Contemporary Dance and Southern African Rock Art

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Tranceformations and Transformations

By

Sylvia “Magogo” Glasser

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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“Where once we could believe in the comfort and continuities of tradition, today we must face the responsibilities of cultural translation. In the attempts to mediate between different cultures, languages and societies, there is always the threat of mistranslation, confusion and fear”

—H. Bhabha, “Beyond the Pale: Art in the Age of Multicultural Translation”, 1993.

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FOREWORD

The juxtaposition of words in the title of Sylvia Glasser's long-awaited book is highly significant as it conjures deeply spiritual cultural experiences and realities.

The multi-faceted, socio-political context in which *Tranceformations*, the dance work, was created is a key contributing element. In addition, as a theatre dance work, in terms of its research and creative process Glasser's *Tranceformations* has pioneered a new chapter in contemporary dance making, not only in South Africa and on the continent but internationally.

In a world where migration of peoples from war-torn or drought-hit countries, many of them African, and at a time when globalisation is an increasing reality, this book contextualises and reflects the value and fluidity of cultural identity and practices, as well as the very real dangers of cultural genocide. It also recounts the decimation of an art form, namely the San/Bushman rock art, through fear and hatred of 'the other'; ignorance or neglect; the after effects of colonisation; the flipside of European occupation of the Cape and the dehumanising mechanisms of the apartheid regime.

The strength of *Tranceformations* (the choreography, the performance and the book) lies in its ability to articulate a choreographic process that tackles cultural taboos – such as ethnocentricity, notions of the primitive and socio-political issues – exploring, then finding solutions for them artistically and, more importantly, aesthetically.

Empowered by her experience and knowledge of anthropology and her considerable expertise as a dancer, choreographer, educationist and cultural activist, Glasser attempts to, and succeeds in, transposing San rock art, its mythologies and sacred rituals practised by its artists, into embodied performance and dynamic theatrical expression. Glasser describes how she is enabled in this quest by her collaborations with designers and a composer to create a powerful dance theatre, which subsequently toured the world.

Theatrical performance, and dance in particular, is by its very nature ephemeral, which is what makes *Tranceformations and Transformations* so invaluable. It not only documents the journey of a choreographer and the birth of her Afrofusion, but captures the practical, ethical and philosophical dilemmas of an artist – a white South African woman who defines herself as an African (daring, during apartheid) paying tribute to heavily marginalised, under-appreciated artists. Her writing also outlines her artistic collaborations, as well as traces the origins of the now internationally revered training course for dancer-choreographers and a new generation of ground-breaking African choreographers, which was born out of this production.

Another vital aspect of this publication, which is an invaluable reference book for dance and anthropology practitioners as well as researchers and historians, is the number of explanations and definitions for thorny subjects such as the impact of apartheid, post-apartheid realities, cultural fusion and, notably, the three stages of trance and Afrofusion. Glasser's authoritative recounting of South African history, starting with the San and the complexity of their history and accompanying terminology, creates a lucidly instructive context for what is to follow down the centuries.

This heritage publication is a major addition to dance pedagogy, dance writing and literature per se. The text and illustrations, which have academic gravitas, provide access to chapters of South African history and artmaking in an articulately accessible form. The writer's profound activist legacy is now, thankfully, also enshrined in print.

Adrienne Sichel

Veteran South African theatre journalist, dance writer, researcher and author of *Body Politics: Fingerprinting South African Contemporary Dance*

The Ar(t)chive, Johannesburg

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am delighted to have my book published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing and hopefully this will enable social and cultural anthropologists, choreographers, dance students, artists, performers and archaeologists who are interested in cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary research, to study and share my work, and that it will change perceptions and fulfil the following: "This book will be a useful model for others seeking to effect systemic change through art making and arts education" (Sharon Friedler, Stephen Lang Professor of Performing Arts, and Professor of Dance Emerita Swarthmore College, USA). I would like to thank Sarahleigh Castelyn for introducing me to Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Thanks to Adam Rummens, Amanda Millar, Sophie Edminson, Rebecca Gladders and the team at Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their guidance and support.

