

**Queer Transgressions: The choreographing of a male
homosexual presence with reference to selected
choreographers**

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Abstract

Queer Transgressions: The choreographing of a male homosexual presence with reference to selected choreographers explores queer identity and in particular representations of a male homosexual presence in dance. Within the methodological framework of dance studies and queer theory I explore the “self fashioning” of my male homosexual presence in dance. This is achieved by critically deconstructing my choreographic process when making choreography. Therefore this thesis is informed by both academic research and my self-reflexive experience of choreography and dance performance. The deconstruction of my autobiography and choreographic process is discussed with reference to both international and South African queer choreographers. This means that by accounting for my own experiences and approaches toward representing a male homosexual presence in dance, I explore the history and engagements of other queer choreographers also creating such representations. I therefore examine the works of selected choreographers and chart the development of the representation of a male homosexual presence in dance. By exploring the choreographic process of other queer choreographers I identify choreographic tactics that queer choreographers are using when making work. From this point of departure I shift the focus away from international queer choreographers and provide insight into the choreographic processes of South African queer choreographers. By accounting for the works and choreographic processes of South African choreographers, I provide a context in which my choreographic explorations on the subject matter can take place.

This choreographic exploration manifests itself through a self-reflexive/autobiographic account on the research and practice of my choreographic process. During my choreographic exploration I set the challenge to both engage with and explore further, established “queering tactics”. This is done with the intention to reveal and create representations of a male homosexual presence in dance.

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A queer introduction

To explore the queer can be considered as an attempt to locate the strange or that which Tasmin Spargo describes as “a marker of transgression” (Spargo 1999:3). It is to align oneself with that which does not quite fit into the way things should look. This queerness is located in the realm of sex, the body, politics and choreography, “for sex is always political, and the realm of sexuality has its own internal politics and modes of oppression” (*Ibid* 1999:6) when explored in dance and choreography.

These identities are marked as “other” in that they transgress the normative constructs of society and provide alternative approaches to the ways in which we understand the human mind, body and soul. The representation of homosexual identity takes place within the context of a heteronormative society. Homosexual presence has the potential to disrupt societal norms and consequently raise socio-political questions. Theorising for homosexual identities is a field of study only beginning to be explored by academics, writers and choreographers. I believe that the study of concert dance and choreography provides an opportunity for the exploration and embodiment of such homosexual identities.

The choreographing of a male homosexual presence in dance with reference to selected choreographers considers male homosexual subjectivities and representations in the context of critical dance studies and choreography. It attempts to reveal valuable queer knowledge which exists as an embodied document of choreographic autobiographies. This is manifested through my choreographic research as a practice of enactment – a praxis of discourse and critical writing with my personal biography and choreography. It is therefore a self-reflexive study on my choreographic practice and research – it is an autobiographical “choreological perspective” (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg 2002:2). The “choreological perspective” accounted for in this thesis understands dance as an embodied

performative¹ art” (*Ibid* 2002:3). It also, “locates dance within the field of theatrical performance, that is, performance that operates within a theatrical framework organised by theatrical codes, in whatever venue it happens to take place” (Sanchez-Colberg 2002:3). Therefore the term “choreological perspective” refers to the process of documenting my choreographic research, methods and process when making choreography. I therefore align the approach of my choreological perspective with the ideas of Sanchez-Colberg by:

aiming to promote and enable practical research by articulating and debating what is peculiar to *my* dance: it’s making, its performing, its spectating, its medium, its choreographic treatments, its documenting methods, et al (*Ibid* 2002:3).

This personal journey engages with a formal investigation into the choreographing of a male homosexual presence by selected queer choreographers. The approaches used by the queer choreographers examined in this thesis provide insight and inform the development of my choreographic practice and attempts to represent a male homosexual presence in dance.

I have structured this theoretical investigation according to interrelated themes. The use of themes allows for selection and it gives me the opportunity to refer to choreographers practicing in different periods and contexts. This means that I can explore specific approaches and strategies used by choreographers and inform my own appreciation of homosexual identity within contemporary choreography.

The first theme of this thesis attempts to locate the queer as both societal construct and academic discourse. It provides ways into understanding the queer and applies such understandings to contemporary choreography. It consequently creates a methodological framework for analysis. The second theme explores the ways in which queer choreographers fashion their personal identities through their choreography. It explores Michel Foucault’s notion of “self fashioning” and the ways in which

¹ Performative events are ones in which “actors” and “spectators” engage in an exchange of some sort. ‘While performing refers to the implementing of, presenting and accomplishing aspects of an act of theatre, performative refers to “an expression that serves to effect a transaction” (Merriam Webster, 1993). (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg 2002:1).

it can be linked to autobiography and choreographic research. This theme links the process of “self fashioning” to international developments being made in choreographic research. It highlights that many choreographers “fashion” their personal identities through their choreographic practice and document their research and choreographic processes when making choreography. The choreographer’s life is consequently a work of art.

In the third theme I posit contextual approaches to the representation of a male homosexual presence in dance. This theme provides a brief socio-historical overview of selected international choreographers dealing with the representation of male homosexual identities in dance. The selected choreographers include Lloyd Newson, Matthew Bourne and Mark Morris. I identify and discuss established choreographic devices (or queering tactics) that these choreographers have used when representing homosexual identity and the ways in which personal presence plays a role in creating a male homosexual reading in their choreographies. This theme documents a number of queering tactics (gender reversal, re-appropriating space, narrative) used to create representations of a male homosexual presence in dance. Such queering tactics came to inform my choreographic practice. This theme provides a foundation for further investigation into an appreciation of queer transgressions within a South African context.

The fourth theme shifts focus to the choreographic practices of South African queer choreographers such as Acty Tang, Steven Cohen and Gregory Maqoma. My intention here is to align the choreographic practices of these choreographers with that of their international counterparts and to show the use of personal presence and the process of “self fashioning” in the making of their choreographies. I also examine the ways in which these choreographers have engaged with and developed established queering tactics in their work. This provides a context in which my own choreographic “self-fashioning” can occur.

The fifth theme is an autobiographical exploration of my choreographic approaches toward representing a male homosexual presence in dance with reference to my choreography entitled *Odd Man Out* (2007). In this theme I engage with established queering tactics and set myself the challenge of developing such tactics within the context of my choreography. The particular

challenge in *Odd Man Out* was to avoid the use of male dancing bodies when representing a male homosexual presence. I also explored the ways in which surrealist tactics and the use of seduction/polysemantism could help to develop a male homosexual presence in my work.

In theme six I continue to discuss personal approaches to representing a male homosexual presence in dance. This theme looks specifically at issues surrounding “coming out” and the theoretical construction of a male homosexual identity. The challenge is to explore further the process of self-fashioning and autobiography through examining the use of queering tactics such as masking/absence of identity, imagery of reflection and the re-appropriating of myth and narrative in my choreography *Narcissus* (2008).

The last theme acts as a brief summation of central issues and provides further insight and conclusion to the content of this thesis. It provides an overview of the queering tactics South African queer choreographers are using when making work representing a male homosexual presence in dance. It also highlights that representation of male homosexual identity is a vibrant concern in South African choreography and with a multi-ethnic democracy, there is variety in the representations. The theme provides an overview of the choreographic tactics that queer South African choreographers are engaging with and the importance of the personal presence of the choreographer in creating a male homosexual representation in dance.

Theme 1: Locating the queer

The term “queer” has undergone a number of transformations with regard to its associated meanings in the last century. Originally meaning strange or odd the term was a way of identifying and referring to any individuals, objects or events marked as other (Foster 2001:195). Tamsin Spargo notes that in recent years western society has begun flirting with this notion of the queer and that:

On the streets Bart Simpson is seen sporting a pink triangle, and the word ‘queer’, once hurled or whispered as an insult is now proudly claimed as a marker of transgression by people calling themselves lesbian or gay (Spargo 1999:9).

She maintains that post 1990 western society has become tolerant of queer identities. Terms such as “queer” and “gay” start to lose their negative connotations and are re-appropriated in an attempt to assert homosexual identity and difference. Judith Butler notes that the 1980’s granted, “an increasing politicisation of the theatricality for queers” (Butler in Burt 2001:152).

The term “queer” has become cheekily appropriated by the academic community in order to refer to a more inclusive study of the feminised “other”. By feminised “other” I refer to identities that constitute the sexual minority. Queer theory has developed out of postcolonial, postmodern and feminist theories and is a continually developing theory of the 21st century which:

is not a singular or systemic conceptual or methodological framework, but a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire. If queer theory is a school of thought, then it’s one with a highly unorthodox view of discipline. The term describes a diverse range of critical practices and priorities (Spargo 1999:9).

Queer theory is situated in opposition to dominant hetero-normative discourses and its constituting theories work to undermine and act against notions of authority. It advocates an inclusive platform for exploring and studying feminised identities. The emergence of such an inclusive platform

occurred in reaction against the ideals of early feminist theory. Early feminist theory was structured on binary thought processes and excluded feminised identities outside the gender of women. Theorists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan and Judith Butler writing from the 1980's onwards contribute to a discourse concerned with more than just the gender of the subject. They contribute to queer theory advocating an inclusive approach toward understanding that which constitutes the feminine identity. The feminine in the context of queer theory is that which does not meet the demands of heterosexuality. The feminine subject evades conformity and societal expectations. This advocates a disregard of the binary opposites that pervade heteronormative and masculine ideals. Queer theory's understandings of the feminine shift away from expecting **this** or **that** and embrace the **in between**, the grey area existing beneath the surface of the norm (Baudrillard 1990:6).

Dance studies and queer theory are associated through shared interrelationships. These interrelationships include sexuality, desire, the body, identity, negotiations of power and space/context. Dance studies explore critical writings of choreographic intentions. They also include writings on dance language and theatrical imagery used by choreographers and provide an account of socio-political and historical implications informing the creating of a choreographer's work. Anna Cvetkovitch terms dance analysis as, "a cultural politics of movement" (Burt 2001:213). The body is placed at the centre of the investigation and through movement enacts or rejects socially constructed expectations thus eliciting a "politics of movement". Therefore placing dance at the centre of sexuality studies is imperative since: "How one moves and how one moves in relation to others constitutes a public enactment of sexuality and gender (Burt 2001:213). Dance therefore provides a "privileged arena for the body's enactment of sexuality" (Desmond 2001:3) and the opportunity of deconstructing, reassessing and further pursuing homosexual representations and understandings of sexuality. "Analysing dance can help us understand how sexuality is literally inhabited, embodied and experienced" (Desmond 2001:13). Therefore dance needs to be acknowledged and approached as an "embodied social practice" (*Ibid* 2001:13). The interrelationships shared by dance studies and queer theory

highlight the plausibility of using queer theory as a framework for analysing representations of sexuality in dance.

Queer theory has provided a conceptual platform for the development of a much needed queer dance history. Although resources pertaining to the field are growing, further research in this field is required. Ramsay Burt (2003) and Jane Desmond (2001) have attempted to establish a queer dance history. Burt's text *Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities: The Male Dancer* and Desmond's *Dancing Desires* provide written accounts for examining representations of homosexual identity in dance. Burt examines changing perceptions on masculinity and homosexuality within western society over the last century and reveals the slow outing of homosexual representation in dance. Desmond's text is an edited collection of essays written by different academics on queer choreography and performance. The writings of Burt and Desmond refer largely to choreographers working in either Europe or the USA and make no reference to works choreographed outside these contexts. Neither are they choreographers or dancers themselves but rather academics with an interest in dance. I intend to use western queer dance history and dance studies as a starting point for understanding queer choreography in South Africa. This investigation occurs in the context of post 1994 South Africa with reference to autobiographical approaches within South African choreography including: Steven Cohen's *Faggot* (1998), Gregory Maqoma's *Miss Thandi* (2002) and Acty Tang's *Chaste* (2007). I will then account for my own choreographic practice with reference to *Odd Man Out* (2007) and *Narcissus* (2008).

Theme 2:

Fashioning the queer self

Why couldn't anyone's life become a work of art?
(Oscar Wilde).

This quotation epitomises the approach used by many practitioners (of theory, performance and writing) in dealing with the representation of homosexual identity. Oscar Wilde turned his own life and persona into a living artwork. Living in the latter half of the Victorian era Wilde's eccentric behaviour and persona granted him both fame and infamy. Wilde "fashioned the self" (Didier 2009:4) advocating the notion that one could construct the self and make one's life into a work of art. With the illegality of homosexuality in England at that time Wilde threatened the conservative institution. This was achieved through writing works suggesting homosexual content and self fashioning his transgressive/flamboyant identity. The dandy was a middle-class man imitating an aristocratic appearance with the intention of working against egalitarian ideals of the time (Laver 1956:23). Charles Baudelaire believes dandyism to be like a personal religion:

Dandyism in certain respects comes close to spirituality and to stoicism and these beings have no other status, but that of cultivating the idea of beauty in their own persons, of satisfying their passions, of feeling and thinking... Contrary to what many thoughtless people seem to believe, dandyism is not even an excessive delight in clothes and material elegance. For the perfect dandy, these things are no more than the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind (*Ibid* 1956:24).

Therefore Wilde "self fashions" his persona from "his mind" by placing symbols onto his body (his clothes) and through embodying a dandy persona. "Self fashioning" for the dandy is about "cultivating the idea of beauty into their own persons" (*Ibid* 1956:24). There is no distinction made between art and life – life is art and *vice versa*. The notion of "life becoming a work of art" and the process of "self fashioning" become key components to the practice of many contemporary queer choreographers. More recently the personal presence and experiences of the queer choreographer act as research for the creating of choreography. In the case of Wilde, his "self fashioning" was

made to pay the price. He was imprisoned for two years for “gross indecency with men” (Laver 1956:25).

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) expressed a similar sentiment to Wilde towards the end of his life. In his writings *The History of Sexuality* and *Madness and Civilisations*, Foucault explores the social construction of homosexual identity by controversially locating the emergence of homosexuality as identity in 1870. The creating of an “othered” identity occurs as a reaction against established and normalised identities (such as heterosexuality). Such queer identities work within the constructs of heteronormativity in order to establish a discourse based on difference. Foucault theorises that identity becomes established when discourses are created about the “othered” identity. He further states that, “the conception of homosexual as identity as psychological interiority is a consequence of creating discourses about homosexuality” (Burt 2001:213). Through coming into existence this identity is established within a transgressive position through which one is enabled to explore further the vast possibilities in creating “othered” representations of identity. Compelling homosexuals to think of themselves through these discourses creates the resulting queer “interiority” (*Ibid* 2001:213). Oscar Wilde’s “self fashioning” of the dandy is a perfect example of this. Didier Eribon (2004) notes that through exploring the construction of identity, Foucault engaged with the process of “self fashion” or “how the subject constitutes himself or herself in an active fashion” (Osaka 2004:165). Foucault noted the importance of “self fashion” in creating a framework for the individual identity:

These practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group (*Ibid* 2004:165).

The study of choreography in South Africa within tertiary institutions follows similar trends in dance research and scholarship beginning with the premise, “that some things can only effectively be known through their enactment and that movement practice is a site for cultural research” (Kolcio and Gerdes 2009:559). This identifies a focus on self-reflexivity in

choreographic research which is embedded in the practice of enactment, integrating embodiment of thought with the performance, as well as critical writings with the choreography. The choreographer can therefore be regarded as an “ethnographic site in progress” (Kolcio and Gerdes 2009:559). More recent choreographers fashion their choreography through researching their identities and *vice versa*. This is not to say that the choreographer includes sentimental portrayals of their own lives in their work – rather that the choreographer researches, constructs and creates theatrical imagery and movement language that is either sourced from the self or comes into being through an organic process that may reveal their personal narrative. According to Ana Sanchez-Colberg, “knowledge lies in direct and concrete experience, which allows for knowledge of reality in a more fluid manner than by conceptual recognition” (Sanchez-Colberg 1996:42). Furthermore, the research process highlights the role of somatic awareness: the moment when theoretical understanding and visceral experience come together (Kolcio and Gerdes 1996:560). Far from being an accessory to the work, intellectual rigour becomes imperative for choreographers as it provides both academic and self-reflexive accounts of their choreography. In theoretically exploring choreographic choices in making work and dancing it, choreographers are provided the opportunity for the body to become subject to its own corporeality, “no longer alienated from the external world but painfully aware of being alienated from itself” (Sanchez-Colberg 1996:45). Language, which is constituted by forces outside of itself, remains a primary and inadequate means to comprehend the body. Dance provides academics with a different way to approach understanding the body. In the context of dance and choreography knowledge can be regarded as an embodied experience and this promotes the notion of “thinking dancers” (Sanchez-Colberg 1996:32). The movement of the choreographed body in space provides insight into the mind, body and spiritual experience of individuals in society. In a concert dance performance, spoken language is reduced to a minimum (if used at all) and the body is made the centre of attention. This results in the body being less attached to structures of institution and socialisation, which makes the dancing body a sentient one (*Ibid* 1996:45) aware of its inability to know and constituted as both subject and object. In other words:

Choreography becomes a form of theorising... The theoretical, rather than a contemplative stance achieved afterwards and at a distance, becomes embedded (embodied) within the practical dimensions that build up through the active engagement of bodies (Kolcio and Gerdes 2009:565).

The notion of academic authenticity is challenged by dance scholars and is constituted by both objective criteria and an internal/embodied truth. Lyotard notes that with the development of the meta-narratives there can be no authority on the legitimacy of knowledge, "Dance privileges the individual experience". This can turn even the most entrenched academic truths upside down" (*Ibid* 2009:564). The body thus functions in discourses concerned with semiotics and the phenomenological (*Ibid* 2009:564). It is imperative for contemporary choreographers to provide both academic and self-reflexive accounts of their approaches to making choreography. It is a necessary means to counter the ephemeral nature of dance and a documented approach to practicing art/life. Accounting theoretically for the personal is unquestioned practice in both queer and dance studies. Queer choreographers are interfacing with their personal experiences when making choreography representing a homosexual presence. They are consequently fashioning the self through their choreography and *vice versa*.

