Contemporary Dance in South Africa

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The Toyi-Toying Body

By

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This book is dedicated to my granny who taught me that art is a weapon or in her case the guitar she broke over the head of a supporter of Ossewa Brandwag-Afrikaner Nationalist Party with Nazi leanings-during a riot in Durban, South Africa in the 1940s.

“I am not in art because of politics;
I am in politics because of my artistic calling.”
(Ngugi wa Thiong’o,1998, 5)

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A NOTE

This is a book for my students and graduates and the many other students across our world who too have a love for dance. I intend this text to be accessible to students and graduates as an example of how I have attempted to integrate theory and practice. I use concise, clear, and at times, conversational writing. Often, this style is not much favoured by those in the academic community, but I am committed to democratisation of knowledge. This for me, means extending the conventions of academic writing style so that readers who are unfamiliar with the theories applied in this book can engage with them and better understand my ideas without having to unravel a sometimes obscure and obtuse style of academic writing. This is my political stance. This is a book about how I used my dance practice – critical analysis of my dance practice and my choreography – to try to understand my home country South Africa, and my relationship with her during the historical period 2003-2007. Although much has changed since this research was conducted, the bulk thereof is still applicable. Yes, this book has gaps, yes there are limitations, yes there are problems ... but, there must be an end to a research project: and to this time and place in my own life. As the fabulous Professor Lois Weaver in the etiquette guide to The Long Table, notes "There is an end but no conclusion" (Split Britches, n.d.) and this too, sums up my book project.

Throughout the book, I incorporate performative writing sections, which are italicised to differentiate them from the main body of the text. These sections serve as a methodological tool to describe the dance performances I viewed, choreographed, or in which I performed. A further reason for this type of writing style was to actively place myself – my body, my corporeality – within this book: "the self can be a place where tensions are felt and uncovered, a place of discovery, a place of power, of political action and resistance. One often knows what matters by recognizing what the body feels" (Pelias, 2005, 420). These performative writing extracts and my use of photographs (as a visual layer) are intended to provide the reader not only with a form of documentation and evidence of these performances and historical moments, but a type of pictorial and textual choreography.

Through my study of South African contemporary dance, I relate some of the history of South Africa and share the experiences of South Africans.

This is not only a consciousness raising journey for myself as a white South African, but also for those both unfamiliar and familiar with the South African narrative. Through the study of dance, the reader and I can travel together and learn more about the diverse and sometimes contradictory politics in play in South Africa; how and why South Africa is what it is, and how it is trying to negotiate its own identity post-Apartheid. This current negotiation is informed by the past in which many stories were hidden or privileged due to Apartheid and colonialism. Contemporary dance in South Africa tells complex histories, present narratives, and is always political and personal.

INTRODUCTION

THE TOYI-TOYING BODY

> *"Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves."*
> —Statement of the President of the African National Congress Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela at his Inauguration as President of the Democratic Republic of South Africa Union Buildings, Pretoria, May 10, 1994.

In 1994, all South Africans aged eighteen years and older were finally able to vote in the country's first democratic elections. South Africans stood in long queues outside voting stations. Many toyi-toyed (toy-toy-ed) in the streets with their clenched fists held up high shouting *Amandla* (which translates from isiZulu into power), with their thumb nails stained by the voting ink. As Jaana Parviainen in "Choreographing Resistances: Spatial-Kinaesthetic Intelligence and Bodily Knowledge as Political Tools in Activist Work" states "[b]odies have been used as a powerful political tool in activist work" (2010, 311). It was through the body that many South Africans resisted the Apartheid government, and it was through the body that many South Africans celebrated our new democracy dancing in long lines outside the polling stations. Since 1948, the National Party Apartheid state had enforced racial segregation and disenfranchised any South African not classified as white under the Apartheid racial classification system that racially characterised and segregated all South Africans according to appearance and descent. The Apartheid government had passed numerous laws that enabled the minority of white South Africans to maintain a position of privilege entitling them to the top positions in industry and society while the majority of Black South Africans were assigned roles of servitude such as labourers or domestic workers. Under this regime, Black South Africans, Indian South Africans, white South Africans, and South Africans of mixed-race parentage could not live or buy property in the same neighbourhoods, go to the same schools, worship in religious buildings together, share public toilet facilities, enjoy intimate relationships across the racial line, nor dance together. Segregation was enforced in public, private,

and personal spaces as bodies were catalogued, separated, and segregated along racial lines.

Toyi-Toying (toy-toy-ing) is a South African political dance form that is performed at a variety of protests or marches. The dancer advances moving side-to-side, changing the weight emphasis from foot-to-foot. At times, there might be a leader who uses call-and-response to encourage the protesters. Fists are sometimes clenched in salute. Chanting of slogans or songs accompanies the movement. Toyi-toying is a vigorous and powerful piece of choreography that creates a charged atmosphere. The title of this book makes apparent the relationship between political action and the dancing body as I adopt the metonym of the toyi-toying body that historically represents the body dancing in opposition to the Apartheid regime. My use of the term metonym as opposed to metaphor is informed by performance studies theorist Peggy Phelan who states:

> In moving from the grammar of words to the grammar of the body, one moves from the realm of metaphor to metonymy. For performance art itself [and I would argue especially dance!] however, the referent is always the agonizingly relevant body of the performer. Metaphor works to secure a vertical hierarchy of value and is reproductive; it works by erasing dissimilarity and negating difference; it turns two into one. Metonymy is additive and associative; it works to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement. "The kettle is boiling" is a sentence which assumes that water is contiguous with the kettle. The point is not that the kettle is like water (as in the metaphorical love is like a rose), but rather the kettle is boiling because the water inside the kettle is. In performance, the body is metonymic of self, character, of voice, of "presence" …. In employing the body metonymically, the performance is capable of resisting the reproduction of metaphor … (1993, 150-151).