Without the beautiful, meaningful, and inspiring rock art of the San and the intriguing stories of the /Xam, there would have been no *Tranceformations,* the ground-breaking dance that I choreographed in 1991, that is still performed currently, and subsequently this book; my deep appreciation, respect and admiration is for them. I dedicate this book to all those people who were part of the process of creating *Tranceformations*, as well as to all those who inspired the process past and present, including the Moving into Dance (MID) students, dancers, teachers, choreographers, and staff. There are many who helped me along the way, and firstly I would like to mention "the eight David's", and "Drid" who, in one way or other, supported the process of conceptualising, creating and completing this book—my husband David Glasser, my fiercest critic and most ardent devotee, who has encouraged and supported me materially and emotionally in all my work and my life at all times; David Lewis-Williams whose ground-breaking work inspired and informed my work, and who many years ago suggested that I write a book; the late David Hammond-Tooke who was my social anthropology professor, teacher and advisor; the late David Webster, my social anthropology teacher, friend and role model; the late Drid Williams my anthropology of dance mentor; David Abilio, former

director of the Mozambique National Song and Dance Company (CNCD), who encouraged my work when others scorned it; David Nevill, former head of Cadbury Schweppes, who financed the life-changing Schweppes Scholarship Programme at MID; David Pearce, current director of the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) at the University of the Witwatersrand, who provided the rock art tracings essential for this book; and David Thatanelo April, who represents the dancers who were not only part of *Tranceformations,* but also those who danced by my side and with me for many years as students, performers, choreographers, teachers, arts administrators and leaders. These latter people helped not only in the creation, rehearsal and/or performance of *Tranceformations* but were, or are, essential in keeping the spirit of the work alive through mentoring the dancers of the "next generation"; with David, they include Gregory Maqoma, Vincent Sekwati Koko Mantsoe, Moeketsi Koena, Nan Hamilton, Eric Lehana, the late Pule Kgaratsi, Themba Nkabinde, Tanya Sutton, Gcina Mkhize, Fiona Lacey, Lesole Maine, Nhlanhla Mahlangu, Muzi Shili, Connie Kau, Thandiwe Tshabalala, Sonia Radebe, Thoko Seganye, Luyanda Sidiya, Thabo Rapoo, Sunnyboy Motau, Oscar Buthelezi, Teboho Letele, Eugene Febzin and Lesego Dihemo. Thanks to all the dancers at Moving into Dance and the alumni whose interviews and comments are an integral and vital part of the book, and to Sarah Roberts for the vital, imaginative costumes and sets, and the late Shaun Naidoo for the inspiring and evocative music.

I include John Hogg in my dedication and appreciation for his generosity always and for permission to use his extraordinary photos of the original work in 1991, and all the beautiful photos he took whenever *Tranceformations* was performed in South Africa between 1991 and 2019. Thanks also to Suzy Bernstein for permission to use two of her photos in this book, and to Moving into Dance and Thabo Sebatlelo for the four photos from Okiep.

Thanks very much to the National Arts Council of South Africa for their grant in 2018, which made it possible for me to do the research for *Tranceformations* for the earlier self-published book, and to distribute copies to under-resourced arts organisations, community centres and schools; all in keeping with my life's work.

I would like to express my deep, gratitude to my colleague and friend Sharon Friedler for her encouragement over the years, for reading the entire manuscript and for her helpful and perceptive feedback; to Adrienne Sichel for agreeing to write the beautiful, insightful foreword, for her constant encouragement and inspiration in getting me to finish the book, and for introducing me to Jessica Denyschen and The Ar(t)chive. Much appreciation to Jessica for her invaluable work at The Ar(t)chive in general, and specifically for this book; for her patience, support, encouragement and commitment to the completion and publication of the 2019 version and consequently of this publication! Thanks to her and the Ar(t)chive also for making the video of *Tranceformations* the dance, accessible for readers of this book. Thanks to Tammy Ballantyne for working with Jessica at The Ar(t)chive, and for teaching the anthropology of dance course, including *Tranceformations*, at Moving into Dance, and to Thandiwe Tshabalala for her administrative help for the book, to the editors and proof-readers at Staging Post and Aimee Armstrong for their invaluable contribution.