Theme 3:

A queer foundation:

Contemporary choreographers and queering tactics

i) Laying the foundation

The emergence of queer discourses in western choreography is seen as a reaction against the traditional classical ballet representation of male and female dancers which is, “formed by and reinforces a normative heterosexual male point of view, marginalising and suppressing other sexualities” (Burt 2001:7). Yet it was within the classical ballet discourse that ballet dancer and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky made advances for the representation of male homosexual identity in dance. Burt notes that western European society had continually changing perceptions of masculinity during the 19th century:

Masculinity, as a socially constructed identity, was rarely stable. Rather than enjoying a secure autonomy, men have continually needed to adjust and redefine the differences attributed to sexual difference (Burt 2007:12).

During the 19th Century the view was held that men had become too civilised and concerned with the pleasures of life (*Ibid* 2007:12). The perceived degeneracy of men affected society’s perceptions of what behaviours and jobs were appropriate for men. Society at this time attempted to re-affirm masculine ideals by asserting the need for men to be productive and industrial, to allow a return to their “primal instincts” (*Ibid* 2007:12).

God made men to be men. On the other hand civilisation, with its town life, buses, hot and cold water laid on, everything done for you, tends to make men soft and feckless beings. That is what we are trying to get out of (*Ibid* 2007:22).

Consequently dance became a profession not befitting for a man.

Increasingly in the 19th century, it has been considered appropriate for a man not to appear soft or emotionally expressive. An individual, who

does not conform to these behavioural norms, has been in danger of being considered, 'not a proper man', a euphemism phrase that generally means homosexual (Burt 2007:22).

Russian ballet dancers of this era were regarded by western European audiences as less taboo than their male counterparts at home. They were viewed as primitive, less civilised and consequently regarded as undeniably masculine if not savage (their skill had much to do with establishing this notion as well) (*Ibid* 2007:22). Nijinsky's fame encourages the return of the male dancer to the stage, consequently fuelling changes in perception of the male dancing body. Nijinsky's unrivalled execution of the ballet form in combination with his masculine physique worked in contradiction to the feminine aesthetic of the ballet. Nijinsky also established transgressive approaches to the choreography of the ballet form by choreographing broken lines and jagged body parts into canonised ballet vocabulary. Such approaches were noted in Nijinsky's choreography entitle *Jeux* (1913) in which he collaborated with Lèon Bakst and Claude Debussy (Barker 1982:52) to make this abstract ballet. The theme of this choreography was the modern man and Nijinsky was inspired by everyday movement and sports such as polo, golf and tennis. He stated:

I wish to create a score of movements in which everything would be defined by the bend of a finger, by the modulation of a muscle, and not by the leaps and pirouettes; it would be a score that would reveal the boundless possibilities of the human body (Nijinsky in Barker 1982:53).

Jeux was a choreography in which Nijinsky broke the codified parameters of ballet vocabulary, narrative and aesthetic qualities.

In interviews given a few days before the ballet premiere, Nijinsky described the aesthetic principles of *Jeux* as "Aeginetan", based on "...ideals of angular as opposed to curved beauty" (Barker 1982:54).

At times Nijinsky's androgynous appearance in works such as Michel Fokine's *Scheherazade* (1910) suggested a feminised male image. This consequently eroticised his male dancing presence and made him an "erotic subject" of the performance – a first for the male spectators' gaze in western dance (Burt

2007:24). The death of his androgynous golden slave in his performance of *Scheherazade* has therefore been read to signify:

to a phobic-minded and life-affirming critic, 'as a punishment...for being the erotic subject of the (male) spectators' gaze' (Kopelson 2001:97).

However, in the cases of such early transgressive representations of masculinity - homosexuality is never overtly addressed, only hinted, implied or suggested at.

ii) Modern Dance & Ted Shawn

The development of modern dance practices in the early 1900's by choreographers such as Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan brought to the fore the notion of "presence". Writers on modern dance practices document a shift towards the use of "presence" by choreographers emerging in the early 20th century. What constitutes this "presence" continues to be debated by academics. Ann Daly states that:

Presence is the silent yet screeching excitement of physical vibrancy, of "being there". It is one of the thrills of dance, to see someone radiate pure energy, whether it is in stillness or in flight (Daly in Burt 2007:50).

This use of presence is directly linked to representations of personal identities that choreographers begin to explore in the 20th century. Through representing personal identities in dance, performers begin to negotiate power with the spectator through asserting their own gaze upon the spectator. In creating choreography that is not purely representational, the dancer can become empowered and in the case of women even de-eroticised. Auslander notes that, "presence is about power, and there is sometimes collusion between political structures of authority and the persuasive power of presence" (Auslander in Burt 2007:50). Those who are present hold power and can propagate a change of perspective. Queer choreographers are no exception and rely on presence in creating representations of homosexual identity. The use of this presence is directly linked to the process of self

fashioning that queer choreographers rely on when making their choreography. The modern dance period propagates an exploration of the personal and influences the practice of contemporary queer choreographers. Modern dance choreographers were innovative. The exploration of a personal spirituality in choreography resulted in new dance vocabularies, different approaches to space and narrative structure, and a presence which began challenging the gaze of the spectator.

The modern dance era was essentially a feminine domain and dominated by female choreographers. This was a shift from the ballet form which was largely dominated by male choreographers. Ted Shawn is perhaps one of the most influential male American modern dance choreographers of his time. Shawn established a platform for men in modern dance and began exploring notions of masculinity in dance and choreography. Shawn and his company of male dancers came into being because of Shawn's personal issues with his own homosexual identity and religion. His homosexual identity and approaches to choreography are undeniably linked and he documented his choreographic approaches and ideas in his text entitled *Dance We Must* (1947).

In *Dance We Must* (1947) Shawn iconoclastically discusses emerging modern dance practices and his choreological approach. Shawn notes that this period is marked by a move towards the personal and spirituality.

Both Ruth St Denis and Isadora Duncan were rebelling from the desiccated forms of the dance then holding sway. They believed that the spiritual content of the dance must be on the loftiest possible plane, rejecting the purely mechanical, the obviously physical and sensual, and even the anaemic sentimentality and prettiness of the ballet (Shawn 1947: 22-23).

Shawn was a very religious man and began giving lectures at religious gatherings encouraging Christians to celebrate dance as a way of worship. He did this in an attempt to popularise dance in western society and believed it a duty to his faith.

Religion is a matter of feeling, not of intellect, and every spiritual teacher has complained at some time or another of the limitations of the language of written or spoken words. It is not a question of *saying*

but of *being*. And the finest expression of being is through dance (Shawn 1947:36).

In his writings it is evident that Shawn aligns his thinking with the potential dance provides for exploring the personal spirit. Emphasis is made by Shawn regarding the important role dance has in fulfilling the need for personal expression. In training dance students Shawn approached each of them as a triune unit.

Divisions constitute one of the problems of education, for every child has a mind to train, a body to train and a spirit to train, and all these three should be trained as a unit (Shawn 1947:58).

He believed that:

The object of education is to enable pupils to say at the end of their studies not 'I know', but 'I experience', and then to create the desire of self expression (Dalcroze in Shawn 1947:67).

In writing on his practices and approaches Shawn provides insights into his choreographic processes. Shawn's entire personal identity was interwoven into his choreographic practice: his performance, teaching, research, personal life and writing. He consequently lived his identity through his choreography in creating Jacob's Pillow² and his company of male dancers.

Shawn's life mission was to change American perceptions of the male dancer and he documents his choreographic explorations regarding masculine dance vocabularies. He identified with the ancient Greek perceptions of homosexuality. Greek society viewed male homosexuality as a rite of passage and a sharing of knowledge between men. Shawn emphasised the physicality of male dancers resorting to the pastoral for inspiration. He distanced himself from city life by creating an exclusively male company on his farm Jacob's Pillow. Shawn had a number of affairs with male company members and sourced many of his works from Greek themes

² Jacob's Pillow – was an isolated farm owned by Shawn during his life. With the help of his male company of dancers he turned the farm into a training school for his company. Jacob's Pillow is still operational today as a dance performance and choreography school.

or manual labour. He attempted to break down the feminine associations attached to dance and the male dancer in the United States of America³.

Shawn challenged these notions by meshing virility with Americanism, and America demands masculinity more than art. He promoted the athleticism of men, and preferred his dancers have athletic training and no dance background (Foulkes 2001:113-125).

Shawn believed that the re-integration of the male dancer into the ballet form had made male dancers feminised because of the training they received.

In the decadent period of the ballet men and women were trained in the same way in mixed classes and we can easily see that, although a man might not be a less masculine person in his private life, if he had been continually trained with women, his eyes would be full of feminine movement and hence unconsciously, he would have taken on feminine gestures (Shawn 1946:102).

He believed that training should be separate for men and women and that the two sexes were intrinsically inclined towards either masculine or feminine movements that should be taught separately. Shawn concerned himself with analysing what he believed constituted feminine or masculine movement and stated that:

Man's place was in labour and the outdoors. He worked with tools that required a large muscular movement and a greater physical energy. I have come to the conclusion that most of the movements of men are big movements of the whole body and the arm movement is a continuation of the body movement (using a scythe)⁴. Woman's work movements are smaller and isolated to the arm and wrist (sewing/cooking) (Shawn 1947: 103-104).

Although Shawn generalises and constructs limits on the gendered body, such analysis bred hyper masculine dance vocabularies which were then used by later choreographers when representing men. This was done as a way to challenge the feminisation of male dancers and later representations of male homosexual identity from the early 1930's to the present. Shawn

³ For further information on the Modern dance era and representations of homosexuality: Foster, Leigh Susan. *Dancing Desires, Chapter 5: Closets full of dances: Modern dance performance of Masculine Sexuality*. Pg 147.

⁴ Addendum: Figure 1, Pg. 76.

highlights his researched and constructed parameters for that which he believed constituted masculine or feminine movement qualities:

The man's quality is positive, aggressive, forceful, definite, explicit, while the woman's quality is tender, protective, conservative, conciliatory, delicate and tentative (Shawn 1947:104).

He notes that masculine vocabulary should rely on the active engagement of muscles. Even when the male dancer is not moving the tense and flexed muscles should suggest an engaged activity. This exemplifies the constructed belief that men should be dominant and active rather than submissive and feminine. In his solo *Death of Adonis* (1923) Shawn drew inspiration from Greek statues. His exposed body was covered in white to highlight the movements of his muscles⁵. He choreographed statuesque like movements and still images celebrating the male form. Such hyper-masculine approaches are not always isolated to the vocabularies of the choreography, but also present in the themes Shawn explores in his works. Many of Shawn's choreographies created at Jacob's Pillow were themed on physical work, manual labour or sports and include *Basketball* (1938) and *Cutting the sugar cane* (1934). Shawn's approaches were relatively successful for his time, making him one of the most recognised male contributors to the modern dance era. He undertook early explorations of masculine sexuality and has consequently created a foundation for the practice of contemporary queer choreographers such as Bill T Jones, Arnie Zane, Lloyd Newson, Matthew Bourne and Mark Morris.

iii) Contemporary choreographers & queering tactics

Contemporary choreographers representing their personal identity in dance have extended on the developments made in the 1930's by choreographers such as Ted Shawn. The 1980's marks a further shift by choreographers representing homosexual identity. The representations from this point onwards explore homosexual identity more overtly. The emergence of such overt homosexual representations is linked to the appearance of

⁵ Addendum: Figure 1 & 2, Pg. 76.

HIV/AIDS amongst the gay community in the 1980's. The effects of HIV/AIDS gave socio-political voice to homosexual choreographers of this period. The representations of homosexual identity before the 1980's were either very subtle, only known to insiders or not present at all.

American choreographers Arnie Zane and Bill T. Jones practicing from the 1980's onwards were eager to represent the ways in which HIV affected the body physically and changed perceptions of masculinity/sexuality through exposing the relationships of homosexuals (particularly men). Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane are noted as establishing this shift towards creating choreography that worked to overtly reveal a personal homosexual narrative (Burt: 2007:156). As a queer couple (and both HIV positive) they created choreography that exposed both the physical intricacies and the emotional spheres of homosexual relationships.

Bill was making work that was very personal. Says Arnie, "I was next to, and being compared with, someone I thought was one of the greatest modern dancers of my era, and I was not a highly trained dancer. I didn't want to share my personal life with an audience, and yet I wanted to work with this person. People were incredibly attracted by this personal story. It was frightening to me to be developing as a sexual being, involved in an intimate relationship, and to be sharing it live, and on top of that having it criticised" (Zane 1989:56).

The collaboration between Jones and Zane and their choreographic explorations of their sexual relationship exemplifies another strategy: the presence of homosexual choreographer's personal experiences in their work.

Bill T. Jones, 56, has always been a magnet for controversy because his work – done largely through his company, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company – is so personal and deals with everything from sexuality and race to his HIV positive status (Jones 2007:01).

The representation of homosexual suffering and love in choreography gave the identity a way to firmly establish a discourse in dance history of same-sex love which continues to develop and change in the 21st century.

Lloyd Newson, Matthew Bourne and Mark Morris are contemporary queer choreographers exploring male homosexual subject matter in some of their choreography. They have continued the exploration of homosexual

identity in dance using personal presence and a number of choreographic tactics which I will dub “queering tactics”. Such tactics are used by international choreographers making work representing homosexual identity and had an influence on the practice of South African choreographers from 2000 onwards. These queering tactics include: use of presence, hyper-masculine vocabularies/themes, camping, images of gender reversal, verbal/text references to homosexual subject matter, explicit homo-erotic images and the deconstructing of established narratives or space.

British choreographer Lloyd Newson and his company DV8 are recognised for the staging of a male homosexual identity in the 1980’s and openly to “come out” of the closet,

DV8 built up its reputation as an issue-based dance group, which produced hard pessimistic work relating to sexual politics and specifically to ‘queer’ sexuality in response to homophobia and the AIDS crisis in the 80’s (Leask 1995:49).

DV8’s work dealing overtly with homosexual subject matter include: *My Sex, Our Dance* (1986), *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men* (1989), *Strange Fish* (1992), *MSM* (1994), *To Be Straight With You* (2008) (*Ibid* 1995:49). The analysis of Newson’s work can provide insight into the types of tactics being used by contemporary queer choreographers to represent a male homosexual presence in dance.

The physical theatre genre developed in the 1980’s provided choreographers with the opportunity to use devices in dance previously less explored such as spoken text, digital media and unique dance vocabulary. The use of the physical theatre genre provides Newson the opportunity to explore the personal in his choreography.

The implicit aim in DV8’s, and one from which the company’s name derived is to question and subvert the current conventional thought. They do not, however, attempt this by transcending gender definitions but by dramatising, in and through the body, the *effects* of gender ideologies on personal relationships (Winter 1994:10).

DV8's work is described as "affective and not pictorial" (Winter 1994:10). The form of the choreography is created through an organic process and movement structures and narrative are not preconceived.

The dancers' own experiences as they are pertinent to the piece are discussed, examined and analysed, a process from which images and dance movements arise. Central to the ethos of DV8 is that the dance is motivated by emotional/psychological imperatives and interior sources. In this sense Newson is in line with early modern dancers (Winter 1994:10).

Newson therefore becomes adamant, "that not one word is spoken on stage that is not a direct quote" (Carter 1993:8). In his work *MSM* (1994) which dealt specifically with cottaging, Newson created a soundtrack of recorded interviews with up to 50 men regarding their sexual exploits with other men. In Newson's recent work entitled *To Be Straight With You* (2008), he continues to source content from personal stories and the choreography is, "based on 85 interviews with those who have experienced homophobia, have strict religious beliefs, or who are juggling their sexuality with their faith (Gardner 2008:01).

Before working in the physical theatre medium, Newson was very familiar with traditional modern dance. He became increasingly concerned with training and the ways in which technique and technical vocabulary limited the range of expressive qualities to beauty and virtuosity (Winter 1994:10). This consequently prompted him to explore other possibilities and vocabularies that could truthfully explore issues such as failure or ugliness. This was achieved through developing the physical theatre genre and encouraging experimentation to create innovative movement vocabulary. *Our Sex, Our Dance* (1986) is Newson and DV8's first choreographed work exploring male homosexuality in which, "two men explore trust and responsibility in the context of a gay relationship" (Winter 1995:12).

Newson himself was joined by Nigel Charnock in a gruelling gymnastic duet which mapped out the intensity of two lovers, the mutual trust and intimacy as well as the violence and frustration of gay love in a society that was hostile. At times real distress through fear and exhaustion

flickered across the dancers' faces: there was not time to act or fake it (Leask 1995:95).

In creating choreography depicting a male homosexual presence Newson has extended further on the explorations made by Ted Shawn. Unlike Shawn, Newson is sourcing vocabulary from personal experiences rather than external sources such as work movements or sport (Winter 1994:10). The physical theatre genre is regarded as a, "far more direct, fast and 'modern' form, which required more of a 'gym' than a 'ballet studio' physicality (Leask 1995:95). This "direct and fast modern form" could be regarded as promoting a hyper masculine vocabulary. Newson however extends on Shawn's practice by paralleling such hyper masculine moments with masculine images of trust, support and stillness which are supported by the performer's emotional integrity.

Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men (1989) builds on the male relationship explored in *Our Sex, Our Dance*.

Going way beyond political statements about homosexuality into extremes, 'Dead Dreams' was a depiction of the utter despair and gloomy consequences of repressed love (Leask 1995:95).