It is this resistance and the centrality of the body in South African contemporary dance that underlines my employment of the metonym of the toyi-toying body in this book. The toyi-toying body is a body that is not only visible but audible and has a relationship to other bodies and objects as it dances. There is no monolithic nor homogenous version of this body, rather the toyi-toying body is a mass of different bodies each dancing from side-to-side shouting and disrupting the status quo and exposing the discourses of power in operation. The toyi-toying body as a site of struggle cannot, nor does not, ignore the very real threat of violence as it is foremost a physical body. This is what Susan Leigh Foster refers to in her article "Choreographies of Protest" as a "perceptive and responsive physicality" (2003, 395); an "articulate" (2003, 395) body. An example is the Soweto Uprising of 1976.

Black South African school children protested the Apartheid government's "Bantu education policy" which stipulated that Afrikaans would be the primary language of instruction at their schools despite it being a minority language. Around ten thousand school children marched in the streets, dancing the toyi-toyi whilst holding placards, singing, and shouting chants of defiance. These young, Black South African bodies were sites of resistance involved in the struggle against the Apartheid regime. Their bodies were also at risk; many young children lost their lives when the Police opened fire on the school children. These young bodies played a major role in challenging the Apartheid state's position of power as the protest spread across South Africa. In this Uprising, as in many other moments of protest, small or big, organised, or informal, South African bodies that were the intended sites of control by the Apartheid state disrupted and exposed this racist tyranny and instead became bodies of protest dancing the toyi-toyi against tyranny. The toyi-toyi as a dance of protest, a dance of resistance against oppression persists in post-Apartheid South Africa, for example at the Marikana Miner's Strike (2012) and the Rhodes Must Fall movement (2015).

Drawing on Arts journalist Adrienne Sichel's comment on how the origins of "South African contemporary dance has been, to a large extent, a political act of defiance and activism" (2012, 108), in *Contemporary Dance in South Africa: The Toyi-Toying Body*, I explore when and how, and to what effect, the body in South African contemporary dance post-Apartheid is a toyi-toying body that protests, subverts, or represents a site of the struggle against oppressive forces of power. I focus on the visual, audible, and mediated dancing body in contemporary dance on the South African stage; how it is choreographed, what meanings lie behind the movements it makes in space; the possible effect of these movements; how and why it is costumed; what text it speaks and what this might mean; its relationship to its setting and space and what this location suggests; and what it shares with, or how it differs from other bodies in the dance and why this might be of interest to the viewer. The dancing body interrupts the representations of gender, sexuality, race, and nation and makes visible the on-going state of identity construction because of its movement and the possibility of movement that is always present in dance performance and in bodies in political contexts, such as the toyi-toying body. This movement also makes visible the fractures, or what dance studies scholar Ann Cooper Albright refers to as "slippages" (1997, xxiii), that occur amongst the numerous formations of the dancing body's cultural identities and its somatic/physical identity.

Kariamu Welsh-Asante, states that "most African dance, is multi-dimensional, it is necessary in this study to locate the music and general culture" (2000, ix). Therefore, I focus not only on the body dancing, but also what it is dancing to, how it is dancing, where it is dancing, and why. This book echoes Jane C. Desmond's call for all forms of dance and "bodily 'texts'" to be examined so that "we can further our understandings of how social identities are signalled, formed and negotiated through bodily movement" (1997, 29). Hence, with a primary focus on the dancing body, I examine a selection of South African contemporary dance works, to develop an understanding of the body's political and social meanings in that performance and in the broader context of South African society.

Clive Kellner in "Cultural Production in Post-Apartheid South Africa" writes that "to be South African is to be a hybrid, from which no singular origin is evident" (1997, 29). Noble Prize Laureate, the South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931-2021), renowned for his work against Apartheid and a campaigner for reconciliation, referred to South Africa as a "rainbow nation" during the run-up to the first democratic elections in 1994; a home for many races and cultures. Nearly three decades later, although Tutu did not intend it to be, this concept of South Africa as a rainbow nation now suggests what Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael in their Introduction to *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies* specify as the "containment" (2000, 6) of various ethnicities, paralleling the Apartheid government's policies of racial segregation. Nuttall and Michael suggest not a rainbow but creolised space (2000, 7) as a framework for thinking about South African culture so as not to erase difference but to highlight the "complex process of making connections" (2000, 10). This concept of the creolised space underpins the importance of searching for resonances and dissonances in the dramaturgy and choreography of the chosen dance works. My reading of contemporary dance in South Africa as a choreographic creolisation of dance languages is a direct recognition of its fluidity and complexity, and its moments of fusion and division amongst the variety of dance idioms that shape contemporary dance practice in South Africa. This concept of creolised dance languages has been assimilated in dance studies such as in Janet O'Shea's *At Home in the World: Bharatanatyam on the Global Stage* where she writes that *Bharatanatyam* "is flourishing or fracturing, burgeoning or fragmenting" (2007, x). The dance works chosen in this book aptly illustrate the concept of diversity that is to be found at the core of South Africa and South African contemporary dance. My writing includes a wide range of dance cultures; South African Zulu dance, for instance: *Indlamu*, a Zulu warrior preparation dance, Indian classical dance languages like *Bharatanatyam* and *Kathak,* European and