My deep appreciation goes to Nadia Virasamy, current chief executive officer and director of education of MID, for taking the baton and running with dedication, passion, and inspiration after I retired, for her helpful comments about the book and for maintaining *Tranceformations* in the MID accredited Performing Arts Training Course (PATC), as well as in MID's repertoire. Thanks to my dear friend and colleague, Maureen Friedman, for her support over many years, including teaching about *Tranceformations* and the anthropology of dance at MID; to Maria Kint for always being there for me, for teaching me so much, and her management in touring with *Tranceformations* in Europe; to Susan Graham for all her work and taking me to see *Tranceformations* in Okiep; Sue Hall and the MID Edudance team including Lucky Ratlhagane, Wayne Mzwandile Nhlangothi, Connie Kau and Nhlanhla Mahlangu for facilitating a San rock art and *Tranceformations* Edudance; Bev Elgie, the late Jackie Semela and Sandra Rosenberg for feedback about the work, and all the above people for their major contribution to MID. Thanks to Jaqueline Simmonds for facilitating the performances of *Tranceformations* in Australia and to her and Caroline Davy for their advice about the book, and to my beloved

family, David, Nadine, Benjamin, Jackie, Abigail, Deborah, Rachel and Emma for their love and support during my stranger-than-fiction life.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTENT AND CONTEXT

Transformations or *Tranceformations*?

This story is about change—ancient and modern change, physical, mental, and spiritual change, personal and collective change, political, social, and cultural change. It is about destruction, decimation, and denial, but also about recognition, respect, and revival. It is about *Tranceformations* a dance choreographed by a contemporary South African woman that was inspired by the ancient rock art and trance dancing of the indigenous First People of southern[1] Africa—the San or Bushmen.[2]

Tranceformations—like the dance, the word conveys multiple meanings and many metaphors. The name and the named, the sign and the signified, the title and the dance, have a symbiotic relationship as meaning and movement shaped each other. *Tranceformations* is the story of the trance "formations" or movements of the San healing ritual, as well as transformation or change on many levels at many times. The two-dimensional images from the ancient San rock art that were frozen in time and space, were revitalised through living, dancing bodies. The contemporary choreography of *Tranceformations* embodied the changes that occurred in the minds, spirits, bodies, and perceptions of the participants in the ancient healing ritual. Furthermore, the lives of the contemporary participants were transformed through the process of conceptualisation, creation, and performance of *Tranceformations.* Dominant hierarchies of aesthetic

[1] South Africa is the name of the country and southern Africa is the geographical region that includes South Africa and other countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, and Mozambique.
[2] See chapter 2 regarding the use of San or Bushman.

values[3] were also reformed, while past and present are interwoven through a contemporary dance creation.

The search for an integration of the physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual led to the realm of the "fragile heritage"[4] of the ancient San people. If their rock art was the initial inspiration, a deeper understanding came from the work of a renowned South African archaeologist, David Lewis-Williams, whose research revealed the connections between San rock art, their belief systems and the trance dance or healing ritual of the San. The trance dance was the kinetic connection to their belief systems, while the rock art was the material manifestation of their spiritual experiences. *Tranceformations* developed into a ritual journey that explores the images and transformations visualised and experienced by the medicine men or shamans during their trance dancing or healing ceremony. It depicts a trance dance, its relationship to healing and hunting, as well as the feelings and hallucinations experienced by the participants in the ritual. The experience of researching, creating and performing *Tranceformations* became connected to, and a catalyst for, a series of unexpected transformations on various levels. These transformations affected not only the perceptions and way of working of the dancers who were part of the original process of creation and performance of this work, but also separate groups of dancers over a period of more than 20 years. At the same time there were national political transformations, and these were connected to transformations in some of the San communities' lives. The personal transformations I experienced as a result of creating *Tranceformations* were in no small measure the motivation for writing this book.

The process of creating and choreographing *Tranceformations* was part of a personal voyage in my creative and socio-political work as a dance educator, cultural activist, and choreographer in South Africa. As a choreographer and dance teacher in South Africa I had to make decisions about who to teach, where to teach and what kind of work to choreograph

[3] When countries are colonised, the culture and aesthetics of the colonisers usually becomes dominant.
[4] J.D. Lewis-Williams, *Discovering Southern African Rock Art* (Cape Town: David Phillips, 1990), 93-98.

within the framework of a society governed by the oppressive, repressive laws of apartheid, and within attitudes forged by apartheid ideology. My choreographic response to apartheid has been expressed on both the levels of content and form. I believe that my work since 1978 has been implicitly or explicitly political. The people I chose to work with, the style and vocabulary of movement I developed, as well as the subject matter, could all be seen to contribute to the view that my work was in some way a form of political protest or resistance to apartheid.