In this work Newson uses the life of serial killer Dennis Nilsen as a source. Nilsen lured men back to his flat before murdering them. Source material was taken from Brian Masters *Killing for Company* (1985) which accounts for these events. Newson starts to re-appropriate an established narrative in creating this choreography. He uses an original narrative as a source and develops it further in order to provide greater depth and exploration of the themes present in the original text. Newson's again juxtaposes hyper masculine vocabulary or imagery with qualities of tenderness in this work.

Scenes from a hard-core gay club and the dark room were played out. The performers struck body-builder poses on top of pedestals, while a couple clutched and dragged one another, one active, the other passive, struggling, suffering, enacting the sordid penalties paid for the price of love. Subtle movement and frozen poses were juxtaposed with fast and dangerous contact work (Leask 1995:95).

Newson explores further the representations of male sexuality in his choreography by using the personal presence of his performers and by revealing the complex nature of male emotional experiences and sexual desire. He furthers the original intentions of early modern dance choreographers and establishes a complex discourse exploring male homosexuality.

The use of queering tactics such as gender reversal and “camping” are present in work representing a homosexual presence being created by contemporary choreographers such as Mark Morris and Matthew Bourne. The term “camping” refers to:

a metropolitan, gay, sub cultural style that assumes a common appreciation of the value of artifice and subversion, of surface rather than depth (Burt 2007:160).

In the context of choreography camping is an approach to choreographic content in which the choreographer chooses to create vocabulary or imagery that depicts a male presence as effeminate. The most obvious manifestation of such camping can occur through creating images in the choreography that suggest gender reversal (such as the use of drag or androgyny). In Mark Morris’s works entitled *Dido and Aeneas* (2006) and *The Hard Nut* (2009) (which is re-appropriation of the traditional *Nutcracker* ballet), Morris performs the female roles of Dido and the Arabian princess (Lesser 2006:01). This works to suggest a homosexual motif in a narrative originally structured within the constructs of a heterosexual context (much like Bourne’s *Swan Lake*).

Gender reversal can be an effective way to create the homosexual motif. Mark Morris often creates images of gender reversal in his work and his astute and acclaimed approach to music in choreography camps male gender even further in the content of his work.

In praising Morris’s abilities with musicality, critics generally turn a blind eye to or play down the camp, parodic element in his work (*Ibid* 2007:184).

He is exemplified for his approaches to music but often structures his vocabulary to the mood and structure of the musical score much like classical

ballet. This has the potential to render the content of the choreography superficial and effeminate because of dealing with, “artifice and subversion of surface than depth” (Burt 2007:156). Camping can be an effective device but the choreographer needs to consider its use carefully otherwise it can dismiss male homosexuality as being effeminate and lacking in depth. Morris avoids this from happening by paralleling explicit homosexual imagery against the “camp, parodic element of his work”. In his work *Dogtown* (1983) for example, Morris depicts men and women mounting one another like dogs having anal sex whilst a soundtrack plays of dogs barking. The men and women swap partners and the acts are performed with an emotional detachment (Burt 2007:186).

The piece presents a parody of the more unsympathetic heterosexual view of gay men – they’re like dogs, animals, less than human, not like ‘us’ (*Ibid* 2007:186).

Matthew Bourne’s *Swan Lake* (1995) serves as another example of the use of gender reversal, re-appropriated narrative and camping being used to represent a male homosexual presence. The choreography was recreated in 2009 and is noted as a work that, “changed the ways in which dance was viewed by the wider public” (Crompton 2009:01). Bourne re-appropriates the traditional *Swan Lake* narrative by refashioning the ballet narrative structure, canon and storyline.

Thanks to its iconic male swans, with their naked chests and low-cut feathered breeches, and its cheeky, irreverent takes on ballet, the royal family, sex and the class system, from the moment it was unveiled, it became both an award-winning classic and a huge popular success (*Ibid* 2009:01).

The female and waif like swans of the original are replaced by aggressive barefoot and bare-chested male swans. Bourne refashions the ballet canon by implanting contemporary style movements into the ballet vocabulary. Much of the original narrative is restructured and made more contemporary, the music however remains the same and only the order of their use is reconfigured by Bourne. In using gender reversal the content of the original narrative is changed entirely. The prince consequently falls in love with a

male swan and the original hetero-normative narrative is re-appropriated to explore homosexual longing and desire. Both Morris and Bourne focus less on representing their own personal experiences as gay choreographers on stage than Bill T Jones, Arnie Zane and Lloyd Newson. These two particular contemporary choreographers focus more on “surface rather than depth” (Burt 2007:156). Their personal concerns regarding their own homosexual identity however undeniably shapes their need to reveal homosexual subjectivity through their choreography.

These selected examples illustrate how international contemporary choreographers are engaging with and approaching the representation of homosexual identity in dance. They have consequently created a foundation for queer discourses in choreography. These choreographers have extended on the practices of early modern dance choreographers and modernist excursions within classical ballet. This theme has highlighted their approaches and tried to identify queering tactics that can be used to create a male homosexual presence. These identified queering tactics include: personal presence, images of gender reversal, use of innovative/organic vocabularies, camping and the re-appropriating of established narratives. Such established queering tactics and the practice of international contemporary choreographers have provided a foundation from which further queer explorations in choreography can take place in the context of South Africa.

Theme 4: South African queer choreographers

I call our generation a lost generation, because we are all still trying to find ourselves within this democracy and within this culture (Gregory Maqoma in Snyman 2003:1).

South African queer choreographers are extending on the foundations established by their international counterparts. This theme is a brief introduction to queer South African choreographers. It aims to provide insight into the socio-political and cultural context out of which my choreographic practice is being developed. I will also briefly discuss the practice of selected South African queer choreographers and identify the queering tactics and variations thereof present in their choreography. My main aim however, is to align the choreographic practice of queer South African choreographers with that of their international counter-parts by highlighting their shared concern for a narrative exploring personal identity.

The quotation introducing this theme highlights the fact that in post apartheid South Africa, choreographers are attempting to express identities previously disenfranchised or disregarded. They are taking advantage of their right to freedom of expression and beginning to account for personal identity. This is in an attempt to locate themselves within a new democracy and diverse postmodern cultural context. Rhodes University graduate and choreographer, Alan Parker explores the narrative form in his thesis entitled *Corporeal Tales: An investigation into narrative forms in contemporary South African dance and choreography* (Parker 2007:01). Parker notes that:

Krouse has consistently articulated the investigation of “private territories” (Krouse 2003a), on both a biographical and autobiographical level, as dominant themes at multiple FNB Dance Umbrella programmes (Parker 2007:10).

He notes that dance critic Adrienne Sichel described the same Dance Umbrella as a, “collusion with history and identity” (*Ibid* 2007:10) and “has also articulated a growing concern for personal narratives at many of these festivals” (*Ibid* 1997:10). Post-apartheid South Africa has offered

choreographers the opportunity to explore identity and culture as never before. South Africa epitomises a postmodern society.

South Africa is a multiethnic country. Among the principle groups are Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, Venda, Ndebele, Tsonga, Swazi, Pedi, Coloured, Afrikaner, English and Indian. Prior to 1994, South African citizens for the most part, identified with one of these groups (Jung & Seekings 1997). South Africa is now moving from a society based on “pigmentocracies” to one based on a “multicultural democracy” (Goldschmidt 2003:205).

With the most liberal constitution in the world, eleven official languages and a vast number of cultures making up our society, South Africa offers a unique melting pot for artistic expression. This has manifested in a growth of choreographers engaging with the contemporary dance form consequently making it, “the flavour of the post-democratic day” (Sichel in Parker 2007:9). South African queer choreographers practicing in the contemporary form are no exception to this norm. The personal narratives of these choreographers are influencing their creative processes when making choreography.

Acty Tang is a Rhodes University graduate and choreographer who won the Standard Bank Young Artist award for choreography in 2007. Tang who is associated with the First Physical Theatre Company has stated that, “Butoh is my physical theatre” (Tang in Jordaan 2007:01). He addresses aspects of his own diasporic identity and homosexual desire through his choreography and is inspired by Butoh aesthetics and performance principles. The Butoh form allows Tang to take the body out of the social realm and into the spiritual. Butoh relies on presence and can be linked to transformative ritual. The body is often painted white (much like in Xhosa initiation rituals) and the performance is grounded in physical embodiment/the experiential rather than dance technique or form. This allows Tang to access and project his presence in the performance of his choreography. Tang’s work explores the politics of transgressive love and desire through his own body.

In terms of content, Acty keeps going back to the theme of love. Thematically it involves politics because he looks at the homoerotic on stage in a country where it is still not acceptable at a very basic level. For him, love and desire are very closely related (Jordaan 2007:1).

These personal explorations have manifested in a number of solo and duet works such as *Beloved* (2004), *Ndilinde* (2004), *AmaQueerKwere* (2005), *Apology for a Stranger* (2006) and *The Silent Wail of Melisande* (2006).

In 2007 after winning the young artist award for choreography Tang was commissioned to produce, *Chaste* (2007). *Chaste* is a refashioning of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* which Tang believes is about:

the awakening of desire that has the potential to conquer the repression of law, patriarchy and religion. Emotions run high in the making of this work as performers are dealing with highly relevant and personal issues of love and the repressed unconscious (Tang in Jordaan 2007:1).

In this work Tang re-appropriates an established narrative (like international choreographers such as Bourne or Newson). Tang states that the themes of "desire and hurt" present in Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* influence the content of *Chaste*. Rather than create a physical re-enactment of the plot Tang focuses on, "the image, theme and emotional core" (Tang in Parker 2007:134). He therefore creates:

more of a parable-like structure, where you stick with the parable and that resonates in the audiences minds. *Chaste*, hopefully, serves as a criticism or an intertextual development of the *Salomé* story, opening it up, unpacking it, and making it reach further to speak to other kind of echoes and such. (*Ibid* 2007:134).

Tang states that the piece has "personal resonances" (Tang in Parker 2007:133) and that the narrative is informed by a collaborative process with the other performers.

During the rehearsal process I asked each person to tell a story that *Chaste* evokes for them. A story of their own or a memory in their own lives, or a story they had heard about from someone else. So I would tell the story of my coming out and Babs had a story about her and a relationship in her past, and Jess wrote a poem. The idea of telling a story is there, but it's not necessarily the meaning of the story. It's the pose; it's the approach to telling your story that is embedded in the piece (*Ibid* 2007:133).

As in his other works Tang is a performer in *Chaste*, his personal presence also fuels the content and the male homosexual narrative. He therefore uses his own queer body to inform the politics of desire, love and identity present in this choreography (much like his solo works).

Another queering tactic Tang uses in *Chaste* is gender reversal. Tang's use of the tactic is subtle and he avoids camping entirely. Ingrid Gordon (the designer for the choreography) placed constructed wire breasts on his male homosexual body⁶. These wire breasts were a simple way to feminise his presence and suggest the constructed nature of gender through the placement of these rudimentary wire breasts which are juxtaposed to his near naked and male body. In *Chaste* Tang also avoids overt textual references to homosexuality and overtly erotic homosexual imagery. He relies rather on subtlety and what he calls the "sensual" through creating choreography that works on the "sensory" (Tang in Parker 2007:138). This sensual element of his work is partly achieved through his use of Butoh principles which allow him to create a corporeal presence and gain access to the spiritual. The re-configuration of a traditional theatre space also allows him to manipulate the gaze of the spectator and consequently create new sensory experiences for them.

The work is particularly sensory incorporating sounds, visual images, smell and touch. The design of the production also uses many textures, velvet, veil, glass, and stone, digital image (Parker 2007:137-8).

In *Chaste*, Tang actively challenges the conventions of a traditional theatre space. He places the spectators on the theatre stage, "the audience in *Chaste* is overtly present in the performance, often touched and spoken to directly" (Parker 2007:137). Tang states that he does this to "alienate the audience's naturalised role, to make their role strange" (Tang in Parker 2007:137). By doing this he consequently deconstructs traditional structures of spectatorship (the safety of the proscenium arch is broken). He attempts to make the audience members a part of the choreography's journey – they are a part of the narrative/space and the spectators gaze is diffused:

so that they become aware of the act of viewing, the act of participation in the performance moment and hopefully the divide between the performer and the audience. Hopefully by taking them away from that convention the piece allows the possibility of being moved, of engaging with their personal sense of being rather than being able to just tuck

⁶ Addendum: Figure 3, Pg. 77.

that parable safely away in a box after they have walked out of the theatre (Tang in Parker 2007:137).

Burt notes that diffusing the gaze of the spectator is imperative when creating queer choreography. Spectators should have their “habitual structures of spectatorship” disrupted so that they can see differently.

Tang is engaging with his own personal experiences and concerns when creating his choreography. He creates a unique signature that meshes physical theatre with Butoh aesthetics and principles. He is creating a unique choreographic practice and has already transgressed choreographic boundaries with his queer choreography.

Steven Cohen is another example of an artist who fashions himself through his choreographic endeavours and forces the spectator’s to “see things differently” by disrupting public spaces. Steven Cohen is a performance artist recognised for his transgressive and queer works. He is a white, Jewish and homosexual man who utilises his personal identity to shape and develop his artistic works. The performance artist places his body in a context (usually a public placement) and relies on the body to produce the art – much like dance. Cohen views and creates his work as a lived experience, as research about society and its perceptions.

I believe that each day’s activity, from walking to the shop to having sex is research for my art (Cohen 2003:21).

He attempts to work against the notion of “art as aesthetic object”. Therefore, both his body and spatial context become integral to creating the artistic experience for the spectator. Cohen like Tang deconstructs “habitual structures of spectatorship” (Burt 2007:45). Cohen achieves this by placing his costumed persona in a public context, usually in a contentious space. This means that he selects a public space in which his presence creates a statement or dialogue with the surrounding spectators about society, identity, race, sexuality and culture. His presence in the space creates a performance in which spectators are confronted unexpectedly and forced into a dialogue through their response to his presence. He consequently re-appropriates a public space and confronts his spectators with a “real” event. His works offer controversial and bold socio-political statements about queer identity.

Cohen has also used gender reversal when making his works which include *The Art of Kissing* (1997), *Faggot* (1998) and *Patriotic Drag* (1998). He relies on his body and presence for artistic expression and includes references to his own identity through the symbolism placed on his body and its relation to the space he chooses. Cohen uses his body to embody a “monster drag” persona. This involves taking conventional drag and transgressing its aesthetic conventions. Cohen does this by exposing his penis, inserts dildos into his anus, wears high heel shoes made of kudu horns/prostheses which are near impossible to walk in and eating his own faeces⁷. In *Patriotic Drag* (1998) for example Cohen attended a white right-wing commemoration at the historical Boer Edifice of Fort Kalapperkop in “monster drag”. He was forcibly driven away by the Neo-Nazi’s⁸. He often documents his performance and later provides viewers and readers with insight into his ideas informing his work through publishing books on his process. Cohen provides self-reflexive accounts on the research informing his artistic process. He engages with the notion of performance as research and he embodies, “the artist as an ethnographic site in progress” (Kolcio and Gerdes 2009:559). His life, body and experiences literally become a work of art. He actively works to transgress the western dance aesthetic and states that he, “wants to shed light on what is seldom seen” (Cohen 2003:32).

Gregory Maqoma who is also a winner of the Standard Bank Young Artist for dance award (2002) is a homosexual choreographer creating work on the male homosexual identity. Maqoma’s *Miss Thandi* (2002) epitomises an integration of both biography and autobiography. Maqoma notes that post apartheid South African choreography has tended to focus on accounting for previously disenfranchised identities.

People have become able to freely express their emotions or ideas which they couldn’t do in the past because of the restrictions and also because people were lacking that identity. I call our generation a lost generation, because we are all still trying to find ourselves within this democracy and within this culture (Maqoma in Snyman 2003:1).

⁷ Addendum: Figure 4, Pg. 77.

⁸ Addendum: Figure 5, Pg. 78.

Miss Thandi is sourced from the biography of Raymond Matinyana. Matinyana was a gay Xhosa drag artist who created and performed a character by the name of Miss Thandi. Maqoma's personal friendship and relationship with Matinyana informs the construction of this choreography in which, "Maqoma focuses on the relationship between himself and the subject" (Snyman 2003:72). Maqoma therefore re-appropriates and investigates an established narrative in making this queer choreography (the biography of Miss Thandi). Matinyana's embodiment and presence of the Miss Thandi character challenged traditional culture, beliefs and notions of identity. Maqoma attempted to extend on Matinyana's contribution to representing homosexual presence by creating this choreography:

I draw a lot from the character *Miss Thandi*, but also from the perception of people regarding that character. I also draw a lot from the people regarding the gay community (Maqoma in Snyman 2003:2).

Maqoma draws inspiration for his choreography from his own personal experiences of Matinyana/Miss Thandi (who was his personal friend) and is aware of including elements of his autobiography in this choreography.

Through reflecting Miss Thandi's biography I'm also reflecting my own autobiography. At the same time I am reflecting a society. In most cases so far I have been dealing with issues that are affecting my society but have also probably affected me directly or even indirectly (Maqoma in Snyman 2003:2).

His own personal identity and experiences feed the making of the choreography. In his recent choreography entitled *Beautiful Me* (2009) Maqoma explores his personal identity and cultural history in an hour long work that has toured internationally.

What finally sets *Beautiful Me* apart from performative autobiographies at large is its self-awareness. Rather than simply implying or embodying the influences on his work, Maqoma discusses them – and to a perfect degree (McLellan 2009:01).

Maqoma imbeds elements of himself and his memory into his choreography as he attempts to account for absent identities and shape South African approaches to homosexual presence in dance.