North American contemporary dance, ballet, as well as popular dance cultures such as *isiPantsula*, that has its roots in the townships of South Africa, and gumboot, with its origins in the mines and docks of South Africa. The contemporary dance works studied in this book were created between 2004 and 2007. This provides a snapshot of the practice and concerns of contemporary dance in just over a decade from the first democratic national elections in 1994. It is through the study of these dance works that this moment in South African history is captured. Contemporary dance in South Africa tells the story of South Africa; its past, present, and possible future and is therefore an enticing and evocative historical period to research a dance practice that as Adrienne Sichel notes has its origins as an activist art form (2012, 108).

It is the complexity, fluidity, and hybridity of such dance, as well as its deliberate staging of bodies, that suggests South African contemporary dance is well suited to exploring the multiple and complex intersections of the South African body with the various discourses of gender, sexuality, race, and nation. Cooper Albright highlights that "[a]s a representational system concentrated in the live body, contemporary dance can help us trace this interconnectedness of bodies and identities by foregrounding the cultural significance of somatic experience" (1997, 5). Therefore, I ask how South African contemporary dance choreographers make visible the complex, fluid, multiple, and contradictory nature of South African identity politics and in what way this matters to the very real experience of those dancing bodies. If dance can portray the fluidity of identities and offer resistant readings of gender, sexuality, race, and nation, then I argue that South African contemporary dance is exceptionally well suited to this task and that this is especially important in the South African context to Apartheid which might be thought of as a legislative choreography. Mark Fleishman states in his article "Physical Images in the South African Theatre" that the physical body of the South African performer functions as a "metaphor for the social body we are in the process of creating with its multilingual and multicultural characteristics" (1997, 209). However, I am acutely aware that the South African performer is an embodiment of the social body and therefore I ask how South African contemporary dance functions as a metonym for the South African social body and interrogate its successes and limitations.

The selected dance works highlight a range of social issues that greatly affected contemporary society and led to many South Africans dancing the toyi-toyi in protest. HIV infection and the ensuing AIDS pandemic negatively impacted the whole population and had a devastating effect on

women and children due to the social stigma associated with the disease and the manner of its transmission. My study of Flatfoot Dance Company's *Transmission: Mother to Child* (2005) illustrates this social issue. Despite the Constitution's emphasis on gender equality and "non-racialism", South Africa remains a country where there are severe imbalances amongst the diverse racial and gender groups. This imbalance is addressed in several of the chosen dance works studied in this book. For instance, Siwela Sonke Dance's *Home* (2003) addresses the poor living conditions of hostel dwellers and the uneasy relationships between men and women in the home, and in Mlu Zondi's *Silhouette* (2006), the uneasy and often violent relationships between men and women is depicted. Urbanisation has altered the lives of many South Africans and Musa Hlatshwayo in *Umthombi* (2004) accesses his rural upbringing to explore the demands made on South Africans living in rural spaces, and by extension, urban environments.

Randy Martin's claims in *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* that "dance displays, in the very ways that bodies are placed in motion, traces of the forces of contestation that can be found in society at large" (1998, 6), is remarkably relevant to my study. I investigate how South African contemporary dance reflects Martin's claim and thus how the body was and is currently valued in South African society. Due to the wide range of social issues highlighted in the selected dance works, I have had to move beyond the scope of traditional dance studies research; thus, my critical research is multidisciplinary. I access feminist dance studies such as Cooper Albright's work on the female dancing body (1997). I make use of race studies, for example the work of bell hooks (2003), to study the representation of Blackness and whiteness in South African contemporary dance. I utilise aspects of geography studies such as the work by Lewis Holloway and Phil Hubbard in *People and Place: The Extraordinary Geographies of Everyday Life* (2001) as both geography studies and dance studies share a concern with the bodily experience of the urban environment. To understand the relationship between the South African body and the experience of the home, I test and extend Iris Marion Young's phenomenological research into the concept of home and the construction of identity (2005).

I employ African and South African studies, for instance Belinda Bozzoli's *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (2004), Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch's *African Women: A Modern History*, (1997) as well as poststructuralist works such as Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977*)* and *The History of Sexuality* (1981). Foucault's notion that "[w]here there is power, there is resistance" (1981, 95) is key to my argument that the body in South African contemporary

dance can expose the "network of power relations" (1981, 96) and offer "a 'reverse' discourse" (1981, 101). In addition, I bring into play postcolonialist theory from publications such as *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989). and postcolonial studies in dance and theatre for example, J. Ellen Gainor's (ed.) *Imperialism and Theatre: Essays on World Theatre, Drama, and Performance* (1995).