The moral issues and dilemmas I faced when choreographing *Tranceformations* were great, but the dilemmas of putting it all on paper for people to read were even greater. I could not write only about the process of creating the work, because any performance, whatever the form, to be fully understood, needs to be seen in its total socio-political and cultural context. On the one hand, the /Xam—the people who *actually* painted the art that inspired the dance—are no longer alive, while on the other hand there are contemporary San people who are still living. As an artist whose work has been strongly political, I could not dismiss the political implications of choreographing the dance, as well as writing this book. I had faced and dealt with some extremely sensitive and difficult issues in creating the dance *Tranceformations* but had worked through them with the support of the team of dancers, designer, and musician. It became exceedingly difficult to write *only* about the process of creating and performing the work. I needed to trace a journey that started long before *Tranceformations* and examine influences that had informed the path I chose. Furthermore, as someone who has had the freedom of choice, and the opportunities to implement these choices, I am aware of the complexity regarding issues in relation to representation, appropriation, and power relationships. However, as a cultural activist, choreographer, and teacher I would like to share my process of research, discovery, and creation, as well as the extraordinary experiences of the dancers who performed this work.

If there has been a thread in my life and my work, it is the concept of integration or fusion. Living in South Africa I had witnessed the horrific consequences of institutionalised legal separation. My work was at one level a personal rejection of the Cartesian mind-body separation that I confronted in my professional and daily life, and on another level, it stood in direct

opposition to the cultural and social separation of apartheid. With the formation of Moving into Dance in 1978 there was the fusion or synthesis of African music, movement, and ritual with Western forms of contemporary dance. This blending of two different aesthetic forms was expressed not only in my choreography but also in the method of training that I developed which became known as Afrofusion. Linked to this process of preparation and performance was the integration of black and white people dancing together at Moving into Dance during apartheid. Closely connected to all of this is the integration of dance with general education, which has been the basis of my teaching and the training programmes I established at Moving into Dance. I had not perceived fusion or integration in its various forms as something fixed, but as part of an ongoing creative process that was constantly changing or developing. It is within the context of change I continue the journey that led to *Tranceformations.*

We will follow a pathway that will lead to my personal anthropology[5] as well as the historical, political, and cultural implications of working in an apartheid society before I return to the trail that takes us to the creation of *Tranceformations.* I need to examine the kind of ideology that shaped the politics of apartheid, and the apartheid of culture in South Africa. It was against this backdrop that my artistic creation was projected and there is no doubt in my mind that the broader political history as well as my personal world view moulded *Tranceformations*.

The politics of arts and culture

I believe that dance is not just an esoteric art form isolated from reality and everyday living, but that it is woven into the fabric of the socio-economic, political and belief systems of people. Dance is a form of cultural expression that reflects the values of individuals or groups of people, and as such it can be an expression of resistance to a political system. Furthermore, dance events or dance rituals can act as agents of change through transforming the

[5] For discussion of relevant aspects in a personal anthropology see D. Pocock, "The Idea of a Personal Anthropology," *JASHM* 8, no.1 (1994):11-42. First delivered in July 1973 at an A.S.A. (Assoc. of Soc. Anthrop.) Conference, Oxford.

attitudes or perceptions of people—those performing the actions as well as those observing.

The debate between "art as art" and "art as politics" is a universal and timeless one. The notion of politics can be restricted to direct concerns of government, or it can have a broader meaning. The broader meaning of politics includes the influence and interaction between people and institutions in general. As the term "art", especially in Western[6] culture, often suggests a domain or area of activity that is separate from everyday life, the use and meaning of this word in itself reveals some of the issues that are involved in this debate. Is the artist required to have a sense of socio-political responsibility, or is the artist's sole responsibility to themselves as creative individuals? Closely linked to this debate is the question of whether art is capable of transforming people socially or politically.

Historically, with the European colonisation of South Africa from the mid-17th century, the white settlers perceived the culture of the indigenous people as less valuable and on a lower level than their Western culture. The culture and beliefs of the indigenous population were either misunderstood, or perfunctorily dismissed. When the Europeans arrived to settle in South Africa in the 17th century, they found indigenous people who had a different belief system and world view from their own. With the arrogance of the dominant culture, they proceeded to try to impose the European values and religious beliefs on the local people. The indigenous people were technologically undeveloped, which again was interpreted as a sign of their inferiority. They were perceived as "child-like" and "simple" or viewed as "savages" and "primitive."

