



Defining Our Own Terrain: interrogating the/my Black female body as a site of possibilities in contemporary South African performance and my own screen dance making (2021/2022)

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By

Marcia Zanele Mzindle (218086421)

Supervisor: Dr. Lliane Loots

Drama and Performance Studies (HCC – UKZN)

Co-Supervisor: Ms. Nomcebisi Moyikwa

Drama and Performance Studies (PMB – UKZN)

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Plagiarism Declaration:

I affirm that this assignment is my own work, that all acknowledgements have been properly made, and that I have read and understood the UKZN plagiarism policy.

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Acknowledgements

“I stand on this path in the footprints of my elders and in the light of my ancestors”

Wallace-Sanders, 2002, p. viii

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Dedicated to the memory of my sister and father
Jabu 'Pinky' Happiness & Themba Christopher Mzindle

∞

*"Nobody tells you how to survive
as a Black woman.
So, let me learn you a lesson
\ you are a threat
on every point of the map. \
you are love in its purest form.
All unapologetic, all unconditional.
Always too compassionate.
\ sometimes...to forgiving. \
But never, too afraid
to show up.
Black Women
You are everything
They believed you wouldn't be.
\ you are gorgeous,
Even through the suffering. \
(Biddy, 2019, p. 21)*

Abstract

This dissertation explores Black female performing bodies as knowledge makers particularly in the South African context. It explores the notion that Black female performing bodies are sites of meaning making and storytelling within performance practice (Nqelenga, n.d.). This research is an act of reconceptualising and a (re)learning of Black female bodies, as sites of knowing both historically and for me personally, within my own situated lived experience and dance performance practices. I consider Black female bodies as possible sites of resistance, knowledge, power, spirituality, resilience and empowerment. In this dissertation, the key intentions are to critically examine the extent to which Black South African female bodies are an embodiment of resilience, sites of possibilities and possible tools of/for artistic expression in/through performance practice. I do this, firstly, with a special focus on interrogating the examples of performative works of South African Buhlebezwe Siwani, *uNgenzelaphantsi* (2014); Lhola Amira's (also known as Khanyisile Mbongwa) work/conversational discourse in the form of a pre-recorded interview on YouTube titled *LHOLA Amira – here's what you need to know about the artist who calls herself an ancestral presence* (2018); Mamela Nyamza *Grounded* (2022)¹ and *De-Apart-Hate* (2017)². Alongside the work of Nelisiwe, Xaba, *They Look At Me, And That's All They Think* (2006). Secondly, I navigate my own performance/dance practice in setting up a screen dances solo project that offers an embodied response to the theorising of this dissertation. This small solo film project (which is available to be viewed via YouTube) is part of the dissertation and is a practice as research (Fraylin, 1994; Sullivan, 2005; Fleishman, 2012) inclusion into finding alternate ways of speaking into the engagements of this dissertation.

This dissertation argues that the presence and appearance of Black female South African bodies stand not only as contested political sites but also as sites of potential resistance. I argue that Black women's bodies have the potential to articulate narratives, discourses, and inscriptions written on it, in what Madison calls "theories of the flesh" (1993, p. 213) which I will interrogate more fully in Chapter Two of this dissertation and embed into my analysis of case studies and my own screen dance in Chapter Three and Four. I seek to interrogate alternative narratives and meaning-

¹ "Grounded" had its first iteration in 2021, before the live performance that premiered in 2022 at Jomba!

² "De Apart Hate" was originally performed in 2016 at various spaces before its Jomba! run in 2017

making processes in order to foreground the potentials of Black female embodiment in the South African context by using an autoethnographic approach alongside practice-based research. This dissertation contributes to the small but growing field of study around the agency of Black female bodies in performance (for example, Carole Boyce-Davies 1994; Pumla Qgola 2001; Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, 2002; Buhlebezwe Siwani 2016; Pumelela Nqelenga (n.d.)