Contemporary Dance in South Africa: The Toyi-Toying Body adds to academic research into dance in South Africa, exemplified by Sharon Friedman's influential edited collection *Post-Apartheid: Many Bodies Many Voices Many Stories* (2012), and explores an extensive range of theoretical material drawn from a wide variety of disciplines such as race studies, African studies, dance studies, theatre studies, performance studies, and gender studies. This cross-disciplinary study is directly related to the distinctiveness of my research topic, the selected dance works, and the various social themes, for instance HIV and AIDS that the chosen South African dance works explore in their performances. This monograph emerges because of my own involvement in South African dance, both as a practitioner and researcher. I argue that an examination of these chosen South African dance works is particularly important due to the history of the body in South African society. Furthermore, despite the efforts of the Apartheid regime to segregate South Africans, South African contemporary dance draws on a wide variety of diverse movement languages and dance forms and post-Apartheid celebrates hybridity. There is attention paid to dance companies and associated choreographers that played and continue to play a major role in the dance form, for example Nelisiwe Xaba, Jay Pather and Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, and Lliane Loots and Flatfoot Dance Company. Furthermore, many of the works in this book were performed in Durban at the JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience which is one of the influential dance festivals in South Africa and an important and necessary platform for the development and promotion of contemporary dance.

My approach utilises the critical study and practise of South African contemporary dance to develop my understanding of this dance form and the toyi-toying body by referencing both my own and other South African dancing bodies. I am enthusiastic in advancing the relationship between the theory and practice of dance. My dance training and my performance experience shapes the methodology of this research. My practice research projects have raised my awareness of the effects of the disciplining – and enabling – discourses of race, gender, and nationality on the South African

body. For example, in *I'm Sorry I Never Meant to Hurt You* (2005), I worked with dancers from the Flatfoot Student Training Company and explored the meaning of the concept of home to us as young South Africans. Our practical experiments in rehearsal sessions uncovered our individual relationships with South Africa as a home and how this personal relationship is shaped by our experience of the discourses of race, gender, and nationality. In *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, André Lepecki's posits that the dancing body possesses the "potential for energetic social action" (2004, 7) an extremely important observation for this book and highly beneficial and empowering for my own toyi-toying body. I make use of this potential throughout my projects and my critique of the selected dance works. For example, I exercise this potential in *How I Chased a Rainbow and Bruised My Knee* (2007) to comment on what it means to be a white African. The opportunity to explore my body's potential to be responsive, and its ability to expose and examine the discourses of race, gender, and nation, is a vital and important political commitment to post-Apartheid South Africa. For instance, in *Mothers and Daughter*s (2005), I responded to the call in Flatfoot Dance Company's *Transmission: Mother to Child* (2005) for all South Africans to be held responsible and accountable for the transmission of HIV and AIDS, and I examined how as a white South African, I am to be held responsible and accountable for the transmission of Apartheid.

I not only offer case studies in which I investigate the politics of the body in South African dance theatre and by extension South African society, I furthermore model a wide range of creative strategies in both my research and case studies, such as choreography, partner work, velocity, composition, costuming, lighting, music, media, spoken text, and other theatrical elements. I perform in solo works, and I work with dancers from the Flatfoot Student Dance Company. These PR projects are either performed to a small, invited audience in London or performed to a large audience at a major dance festival in South Africa. This research has not only run parallel to my case studies of selected dance works but has greatly shaped my reading of these dance pieces. "Dance with its focus on the body asks particular questions of theory, it teases out particular emphases in theory often in refreshing new ways and it can illustrate some of the more abstract ideas physically and immediately in an embodied manner" (Briginshaw, 2001, 20). I am a fierce advocate for the use and value of combining both critical research and such PR in investigating the politics of the body. As a South African and a choreographer, I have embodied experience of both South African society and South African contemporary dance, and this has been a valuable resource in my research.

The overall shape of this book reflects how I encountered the work, and I adopt the African call and response (Sale, 1992) to generate dialogue amongst the case studies and my projects. The chapter-by-chapter structure reflects the process of conscientisation (Freire, 1972) that I underwent in my research, as I learned more and more about the details and analysis of South African politics as well as the numerous creative, courageous, and moving ways South African choreographers have responded to and articulated those details. In my monograph, I am aware that I am speaking about my experience to a diverse audience that includes amongst others; dance students based in South Africa, dance students based outside of Africa, South African audiences who have expertise in South African contemporary dance, an international audience with an interest in dance studies and African studies and furthermore, I am documenting my research project. This has meant that I have adopted various voices which I use as I travel my research journey. Like the toyi-toying body transferring weight from one foot to the other, so I move from the voice of the audience to the voice of the choreographer, throughout this book. Furthermore, the toyi-toying body offers the tactic of speaking as an individual and a collective as well as an outsider.

As a South African, I wear the history and the future of my country on, in, and through my body. These prepositions – on, in, and through – are chosen because they imply movement. These are words that direct action in a sentence. These are words that choreograph the movement of a subject and a verb. These are words that can literally imply the process – the dance – of identity formation. My skin, the surface on my body, represents my identity. My history, my experiences, are embodied in my body. And my choreographic practice, on the stage and in life, moves through my body, my gestures, my pathway, my direction, and intersects with other bodies. This choreography of prepositions is constantly forming and re-forming, an endless dance, which results in my future bodily directions and bodily experiences.

My material body, classified as white during Apartheid, represents, and performs without my consent, a racist cultural identity that does not conform to my own anti-racist and anti-sexist beliefs. My materiality, fair skin, represents, unfortunately in some instances, a white racist. My dancing body is “both the questioner and the question” (Atkins, 2004, 345). Because of this, it is imperative that I mobilise my dancing body and utilise its potential for energetic social action against racist and sexist aspects of society. Included in this political act is the acknowledgment of the materiality of my body and how this has and will influence my environment. To be anti-racist

and anti-sexist, I need to and must recognise how the dominant repressive discourses of gender, race and nation have resulted in my specific experience of the socio-cultural context. My physical skin colour and biological markings have permitted me a particular experience of South African life. What made the Apartheid system of racial classification notoriously distinctive was its panoptic scope: every single South African citizen was compelled to register as a member of an officially designated race, on the understanding that this classification would then inform every aspect of their life.