These queer choreographers practicing in South Africa are utilising their own personal experiences and identity to shape the content of their choreography. They are also engaging with established queering tactics and at times developing on the practice of their international counterparts. The post apartheid South African context is fuelling greater possibility for exploring different identities and cultures. It is a truly postmodern context in which unique approaches to making queer choreography are only just beginning to be explored.

Theme 5: Queer Transgressions I:

Surrealist tactics, male bodies & seduction

That is the secret of all seduction, the transubstantiation of sex into signs
(Baudrillard 1990:05).

i) A choreological perspective: influences

In this theme I will be accounting for my own choreographic approaches used to represent a male homosexual presence in dance. The choreography and queering tactics established by contemporary international and South African choreographers outlined in themes III and IV have created a foundation and framework from which my own choreographic research and “choreological perspective” (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg 2002:2) can develop. The “choreological perspective accounted for here refers to dance as an embodied performative⁹ art” (*Ibid* 2002:3). This choreological study, “locates dance within the field of theatrical performance, that is, performance that operates within a theatrical framework organised by theatrical codes, in whatever venue it happens to take place” (*Ibid* 2002:3). The choreological methods I explore:

aim to promote and enable practical research by articulating and debating what is peculiar to *my* dance: it’s making, its performing, its spectating, its medium, its choreographic treatments, its documenting methods, et al (*Ibid* 2002:3).

My choreographic practice and signature have been predominantly influenced by dance genres such as *tanztheatre*, *ausdruckstanz* and physical theatre. Rudolph Laban and Mary Wigman’s experimental choreography and explorations of German expressionism in the 1920’s begin to formulate concert dance performance that explores, “a final heightening of the

⁹ Performative events are ones in which ‘actors’ and ‘spectators’ engage in an exchange of some sort. ‘While performing refers to the implementing of, presenting and a accomplishing aspects of an act of theatre, performative refers to “an expression that serves to effect a transaction” (Merriam Webster, 1993). (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg 2002:1).

opportunity for human expression” (Wigman, trans.Sorrel in Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg 2002:9). This means that:

The dance form is not determined by dance (only)... On the contrary it is more of a compromise which has its origins in theatre, where the main accent is no longer on the dance itself but on the total stage event (Wigman trans. Sorrel, 1966 in Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg 2002:9).

These ideas pertaining to a “total theatre event” explored by Laban and Wigman were fuelled by Wagner’s notion of Gesamtkunstwerk which:

brings into play a synthetic approach to the production as a whole including a concern with the dialectic between an individual’s internal reality (their subjective life) and its external socio-cultural context. Where the dance’s conceptual content has an effect on its material form, where there is an emphasis on emotion and, with it, a focus on the performer’s presence as a central factor of the event, a corporeal work emerges (*Ibid* 2002:9).

Such corporeal approaches to choreography have been explored further in more recent dance genres such as tanztheatre (Pina Bausch) and physical theatre (Lloyd Newson) and inform my choreological methods.

Corporeality sees the human body as a body that is personal, social, emotional, animal, mineral, vegetable, sexual, biological and psychological, as well as an agent of motion, and one that given a context, a space, which is in itself socio-personal, political, domestic, abstract, conscious, unconscious etc. (*Ibid* 2002:9).

An understanding of a corporeal approach allowed me to produce a choreography in which the, “narrative is subsumed within a corporeal form” and a seduction/”polysemantism of the theatrical sign can be employed” (*Ibid* 2002:10) by the choreographer.

I briefly aligned my understanding of the feminine in the first theme with philosophical thought established by Jacques Baudrillard. I will discuss this notion of the feminine further so as to give greater insight into my choreographic approaches. Freud proposed that societal constructs are informed by an unchanging dominant libido and that this libido is undeniably masculine (Lacan 1985:47). However, this dominant libido dominates if the feminine subject remains complicit and unchallenging of this masculine libido

(Lacan 1985:49). Jacques Lacan furthered Freud's argument by claiming that the feminine subject should not assert itself in opposition to this masculine libido (*Ibid* 1985:49). He proposed that the feminised subject is subsumed by this masculine libido and consequently a part of it. Following on from this, Baudrillard proposed, "a universe in which the feminine is not that which opposes the masculine but seduces it" (Baudrillard 1990:7). His term "seduction" therefore refers to the, "liberation of desire"/polysemantism and the "transubstantiation of sex into signs" (*Ibid* 1990:8). "Seduction" refers to a process whereby societal constructs/ theatrical signs no longer adhere to rational and unified consensus with regard to their meaning as would happen in the masculine libido. The queer subject is therefore considered feminised in this context and is subsumed within the masculine order. This subsumed position of the feminine only leaves the subject un-empowered if they adhere to the constructed and normative expectations of the masculine libido. Baudrillard believes that the feminine subject can assert itself through its ability to embody ambiguousness and employ seduction (*Ibid* 1990:8). Through this the expectations of gender, sexuality and desire can be rendered fluid by the feminine subject and thus a multiplicity of possibilities with regard to representing sexuality, identity and desire become available to the choreographer. This understanding of "liberated desire" is directly linked to a "cultural politics of movement" (Desmond 2001:7). This is because, "desire is sustained by want" (Baudrillard 1990:5) and the way through which one physically embodies and expresses this want. The ability to seduce or manipulate theatrical signs becomes important when creating queer choreography representing a male homosexual presence in dance.

I align my choreographic signature with the surrealist movement both philosophically and aesthetically. Andre Breton founded the surrealist movement with the release of his manifesto in 1924. Surrealism's birth coincides with the end of the First World War and the movement had dissolved by the beginning of the Second (Maurice 1965:35). However, one cannot assume a tangible birth and death of surrealism. The movement comes to embody a series of artistic manifestations over time, "The surrealist state of mind, or better still surrealist behaviour, is eternal" (*Ibid* 1965:35). The aesthetic conventions and ideals of the movement still continue to inspire

and influence the practice of queer artists such as David Lewis Baker, Gary Gordon and Martha Clarke. Hal Foster's text entitled *Compulsive Beauty* (1997) explores the historic, aesthetic, artistic parameters and theoretical concerns fuelling the surrealist movement. He notes that:

Although the surrealists are hardly critical of heterosexism, they were concerned with the imbrication of the sexual in the visual, of the unconscious in the real; indeed they introduced this problematic into modern art in a programmatic way. Feminist and gay and lesbian critiques have compelled such questions to be asked anew, particularly in a psychoanalytic frame and to do so historically was to turn to surrealism among other sites (Foster 1997:xiii).

The surrealist movement promotes anti-establishment thinking and ideals: "Surrealist practice attacks the familiar, provokes the irruption of otherness – the unexpected" (Tythacott 2003:2). In creating a surrealist-inspired choreography I used myself as a source to inspire the making of the production. This required me to access my personal subconscious. Freud believes this subconscious to be, "created through repression" (*Ibid* 2003:52). I explored *the uncanny* present in my own subconscious consequently fuelling:

a concern with events in which repressed material returns in ways that disrupt unitary identity, aesthetic norms and social order. The surrealists are not only drawn to the return of the repressed but also seek to redirect this return to critical ends (Foster 1997:xvii).

To explore the uncanny is to submerge the self within the unconscious and the repressed images and symbols that inhabit it.

This is the basis of surrealist connections between symbols and symptoms, beauty and hysteria, critical interpretations and paranoid projections. It is also the link that connects the early experiments in automatic writing, dream recitals and mediumistic sessions to the later involvements in hysteria, fetishism and paranoia (*Ibid* 1997: xviii).

Hence, "Breton defines surrealism as psychic automatism" (Foster 1997:3) and the artist undergoes a process of self-reflexivity in accessing their own "psychic automatism". Therefore repressed "symbols and symptoms" of my own subconscious were accessed in the process of fashioning my

choreography and conducting my choreographic research. These “symbols and symptoms” were then constructed as theatrical signs within a corporeal concert dance performance and were fashioned through seduction and surrealist tactics to create an ephemeral representation of a male homosexual presence. Such surrealist practice encourages the fluidity of theatrical signs used in corporeal choreography by promoting the “return of a familiar phenomenon (image or object, person or event) made strange by repression”. This is because:

Return of the repressed renders the subject anxious and the phenomenon ambiguous, and this anxious ambiguity produces the primary effects of the uncanny: 1) an indistinction between the real and the imagined 2) a confusion between the animate and inanimate and 3) a usurpation of the referent by the sign or physical reality by psychic reality, and here the surreal is often experienced as an eclipse of the referential by the symbolic, or as an enthrallment of a subject to a sign or symptom, and its effect is often that of the uncanny: anxiety/the marvellous (Foster 1997:7).

Understandings of corporeality, surrealist tactics/aesthetics and seduction informed my choreographic process and the way in which *Odd Man Out* (2007) was staged and performed. I will therefore provide further analysis of the choreographic content of *Odd Man Out* and discuss how the choreographing of a male homosexual presence was achieved.

Odd Man Out (2007) was my first choreographic attempt to represent a male homosexual presence in dance. The choreography was intended to be a queer surrealist work. I tried to create a work exploring homosexual longing, loneliness and desire which was sourced from my own feelings of isolation as a homosexual man and present in my personal dreams and homosexual desires.

Freud and Breton disagreed on the nature of dreams: while Breton saw them as portents of desire, Freud read them as ambiguous fulfilments of conflictual wishes. For Breton dreams and reality were vases *communicants*, and surrealism was pledged to this mystical communication; for Freud the two are in a relation of distorted displacement (*Ibid* 1997:2).

Whilst Breton and Freud may disagree, I took readings from both and think that the nature of dreams and reality are informed by both these theorists' observations – that dreams are “portents of desire” which can be “read as ambiguous fulfilments of conflictual wishes” and can “communicate” and relate through “distorted displacement”. I therefore attempted to include this understanding of desire and the nature of dreams when using the images from my unconscious to shape the interrelationships of the theatrical images present in my choreography.

Odd Man Out is a corporeal choreography which encompassed a multi-stranded and embodied dance medium:

Which takes into account that there are a flux of inter-relationships within the mediums' parts that bind the work together and provide it with complex polysemanticism *or the ability to employ seduction*¹⁰ (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg 2002:39).

The dance medium of *Odd Man Out* is comprised of four main strands: performer, movement, sound and space (*Ibid* 2002:41-42). Together these four strands and their inter-related sub-strands create a nexus:

a web of interrelationships between each strand of the dance medium that interest the choreographer (*Ibid* 2002:42).

The way in which the interrelationships of each strand of the dance medium relate through corporeality, surrealist tactics and seduction is explored within this choreological perspective. I engaged with surrealist tactics such as: juxtaposition, uncanny objects, repetition and the surrealist “point” to develop the interrelationships of the dance medium. I explored established queering tactics such as: gender reversal, investigation of innovative dance vocabulary and performer presence. And I undertook the challenge to avoid queering tactics such as: male dancing bodies, text/explicit imagery of homosexuality, camping and hyper-masculinity. This was in an attempt to create a unique and ephemeral representation of a male homosexual presence in dance.

¹⁰ Italics have been added to highlight significance.

ii) Gender reversal & avoiding male dancing bodies

Perhaps the most interesting queering tactic avoided in *Odd Man Out* was the male dancing body. The use of the male dancing body is perhaps the most common queering tactic used to represent a male homosexual presence. The act of men being physically intimate in dance immediately begins to create the homosexual motif for the choreographer. This is due to perceptions regarding male dancers over the last century. Making men dance together results in the male dancer becoming a feminised subject by view of the spectator. This effectively comes to rob him of his masculinity. This is because dance has difficulty avoiding being associated with the feminine:

The feminisation of spectacle, putting oneself on display (without the cover of sports masculinity – authorising violence), feminises male dancers (Desmond 2001:18).

Therefore, regardless of whether the choreographer attempts to use a hyper-masculine vocabulary or buff male bodies, the act of performing on stage makes the male dancer a feminised subject. The reasoning for this feminisation of the male body simply lies in the masculine libido's disassociation from dance and its inability to "authorise violence" (*Ibid* 2001:18). It also has to do with the spectator's gaze and the constructed expectations of western dance theatre. "The ideal spectator is always assumed to be a male and the image of women designed to flatter him" (Berger in Burt 2007:31).

In South Africa there is less taboo associated with male dancers – men often dance in African culture. However these dances are still gender specific and men assert masculine qualities (large stomping leg movements, beating of the chest or using spears as props). These cultural dances are context specific (ritual or cultural) and geared towards exemplifying men as warriors or leaders.

The African dances are classified on the basis of gender and deeply reinforce certain community structures like age, status, context and kinship. In African dance, men usually expend jumps and leaps while

women dancers perform crooked knee positions and bent body postures (Jathar 2009:01).

An example of this type of performance are the Shangaan *Muchongolo* dance contests which, “like cockfights, muchongolo dancing deals with violence, sexual desire and witchcraft” (Niehaus & Stadler 2004:364). In the Zulu warrior dance called *Umghubha*, Zulu men dance and challenge one another with traditional spears and shields (Jathar 2009:01). South African choreographer Vincent Mansoe usually engages with African dance vocabulary interwoven with the contemporary dance style: Afro-fusion. The movement vocabulary present in his choreography is described as:

Intuitive, highly coordinated, a low-to-the-ground way of moving with fancy footwork and fierce stamping Zulu Indlamu sequences (Sulcas 2007:01).

African men engaging with the contemporary form which exemplifies personal rather than cultural expression in South Africa would be regarded as feminised male performers. Established social codes disallow men to express themselves emotionally and personally in traditional African dance. “To overtly display emotion or the body is considered effeminate, and the male dancer does both” (Morris 2001:243). As a spectator of dance one views the work with a set of preconceived understandings of gender, sexuality, race and culture. Most of these associations are informed and mediated by patriarchy and its ideals and assumptions which construct gender, “as a sedimentation that, over time, has produced a set of corporeal styles” (Burt 2007:31). South Africa is not an exception to this norm. We are a society struggling against violent crime, high levels of rape and poverty. From 2008-2009 2.1 million serious crimes were committed. A third of these were contact crimes (assault, rape or murder) (SAPS Annual Report 2009:01).

Julia Foulkes highlights further that the feminisation of male dancers is made more complicated by the conventional status of men as breadwinners, “the financial instability and gentility associated with the arts only further strengthened the conventional union of dance and femininity” (Foulkes 2001:114). This seems even more likely to be the case in South Africa. The

high level of poverty and the lack of funding directed towards the arts and contemporary dance in particular discourages the involvement of black persons in the field. The lack of funds associated with the art feminises the status of men in the field of dance and consequently within the greater socio-political and cultural context.

In *Odd Man Out* I attempted to avoid the use of the male dancing body entirely. I chose to use female dancing bodies and images of gender reversal to create a subsumed discourse representing a male homosexual presence. The female dancing body cannot become feminised for it has always been a feminised subject. All of the six women were dressed in male clothing and wore formal black pants and white collared shirts. By placing men's clothing on a woman's body I attempted to suggest a masculine presence in the choreography. The use of gender reversal in such a way results in the female body being juxtaposed with a male sign (the male clothing). Munoz notes that, "to perform hybrid gender is not only to be queer but to defy gender logics within heteronormative spaces" (Estaban Munoz 2001:436). This type of imagery of gender reversal can be referred to depict the, "feminised phallus" (De Waal 2008:29). Images depicting the "feminised phallus" acquire the status of masculine object/signifier whilst suggesting a feminine subjectivity.¹¹

iii) Creating an innovative movement vocabulary

I tried to be diplomatic and compromising with my performers during the choreographic process. I explored a "triadic making" (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez Colberg 2002:13). This means that I adopt a process which was as inclusive as possible. The performers are my co-authors and the making of the choreography is a collaborative process. I did this in order to create a creative atmosphere in which the performers could feel as though they were contributing both physically and emotionally to the content of the choreography – to give them a sense of ownership. Like the queer choreographers discussed in prior themes I tried to explore the creating of an

¹¹ Appendix: Article 1, Pp. 94-95.

innovative dance vocabulary. This means that the rehearsal process started without prior knowledge of what the movement vocabulary would look like. The entire cast (myself included) contributed to the creating of the movement vocabulary and solved choreographic problems together. The movement vocabulary is consequently informed by many different personal stories, perceptions, emotional reactions, movement styles and genres. Through such a process, a unique movement vocabulary can be created. Creating innovative dance vocabularies has the potential to assist the choreographer in diffusing the spectator's gaze. This is because in creating such vocabularies the choreographer can work against the reification of the performer. When spectators watch the choreography the innovative vocabulary and consequent narrative are unfamiliar to them. The spectators are forced to continually change their way of seeing or where they look. Their spectatorship is no longer static and directed by the choreographer but diffused. This disrupts, "normative, habitual patterns of spectatorship" (Burt 2007:45) which is essential when choreographing for queer identities.

My process of making a movement vocabulary was one of communication, sharing and compromise. I directed my focus towards an organic process in searching for an expressive movement vocabulary. I created two basic phrases in the dance studio exploring longing, desire and loneliness and taught these phrases to the performers. I created the two phrases sourcing movement from my personal emotions and experiences. I also used images such as Edvard Munk's *The Scream* (1893)¹² as a source to assist in developing these phrases. The performers were then provided visual sources to inspire the development of these phrases. The phrases were shared, I selected material that was appropriate and the performers were given options to include or exclude certain movements. The selected material was then phrased through a process of collaboration in which we found the transitions and intentions of the vocabulary together and simultaneously constructed the gem phrases¹³. From this point of reference

¹² Addendum: Figure 6, Pg. 78.

¹³ Gem phrase: the first phrase set by the choreographer. It is a foundation from which other phrases can be created.

the performers were instructed to use these gem phrases to create duets and interactions which were developed, crafted and spaced.