The notion of "primitive" and its use and meaning in Western society needs to be understood and I believe that there are two sets of meanings that are implied by the term "primitive" in Western society. These two sets may seem contradictory, but actually are predicated on each other.

[6] For the sake of simplicity, I use the blanket term Western for the culture that had its roots in Europe or North America. This is not meant to ignore the diversity of Western culture or of Western dancing. Also see chapter 2.

On the one hand the meaning can encompass concepts such as savage, underdeveloped, uncivilised, unskilled, unsophisticated, simple, basic; while on the other hand "primitive" can be used to mean natural, instinctive, spontaneous, exotic, romantic, colourful, unspoiled.

It may appear as if the first set of meanings of "primitive" has only negative connotations, while the second set has positive values. However, the ramifications of both sets of meanings have been instrumental in forging ethnocentric attitudes: in the first instance arrogance and in the second instance paternalism[7]. Both sets of meanings can be understood with reference to the process of colonisation. By colonisation I am referring to the appropriation of land and subsequent control and governance of the indigenous inhabitants of a country by a foreign settler society, usually through coercion and followed by subjugation. The colonial conquests were often followed by the arrival of missionaries. The latter often described the native non-Christian populations as savages, barbarians, pagans and heathens who needed salvation. There was an evangelical zeal in South Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries, to convert and "civilise" the indigenous population according to Western values and belief systems.

These attitudes of superiority and paternalism were reinforced in the second half of the 19th century by the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin. These theories stated that all life evolved from the simple to the complex. In a case of what could be referred to as misappropriation and even distortion, these evolutionary ideas were transferred to the colonial situation whereby the indigenous inhabitants were perceived as less developed, or less highly evolved, forms of life than their conquerors. In the evolutionary scale the people who were now referred to as "primitive" were on the side of "nature" as opposed to "culture." Nature embodied all things instinctive or biological, while culture embodied the aspects in life that are learnt. Western culture was equated with civilisation that was acquired essentially through reading and writing. Coupled with evolutionary theories was the glorification of the concept of "The Empire"—especially in

[7] There is also the use of "primitive", which does not have negative connotations, especially in the world of fine artists. See S. Glasser, "The Notion of Primitive Dancing", *JASHM* 7, no. 3 (1993(b)):183-96.

Victorian Britain—with the "mother" country protecting her child-like subjects.

We can see in the above historical process and intellectual climate that the seeds associating the word "primitive" with all connotations of negativity for the first set of meanings of "primitive" i.e., savage, uncivilised, simple were sown and nurtured. On the other hand, there was also a romantic movement in the 18th century, based on Rousseau's idea of the "noble savage", to view the indigenous inhabitants of the new colonies as natural and unspoilt. The Nature/Culture dichotomy, referred to above, reinforced this idea of the indigenous inhabitants of the colonies or "primitive" people as instinctive, spontaneous, or wild, and either without any culture or with a culture that was on a much lower level than the European culture. The term "primitive" can be understood in relation to both romanticism and evolutionism. The indigenous people of southern Africa, like other so-called "primitives" were classified in the evolutionary scale with Nature as opposed to Culture. They displayed no evidence of civilisation in terms of what their Western conquerors deemed to be civilised. The following passage expresses the widely held sentiments of that period:

> "They [the San] could not adapt themselves to their new environment, they tried to live as their ancestors had lived, and therefore were fated to perish. The wave of European colonisation was not to be stayed from rolling on by a few savages who stood in its course."[8]

These attitudes toward the San are still to be found in recent times as evidenced by a question posed in 1997 by the vice-president of Botswana, Festus G. Mogae, "How can you have a stone-age creature continue to exist in the age of computers?"[9]

The attitude of European imperialists and colonialists in the 19th and 20th centuries was one of absolute belief in the superiority of their

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[8] Pyrard de Laval quoted in D. Chichester, in *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen,* ed. P. Skotnes, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996), 52.

[9] G. Oliver, "Botswana: where cattle have more value than people or heritage", *Sunday Independent,* 31 August 1997.

system and ideas. Social Darwinism served to reinforce colonial supremacist philosophies. While various forms of discrimination based on race, both legal and social, had been in practice since colonisation in South Africa, formal apartheid was legalised in the mid-20th century when the Nationalist government came into power in 1948, after the elections in which only the minority white population was permitted to vote.