Chapter One investigates how the body is employed in the discourse about the transmission of HIV and AIDS. I open with a discussion of HIV and AIDS in South Africa to locate Flatfoot Dance Company's *Transmission: Mother to Child* (2005). I reveal why Flatfoot Dance Company's work focuses on the transmission of the disease via mother to child and why placing sole responsibility for the disease's transmission on the mother is flawed and perilous in South African society. I consider how dance choreographs the body to engage with representations of gender, sexuality, race, and nation by adopting Cooper Albright's premise of the dancing body as responsive (1997, xiii). She states that this responsive dancing body "engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience" (1997, xiii). I argue that South African choreographers such as Lliane Loots, are aware of the dancing body as responsive and make use of this capacity to question, resist, and offer other possible representations of the body on and off the South African stage. In the last section of this chapter, I focus on my solo performance project *Mothers and Daughters* (2005), in which I used my own embodied experience of the surrogate relationship between Black domestic workers and white children in Apartheid South Africa. This research project emerged in response to Flatfoot Dance Company's *Transmission: Mother to Child* in which it was proposed that all South Africans, regardless of race, gender, or HIV status, are responsible for the transmission and treatment of HIV and AIDS. I pay attention to how my focus shifted from the transmission of HIV and AIDS, specifically from mother to child to the surrogate relationship between Black domestic workers and white children. I maintain that all South Africans regardless of race share a responsibility for the nation and her children, and as a white child of Mama Africa I am therefore to be held accountable for her Apartheid history and I am also responsible for the transmission and treatment of HIV and AIDS in South Africa.

Chapter Two argues that South African contemporary dance as a performance practice is extraordinarily well equipped to explore the relationship between the home and the body because of the centrality of the body to both dance and homemaking, and the historical role the body has played in the location of the home place in South Africa. In her essay "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme", Iris Marion Young states that "home is the site of the construction and reconstruction of one's self" (2005, 153); "however minimal, home is an extension of the person's body" (2005, 152). I concur and further submit that the body is also an extension of the home. Employing a feminist dance studies framework, I analyse two sections of Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre's *Home* (2003) – Hostel" and "Kitchen" – to explore the connection between the body and the home, and most importantly, how home matters in South Africa, where homemaking has been limited by segregation policies and so many are displaced by forced migration and economic necessity. In 1913, the Union of South Africa government passed the Native Land Act that resulted in Black South Africans becoming strangers or homeless in the land of their birth. During the Apartheid government regime (1948-1994), forced removals as a direct result of the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the formation of the "independent" Black homeland states, provide further examples of why home matters in South Africa. Henceforth, land access and the home site were clearly linked to constructions of South African national identities, specifically in this case, Black South African identity. If home allows the "construction and reconstruction of one's self" (Young, 2005, 153), then Black South African experiences of home engender identities associated with the loss of choice of where the home can be located, and to extend Young's analysis, the destruction of people's homes no doubt frequently had a commensurable destructive effect on those South African identities not classified as white. Over a century later, land access remains a highly charged issue in post-Apartheid South Africa with land claims, farm murders, and land redistribution projects serving as, amongst other matters, reminders of the sensitive issue of the relationship between identity politics and the physical location of a place to call home for all South Africans.

In response to *Home*, I adopted workshopping for my project *I'm Sorry I Never Meant to Hurt You* (2005). In workshopping, the performers use their own experiences and bodily knowledges as source material in creating the performance. Workshopping is based on a collaborative way of performance making amongst all races and was favoured in South Africa during the Apartheid era as a direct political response to racial segregation. This approach offers me a method of making dance that is a political commitment to positive social change. During July/August 2005, I worked

with three dancers from the Flatfoot Student Training Company in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal using dance to explore the meaning of the concept of home to us as South Africans. The outcome was performed on the Fringe at the JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience in Durban at the end of August 2005.

Establishing a connection between the geographical and historical landscape of Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa and the South African body, Chapter Three analyses Musa Hlatshwayo's *Umthombi* (2004) to explore the literal and metaphorical link between the landscape of South Africa and the South African body. *Umthombi* is an example of South African contemporary dance that explores the relationship between the body and the rural landscape and traditional beliefs and practices. There is much debate over the rapid urbanisation of South African society, and the differences between, and demands made on, bodies – through labour, terrain, and distance – in rural and urban spaces and, by extrapolation, in traditional and modern societal contexts. In this chapter, I reflect on this conflict and its effects on the South African body and examine how this is explored in Musa Hlatshwayo's *Umthombi*. Hence, this chapter interrogates how South African contemporary dance can effectively investigate this relationship, and how dance reveals and represents the discord which arises between rural and urban life and modern society, and traditional beliefs held by many in South Africa. South African contemporary dance and geography studies share a focus on the body's pathways through space. I hold that contemporary dance in South Africa especially, if not uniquely, shares this theme of the body's pathway through space, and that *Body Maps: or how our garden grows* (2006) is an example of this relationship. South African contemporary dance is a necessary response to South Africa's historical and contemporary geographical experience because it is so articulate about embodied spatial experience, and because of the close relationship between dance and geography studies. Geographical experience is particular to an individual's body and particular to the individual's group identity. This particularity offers me a strategy to read against the generalisations of the categories of race both under Apartheid and post-Apartheid. This specificity of experience also pertains to categories of gender and culture, and like identity construction, is shaped by the environment. I argue that this specificity suggests an individual agency, and this agency must have enabled South Africans to contest Apartheid oppressions. I maintain that contemporary dance in South Africa effectively explores this relationship between the body and its environment in South Africa and therefore offers an effective strategy in investigating these "maps of meaning" (Dodson, 2000, 155; Jackson, 1992). I analyse my PR project *Body Maps: or how our*

garden grows as the primary aim was to investigate the relationship between the South African body and the urban landscape to uncover the connection between the individual and their environment.