The majority of the movement vocabulary initially took the form of known contemporary vocabulary and transitions. I placed gestures (reaching hands, hands over mouths, looks) into the phrases to further the emotive element of the choreography and sourced the idea of minutia from contemporary choreographer Ephia and her company *Djalma Primordial Science*. Minutia refers to small and isolated embodied contractions/shaking of the body. I wanted to add a subtle hysteria to the vocabulary. It also allowed me to break the fluidity of the contemporary form (shaking heads, contracting hands, vibrating bodies). The use of minutia as oppose to larger/overt contractions allowed me to avoid having the vocabulary seem over dramatic. I provided the performers with as much information regarding the emotive intention (longing, loneliness, hysteria) of the choreography to help them with the embodying process:

Embodiment of movement involves the whole person, a person conscious of being a living body, living that experience, giving intention to the movement material. It involves perceiving oneself in space and hearing one's sound, with kinaesthetic awareness of creating and controlling the movement (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez Colberg 2002:7).

The intention of this embodied expressionist vocabulary was fuelled by the performer's relations to one another, the sound, the space and the surrealist objects/images contextualising the space.

The music used in *Odd Man Out* presented a challenge. It was difficult to select music for the expressionist vocabulary – the music I attempted to use earlier in the process over-emphasised the expressionist qualities of the movement vocabulary. This made the choreography seem melodramatic. I avoided choreographing the movement vocabulary to the time and content of the music. I also wanted to avoid music that was lyrical in nature. I tried a number of different pieces of music with the movement vocabulary. I found that atmospheric music was far more effective. Often choreographers engaging with expressionist vocabularies will rather use the sound of percussive instruments. This is because it helps to emphasis the expressive

quality of the movement vocabulary. I used a piece of music performed by the Kronos quartet entitled, Quartet No. 4. The music is performed by string instruments. A large portion of the musical score is percussive in nature and the musicians pluck the strings of their instruments. The instruments are played in very high pitches and evoke the atmosphere of a strange and unstable space¹⁴. The music works effectively with the vocabulary by emphasising the expressive quality of the vocabulary rather than providing lyrical accompaniment or influencing the form. The performers do not dance in time to the rhythm of the music. Rather, the music works to inform their intention of depicting trauma, desire, longing and loneliness which resonates with a surrealist space of juxtaposed objects, bodies and images.

iv) A surrealist space of juxtaposed objects, bodies & images

The title and context of *Odd Man Out* was sourced from a painting by surrealist artist David Lewis Baker (Figure 7)¹⁵. The artwork consists of twenty one images of men all of which are exactly the same except for one man in the centre of the image who is coloured in black and surrounded by black background (the odd man out achieved through visual juxtaposition). I manipulated and fragmented the painting into the form of an animated projection. As the dance performance occurred the men in the image appeared individually on a white cyclorama behind the performers to eventually complete the artwork – the “odd man” being the last to complete it as the performance ended. This animated projection created a context and was one of the many narrative strands of the dance medium. The animated projection is juxtaposed with the physicalised performance on stage.

Perhaps the most evocative element of *Odd Man Out* were the surrealist objects used to further create the context of the space: the upside down and hanging men. I juxtaposed six upright performers on stage with hanging upside down bodies which emerged from the ceiling of the space. This image of the “upside down man” was taken from a photograph of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini ‘s hanging upside down from the Esso gas station

¹⁴ Music is attached on CD

¹⁵ Addendum: Figure 7, Pg. 79.

after his execution towards the end of World War Two (Figure 8)¹⁶. This image can be read symbolically: the upside down body of fascist discourse (Mussolini) suggests that dominant discourses are being dislocated and reconfigured. The “upside down man” is an image of death/castration and of desire. The image has profound symbolic significance for me: these “upside down men” come to represent the “feminised phallus” like the performers below them. In being upside down they can read as “other” – dislocated and displaced in space from the masculine system. This consequently suggests their feminisation and later informs the reading of male homosexuality presence.

The surrealist image deepens the unconscious dimension: the image becomes a psychic montage that is temporal as well as specific (in its deferred action), endogenous as well as exogenous (in its sources), subjective as well as collective (in its significations). In short, the surrealist image is patterned upon the symptom as an enigmatic signifier of a psychosexual trauma (Foster 1997:81).

It is this “psychosexual trauma” that my surrealist object comes to embody and which creates the notion of the marvellous during the performance. The ‘upside down hanging man’ is ambiguous. Foster notes that although surrealism promotes liberation, love and pleasure, it is also bound to the death drive.

I want to suggest, it is precisely at these points of greatest difficulty – where pleasure and death principles seem to serve one another, where sexual and destructive drives appear identical – that surrealism is at once achieved and undone. If surrealism is bound up with the uncanny, then it can be bound up with the death drive. In short just as surrealist automatism suggests not liberation but compulsion, so surrealism in general may celebrate desire only, in the register of the uncanny to promote death (*Ibid* 1997:11).

Therefore the displaced masculine sign that the performers and surrealist bodies carry highlight that:

¹⁶ Addendum: Figure 8, Pg. 79.

The blurring of masculine subjects and objects destabilises notions of male objectivity and rationality as prescribed by the dominant masculine libido (Burt 2001:211).

I tried to further the “odd man motif” by juxtaposing the hanging bodies with one another. Six upright female performers juxtapose and compliment the “six upside down men” by being below them and upright – both the performers and the “upside down men” were in identical costumes. Of these six “upside down men” five are large and one is small, five are upside down and one parallel. The juxtaposed “upside down men” are consequently juxtaposed with the performers below and the “odd man out projection”. I tried to relate images visually through their dislocated sameness. The juxtaposing and relating of these images begins to create the nexus of the dance mediums strands. I attempted to create a dialogue between these by have the performer’s embodied performance of the movement vocabulary relating to the juxtaposition to these images and bodies creating a surrealist space.

v) A surrealist repetition and the seduction of desire

The relationship between the performers and the surrealist space is informed by their presence and embodiment of the movement vocabulary. The dance is approached as a language which needs to be interpreted, fuelled by intention and executed to “express, make manifest that which lies outside language – the “unsayable things” which Bausch has often referred to (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg 2002:10). The performers are required to approach the space as a real space:

The focus on space implies a concern with the body’s engagement with the ‘here’ and ‘now’. On entering this domain one has moved away from dance perceived as an art object to dance seen as a participatory human event (*Ibid* 2002:10).

As mentioned earlier the images, objects and performers in the space are made to relate through the juxtaposition of their dislocated sameness. This interrelatedness is furthered by the intention of the performer’s embodied movement vocabulary and their interaction with the objects and images

constituting the space, “dancers have to make the corporeal image appear through intended, imaginative, lived action (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg).

In order to create a male homosexual presence subsumed within the masculine order I created a space steeped in the repetition of masculine signs. The performance of *Odd Man Out* took place in a conventional theatre space framed by the proscenium arch. This type of space adheres to the convention of the traditional spectator’s gaze. The animated projection, objects and performers were all dressed as men. I used a repetition of images to further create a space steeped in masculine imagery. This “compulsion to repeat” (Foster 1997:125) is a part of the surrealist aesthetic and practice. The spectators were made to view a space that appears to adhere to traditional conventions and suggests a masculine space. The performance therefore takes place in a space adhering to the masculine order. I tried to relate the surrealist space to the performers and employed seduction/polysemantism to create an ephemeral male homosexual presence in the choreography.

Odd Man Out starts with only a single performer centre stage. As this dancer performs a solo¹⁷ the men in the animated projection begin to appear one by one. This also occurs with the appearance of the performers on stage, each of the six performers enter the space individually. They walk backwards into the space, with their arms bound behind their backs and looking up into the space above them. The use of the “unexpected”/“shock” is a tactic often employed by surrealists. As the soloist performs there is an unexpected entrance of the “upside down man” above the “feminised phallus” inscribed performer. The spectators do not expect this entrance as the bodies only come into the space as the performance takes place. To continue creating a space steeped in the unexpected the “upside down hanging men” entered and retracted into the ceiling above the space – making the spectators unsure as to when they would disappear and reappear. The “upside down men” being above the performers creates a unique space filled with imagery. The space above the performers which is usually not occupied during performances

¹⁷ Addendum: Figure 9, Pg. 80.

becomes filled. The filling of this upper space with “upside down men” which juxtapose the upright performers below suggests a “surreal” space/experience. The “upside down men” being above the performers suggests that these objects are outside of a real space. They are displaced from reality (the floor) and exist in a space of dreams (the air above the performers). They also work to fill the space and the gaze of the spectator is diffused because of the sheer number of images on stage.

The juxtaposition of the performers with the “upside down men” immediately creates a dialogue (through their dislocated sameness and their opposition to one another in the space). I used the intention of the embodied performance of an expressive movement vocabulary to further inform this dialogue and establish a nexus of the dance mediums strands. The expressive vocabulary the performers and I created explored the notion of desire, longing and loneliness. Part of the movement vocabulary that captured this notion the most was the “surrealist point”. Mary Anne Caws notes that:

Of all the dada and surrealist gestures, the act of pointing is one of the most characteristic. Surrealism insists upon insistence; the pointing finger is the most insistent image of all. As baroque as it is surrealist, the pointing finger calls attention to itself and to the observer. It is the equivalent of shouting in a manifesto, of WRITING LARGE in a text. The attention it gets it means to keep (Caws 1999:257).

The use of the “surrealist point” and variations thereof are present in the movement vocabulary of *Odd Man Out*. The choreography starts with a performer in a single spot centre stage performing a solo. As her solo progresses she comes to stand, look and reach with her right hand upwards. She then slowly closes her hand, moving from a pointing finger and ending in a closed fist. She then breaks her slow upward reaching arm at the elbow, evoking a sense of pulling something down, and covers her mouth in shock with the appearance of the “upside down man” (Figure 9)¹⁸. This motif is repeated, developed and performed by all the performers with the increasing desire and longing by the dancers for the drop of the bodies. The performers continually focus upwards to the space above them, searching for the men

¹⁸ Addendum: Figure 10, Pg. 80.

and trying to pull them down with both their gaze and the movement vocabulary.

The act of pointing and the juxtaposing of imagery/signs play a key role in creating the male homosexual presence in *Odd Man Out*. "Pointing" is perhaps the most evocative materialising of human desire:

This pointing to a moment made from a place of privilege, whether as a creator of the work of art or as an observer, can convey an intense feeling of desire... a behaviour which makes manifest an intention to make something manifest (Caws 1999:262).

The act of pointing does not only "convey an intense feeling or desire". As a performed gesture, it comes to refuse any unified consensus with regard to what is desired and is "knowingly erotic and eroticising" (*Ibid* 1999:256). The loss of unified consensus regarding that which is desired arises due to the gesture's insistence on including the observer.

The pointing gesture appears to consist of four, sometimes five primary parts: the artist behind the pointing gesture, the outside observer of the gesture (the audience); the pointing person or the object designated; the person, thing, or place designated, pointed out or at; and the included observer (Caws 1999:262).

The gesture of desire consequently refuses possession on anyone's part and can therefore be regarded as liberated, free to employ "seduction".

In the case of *Odd Man Out*, the ways through which a notion of desire is captured in the "point" can be explained through the "eroticising of surfaces" (Burt 2001:217). This "eroticising of surfaces" refers to the way through which the choreographer eroticises the surfaces of artistic images through the use of sign or gesture. Therefore one can examine the first understanding of desire produced in the choreography.

Spinoza sees desire as a form of production, including self-production, a process of making or becoming (Burt 2001:217).

The juxtaposing of the upright "feminised phallus" inscribed dancer and the "upside down man" are the starting point for this analysis. The juxtaposing "feminised phallus" and "dislocated masculine object" create a dialogue as

they come to relate through the eroticising gesture as the dancer/choreographer produces it. The pointing gesture therefore conveys an inherent suggestion of eroticism between the two male symbols and the desire is manifested through the self-production of the gesture.

Elizabeth Grosz identifies another understanding of desire stating that:

From Plato, to Freud and Lacan, desire is predicated upon lack and on a yearning for that what is lost, absent or impossible (Grosz in Burt 2001:217).

In *Odd Man Out* this understanding of desire being predicated on lack is apparent. The “feminised phallus” inscribed dancers desire to be united with the “dislocated male bodies” above them. The eliciting of the desire for them to be together occurs through it not happening. The lack is conveyed through them being unable to be united and the distance between the bodies in the space (one above and the other below). This image is developed further when the “dislocated male bodies” drop to the stage floor amidst the dancers who are then still unable to touch them. Their desire for the male bodies is therefore fuelled by their inability to acquire them (Figure 11 & 12)¹⁹. The same can be said for the male homosexual whose desire is fuelled by the lack imposed by heteronormativity in disallowing same sex desire to occur.

This ephemeral representation of a male homosexual presence is finally fed by the last understanding of desire. Some queer theorists believe that, “desire is based on the recognition and acknowledgement of sameness” (Burt 2001:217). The very act of juxtaposing two dislocated signs against one another separated by an eroticising gesture suggests a desire fuelled by the recognition of sameness. In *Odd Man Out* the two images desire or work together through their dislocated sameness.

These differing notions of desire are produced through eroticising images/signs which work in tandem with surrealist tactics to create a subsumed expression of a male homosexual presence. Through repeating and creating a large number of masculine signs on stage I created a context suggesting the dominant masculine libido. Desires and signs are liberated from unified consensus whilst existing in what seems to be masculine context

¹⁹ Addendum: Figure 11 & 12, Pg. 81.

subscribing to traditional conventions of spectatorship (even framing the choreography in a proscenium arch). This subsumed feminine expression thus employs “seduction” within a masculine order of being. Therefore through liberating desire and signs from unified consensus and ephemeral male homosexual presence is created. This is because:

The key to queering evidence, and by this I mean the ways in which to prove queerness and read queerness, is by suturing it to the concept of ephemera or trace, the remains, the things that are left hanging in the air like a rumour (Estaban Munoz 2001:424).

This allows the audience to realise the motif rather than giving it to them from the outset. The choreography therefore evokes the sense of “queer becoming” (Burt 2001:217) rather than announcing its queerness in opposition to the norm.

As the performance ends the “upside down men” retract into the ceiling leaving the floor below. Five of the six performers leave the space. The soloist from the beginning of the performance remains on stage (the odd one out). She searches in the space above her trying desperately to bring back the objects of her dreams. As she gives up she turns to sit and notice the animated projection. The last man completes the image of the projection as she sits there, lights fading. This last image is the final juxtaposition present in *Odd Man Out* and carries further the motif of being the “odd one out” by juxtaposing the completed painting (itself a juxtaposition of images) with the single performer that remains. This image is both one of hope and despair. It exemplifies and beautifies the state of being “odd” but also avoids providing solutions/ a way out. The performer does not escape the surrealist space, the trauma of the expressionist vocabulary ceases with the performer sitting still and watching. The last man that completes the projection is filled in black (unlike the white empty men making up the rest of the image) and he is surrounded by blue. Having this image in the centre of the projection suggests a doorway or an opening out of this surreal space. It consequently can be read to suggest new possibility and hope.

In *Odd Man Out* I tried to explore interesting ways to represent a male homosexual presence in choreography. However, there are still issues that

are problematic. Due to the subtle and ephemeral nature of the representation, reading the work may be difficult for an audience unfamiliar with choreography. Most South African and international queer choreographers have explored gender reversal: relying on feminising the male dancing body. Such gender reversal can be effective but relies on grotesque or effeminate images of male homosexual subjectivities which can at times distance some audience members and re-affirm their reservations towards homosexuality.

Odd Man Out is an exploration of creating a subsumed representation of a male homosexual presence in choreography. It avoids placing homosexual representations in opposition to heteronormative institutions and rather places homosexual identity within the dominant order. Therefore providing a position from which “seduction” of such a dominant order can take place using surrealist tactics and seduction. I therefore created a representation of a male homosexual presence in dance. This was achieved by avoiding the use of male dancing bodies and through a researched engagement with queering tactics developed by other contemporary queer choreographers. This thesis is a deconstruction of my choreographic process which acts as a documentation of my choreographic explorations in representing a male homosexual presence in dance.

Theme 6: Queer Transgressions II:

Narcissistic reflections on absent identity & “coming out”

*I follow from a distance
You cannot know it's me
Dreaming to know those layers
A clothes ripping expose
Of two love seeking souls
Unreciprocated
Our Narcissi*

(de Boer 2008:4)

i) The closet & “coming out”

In my final Masters choreography entitled *Narcissus* (2008), I explored the process of “self fashioning” identity. *Narcissus* explores the process of “coming out” through a performed choreography. I again chose to use an organic process in making this choreography and myself as source. Being both the choreographer and a performer of the work resulted in the choreographed narrative exploring the “coming out” of my own male homosexual presence.

On a private level, to uncover and become aware of repressed conflicts might be therapeutic; but to do so within a performance can have the effect of offering this as a positive and valuable thing to do and thus subvert norms and demonstrate possibility for change (Burt 2007:152).

Through revealing my own sexual identity there is the potential for the performers and audience members to be made aware of their own identity and that of others.

The act of “coming out” becomes a key concern for the politics of the Gay Liberation Movement. “Coming out is the process by which individuals come to perceive themselves as homosexual and assume a self image of homosexual” (*Ibid* 2007:33). In order to attain an identity/culture the homosexual subject is required to, “emerge from confinement and concealment into the open, a movement from secrecy to public affirmation” (Spargo 1990:30). “Coming out” is a key process for creating new discourses about homosexual identity. It is a fashioning of the self in which one attempts

to account for a repressed aspect of sexual identity through creating a publicly constituted discourse. The homosexual subject is required to interrogate their identity and undergo an extensive process of self reflection in order to accept their difference.