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INTRODUCTION

BLACK, AFRICAN, FEMALE, SPIRITUAL

I am a Black South African woman, a performance maker, and I am currently on a continuous journey of *Ubungoma*³ (*sangoma*⁴ training). In this dissertation, I set out to negotiate the confluence of all three of these shifting identities as they relate to my study of Black female bodies (including my own) and how they are situated as a site, knowledge makers and modes of expression in selected contemporary South African performances. In the meaning of 'site', I consider Black female bodies as a place or source where resistance, knowledge, power, spirituality, resilience, and empowerment are explored. Therefore, thinking of Black female bodies as "site[s] of possibilities" (Hartman, 1997, p. 51) allows for (re)defining and (re)imagining Black female bodies in and through performance. It offers context to the intersectional inscriptions that Black female bodies carry, echoing the notion that Black female bodies are not to be considered or thought of as a single entity, but rather a "site of multiplicity" (Bennett and Dickerson, 2001; p. 207). This is said considering how Black bodies read differently in different contexts and the different socio-cultural inscriptions that exist around Black femaleness. These contexts include, among others; the church, religion, spirituality, academia, performance, and histories. The body in protest, the colonised body, the cultural body, the conscious body, the privileged body, and the body at labour. Each location, each space demands a different engagement or each space and location warrants a different result from Black female bodies. Black female bodies here are "distinguished from other such symbols by [their] capacity to offer a multifarious complex of meanings" (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996, p. 203). The conversation that arises from these various sites is very much intertwined with the identities that the bodies hold. The idea of including my spiritual life and my performance life felt pivotal as these are my own lived experiences and have become central to the research I offer in this dissertation. My intention is to explore Black female performing bodies as knowledge maker particularly in the South African

³ Ubungoma: refers to the spiritual calling of divination and healing practice (Mkhize, 2018, p. 136) in Thorpe, J. 2018. *Feminism is: South Africans speak their truth*. Cape Town: Kwela Books.

⁴ Sangoma: Diviner, spiritual practitioner and spirit medium (Mkhize, 2022, p. 23)

context. To explore the notion that Black female performing bodies are sites of meaning making and storytelling within performance practice (Nqelenga, n.d.).

I do this, firstly, with a special focus on interrogating the examples and case studies of performative works of Black South African female performers: Buhlebezwe Siwani in her work, *uNgenzelaphantsi* (2014); Lhola Amira's (also known as Khanyisile Mbongwa) work/conversational discourse in the form of a pre-recorded interview on YouTube titled *LHOLA Amira – here's what you need to know about the artist who calls herself an ancestral presence* (2018); Mamela Nyamza *Grounded* (2022) and *De-Apart-Hate* (2017). Alongside the work of Nelisiwe, Xaba, *They Look At Me, And That's All They Think* (2006). The analyses of above-mentioned case studies will serve as one stream of interrogation that will offer inspiration that gives context, influence, and substance to ideas I wish to explore in my own practice. These key ideas are the interconnected and intersectional interrogations of gender, race, class, body politics, and the elements of African spiritualities (related to ancestral callings) as they are negotiated through Black female bodies in these contemporary performances. Secondly, I navigate my own practice in setting up a screen dance solo project that offers an embodied response to the theorising in this dissertation. This solo film project (which is be available: https://youtu.be/45vJHriH_Yo)⁵ is offered as part of the dissertation. I adopt a practice-based research approach (Fraylin, 1994; Sullivan, 2005; Fleishman, 2012) to interrogate the performance case studies listed above. In this light, I have created a solo screen dance film in response to my investigation of the four case studies analysed and a research inclusion into finding embodied ways of speaking into the theory I engage. Thus, while I include a creative response in my dissertation, this remains a 100% dissertation.

In this research, I aim to critically examine the ways in which Black South African female bodies can be engaged as embodiments of resilience, resistance, "site[s] of possibilities" (Hartman, 1997, p. 51), and a tool of artistic expression in and through performance practice. I will briefly discuss each of these ideas below for context and clarity of meaning going forward.

⁵ Screen Dance Film, INTO EMDAKA YouTube Link: https://youtu.be/45vJHriH_Yo

To pin down resilience in the context of this dissertation it is “the ability to bounce back from adversity, frustration, and misfortune” (Ledesma, 2014, p. 1). Cathrine Moore (2019) on her Blog Positive Psychology writes:

Resilience theory argues that it's not the nature of adversity that is most important but how we deal with it. When we face adversity, misfortune, or frustration, resilience helps us bounce back. It helps us survive, recover and even thrive in the face and wake of, misfortune.

