar in nature. This methodological approach also resonated with existing scholarship used in the study, which foregrounded embodiment, phenomenology and participatory practice. I therefore made connections between the data and larger theoretical frameworks in order to provide a pathway to broader literature expounded upon in other chapters.

The ‘problem’ with men as dancers, as discussed by a number of dance scholars, was elaborated. It was argued that, although in some parts of the world, dance for men is an accepted and valued cultural and social practice (Fisher and Shay, 2009), in dominant Western paradigms, theatrical dance training and the social meanings associated with it have traditionally been perceived as a female activity and art form (Risner, 2009: 6), dominated by women (Roebuck, 2001). I detailed the trajectory of dance in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom and followed the lived experiences of my participants with regards to their formative years as young dancers as well as their experiences around their professional careers. To do so, I described the anxieties of attending dance class at school-going age and detailed how it was their love for dance, as well as the support they received from their families that enabled them to continue both as young dancers and later on in life as professionals, despite dance not being a popular career choice for men at the time.

The thesis then shifted to the role that Contemporary dance plays in challenging traditional representational practices in dance, especially with regard to integrated dance. It was suggested that choreography for male dancers traditionally sets them up as enablers, supporters and carriers - enabling the female dancer, carrying the female dancer. Contemporary dance arguably disrupts this, providing alternative ways of male and female engagement on stage, taking on particular significance in integrated spaces. David gave an example of his colleague Chris, who he suggested 'thinks differently' about ability and does not necessarily fall into the choreographic trap of conforming to traditional gender representation. Adam, with specific reference to choreographer Hofesh Schechter, suggested that Contemporary dance provides new choreographic possibilities for men in terms of having access to a wider vocabulary of movement.

Shifting from that, I considered the potential that disability offers dance. David, Adam and Zama all articulated the ways in which disability disrupts traditional understandings of dance and the bodies which should be dancing. David and Zama both alluded to the possibility of them never becoming dancers if they were able bodied, indicating the possibilities that disability offers dance and movement. I also explored the importance of gender equality within the integrated performative space to allow opportunities to change the way we understand the relationship between able-bodied and differently-abled male and female dancers.

There is a lack of scholarship that addresses the development of Contemporary dance in South Africa pre- and post-apartheid. I used ballet and its colonial history to discuss the ways in which other dance forms struggled for legitimacy. In this regard I argued that the history of South African Contemporary dance is of significance because of the ways in which this history has shaped the present dance landscape. This is important for understanding the nuances of dance in South Africa today. This is also important to signal the differences between male dancers in South Africa and male dancers in the West. I suggested that due to dance being viewed as part and parcel of 'African culture', men have been able to more easily pursue professional careers in dance. Moreover, due to other social factors such as exposure to international dance stars, young South African men have role models to whom they can aspire. Lastly, because South African Contemporary dance has its roots in 'traditional' African dance, young, black male dancers increasingly gravitate towards this genre. However, it must not be taken for granted that these male dancing bodies are readily accepted by audiences and society more broadly. Instead male dancers in South Africa need

to be examined on a case-by-case basis in order to understand the nuances of their respective contexts and backgrounds and the ways in which it shapes acceptance of or resistance to their careers in dance. An important question to ask was whether there were traditional representations of masculinity in South African Contemporary dance and if so, how these were manifested. I would argue that although Marc, in his work, taps into the complexity of vulnerability and strength, the context in which he creates his work is radically different from that in South Africa. This brings to mind anthropological theories pertaining to the universal and the particular. In these instances the deconstruction of masculinity can be seen in different parts of the world; however, the complexity thereof lays in the particularity of respective contexts, including but not limited to histories of colonialism and oppression.

To enable me to do this study, I also had to attend to the development of integrated dance in South Africa in a section titled 'Pioneers and gatekeepers'. To do so, it was important to consider key drivers, such as Adam Benjamin and Gladys Agulhas, in developing inclusive dance practice in the form of professional dance companies. Nonetheless it is difficult to obtain funding for this purpose, which in turn affects the sustainability of integrated professional dance companies. The fact that there currently is only one such company left in South Africa, highlights this problematic. Nevertheless disability offers potential for challenging normative ideas around masculinity, and integrated dance allows for radical moments of deconstruction as well as opportunities to reimagine the South African dancing body.

Phenomenology as an approach enables better understanding of dance as an embodied practice. Merleau-Ponty's (2005) theorisation of phenomenology provided as an analytical lens through which to explore the experiences of my participants. I argued that the nuances of masculinity, disability and dance could therefore be successfully interpreted through a phenomenological framework, foregrounding the intricacies of negotiation, subjectivity and lived experience. The ways in which disability challenged conventional expectations placed on men was illuminated by various examples put forward by my participants. These examples pointed to the ways in which hegemonic masculinity shape our understandings of masculinity and what is considered acceptable for men. Disability not only challenges normative understandings of masculinity more generally, it also informs perceptions about participation in other spaces. Disability furthermore defies what a dancing body is expected to be able to do.