Apartheid and culture

The theoretical basis for apartheid, as formulated by the Nationalist government in South Africa, was based on the notion of separate development or cultural exclusivity. Cultural exclusivity or purity, and cultural preservation, are dangerously close. It would be difficult to object on moral grounds to any group that wished to practice and even preserve its cultural traditions such as music and dance. However, separatist or exclusivist tendencies can easily be distorted to serve racist systems, as we have seen with Nazism and apartheid.

"Apartheid" literally means separateness in the Afrikaans[10] language. Cultures were seen as discrete or separate, homogeneous entities that must be preserved in that way. Culture was perceived as static or literally frozen in time. Therefore, Zulus, Xhosas, Basothos, Afrikaners, English and other ethnic groups were seen as separate groups or tribes or "nations", each with its own exclusive traditions. Contact should occur only at the workplace, but schools, living areas, places of entertainment etc. were separate. Any form of interaction or social and cultural integration was actively and often brutally discouraged by the architects and enforcers of apartheid. The results of this cultural and racial exclusivity were horrific.

Differences rather than points of commonality were emphasised and maintained, and each ethnic or language group was expected to develop separately and preserve their separate customs and culture. Separate amenities such as schools, living areas, beaches etc. were legislated and enforced. In theory the amenities provided for the different groups were separate and equal. The practical application of this policy of "separate

[10] See chapter 2.

development" was that education and opportunities for the majority of the African population were either inferior to those provided for the minority white population or non-existent. European or "Western" arts and culture was perceived to be superior to African arts and culture and the former received both moral and material support from the government at the expense of the latter. Attitudes to African culture amongst the majority of the white people were dismissive or derogatory. Within apartheid society "art for art's sake" was used by the government to give intellectual respectability to its racist policies. The philosophy of "separate development" or segregation was applied to art, which included dance. Ballet companies were state funded and presented in luxurious state theatres, while indigenous or traditional dance was seen as tribal or ethnic entertainment that was classed in the curio category.

Cultural fusion and appropriation

Cultural fusion is directly opposed to cultural apartheid. By cultural fusion I mean the synthesis or integration or combination of two or more cultural forms of expression that have their roots or sources in different traditions or different countries. The resultant fusion or hybrid form is, in its turn, also fluid or subject to change or continuous transformation. In this model, culture or cultural practices are adaptive and constantly in a state of flux. Old traditions feed into new forms and conversely new practices inform old traditions. I believe that there are different levels of fusion or hybridisation. Firstly, there is the unconscious absorption of other forms of culture. Secondly, there is conscious fusion which occurs when the aspects of culture that are fused are easily accessible or of a popular or secular nature. Thirdly, there is fusion that incorporates rituals and belief systems of "other" cultures that are of a sacred nature. Regarding the first form of fusion, through easier travel and improved communication via electronic media, many communities are becoming less homogeneous, and cultural fusion or change that was accelerated in the 20th century continues to expand with globalisation in the 21st century. With all forms of conscious fusion, issues of transcultural borrowing or cultural appropriation need to be addressed. By appropriation I mean taking something that belongs to someone else and making it your own. This can be done either by valuing,

respecting and understanding culture—appropriation with appreciation—or by brashly taking without regard, knowledge or sensitivity towards the "other" culture. My early work remained at the level of the second form or "secular" fusion, but from 1991 onwards I began to work at the third, or "sacred", level. The complexity and sensitivity of the issues involved in cultural fusion and cultural appropriation were central to the process of conceptualising and creating *Tranceformations.* Before examining factors that led me to go in this direction at a time when it was against the tide, I would like to look at the bigger picture regarding cultural fusion or hybridisation in South Africa.

If we examine cultural fusion in South Africa in the 20th century, we will see that, despite apartheid, fusion had been occurring. Until recently the flow was from the dominant culture of the West to the subordinate African or indigenous culture. There are several examples of fusion that occurred at a popular level in music/dance. The rural black African men who went to the cities with the migrant labour system encountered Western culture which they would absorb and adapt or blend with their songs and dances. Urbanisation meant many rural black people settled in cities, or special segregated townships or squatter camps. As there were no structured forms of leisure such as cinemas, libraries or theatres, people used their own resources to entertain themselves and new forms of dance and music developed. Racial legislation meant that urban black residents were often illegally resident in the cities, and forms of cultural expression such as music or dance were often also a form of political resistance to a hostile system. Urban popular dance and music forms such as *marab*i developed in the urban slum yards of Johannesburg in the early 20th century,[11] *Isicathamiya* was another form of music/dance which absorbed Western elements into the traditional African forms. The Zulu migrant workers in Natal in the 1930s combined or fused the music and dance that they brought from their places of origin in the rural areas with the forms they learnt in the cities. *Isicathamiya* developed into a style of music and dance that incorporates Zulu wedding songs and dances, traditional Zulu songs and dances, Christian hymnody, and American minstrel and ragtime forms of