Chapter Four focuses on Mlu Zondi's *Silhouette* (2006) and Nelisiwe Xaba's *They Look at Me and That Is All They Think* (2006). One of the research questions explored in this chapter is how South African dance calls attention to the gendered constructions of South African Blackness and whiteness and its associated meanings and responsibilities by way of my close reading of the selected dance works. Zondi encourages the viewer to be conscious of, examine, and review the act of looking at Black bodies. In this chapter, I focus on the politics of looking at a dancing body from Africa of a particular skin colour and the respective aesthetics associated with South African bodies, Black, white, Brown. Furthermore, Zondi attempts to add to the debate on gender-based violence, the myths and stereotyping of the Black African body, and through the performance confront the value system of the Black African body assumed to need domesticating. Nelisiwe Xaba's *They Look at Me and That Is All They Think* (2006) adopts the story of Saartjie Baartman as an allegory for Xaba's own artistic journey from South Africa to Europe. Saartjie Baartman was taken from South Africa when she was twenty-one years old (1810) and exhibited in England and France until she died five years later. After Baartman's death in 1815, her genitalia and her skeleton were on public display at the *Musée de l'Homme* in Paris until 1982, and thereafter remained in the museum's holdings until they were returned to South Africa in 2002. Baartman's buttocks and genital labia were on display as representations of African sexuality and, in her performance, Xaba, through her use of costume, image composition and choreographed movement, critiques this colonial, sexist, and racist act of representing the South African. South African female choreographers, like Nelisiwe Xaba, are aware of the power operations at play in the act of looking by both the spectator and the dancer, and how this looking has a particular effect on the act of representation in dance.

In *How I Chased a Rainbow and Bruised My Knee* (2007), I use my body as a vehicle for analytical thinking (Cooper Albright, 2003, 179) to ask what it means to be African and look white, consequently adding to growing research on white African identity politics. In my project I claim my African-ness and publicly acknowledge my white body's historical involvement in colonial and Apartheid South Africa, the source of much of the violence and oppression in Africa as demonstrated in this monograph. I argue that, like all Africans, I perform multiple representations of African, and being African is a performance of multiple identities that are in constant

movement, clashing and overlapping, like a collective of bodies toyi-toying, and it is this performance that contemporary dance in South Africa is so well suited to explore.

During my sessions I explored how I might theatricalise whiteness to interrogate it and show my awareness of the political effects of whiteness in South Africa. I cannot change the Apartheid racial classification of my ancestors, or that I am lightly pigmented, but I challenge whiteness by making it visible and therefore denaturalising it. The findings that emerge from *How I Chased a Rainbow and Bruised My Knee* theatricalise my identity as a white South African and aim to make this identity construction visible thereby exposing its ongoing process and its dependence on the construction of a Black South African identity as illustrated using the photographs and slides in various processed states.

Despite the current climate for the arts in South Africa with withdrawal of national arts funding for many contemporary dance companies and the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, South African choreographers and dance makers remain conscious of the dancing body's power to reveal the construction of racial, sexual, gender and national identities demonstrating how identity construction is polyvalent, complex, and an on-going process. Returning to the metonym of the toyi-toying body; Sylvia "Magogo" Glasser in her article "Is Dance Political Movement?" for the *Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human* Movement wrote that "[a]s the country and its politics become normalised, one would expect dance to become de-politicised" (1991, 120). Contemporary dance in South Africa remains politicised and this book demonstrates that at its core, remains concerned with the political and social issues in South African society; it continues to dance with a toyi-toying body.

CHAPTER ONE

MAMA AFRICA:
AFRICAN DAUGHTER

Figure 1.1: Thulile Bhengu (and her child), Marise Kyd (and her child), and Caroline van Wyk (and her child) with Ian Ewok Robinson in Flatfoot Dance Company's *TRANSMISSION: Mother to Child* ((2005), JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Festival, Durban, South Africa August/September 2005 (Photo by Val Adamson. Courtesy Val Adamson, Centre for Creative Arts, and JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience).

The spotlight warms the dance mats/The dancer begins walking with her arms stretched out to the side/She is enclosed by the warmth of the spotlight/Her hand moves backwards then forwards slicing the space around her/The sound of a slap/Her torso moves up and down/She stops/She stands still/She slides her arms open and out again to the side/She bends her body backwards/She curls

over and unfolds/Sinking into a deep bend, she rocks to open her arms/She moves to close her arms/Fast/She balances/She rocks her body, gently playing with her weight/On the ground she opens and closes her body in the foetal position/The voiceover changes its voice/Another dancer begins to shift.