The concept of resilience is used as thematic thread throughout this dissertation and my engagements.

I also open up for discussion the idea of the Black female body in performance as resistance (see hooks, 1992; Hobson, 2003; Mowatt, French, and Malebranche, 2013; Lomax, 2018; and Moore 2019); resisting against various intersectional marginalisations and giving voice back to Black women. According to *International Coalitions Sites of Conscience*, n.d, “trauma lives in our bodies; shame lives in our bodies; history lives in our bodies. Some of us are reminded of this every day”. These ideas related to resisting historical and embodied trauma and shame related to Black female bodies will be explored more fully through the case studies in Chapters Two and Three, respectively.

In this dissertation, I will be using Blackness as a critical frame which I use to navigate ideas of identity. What I mean by “Blackness” is the social and cultural identity constructions, representations or expressions, and the lived experiences of Black bodies and Black women. This is in reference to, but not limited to the stereotypical concept of how Black women are expected to appear or viewed, within the society at large. I engage “Blackness” which encompasses race, lived experiences, languages, cultures, traditions, and religions in the South African context. Saidiya Hartman (1997, p. 56-57) states that

It is important to remember that Blackness is defined here in terms of social relationality rather than identity; thus Blackness incorporates subjects normatively defined as Black, the relations among Blacks, whites, and others, and the practices that produce racial difference. Blackness marks a social relationship of dominance and abjection and potentially one of redress and emancipation; it is a contested figure at the very center of social struggle.

I argue here, in line with Hartman (1997) that the presence and appearance of the Black female South African body stands as not only a contested political site but also as a site of potential resistance. The Black female body is constantly subjected to

forms of dehumanisation, body politics, objectification, sexualisation, discrimination, inequality, and sexism. I consider Tania Cañas's (2020, p. 2) words as she proposes that "sites of resistance are those that exercise an agency and accountability to our collective selves and community". I equate sites of resistance to Black females and, Black female bodies as they have emerged as powerful and resilient even within the difficult socio-political experiences and injustices of racism and colonisation. In placing the Black female body as a site of resistance, Cañas (2020, p. 2) further argues:

Sites of resistance as a framework, articulates the dangers of limiting discourse to representation and lived-experience, whilst negating fields of interpretation. Sites of resistance assert that there is a difference between not only who can speak, but *how* one can speak.

Further, Hobson (2003, p. 102) writes that "resistance is not just an individual protest. Rather, she [Black women] expresses defiance of a historical tradition that degrades Black women's bodies". According to Hobson, the Black female body "functions as a site of resistance, rather than reinforcing shame and self-deprecating humour [and] suggests possibilities for the Black female body as a site for decolonization" (2003, p. 101). In placing my body in performance as a site resistance to the negative inscriptions and connotations inscribed on Black female bodies, and it giving my body power and voice to speak, I aim to be part of this performative 'reclaiming' of the autonomy and agency of Black female bodies with the intention of ushering in new ways of redefining our/myself.

In looking into the performance practices of South African Buhlebezwe Siwani, *uNgenzelaphantsi* (2014), Lhola Amira's (also known as Khanyisile Mbongwa) *LHOLA Amira – here's what you need to know about the artist who calls herself an ancestral presence* (2018); Mamela Nyamza *Grounded* (2022) and *De-Apart-Hate* (2017). Alongside the work of Nelisiwe, Xaba *They Look At Me, And That's All They Think* (2006). I aim to interrogate deeper understandings around how these four performance makers negotiate their Black female South African bodies as "sites of resilience" (hooks, 1992; Hobson, 2003; Mowatt, French, and Malebranche, 2013; Lomax, 2018; and Moore 2019). Given that Black female bodies are often seen as "impure, savage and embodied evil" (Pro'Sobopha, 2005, p. 120). It leads me to think of my mother, grandmother, and the women in my lineage that come before me. Black women who in the historical context, under apartheid subjugation in South Africa were subjected to sexism, toxic masculinity, entitled whiteness, and fought for the rights of

Black bodies more especially the Black, African, female bodies - their bodies – to survive and be resilient. These stories will be the backdrop for this analysis and my own performance-making interrogation. Their stories, my Blackness, and my body are a constant reminder that I am a product of, as Nora Chipaumire articulates in her 2014 TEDx Talk titled *The Black African Female Body*⁶, of

[...] struggle, a child of violence, trauma, I am a child of resistance and revolution...that the Black, African female body has been historically on a collision course with power, masculinity, whiteness at times validating these presences but often refuting them.