Having only been exposed to traditional dance during his training, Marc, for example, mentioned the ways his disability had changed his perceptions about movement, opening up his mind to the potentiality it offers dancers and dance-makers. Although Marc at times felt like he had lost some of the strength he had before his accident, he has since come into his new body and has discovered new ways of dancing and a new understanding of what dance is. His embodied experiences have opened up a new physicality and a new vocabulary of movement.

Although situated within the specific context of ballet, the work of Midgelow (2010) alludes to the ways in which dance more generally renders disabled men effeminate due to the space their bodies occupy and the activity their bodies are participating in. She explores the ways in which renowned dance-maker Hoghe reappropriates his 'not-male status' and draws attention to the ways in which disability also destabilizes the aesthetic in dance. Thus, for Midgelow, categories such as gender and sexuality are provisional. This notion of 'provisionality' is very useful for phenomenological researchers who wish to engage with concepts like hegemonic masculinity: which necessitates an understanding of hegemonic masculinity as socially constructed, unstable and open to resistance. This 'provisionality' helps us to better make sense of notions of subjective masculinities and the ways in which my participants negotiate their masculinity in integrated dance spaces.

At the same time the work of Gard (2006) underscores subjectivity as epistemological in nature. Understanding subjectivity in this way highlights the manner in which masculinity, too, is embedded in social relations. Therefore, like Gard (2006), I tried to avoid presenting a typology of the male dancer. Instead I focused on subjective meaning and embodied experiences and was mindful of the ways in which this subjectivity can be shaped by wider social relations. In an attempt to better understand how disabled male dancers negotiate their masculinity in integrated dance spaces, I asked participants to discuss the implications of maintaining or deviating from traditional representations of masculinity in Contemporary dance. What came out most clearly was something which I termed 'subjective masculinities'. More than anything, this refers to the idea that masculinities take on personal and subjective meaning. Against the backdrop of discussions around hegemonic masculinity and the expectations attached to this way of thinking and being, I employ the notion of subjective masculinities as a way to make sense of the lived realities of my participants. I suggest that although a normative, hegemonic masculinity exists and at times even shapes our

understandings of masculinity, there are subjective masculinities at work which resist limiting conceptions of manhood and provide alternative ways of engaging the topic.

In conclusion, I initially had the idea that masculinity is pervasive, explicit and shapes the way my participants experience being disabled dancers. Through conducting this study I have realised, however, that for these dancers masculinity is less about *doing*, and more about *being*. It is something that they *are*, rather than something that they *do*. This being said, masculinity means different things to different people and cannot be understood only in conventional ways, with any sort of universal definition. Rather, being a disabled male dancer offers novel ways of experiencing the subjectivity of masculinity and allows us to take stock of our narrow preconceptions, ideologies and the ways that we negotiate our expectations of each other. The provisionality of subjective masculinity was a way for me to make sense of the complexities of what Adam refers to as ‘the male condition’.

However; it is not enough to fully articulate the ways in which my participants inhabit their bodies. Perhaps this is due to it being such a personal reality but I also have a hint that for these dancers, masculinity is more subtle than it is explicit. This was made evident by the fact that my participants had never really thought about the ways in which they are masculine, the ways in which their work is masculine or even the ways in which they negotiate their masculinity. For most, it was just a way of as Merleau-Ponty would say ‘being in the world’. This is not to suggest that dancers lack consciousness, in fact: they have a heightened awareness of self, due to the embodied nature of dance (Aalten, 2007)(Cooper Albright, 2011)(Pakes, 2011). Indeed, it speaks to the ways in which my participants experience their bodies both subjectively and materially. From a phenomenological perspective, my participants have offered me ways of better understanding what being a male dancer means to them. It has in turn allowed me to reflect on my own assumptions and the ways in which these expectations perhaps informed the types of questions asked, as well as the answers I was expecting to get. That being said, I hope to have illuminated glimpses of the lives of Marc, David and Zama in a way that is both meaningful and challenging. My desire was for this project to offer novel ways of understanding the nuances of masculinity, through employing an ethnographic study, enhanced by a phenomenological approach. Through my work, I hope to inspire not only new imaginings of the differently able male dancer, both in South Africa and elsewhere, but also the ways in which we negotiate difference, moving away from the confines of polarisation to embrace the dynamism of the unknown.

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Interviews

Marc Brew	(19/09/2014; Llandudno)
Adam Benjamin	(22/09/2014; Plymouth)
David Tootle	(30/09/2014; Farnham)
Zama Sonjica	(10/12/2014; Cape Town)
Gerard Samuel	(18/05/2015; Cape Town)
Adrienne Sichel	(21/05/2015; Johannesburg)
PJ Sabbagha	(21/05/2015; Johannesburg)
Sylvia Glasser	(21/05/2015; Johannesburg)
Gladys Agulhas	(22/05/2015; Johannesburg)
Georgina Thompson	(22/05/2015; Johannesburg)