"HIV is, [Paul Farmer suggests], the most spectacularly studied infection in human history" (1999, 50). However, its broader social significance has been surprisingly undertheorized in the social sciences" (Squire, 2007, 50) and this is also the case in Dance Studies. Choreography articulates the body's somatic and cultural identity, and a reading of contemporary dance in South Africa uncovers a complex and multi-faceted version of the South African body especially in relation to the discourse of HIV and AIDS. Many South Africans dance the toyi-toyi in protest marches demonstrating their right to treatment access programmes and suitable medication, against the stigmatisation of people who are HIV-positive, in opposition to homophobia, and similarly in objection to the profits made by certain pharmaceutical corporations at the expense of those dying. In this chapter, I investigate how the body is employed in the discourse surrounding HIV and AIDS, such as raising awareness of the HIV virus and how it spreads, and how contemporary dance in South Africa either upholds or subverts the discursive practice around HIV and AIDS. This chapter focuses on Flatfoot Dance Company's *TRANSMISSION: Mother to Child* (2005) and the role this selected choreography plays within a specific period of South Africa's HIV and AIDS epidemic. This work calls for the sharing of responsibility and accountability of South Africans of all genders for the transmission of HIV and AIDS. Using my own embodied experience of Apartheid South Africa, and my reception and analysis of Flatfoot Dance Company's work, and using PR, I explored my responsibility and accountability as a white South African in *Mothers and Daughters* (2005).

Flatfoot Dance Company, guided by Artistic Director Lliane Loots, is a contemporary dance company based in Durban, South Africa that "works to create conscious dance theatre" (JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience Programme, 2005, 15). South African Dance Scholar Sharon Friedman notes that the company's "focus has strongly attempted to deal with a race legacy that has often not offered quality training and placements to young Black South African dancers within South Africa. Performing and working within Africa is one of their priorities" (2012, 93). *TRANSMISSION: Mother to Child*, explores the theme of motherhood, focusing on HIV and AIDS and mother-to-child transmission, the surrogacy relationship between

Black domestic workers and white children, and the construction of the nation of South Africa as mother: a Mama Africa.

It must be made explicitly clear to the reader from the outset that the scope and focus of this chapter is explicitly concerned with *how* HIV and AIDS is represented in the selected contemporary dance work, and *how* the South African experience of the disease is explored; this section of the book is not a treatise on the portrayal of HIV and AIDS in contemporary dance in other nation states (see Gere, 2004). Neither will this chapter provide the reader with a detailed history of HIV and AIDS in South Africa (see Squire, 2007; Reddy, Sandfort & Rispel, eds., 2009; Fourie & Meyer, 2010; McNeill, 2011; Mbali, 2013; Šehović, 2014), nor an in-depth analysis of the biology of this disease. Instead, I am extremely interested in how contemporary dance and this choreography highlights the experience of the disease and its impact on the lives of South Africans, and the very real weight it places on South African society. Theatre Scholar Ola Johansson captures this urgency when he writes:

> AIDS is the greatest democratic challenge in Africa since the time of independence. It is a bodily syndrome that breaks down a person's immune system, but it is also a societal set of symptoms that weakens any community's immunity to critique. This may seem like a far-fetched analogy between particular corporealities and general regimes. In terms of a communicable disease, however, HIV is a virus that always runs the risk of spreading if the right to one's own body and mind is violated. This applies not only to the current African state of affairs, but also to local governments, religious authorities, educational systems, no-governmental organizations, and (post)colonial ramifications of global trade policies. There is no way to get around this complex body of influences if one traces and pursues the cultural causes of the disease (2007, 50).

I want to discover how the chosen dance work deals with several factors surrounding HIV and AIDS. How social and sexual practices that have a role to play are represented and/or questioned in the choreography? How the discourses surrounding HIV and AIDS are called into question through the medium of dance? How this dance plays a part in HIV and AIDS education, and how dance is used as a mode of activism? To put it plainly, how are these dancing bodies toyi-toying in the campaign to raise awareness around the discourses of HIV and AIDS?

Anthropologist Fraser G. McNeil accurately expresses how HIV and AIDS has marked both the personal and the political experience of South African society when he states:

> It is difficult to imagine living in post-Apartheid South Africa without experiencing the constant threat of HIV and AIDS in some shape or form. Despite ex-President Mbeki's now infamous claim never to have known anyone who has died of it, AIDS has sunk deep into the nation's collective conscience. Of course, this does not imply any uniformity in its comprehension. In another equally infamous statement, the current president Jacob Zuma recently championed the prophylactic properties of a post-coital shower, courting the fury of AIDS activists whilst playing to the sensibilities of an important constituency in the electorate. Many, then, do not accept the conventional scientific explanations, or act on them in recommended ways. But there is a profound sense that AIDS is here to stay, and that it is killing people. Sex, the source of life and a ubiquitous source of pleasure, has become synonymous with death and distress. Previously healthy men, women, and children are becoming sick in increasing numbers, often hidden from sight by confused and frightened families. Political controversy surrounds the antiretroviral (ARV) medication that could help to hide the symptoms and quell the stigma of a slow, painful, untimely, and undignified death. Grandparents are bringing up their children's children, and there seems to be no stopping it: in the time it will have taken you to read this far, hundreds of South Africans have been infected with HIV. In a very tangible sense, then, the epidemic is perceived as having brought about a crises of sexual and social reproduction in South Africa (2011, 15–16).