The “coming out” process climaxes in the homosexual subject’s desire to admit their difference. *Scientia sexualis* is a term which describes the way in which western society perceives sex (Foucault in Spargo 1999:14). It exists in contrast to the east’s understanding of sex known as *ars erotica*. *Scientia sexualis* means that western societies understanding of sex is based on the need to reveal the shameful truth about sex and sexuality, whereas an *ars erotica* understanding is based on recognising and experiencing a multiplicity of pleasures. The way through which *scientia sexualis* based societies attempt to find the shameful truth about sexuality is through confession (*Ibid* 1999:15). This process of confession is present in many aspects of western living such as christian, judicial and medical confession. This confession is expected to be made to the dominant sexual order (the masculine libido) (*Ibid* 1999:14-16).

The only way through which “other” identities can become publicly constituted is through creating a visible queer discourse which exists within the dominant discourse.

Declaring oneself to be *out* of the closet of concealed sexuality may be personally liberating, but it entails acknowledging the centrality of heterosexuality as well as reinforcing the marginality of those who are still in the closet. It is impossible, in short, to move entirely outside of heterosexuality (*Ibid* 1999:12).

By 1991 Judith Butler and Diana Fuss began to criticise the in/out rhetoric as being misleading. They maintain that the act of “coming out” constructs the notion of a closet in the first place and that:

The problem of course with the inside/outside rhetoric... is that such polemics disguise the fact that most of us are both inside and outside at the same time. To be out, in common gay parlance is precisely to be no longer; to be out is to be finally outside of exteriority and all the exclusions and deprivations such outsiderhood imposes (Burt 2007:64).

Therefore there is a great amount of bravery attributed to “coming out” and a continual ambiguity of power between the dominant and the marginal. To be “out” is an acquisition of personal freedom, but it is also to be visibly outside of the norm and the privilege of majority. Therefore in “coming out” there is both an acquisition and loss of personal and political freedoms.

It is through the shame of exposure/confession, of being made vulnerable to the dominant order, that the homosexual subject can assert their personal identity. The performance of *Narcissus* is an act of confession. But it is one that changes the context of confession to suite the queer. It is a personal confession but publicly constituted within the context of a public concert dance performance. It is a public confession in which the homosexual individual controls the process and requirements of the confession. Through this choreography I wanted to explore and research the process of “coming out” and “self fashioning”. I therefore used my self as source to inspire my research on Narcissus and the making of the choreography. When making *Narcissus* I experimented with established queering tactics such as: re-appropriating an established narrative, overt homosexual imagery, innovative dance vocabulary, performer presence and male dancing bodies. I also undertook the challenge to explore other tactics such as: masking, seduction and the process of confession to create a male homosexual presence in dance.

ii) The Narcissus myth & self-reflexivity

I again used a surrealist source and aesthetic in creating this choreography. One of the sources used for this work was Salvador Dali’s painting *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1936-7)²⁰. The painting reflects Dali’s personal concerns and is:

a paradigmatic of Dali’s mode of viewing his own situation at the time. The ‘metamorphosis’ of Dali-Narcissus implied liberation from all systems of thoughts and rebirth into the new freedom of man and his right to madness (Finkelstein 1996:227).

²⁰ Addendum: Figure 13, Pg 82.

Dali worked within a surrealist mode and sourced his work from the “aesthetics of repression” (Finkelstein 1996:227). He worked within a similar manner to contemporary queer choreographers in that he traced his personal concerns and developments within his writings and art. *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* charts Dali’s shift towards what he called a “classic aesthetic” (*Ibid* 1996:227). This painting also charts developments of his personal relationship with his wife Gala and his own narcissistic tendencies (*Ibid* 1996:227). The surrealist movement advocates the use of the self as source for creating art and encourages the artist to access the “aesthetics of subconscious repression” or the “uncanny”. As with *Odd Man Out*, I accessed my own subconscious during my choreological process, and used it to source images, text, movement vocabulary and the narrative present in my choreography. To explore the uncanny is to submerge the self within the unconscious and the repressed images and symbols that inhabit it.

This is the basis of surrealist connections between symbols and symptoms, beauty and hysteria, critical interpretations and paranoid projections (Foster 1997:xviii)²¹.

The Narcissus myth played an integral role in creating this choreography. The term “myth” refers to:

The narrating of a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial time, the fabled time of the “beginnings”. In other words myth tells how, through the deeds of supernatural beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the cosmos, or only a fragment of reality — an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a “creation”; it relates how something was produced, began *to be*. The actors in myths are supernatural beings. They are known primarily by what they did in the transcendent times of the “beginnings”. Hence myths disclose their creative activity and reveal the sacredness (or simply the “supernaturalness”) of their works. In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the “supernatural”) into the world. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really *establishes* the world and makes it what it is today. Furthermore, it is as a result of the intervention of supernatural beings that man himself is what he is today, a mortal, sexed, and cultural being (Eliade 1963:23).

²¹ For more information regarding the uncanny – refer to Theme 5.

Contemporary queer choreographers representing a male homosexual presence in dance have often resorted to re-appropriating established narratives (Lloyd Newson, Matthew Bourne, Acty Tang and Gregory Maqoma for example). The use of myth as a source allows the choreographer access to the narrative traditions of the heterosexual institution. The re-appropriating of such a narrative therefore provides the choreographer with the opportunity to reform and change established heteronormative discourses. This is because myth overtly deals with issues of “psychology, customs or ideals of society” which form the “fundamental worldview of a people” (Collins English Dictionary 2004:100). By re-appropriating an established narrative I was provided access to the psychology of the dominant order and most of the spectators of the choreography. The spectators are made familiar with the explored narrative which is then re-interpreted by the choreographer, consequently providing an opportunity for changing established perspectives and discourses.

It has recently been discovered that the original Narcissus myth is very different to the versions accounted for by classical Greek and Roman society. An earlier Hellenic version of the myth tells the story of a young man (Ameinias) who along with many other young men fall in love with Narcissus, another young man (Keys 2004:9)²². The young man confesses his love to Narcissus and is rejected by him. This young suitor then turns to the gods and asks them to punish Narcissus. The gods then condemn Narcissus to experiencing unattainable love. This manifests in Narcissus falling in love with his reflection on the surface of a pool of water. Narcissus is trapped by the love for his reflection and dies to be reborn as the Narcissus flower. The Hellenic version suggests that he commits suicide in repentance.

It's thought that, in the liberal sexual atmosphere of ancient Greece, his story developed as a cautionary tale as to what could happen to beautiful young men who rejected their elders' advances (*Ibid* 2004:9).

This Hellenic myth underwent a transformation at the hands of the Roman scholar Ovid (*Ibid* 2004:9). The figure of the Ameinias was replaced with that

²² Appendixes: Article 2 by David Keys, Pp. 96-97.

of a young girl (the nymph Echo). What originally was a homosexual discourse becomes appropriated to being a heterosexual one. Therefore in creating this choreography I was working toward re-asserting the homosexual content of the original myth and re-appropriating an established narrative.

Homosexual love has been categorised by some theorists as being a narcissus complex: an obsessive self love, self-involvement or love for sameness. I wish to propose that homosexual identity is far more complicated than this and that the narcissus myth and the character have far more depth to them. In my programme note introducing this choreography I quoted American poet W.H. Auden (1907-1973) who stated that:

Narcissus does not fall in love with his reflection because it is beautiful but because it is his. If it were his beauty that enthralled him, he would be set free in a few years by its fading.

Auden questions the notion of “reflection” present in the narcissus myth. He suggests that Narcissus is not obsessed with his aesthetic beauty, but rather that he is attempting to know (through self reflection) that which constitutes his personal identity. In order to fashion the self, “come out” or “blossom” a process of self reflexivity/self discovery must occur. There must be an attempt to discover that which constitutes the self. The words “set free” allude to the fact that Narcissus is trapped and that the process of “self fashioning” is an “enthraling” struggle towards a personal freedom, “Narcissus is the enduring western figure of male self-reflection” (Levine 1994:xi).

iii) A compulsive repetition of reflection: a surrealist space

Narcissus (2008) is a corporeal concert dance performance and further develops my choreographic process and research undertaken in *Odd Man Out*. It relies on the surrealist aesthetic and draws inspiration from the expressionist movement. I have therefore avoided unnecessary repetition in this theme and rather focused on developing and exploring other aspects of my choreological perspective not touched on in *Odd Man Out*.

In choreographing *Narcissus* I used the word “reflection” as a source informing the choreographic choices that I made. I wanted the choreography

to begin by suggesting a concealed/absent personal identity which through a process of reflection/self fashioning/metamorphosis developed into an out/revealed personal identity. The term “reflection” can be defined as:

Re-flec-tion (noun/verb)

1. the act of reflecting or the state of being reflected.
2. an image, representation; counterpart.
3. a fixing of thoughts on something; careful consideration.
4. a thought occurring in consideration or meditation.
5. the return of light, heat, sound etc. after striking a surface.
6. (in a plane) the replacement of each point on one side of a line by the point symmetrically placed on the other side of the line.
7. (in space) the replacement of each point on one side of the plane by the symmetric point on the other side of the plane.
8. Anatomy: the bending or folding back of a part upon itself.

(Collins English Dictionary 2004:130).

I tried to explore the notion of “reflection” in all the strands of the dance medium. From this point onwards I will examine the way in which “reflection” manifested in my choreography and underwent a metamorphosis to create a male homosexual presence exploring the process of “coming out” or “self fashioning”.

I tried to create a surrealist space into which the spectators enter. As the audience entered the performance space they were photographed at the door by a masked figure and then took their seats. This encounter was an attempt to break the fourth wall and to include the spectators as a part of the performance. I wanted the spectator’s to enter into a space in which they immediately felt as though they were under scrutiny – and that their presence was an integral part of the performance. An evocative soundtrack of repetitive ticking noises was integrated into the space to create an atmosphere of anticipation before the performance started. I wanted to suggest time passing and create anticipation for the happening of an event (through having repetitive ticking as though the space was counting down towards something).

I placed myself on stage (my identity masked) as the audience entered the space. I sat very still with my head and focus downwards. I attempted to embody an inner focus of being trapped and falling in and out of a dream – delving into the subconscious, thinking and reflecting. I hung two long phallic

shaped structures along the diagonal of the space, one structure being downstage right and the other upstage left²³. These structures were identical and acted as reflections of one another. Salvador Dali's *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* influenced the stage design. The painting contains a number of "reflections" and images of growth/metamorphosis, a classic statuesque aesthetic and an image of an isolated youth in the shadows. It also contains phallic like imagery captured in the lines of the hand emerging from water, the hunched figure and the upright youth on the pedestal. I wanted to create a space which captured this phallic symbolism.

I incorporated the use of two fronts in this choreography (breaking the frame of the proscenium arch). I did this in an attempt to give the phallic structures in the space a sculptural and circular dimension. Having two fronts also provided the spectators an option for viewing the choreography. They are given a choice in changing perspective which marks the first step toward "self reflection". It was also a way in which I attempted to deconstruct the conventional theatre space to allow for a feminine way (a choice of perspective) for viewing a work steeped in masculine imagery. The phallic structures were made from transparent material and were constructed to represent a metaphorical closet from which the other performers continually emerged from and return too. I had the lighting for the choreography also suggest the "reflection" motif by having the side lighting reflect the performer's shadows onto the walls of the performance space as they moved²⁴. This made the space seem larger and full of bodies. I therefore created a surrealist space through establishing a compulsive repetition of uncanny images suggesting reflection.

One of the many strands of the dance medium present in *Narcissus* was the projection that played during the performance on a suspended cyclorama above the performance space. This projection undergoes a transformation in style as the performance progresses and it too embodies an exploration of "reflection". I wrote the text used to create the projection

²³ Addendum: Figure 14, Pg. 82.

²⁴ For greater insight view the attached DVD recording of *Narcissus*. Many of the devices and aesthetic choices mentioned in this theme are identifiable in the recording. The recording offers two perspectives of the piece: one which is higher up and reveals the whole space and the other which is focused and closer to the danced vocabulary.

through sourcing ideas from my own life (mainly through using automatic writing), the narcissus myth and the movement vocabulary the cast and I had created. Automatic/free association writing is a process whereby an artist accesses their stream of consciousness and writes directly onto paper without attempting to construct coherent thoughts or sentences. One attempts to access the subconscious or the immediate.

Automatism appears to access this idyllic space, or at least to record its liberatory images: Surrealism begins from that point (Foster 1997:4).

I then created the projection by writing each word or phrase of the text individually on a white piece of paper and would photograph it. The written text can be regarded as being my own personal reflection. The photograph of the text becomes a reflection of the original reflection, and the played projection is a reflection on the content of the choreography and a testament to the process of personal reflection. Originally I intended to use a voice recorded narration that ran in conjunction with the projected text. I later decided against this preferring the audience members to read the text. This was so that the process of making the narrative required their active participation/"self fashioning". I wrote the text with the intention of it referring directly to the person reading the text. Through doing this I tried to place the spectator as a part of the reflection process and performance.

You're here now with me
Exposed in a flash
(Photographer takes photo of audience members)

Narcissus in the shadows
There he stands
Trapped and looking
Much like you
You've come to see
Well come and see
This Narcissus
Exposed

Still watching
Looking with a look

Don't stare²⁵

(de Boer 2001:1-3)

I wanted the projection to work as a concealed reflection captured in the mind of the spectator as they read the text silently in their minds. This allows them to fashion their own reading of the narrative content of the choreography. It was also a way to do justice to the silence and secrecy of most homosexual experiences – that homosexuals have little or in some cases no voice at all. The narrative strand of the projection provides a poetics of text open to an infinite number of interpretations of the performance of the embodied movement vocabulary and the relationships of these performers to one another.

iv) A compulsive repetition of reflection: absent performers, movement vocabulary & sound

The first half of *Narcissus* capitalises on the secretive, the hidden and the closeted. In costuming the performers I chose masks to hide the identity of the performers. The performers consisted of four women and two men. The women wore white male vests, black masks and black pants. The men wore a variation of the women's costume: blue male vests, black masks and formal black pants. I placed myself (one of the male dancers) on stage seated and unmoving for the first half of the performance. I wanted the other male dancer to read as my counterpart/reflection searching for unification with his other half. The women were to be abstractions, mediators, propagators of the reflection process and reflections of one another. They could be read as the feminine seeking a way towards freedom or even as a visual signifier of what the men are not. I used black masks to unify the performer's identity. I wanted them to read as a single consciousness. I attempted to use the suggestion of the absence of their identity to seduce the spectators. By masking the performers I tried to create inter-subjectivity between them which was dependant on suggesting a collective absence of identity. By creating the suggestion of an absence of identity in the choreography there is the inherent possibility for a revealing of identity. To me the performers

²⁵ Appendixes: Article 3: Narcissus: unpublished text, Pp. 97-98.

represent the faceless, the voiceless and the masked – the homosexual. The black masks had no eyes, only white mouths which were sewn shut²⁶. In my *viva* during the practical examination of this choreography, Jay Pather informed me that the masks evoked a sense of sadomasochism for him. Whilst this was not my original intention, his reading was entirely valid. Sadomasochism and the closet homosexual can be viewed as a binary contrast suggesting both domination/control and transgressive sexual freedom; it captures the contradiction of existence embodied by the homosexual subject in a heteronormative society. It also captures a surrealist aesthetic by suggesting an image, “where pleasure and death principles appear to serve one another, where sexual and destructive drives appear identical” (Foster 1997:11).

I again attempted to create an innovative vocabulary during the choreographing of *Narcissus*. I attempted to extend on the discoveries I made in *Odd Man Out*. My choreological process was again one of inclusion and co-authorship. During the rehearsal process I would create phrases. Together the performers and I would develop these phrases and solve problems through discussing, watching and learning one another’s movement. We would often improvise together as a cast – create basic gestural phrases and then attempt to develop these phrases spontaneously as a group. One person would come forward and using a simple phrase as inspiration and offer a single movement variation of the original phrase. Each member of the cast would be given the opportunity to add to the phrase. Once a basic phrase was created we would try creating transitions and developing the phrases further. I was very involved in the creating and learning of the vocabulary as I was both choreographer and performer in *Narcissus*.

I again turned to the expressionist movement for inspiration during this choreological process. Unlike *Odd Man Out*, *Narcissus* dealt less with trauma and hysteria. The movement vocabulary needed to have a subtle expressionist quality to it rather than suggest overt angst. I wanted the movement vocabulary to suggest that we were attempting to discover that which lay beneath our costumes – our bodies or personal identities. The

²⁶ Addendum: Figure 15, Pg. 83.

embodiment of the movement vocabulary was integral to the success of the choreography. To help the performers with embodiment I had them think of a very personal secret that they would not want to share but desperately felt the need to confess. They were required to keep this secret present in their minds throughout the performance. I also tried to have the performers also explore the, “fear of the unknown” – fear of the unknown consequences of confessing their secrets. I played a number of visualisation exercises with the performers to access this “fear”. For example the performers were instructed to walk very slowly across the space imagining they were walking to a door which always closed on arrival. The performers were never told what lay beyond the door – the unknown. I tried to get them to explore the enthralling possibility of the unknown and the innate fear attached to it. The masks that the performers wore also assisted in developing intention and embodiment. The masks made it very difficult to see, our vision was very limited in a space filled with other bodies. Therefore the fear of the unknown was fuelled by a very real fear of falling or running into the set. Having the material over one’s face also promotes the performer to focus inwards rather than projecting and overtly performing outwards to and for the spectators.