[11] D. Coplan, *In Township Tonight!* (London: Ravan, 1985)

expression[12]. In *isicathamiya* performances, the feet are lifted and placed onto the ground with lightness rather than with a sharp stamp common to Zulu traditional dances such as *indlamu*, as the urban migrant workers wore smart "city" shoes and did not want to spoil them. *Isicathamiya* has been popularised through Ladysmith Black Mambazo, which has toured extensively internationally and won several Grammy awards.

During the past 25 years the trend has changed. There has been what I refer to as active or conscious fusion or hybridisation in dance/music on an increasing scale. The difference now is that the fusion is flowing or happening in both directions, and very actively from African or indigenous black culture to Western or white culture. It is happening at the level of theatrical performances in music and dance as well as in informal situations. In the dance field, it has led to some original, innovative, and thought-provoking work where diverse groups have produced their own brand of fusion between Western modern and contemporary dance, jazz or ballet on the one hand and traditional or township[13] South African dance on the other. This trend is not unrelated to the changed political climate in South Africa. Previously, the incorporation of African elements into Western cultural forms of expression happened mainly at protest theatre/dance level. Since the 1970s a small group of artists, including choreographers and non-racial[14] groups had worked consciously, using African dance/music and rituals combined with Western forms, to break down the enforced separation of apartheid. For some of these artists and groups it was often blatant political protest, but for others the conscious act of valuing indigenous black culture and incorporating it into their work, in itself, was an act of defiance for a white choreographer/director. In the late 1980s what had been a minority activity in the contemporary dance scene accelerated until, in the early 1990s, it became what could be termed fashionable. This was not unrelated to Mandela's release and the new political dispensation. It also happened as a natural result of the repealing

[12] Ibid.

[13] See chapter 2 for meaning of "township" in South Africa.

[14] Non-racial was used by many people or groups who were against apartheid as it emphasised that race should not a consideration, whereas multicultural and multiracial were felt to be euphemisms for 'separate development' or apartheid. See chapter 2 for further information on the term "non-racial".

of certain apartheid laws, such as the Separate Amenities Act,[15] and in general an easing of the laws of segregation. As contact between black and white people became easier, fusion or hybridisation in dance became more common.

There has been a developing awareness that indigenous black South African culture is valuable and is of interest. In the post-apartheid state, indigenous or African culture is currently being represented in government funded and privately owned performance venues, as well as at local, provincial and national celebrations and festivals. Whatever the motives, the willingness to work together across race and culture is more common and the end result is generally positive. However, even though the laws have changed, and apartheid has been abolished, attitudes are deeply entrenched, and reactionary perceptions and prejudices have a way of manifesting themselves. There are still moral and ethical problems relating to fusion, some being appropriation without appreciation. At both the popular and informed level the attitude persists that African dance[16] is easier, simpler, less technical than Western ballet or dance. The attitude that dance is of an evolutionary nature and that if you can do the "highest" form you can easily do the others unfortunately persists. Approximately 25 years ago, in two different forums, I heard respected members of the South African dance community state in public that classical ballet is the basis of all dance training, and that with a classical ballet training you could "do" African dance, but if you had only been trained in African dance you could not "do" ballet. While the second statement may be true, the first part reflects a misconception about African dance that still exists amongst many people in 2019—that it is easy, it has no technique and that if you are able to do the dominant or "universal" Western form there is no problem in doing any of the so-called primitive dances. The issues discussed above, as well as an anecdotal account of a personal experience in 1990, will further illustrate the problems and complexity surrounding the issues of cultural appropriation and attitudes to dance "other" than Western theatre dance, especially ballet. Ballet is still widely perceived as being on a higher aesthetic scale—both by the upwardly mobile black South African middle

[15] The Separate Amenities Act was repealed as late as 1990.
[16] See chapter 2 for discussion on African dance.