The central aim of this chapter is to find out, how contemporary dance in South Africa is responding to HIV and AIDS. Examining the body and identity in contemporary dance, Cooper Albright's hypothesis is that the dancing body is responsive (1997, xiii). She states how this responsive dancing body "engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience" (Cooper Albright, 1997, xiii). This notion of the responsive body that investigates the relationship between the body and identity is further developed when Cooper Albright describes dance as containing a "double moment of representation in which bodies are both producing and being produced by the cultural discourses of gender, race, ability, sexuality, and age" (1997, xxiii). This "double moment of representation" highlights how the dancing body can be choreographed as responsive in order to expose and question cultural codes and conventions surrounding the dancer's physical body; the dancing body makes visible the process of identity formation–the 'becoming'" (Cooper Albright, 1997, 91). For example, in Flatfoot Dance Company's *TRANSMISSION: Mother to* Child, two Black male dancers, Sizwe Zulu and Lenin Shabala, with strong physical appearances perform a choreography of gentle and soft movement qualities that demonstrate how the dancing body is able to expose and question the "becoming" of the gendered and cultural body, and thus the

cultural positioning of Black African masculinity as predominantly athletic and aggressive is questioned and a different representation of what it means to be a man in Africa is offered. My appropriation of the dancing body as responsive acknowledges how some choreographers, such as Lliane Loots, are aware of this double moment of representation and thus choreograph to question, resist, and offer other representations of the body in society thus reiterating the claim by Jay Pather, Artistic Director of Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, that South African dance is responsive (Young-Jahangeer, Loots, Rorvik, Oosthuysen, & Rorvik, eds., 2004, 19).

Unlike most other cultural productions, dance heavily relies on the physical body to enact its own representation. Scholars Melissa Steyn and Mikki van Zyl (2009) note that "[a]s it shapes our sexualities, social and cultural regulation not only informs our sense of self, but also contours our actual bodies. Bodies become vehicles of cultural ideas" (2006). At the very moment the dancing body is creating a representation, it is also in the process of forming that body. Put more simply, dancing bodies simultaneously produce and are produced by their own dancing. This double moment of dancing in front of an audience is one in which the dancer negotiates between objectivity and subjectivity – between seeing and being seen, experiencing, and being experienced, moving, and being moved – thus creating an interesting shift of representational codes that pushes us to rethink the experience of the body within performance (Cooper Albright, 1997, 3). What Cooper Albright offers my reading of dance performance is a double moment of representation that "allows for a slippage between what I call a somatic identity (the experience of one's physicality) and a cultural one (how one's body renders meaning in society)" (1997, xxiii). This recognition of the physical identity is particularly relevant to my study of the South African body in contemporary dance. It was the physical identity that affected (and still affects) many South Africans' experiences of their social context. Therefore, it is vital that there is acknowledgement of the body as a material *and* social form, and of how this materiality interconnects with the body's cultural context. This "slippage" between the somatic and cultural identity of the body highlights the actuality of the constant negotiation and engagement of the dancing body with the discourses of race, gender, nationality, and in relation to this chapter's topic, the discourses of HIV and AIDS. Further, Cooper Albright states:

> I envision this dual moment in dance as a sideways figure eight, with the dancing body situated at the intersection of two loops circumscribing the realms of representation and physical experience. Although these two loops are separated here for the purpose of my analysis, it is important to

> understand that there is a continual flow of the body along the pathway of the figure of eight such that the dancing body is constantly crossing and crisscrossing both realms. The ambiguity of this situation creates the possibility of an interesting slippage of viewing points (1997, 13).

Hence, this double moment of representation must not be considered as a binary or an evenly matched polarity with the body being produced and producing itself, as this locks the body into a match of opposites that are equally balanced, and thus fixes this identity dance as a status quo where there can never be any movement in either direction; a constant state of animated suspension. Rather, this is a state where the body is intertwined, moving within and outside of dominant repressive discourses, constantly altering itself and being altered (Cooper Albright, 1997, 13). It is necessary to add to and develop her concept of the sideways figure of eight: it is rather a sideways figure of eight with at times one half sideways and the other half sometimes vertical, or one half longer and the other smaller, with the crossing over of the two halves never in the same place, nor in the same direction. The versions of this sideways figure of eight must be seen in a multi-dimensional form, with the figure also moving through various positions in time and place. The sideways figure of eight is unique to everyone and is constantly repeated yet never the same. And it is the dancing body's core position of offering the possibility of perpetual movement that produces these moments of slippage between how the dancing body moves and what the dancing body represents in society, between the personal experiences of the body and the cultural representation of the body, thus foregrounding the instability of identity construction in performance (Cooper Albright, 1997, 26). The various discourses of race, gender, and nationality are themselves never fixed. It is this moment of movement, this dance – this struggle – that allows for no static identity, that is the reason why the metonym of the toyi-toying body in contemporary dance in South Africa is so apt, and perhaps the physical bodily incarnation of Cooper Albright's concept of the sideways figure of eight. Furthermore, this toyi-toying body – this multi-dimensional sideways figure of eight – is a body that is audible; it sings, and it shouts. It is also a body that is at times an individual and at times a member of a crowd, a group, a community. This toyi-toying body can move forwards and backwards, side-to-side, and up and down. It can be slow, fast, quiet, noisy, still, for or against, resisting or reinforcing. Chris Weedon refers to the body as "a site of constant struggle" (1997, 115) and the toyi-toying body is the strongest and best example of this in its historical struggle against the Apartheid regime, current struggle in the campaign of raising awareness of the transmission of HIV and treatments of AIDS, and of course, the struggle the body experiences in the