When selecting and crafting movement vocabulary I used both reflection and the threat of exposure as a source. The majority of the movement vocabulary involved stylised looking²⁷, pulling and brushing of the clothing, the covering of the eyes (blinding the dancers further) and longing reaches out to one another²⁸. I tried to incorporate as much movement as possible in which there was a, “bending or folding back of a part upon itself” (Collins English Dictionary 2004:103). I also chose to use movement in which the appendages of the dancer mirrored/reflected one another.²⁹ Using such movement evokes a sense of moving inwards, with the body continually referring back in upon itself. Such movement vocabulary also suggests the concealment of an inner narrative. I included less moments of minutia³⁰ to down scale the suggestion of hysteria. The cast and I would often use known contemporary movements and transitions. I wanted to maintain the fluidity of

²⁷ Addendum: Figure 16, Pg. 83.

²⁸ Addendum: Figure 17, Pg. 84.

²⁹ Addendum: Figure 18, Pg. 84.

³⁰ Refer to Theme 5 for more info on minutia.

these contemporary transitions and therefore rather attempted to break and fragment the straight line of the contemporary form. This meant that the lines of the arms would be broken at the elbow, feet were often flexed and wrists turned upwards. I contrasted the fluidity of the contemporary movement with moments of instability and a jerking of the body. The performers would pull on their own costumes and that of their cast members.

Narcissus begins with what I called a “birthing”. The performance started with me sitting still on stage and the other performers in the phallic structures (the metaphorical closets). The performers fall out of the structures and begin to start moving in the space. The projection informs this reading:

Exposure can be painless
The emergence from the womb
That umbilical abortion (de Boer 2008:1).

The choreography starts with the performers embodying a sense of uncertainty and confusion. They walk through the space as one of the female performers centre stage performs a short solo which suggests instability. I choreographed very small, gestural and relatively contained movement. She did not travel in the space and I tried to suggest that she was stuck in one place – unable to express herself. During the phrase she repeatedly pushes with her palms outwards as though she is trying to push away a wall. She and the other performers would often look at their hands. This was a gesture that was repeated throughout the piece. For me this movement suggests the possibility that we all have in fashioning our identities – that constructing identity is in our hands. It is also a movement that makes one aware of the materiality of the body (as both performer and spectator). I had the performers continually focusing on their own hands/bodies; even in moments where the performers touched they were tentative and often encouraged to explore the material and tangible nature of one another’s bodies.

At the end of the solo the performers were still separated from one another in the space. I choreographed the movement vocabulary at the beginning of *Narcissus* to be controlled, small and held with the performers having little contact with one another. As the choreography progressed I tried to work against this by having the performers acquire more mobility and

interaction with one another through contact³¹. Due to the piece having two fronts, the performers were required to be aware of their focus. The piece was performed in the Rhodes University Box Theatre which is an intimate space. The performers were, therefore, often less than a metre away from the spectators. I wanted to continue having the spectators seem a part of the performance – to break the fourth wall. The performers would direct a lot of their focus outwards and look directly at the spectators as they performed. At times they would even gesture to the spectators – placing their fingers on their lips encouraging the spectators to keep a secret.

The performers came to acquire more contact as the choreography progressed. I tried to have the contact between the performers suggest haphazard exploration. Their encounters were brief and consisted of quick lifts or shifts of weight, searching gestures (covering eyes, pulling on clothing) and longing reaches to one another. I used “reflection” to further inform the staging and spacing of my choreographic phrases. Using four performers allowed me to create sequences in which the performers reflected one another’s movements or reflected one another in their spacing. The performers would at times follow or face one another reflecting each others movements³². In terms of spacing I chose to use the upstage right to downstage left diagonal as a plane in the space to which the performers left and returned to consequently suggesting, “the replacement of each point on one side of a plane by the symmetric point on the other side of the plane” (Collins English Dictionary 2004:45). In many of the sequences two performers would come together into a duet centre stage (reflecting one another’s movements), this would occur whilst the other two performers were separated across the space still reflecting on another’s movements and maintaining a connection between one another³³. I therefore worked to juxtapose images of connectivity and separation.

I used music to create the soundscape present in *Narcissus*. The music choices differed in this choreography to those present in *Odd Man Out*. Due to the fact that I made the expressive quality of the choreography less

³¹ Refer to attached DVD of the choreography.

³² Addendum: Figure 19, Pg 85.

³³ Addendum: Figure 20, Pg 85.

overt, I could move away from using music that was purely atmospheric. The soundscape included music by a number of contemporary avant-garde composers. The genres used in the choreography are completely unrelated ranging from atmospheric, to techno club and even contemporary classical. The first two tracks, *Country Kids* by the Dielectric Minimalist All-Stars and *The Tangent Universe* from the Donnie Darko soundtrack were atmospheric in nature; suggesting a strange/surreal space. As the process of self discovery got underway in the performance I used more lyrical music. I tried to use music that provided a tangible rhythm such as: *Urchin-Snuffed Candles* by The Third Eye Foundation, *Running One (Remix)* from the Run Lola Run soundtrack, *Test Me* by Build Buildings and *String Quartet no: 05 (ii)* by Kronos Quartet performing Philip Glass. The performers never danced to the music, but the music helped to inform their rhythms and intention during performance. I did however have to try time the choreographic sequences to both the music and the projection. This meant that I needed to time the content of the projection to the length of the music score and performance. Throughout the choreographic process I meticulously timed the length of the dance sections and constantly reworked the sub-strands of the choreography to create a nexus.

The kiss between the two male performers marks the move towards a “coming out” or the confession of identity. I tried to avoid making the kiss overtly erotic, mostly because many queer choreographers have used the homoerotic as a way to overtly create the reading of a male homosexual presence. I wanted to make the kiss subtle – even innocent rather than overtly sexually charged. The staging of this kiss between men needed to be handled carefully. The kiss occurs after my duet with Shaun Acker. I tried to construct the duet as an awkward discovery undertaken by two men. Our costuming was identical and we remained masked throughout the duet. I wanted the imagery to suggest a coming together of two identical halves of one identity³⁴. I attempted to de-eroticise the vocabulary as much as possible. I tried rather to create a sense of awkward intimacy between us. By the end of the duet we find one another. We stood apart with only our heads

³⁴ Addendum: Figure 21, Pg 86.

touching and rubbing, suggesting that we were exploring each others faces/identities³⁵. The kiss takes place with only the lower part of our masks lifted up so as to reveal our mouths. I did this to suggest the hidden nature of homosexual intimacy and the inability to share such intimacy in front of others. The kiss was relatively de-eroticised, more exploratory than sexual. After the kiss we moved to sit amongst the rest of the spectators.

v) Confession: moving from the surreal to the real

In the second half of *Narcissus* the performers and I undergo an exposure of our personal identities. Each performer dances a solo in which they move from sitting masked amongst the audience of spectators (also watching the choreography) to performing and removing the mask (revealing identity). I wanted to continue having the audience members feel as though they were a part of the performance process. The female performers move to sit amongst the audience when the male duet takes place. The performers become a part of the spectators and consequently the spectators are made aware of their position as spectators. Burt identifies that breaking the fourth wall is one the ways in which queer choreographers attempt to free the spectator's gaze (Burt 2007:45). It forces them to recognise the constructed nature of the performance space and threatens to place them as part of the act of performance. The end of the male duet marks the move away from a surreal space to one that is "real". There is a move away from "an indistinction between the real and the imagined" (Foster 1997:7). The strange and absent performers become very real individuals as they reveal their personal identities.

The performance of solos by the cast from this point onwards was a way of doing justice to each performer's unique individuality. Each solo was sourced from the same gem phrase and developed by the performer so as to represent their individuality. I provided the performers a lot of freedom in this section of the choreography and the making of their solos. They remove their masks during this performance and confess their personal identity. During the

³⁵ Addendum: Figure 22, Pg 86.

performance of the solos the photographer returned to take photographs of each performer as they danced. I used the photographer character to suggest that we are always being watched and monitored by society, that our acts are evidence through which we are judged according to societal expectations. As each performer dances a portrait of them was projected³⁶. I tried to suggest that our identities are layered by having each portrait appear in segments. This suggestion of layered identity can be read further in the completed portrait image in which the performer has replaced a part of their face with another photographic image of the same part. The photographed portrait is therefore a reflection within a reflection of a reflection – multilayered like each of our identities. The move from the rigidity of text to the fluidity of images in the projection was a way through which I attempted to further capture the notion of “coming out”. The rules of text are strict much like the rules of the dominant sexual order. The image has fewer rules, breakable rules that align it with the fluidity of pleasure the homosexual identity exemplifies. Nearly anything is possible with an image, much like the identity of an individual it is completely “self fashioned”. Once they completed their solos the performers returned to sit amongst the spectators to watch the final confession.

My own solo is at the end of the choreography and is the final “coming out” image. I wanted to contrast the absence of personal identity with an exposure which revealed a male homosexual presence. The kissing moment is the point at which the audience is made more aware of the homosexual content of the choreography and my solo is the final exposure of my personal identity. I referred to Greek sculptures of Narcissus³⁷ as a source for my solo. The nude youth was the perfect “coming out” image. The nude body is often viewed as taboo in performance. To expose the self is to be shamed and made vulnerable, much like “coming out”. To be naked is also to be feminised and it exposes the vulnerability of the male human body. During my solo I purposely strip my body of my clothing. I exposed my male homosexual body.

³⁶ Addendum: Figure 23 & 24, Pg. 87.

³⁷ Addendum: Figure 25, Pg. 88.

To dress and undress links the biological body to the social being, and public to private. This makes it an uneasy territory, since it forces us to recognise that the body is a biological entity. It is an organism in culture, a cultural artefact even, and its own boundaries are unclear (Liepe-Levinson 2002:135).

Standing nude before an audience of spectators and looking at them is the ultimate confession. It is an act which immediately demands the recognition of my identity once it is exposed. I ensured that whilst standing there I looked around the performance space at all the audience members. This was so that I could work against the traditional assumption that men in dance “are expected to be detached and not acknowledge the spectator” (Burt 2007:32). The freeing of the spectator’s gaze can also be achieved through challenging it with your own performers gaze and presence. There is a degree of freedom acquired in exposure of my body as it is an act of claiming identity and making it visible. That freedom is however always under threat...vulnerable. Whilst my solo took place an image of an emerging and growing narcissus flower was projected. The image comes to completion as I stand naked. The image of the blossoming flower in this context was to suggest the process of “self fashioning” identity and the beauty imbued within the process of “coming out”.

A queer conclusion

The representation of homosexual identities has come a long way in the last century and in South Africa in particular. This thesis does not claim to be an authority on the ways in which all queer choreographers are making work. It rather gives insights into my own choreological perspective and practice in the context of my contemporaries. I wanted to begin accounting for the choreographic approaches of queer South African choreographers and create a foundation for further writing on the subject matter.

There are a number of observations, similarities and differences in the practice of queer choreographers that have been identified in the body of this thesis. First and perhaps the most important of these is that choreographers making work on homosexual identity are often (if not always) homosexual themselves. From this point of departure, this thesis has attempted to show that these queer choreographers often don't make a distinction between their personal life and their choreography; each is an extension of the other. There is a tendency for queer choreographers (Bill T. Jones, Arnie Zane and Lloyd Newson) from the 1980's onwards to include their personal concerns in the content of their choreography. This reigns true in the context of South Africa. Gregory Maqoma notes that with the end of apartheid South African choreographers have sought to create works accounting for identities that had no means to express themselves before. The personal has become an important source for practicing South African choreographers such as Acty Tang, Steven Cohen and Gregory Maqoma. This personal element in the choreography works in my opinion to create a homosexual presence. The performer and choreographer are literally there in performance: as themselves or an extension of the self or subconscious. This presence has also been noted as a way in which choreographers can actively challenge socio-political issues through the staging of their choreography.

I think that one would be mistaken to think that these personal approaches in making choreography don't rely on a kind of form in their making. This is perhaps not form in its traditional sense, but rather a new type of form. This form is embedded in the ability to manipulate the signs making the choreography; it is more than just execution of the movement

vocabulary, or dance for the sake of dance. There are complicated thought processes involved and difficult stylistic and choreographic choices that need to be made by such choreographers. Choreographers staging their personal identity make distinct choices in creating their work, some of these choices are recurring and all of them are continually changing or work differently in new contexts. The possibilities are endless. With the vast number of cultures and identities present in South Africa this type of approach in making choreography is likely to flourish for years to come and develop in its complexity. These choreographies are becoming ways in which South African's are exploring and accounting for previously disenfranchised and personal identities – most of which are queer.

Where do we dance/perform as queer choreographers in South Africa? With resources fairly limited in this country, choreographers have had to make a plan. Contemporary queer choreographers in South Africa are under immense pressure with regard to resources and funding - we just don't have the money or facilities. Therefore South African choreographers use what they have available to them. There is a real sense that dance can happen anywhere for the choreographers explored in the later part of this thesis. Dance is not isolated to the dance studio or dance mat, it is an embodied social practice. South African choreographers dealing with homosexual presence in dance are deconstructing traditional spaces and embracing all kinds of public and private spaces. Dance can happen anywhere and queer choreographers are more frequently engaging with other spaces or re-appropriating traditional spaces (Cohen, Tang). The need to do this arises because queer choreographers require the spectator to question the ways in which they view the performance. Queer choreographers have the need to create their own spaces that don't submit to the rules of the traditional gaze embedded in established theatre spaces (unless they want to seduce it). They either create an entirely new space to perform the dance (museums, the outside or film) or re-appropriate and seduce traditional spaces. This is done because in order to create representations of homosexual identity that transgresses the norm these choreographers need to question the ways in which the spectator's gaze upon their work. Therefore, accounting for different identities requires audience members to look differently at that which

they already know. South African choreographers representing homosexual identity find ways to challenge the spectators' gaze and consequently the feminisation of spectacle. Although this has been true in some western choreography there are other factors coming into play in South Africa that extend the possibilities when creating homosexual representations in dance.

I would like to think of the South African choreographer I discuss in this thesis as post postmodern choreographers. Queer choreographers in South Africa seem to be returning to the ideals of modern dance practices – one could even call them “Remodernists”³⁸. There is a return by choreographers to the personal, spiritual and self reflexivity when making work (similar to the sentiments of Ted Shawn in his writings *Dance We Must*). The making of these choreographies is occurring in a culturally, racially and spiritually postmodern society (the rainbow nation). South African queer choreographers are creating work in a context less embedded in binary ways of viewing the self, our world and others (unlike the early modern dance era). The choreographers of which I speak also approach their choreography using poststructuralist thinking. These choreographers are aware of and make choices with the understanding of gender and sexuality as being constructed. The use of seduction/polysemantism becomes a key way in which these choreographers operate when creating choreography. They don't seek to create opposing representations of identity. There is a sense that dominant discourses can be seduced by the choreographer utilising images and signs embedded in the choreographic content of their work (the vocabulary, space, gaze, theatrical images, narrative, text, and surrealist tactics etc.). Through this they are provided the opportunity to create a subsumed discourse rather than an oppositionary one. The representations of homosexual identity of which I discuss don't seek to exclude heterosexual discourses – they exist as its equal.

South African queer choreographers continue to create innovative dance vocabularies. These innovative vocabularies are often born from an organic process (and influenced by many styles) and the choreographer has the choice of including any type of training into their choreography. Innovative

³⁸ Appendixes: Article 4, Pp. 98-100.

vocabularies keep spectators of the dance interested and engaged. Unique vocabularies assist in diffusing the gaze of the spectator further and make the choreography and its rhythms unpredictable. They also seem to avoid hyper-masculine vocabularies and images of camping.

The works of most of the choreographers are inter-textual in nature. Male representations of homosexual identity by South African choreographers have at times included re-appropriated traditional western narratives (Tang & de Boer). This places the re-appropriated narrative within a greater context for the audience and allows for a more ephemeral challenge to dominant discourses. If text is used by these choreographers, it is done very carefully. There is an avoidance of referring directly to the homosexual content of the choreography when using text and rather an inclination towards subtlety or suggestion.

The body is the home of dance and the primary means through which choreographers create their dance. South African choreographers take into consideration the body and the associations attached to a particular body when making work. These gendered coloured, cultural, HIV positive and sexual bodies influence the making of their works. The signs attached to the body are manipulated through costuming, make-up or dance vocabulary (gender-reversal). A type of body can also be avoided by the choreographer completely (such as in *Odd Man Out*). The vocabularies being used by such choreographers are often non-gender specific and play into ambiguity. The static nature of gender roles and associations are deconstructed and often even disregarded by these queer choreographers.

South African queer choreographers are creating discourses in choreography that are inclusive. Careful consideration is being taken when representing identities in this multiethnic context. South African choreographers are asserting their personal identities through their art form. The use of personal presence in their work helps to assert the presence of their homosexual identity. The staging of such representations consequently has the power to address socio-political concerns and assert the rights of queer persons. This thesis therefore shows that queer choreography is emerging in South Africa and challenging and developing conventional approaches to representing male homosexual identity.

Addendum:

Figure 1:

- The male dancers of Ted Shawn's company at Jacob's Pillow – Shawn believed that men should use "big" movements and he developed a hyper-masculine movement vocabulary.



Image sourced from:

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_ZKwi2HpR3M8/SdABjUqGayI/AAAAAAAAIJK/klndWz1HY/s400/Ted+Shawn%27s+Men+Dancers+in+Polonaise.jpg

Figure 2:

- Ted Shawn in *Death of Adonis* (1923).



Image sourced from:

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_ZKwi2HpR3M8/SdAAaUViYI/AAAAAAAAIIs/Y5BLmU42_kU/s400/ted_shawn.jp

Figure 3:

- Acty Tang in *Chaste* (2007).



Image sourced from:

http://cuetv.ru.ac.za/wpcontent/uploads/2007/07/acty3.bmp&imgrefurl=http://cuetv.ru.ac.za/%3Fcat%3D16&usq=_LHPoO5nkQh82QpITwq3_410d7E8=&h=576&w=685&sz=1157&hl=en&start=4&um=1&tbnid=Ms8hwSrQijzM:&tbnh=117&tbnw=139&prev=/images%3Fq%3DActy%2BTang%2BChoreographer%26hl%3Den%26um%3D1

Figure 4:

- Steven Cohen dressed in Monster Drag for his work entitled *Limping into the African Renaissance* (1999-2002).



Image sourced from:

<http://www.at.artslink.co.za/~elu/stevencohen/objects/front.jpg>

Figure 5:

- Steven Cohen being driven away by Neo-Nazi's in his work entitled *Patriotic Drag* (1998).



Image sourced from:

<http://www.artthrob.co.za/00mar/images/cohen01a.jpg>

Figure 6:

- Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (1893).

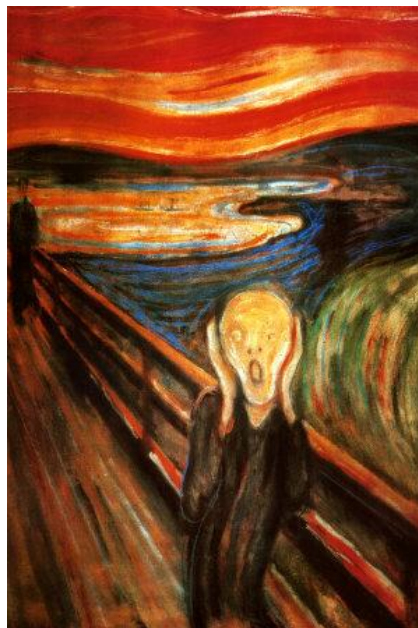


Image sourced from:

<http://riverdaughter.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/the-scream.jpeg>

Figure 7:

- Contemporary surrealist painter David Lewis Baker's *Anonymity 01: Odd Man Out*.

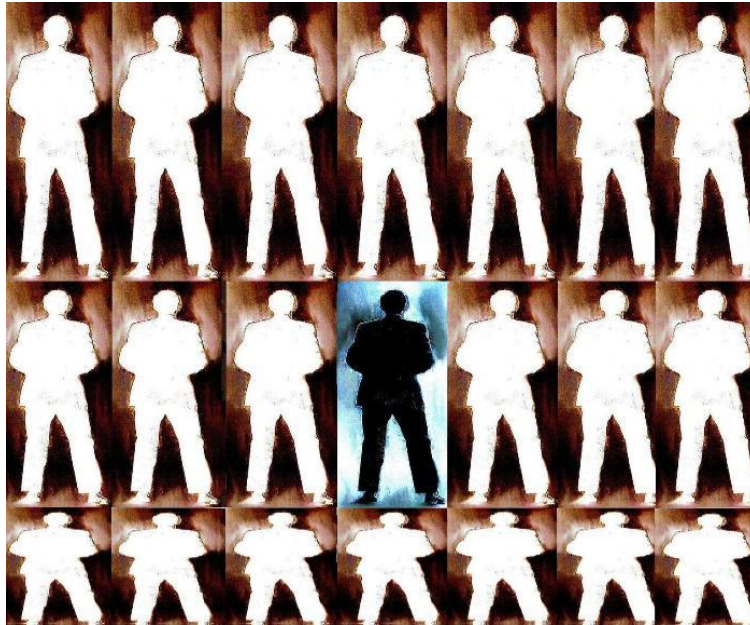


Image source: no longer available on the internet.

Figure 8:

- The upside down hanging body of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. After his execution his body was hung up in public at the Esso petrol station. His body was then beaten, pelted with stones and hurled with abuse from the public (1945).



Image sourced from:

<http://cache.daylife.com/imageserve/0eNM0vkfM0hG/340x.jpg>

Figure 9:

- Solo performer at the beginning of *Odd Man Out* (2007).



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Figure 10:

- Performers in *Odd Man Out* reaching for the men above them.



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Figure 11:

- The upside down hanging men drop to the floor amongst the performers who remain unable to touch them.



Figure 12:

- The space between the performers and the upside down hanging men informs the notion of desire being mediated by lack.



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Figure 13:

- Salvador Dali's *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1936-7).



Image sourced from:

<http://www.intentblog.com/archives/metamorphosis.jpg>

Figure 14:

- The phallic like structures creating the context in *Narcissus* (2008).

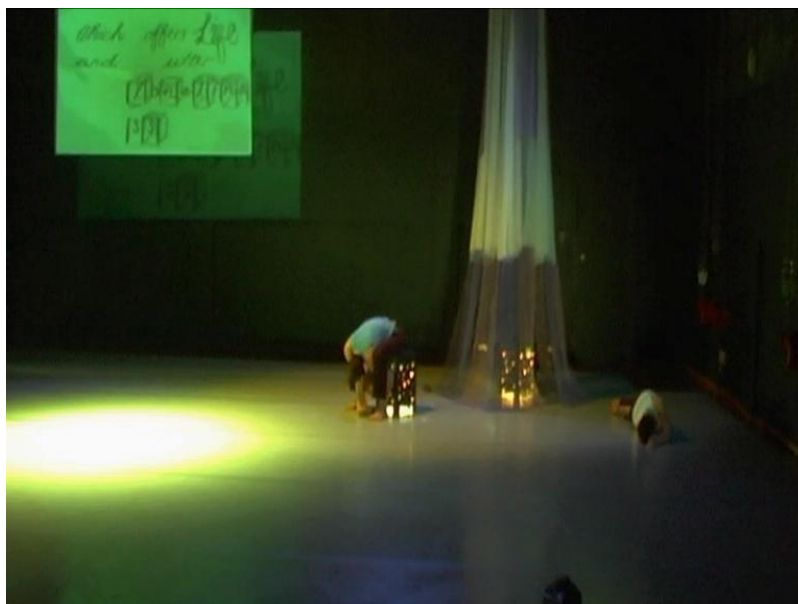


Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department

Figure 15:

- The 6 performers in *Narcissus* wore black masks, black pants and blue/white vests.



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department

Figure 16:

- The movement vocabulary included stylised looking.



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Figure 17:

- The movement vocabulary included longing reaches between performers.



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama

Figure 18:

- The movement vocabulary included movement in which the appendages of the dancer mirrored/reflected one another.



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Figure 19:

- In the choreographic sequences performers would be staged to be mirroring one another.



Images sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Figure 20:

- In many of the sequences two performers would come together into a duet centre stage (reflecting one another's movements), this would occur whilst the other two performers were separated across the space still reflecting on another's movements and maintaining a connection between one another.



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Figure 21:

- The two male performers (Shaun Acker & I) find one another in the space.



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Figure 22:

- The two male performers (Shaun Acker & I) heads touch and rub as we search one another's faces/identities.



Image sourced from: The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Figure 23:

- Profile picture of *Narcissus* performer Nomcebisi Moyikwa.



Figure 24:

- Profile picture of *Narcissus* performer Alex Richardson.



Figure 25:

- Image of a Greek nude statue of Narcissus.



Image sourced from:

<http://www.costumearmor.com/images/customdesign/Narcissus.jpg>

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Appendixes:

Article 1:

Published in: *The Mail and Guardian Newspaper: Critique and Analysis*, Vol 24, No30. South Africa, July 25 to 31.

Body Language: Sock it to me



By: *Shaun de Waal*

Before I had had the chance to see it in a magazine, the Emporio Armani underwear ad featuring David Beckham had already whizzed around the internet, popping up on blogs galore, being emailed around the world. In fact, I still haven't seen it in a magazine, but then I suppose I don't buy the kinds of magazines in which I'm likely to see it. Or any magazines really.

Not that this is the first time we've seen Beckham in a state of undress. His picture-autobiographies reveal his torso and tattoos, and he has stripped down for Armani before. A 2007 ad showed him lying on a bed, apparently in the process of removing his trousers, so this new one is like a natural sequel. Now the trousers are definitively off!

And those older ads (even the one where he lies atop a woman in bed) have little of the direct come-hither attitude displayed here. He may be scowling at the viewer with manly toughness, but his body is laid out submissively for our gaze.

He reclines on a bed of rumpled white sheets, with the light falling on his new white undies in such a way as to emphasise the bulge therein. Of course, following fast on the heels of the picture as it crisscrossed the globe via the

internet were accusations that those Armanis had been filled out with a ball of socks -- a favoured old underwear model's trick, it would seem. That or the crotch area has been Photoshopped a little, if it wasn't already lit with the kind of care once devoted to Marlene Dietrich's face. Moreover, according to some people who have carefully studied Beckham photos old and new, the nipples have been tweaked too.

I'm not sure one should worry about such enhancements, whether electronic or sock-related. (I hope at least they are Armani socks.) I know it's useful to believe that Beckham is a real person, because that enhances his status as an endorser of product.

A straight man friend, who knows about such things, reliably informs me that Beckham is not just a fashion icon, but in fact has a parallel career as a footballer -- or used to. It's also helpful to believe he's real if you want to sell newspapers on the basis of his sexual indiscretions. But last time I saw his image on TV and it began to talk in a bat like squeak, as if he were indeed a real, flawed person, I switched the TV off at once.

Beckham is sexually attractive, but only insofar as the photographer and/or lighting assistant and/or Photoshop operator are artful. He is a constructed image, and the image is irresistible. He's like the genetically modified epitome of male beauty and he symbolises the return of the repressed, as Camille Paglia would see it -- the classical-Greek idolisation of male beauty that was suppressed by all that text-obsessed Judaeo-Christian prudishness and denial of the body. And, in Beckham's case at least, it is beauty that he possesses -- in a way that used to be applied only to women. Yes, he's added some tattoos to the boyish torso, to increase the impression of traditional masculinity (decoration through pain), but he is basically an example of what you'd call the feminised phallus.

That he would seem to have an actual phallus himself, possibly even testicles, is something the new Armani ad asks us to contemplate. In fact, it's not the bulge making that suggestion so much as the forearm that appears in the background. If it is indeed a forearm. With its densely tattooed surface, and in the way it is partially obscured, it looks like Becks's pet python has slithered into bed with him unawares.

The sock-bulge in the white briefs may be suspiciously rounded, all too neatly curved, lacking the bumps and angles that would speak of real flesh. But it's also about a package: Beckham the overall package is summed up in the perfection of the undies-package.

The pythonic forearm subliminally suggests one thing, and then we return to the neatly rounded bulge in the underpants -- after all, it is the underpants that are for sale at Emporio Armani. If I buy them, I too can have testicles of an almost supernatural generosity and sphericity. But where do I get the python?

Article 2:

Published in the BBC History Magazine, Vol. 5 No. 5 (May 2004), p. 9.

The ugly end of Narcissus

Ancient manuscript sheds new light on an enduring myth

By *David Keys*

Narcissus, Greek mythology's most tragic figure, didn't die of a broken heart, but collapsed into a pool of blood after committing suicide, according to a new discovery. A previously unknown account of Narcissus's demise - which appears to pre-date all other known versions - has been discovered among ancient manuscripts stored at Oxford University.

This early version - a Greek poem - probably dates from the mid-first century BC and differs from the oft-quoted account by the Roman poet Ovid written about half a century later.

'Following this discovery it is becoming increasingly clear that the myth was altered by Ovid to broaden its appeal,' said the Oxford scholar who discovered the poem, Dr Benjamin Henry of the university's classics faculty.

Narcissus was so beautiful that vast numbers of men (not Echo and other females, in the newly discovered poem) fell in love with him. However, such was his egocentricity that he spurned them all, leaving a trail of heartbreak behind him. Finally, a rejected suitor persuaded one of the gods to deal with him. Narcissus was made to stare for ever at his own image, reflected in a pool of water. The more he stared, the more desperately he fell in love with himself.

According to Ovid, Narcissus - pining from a broken heart - wasted away and died, whereupon he turned into the world's very first narcissus flower. However the earlier version has now revealed that the original myth probably had a less peaceful, more violent denouement, ending in bloody suicide.

The papyrus fragment is one of tens of thousands that were found in the late 19th and early 20th century in ancient rubbish dumps at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt. These dumps, now fully excavated, are the world's largest source of ancient writings, accounting for 70 per cent of all known literary papyri. Many are kept at Oxford but the majority have still not been fully transcribed and translated. It was during work on these remaining manuscripts that the Narcissus fragment was found.

Dr Henry thinks it likely that its author was Parthenius of Nicaea, a Greek from what is now western Turkey. He appears to have been born sometime around 100 to 90 BC and was taken prisoner by the Romans during a war in Anatolia in around 73 BC. He ended up in Italy, where he became the Roman poet Virgil's tutor.

Although a mythological character, Narcissus has had a substantial impact on human culture - from art and literature (Shakespeare, Milton, Poussin, Rousseau and Goethe) to morality, lifestyle, Freudian psychology and arguably even religion. It's thought that, in the liberal sexual atmosphere of ancient Greece, his story developed as a cautionary tale as to what could happen to beautiful young men who rejected their elders' advances.

Article 3

Unpublished Text.

Narcissus Text

By: Kyle Dylan de Boer

Quiet

For one moment

This moment

** Flash of camera**

You're here now with me

Exposed in a flash

A flashing of memories

Caught in reflections on water

I'm changing again

These layers are coming off

Another birth

Imminent...

Can you hear it ticking?

Like an earth covered bulb

Growing us mad...

Narcissus in the shadows

There he stands

Trapped and looking

Much like you

You've come to see

Well come and see

This narcissus

Exposed

Exposure can be painless

That emergence from the womb

That umbilical abortion

Which offers life and utter loneliness

Neither here...

And no one there...

Still watching

Looking with a look

Don't stare

Have a peek narcissus

Rather at you than me...
I follow from a distance
You cannot know it's me
Dreaming to know those layers
A clothes ripping expose
Of two love seeking souls
Unreciprocated
Our Narcissi

Waking on the borders
Of a dark and thoughtless reflection of the mind
Rising again
To journey apart
You and me together darling
Are causing this odd falling
Caught in the spotlight of the mind
And publicly exposed

Article 4

Published by: The Stuckist Movement: Billy Childish & Charles Thomson
Retrieved 04 June, 2007 from:
<http://www.stuckism.com/remod.html>

The Remodernist Manifesto:

Remodernism

'towards a new spirituality in art'

A *Stuckist* Document: *The first Remodernist art group (est. 1999)*

Through the course of the 20th century Modernism has progressively lost its way, until finally toppling into the pit of Postmodern balderdash. At this appropriate time, The Stuckists, the first Remodernist Art Group, announce the birth of Remodernism.

- 1. Remodernism takes the original principles of Modernism and reapplies them, highlighting vision as opposed to formalism.**
- 2. Remodernism is inclusive rather than exclusive** and welcomes artists who endeavour to know themselves and find themselves through art processes that strive to connect and include, rather than alienate and exclude. Remodernism upholds the spiritual vision of the founding fathers of Modernism and respects their bravery and

integrity in facing and depicting the travails of the human soul through a new art that was no longer subservient to a religious or political dogma and which sought to give voice to the gamut of the human psyche.

3. Remodernism discards and replaces Post-Modernism because of its failure to answer or address any important issues of being a human being.

4. Remodernism embodies spiritual depth and meaning and brings to an end an age of scientific materialism, nihilism and spiritual bankruptcy.

5. We don't need more dull, boring, brainless destruction of convention, what we need is not new, but perennial. We need an art that integrates body and soul and recognises enduring and underlying principles which have sustained wisdom and insight throughout humanity's history. This is the proper function of tradition.

6. Modernism has never fulfilled its potential. It is futile to be 'post' something which has not even 'been' properly something in the first place. Remodernism is the rebirth of spiritual art.

7. Spirituality is the journey of the soul on earth. Its first principle is a declaration of intent to face the truth. Truth is what it is, regardless of what we want it to be. Being a spiritual artist means addressing unflinchingly our projections, good and bad, the attractive and the grotesque, our strengths as well as our delusions, in order to know ourselves and thereby our true relationship with others and our connection to the divine.

8. Spiritual art is not about fairyland. It is about taking hold of the rough texture of life. It is about addressing the shadow and making friends with wild dogs. Spirituality is the awareness that everything in life is for a higher purpose.

9. Spiritual art is not religion. Spirituality is humanity's quest to understand itself and finds its symbology through the clarity and integrity of its artists.

10. The making of true art is man's desire to communicate with himself, his fellows and his God. Art that fails to address these issues is not art.

11. It should be noted that technique is dictated by, and only necessary to the extent to which it is commensurate with, the vision of the artist.

12. The Remodernist's job is to bring God back into art but not as God was before. Remodernism is not a religion, but we uphold that it is essential to regain enthusiasm (from the Greek, *en theos* to be possessed by God).

13. A true art is the visible manifestation, evidence and facilitator of the soul's journey. Spiritual art does not mean the painting of Madonnas or Buddhas. Spiritual art is the painting of things that touch the soul of the artist. Spiritual art does not often look very spiritual, it looks like everything else because spirituality includes everything.

14. Why do we need a new spirituality in art? Because connecting in a meaningful way is what makes people happy. Being understood and understanding each other makes life enjoyable and worth living.

Summary

It is quite clear to anyone of an uncluttered mental disposition that what is now put forward, quite seriously, as art by the ruling elite, is proof that a seemingly rational development of a body of ideas has gone seriously awry. The principles on which Modernism was based are sound, but the conclusions that have now been reached from it are preposterous.

We address this lack of meaning, so that a coherent art can be achieved and this imbalance redressed.

Let there be no doubt, there will be a spiritual renaissance in art because there is nowhere else for art to go. Stuckism's mandate is to initiate that spiritual renaissance now.