The collision with power, whiteness, and toxic masculinity has left trauma, and shame that my body, Black female bodies carry disproportionately and, have had to endure and continue to experience in the form of contemporary racism. I stand as a Black female body that is riddled with many inscriptions, narratives, and identities, and by that, hold different meanings in different spaces. Life experiences and lessons learned through the teachings of *ubungoma* are also teaching me that my body is constantly evolving and becoming. These learnings have introduced me to the thought and processes of reimagining and redefining the Black female body in performance and in being. Pumelela Nqelenga (n.d, p. 6), on reflecting on Hobson (2018), also argues that,

The Black South African female body is no stranger in being positioned as the other through performance. Since the days of Sara Baartman being forced to perform as the Hottentot Venus in 1816 Europe, the Black female body has been positioned to be hideous, frightening, deviant, and primitive.

According to Nqengela (n.d), these performance spaces [historically, economically, socially, and politically] have shrunk Black women's voices, at times rendering them invisible, not fully human objects to be looked at, but very rarely heard. In understanding the oft positioning of Black women as other in performance, I consider performance not only as an act of presenting a form of entertainment but also as an act of everyday life within our society (Goffman, 1959; Schechner, 1988). I align my thinking here with local performance practitioner and case study within this dissertation: Buhlebezwe Siwani (2016) who, following Schechner (1988) and Goffman (1959) explains that performance is not fixed, it can move from the mundane

⁶ Ted talk on YouTube titled- The Black, African, Female, Body: Nora Chipaumire at TEDxCalArts; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNpPQvupacM> [accessed 13 May 2021]

to the unimaginable, and it exists within every discipline and everyday life, often mimicking everyday life, routine and ritual.

My own screen dance offering, in speaking to and with the theory also negotiates how I negotiate the positioning of my Black female body in some avenues of South African society, further using movement to imagine the Black female body (my body) as a “site of possibility” (Hartman, 1997, p. 51). I hope thus, to contribute to a small but growing field of study around the agency of Black female bodies in performance (for example, Carole Boyce-Davies 1994; Pumla Qgola 2001; Kimberly Wallace-Sanders 2002; Buhlebezwe Siwani 2016; and Pumelela Nqelenga (n.d.). I hope to engage how this body – my body – may begin to offer powerful and transgressive multiplicities of identities and inscriptions within the arena of contemporary performance and within society at large.

This, in turn, begins to inform the structure of this dissertation and the creation of a practice-based (solo) screen dance performance. This dissertation is structured such that the four case studies inform and influence my practice-based solo screen dance reflections. The four case studies comprise of installation and performance works of Buhlebezwe Siwani, *uNgenzelaphantsi* (2014); Lhola Amira’s (also known as Khanyisile Mbongwa) work/conversational discourse in the form of a pre-recorded interview titled *LHOLA Amira – here’s what you need to know about the artist who calls herself an ancestral presence* (2018); Mamela Nyamza *Grounded* (2022) and *De-Apart-Hate* (2017). Alongside the work of Nelisiwe, Xaba, *They Look At Me, And That’s All They Think* (2006). These artists are Black female South African (contemporary) performance makers. Their work offers a profound vehicle to interrogate ideas around transgressive multiplicities of intersectional identities that manifest in the forms of race, gender, culture, and religion. The performative works explore and challenge the inscriptions or narrations that negatively receive or perceive the Black female bodies of the performers themselves. They further speak to how Black female bodies carry the various inscriptions informed by the mentioned identity categories. Using the four case studies as a point of reference and reflection, my solo dance film practically and through a written reflection of the making and doing looks at how Black female bodies – and my body in particular – have/has been positioned through various current social-political moments and bearing the influence of various

works by Lhola Amira, Buhlebezwe Siwani, Mamela Nyamza and Nelisiwe Xaba. My screen dance offering and my reflection on it will bring this dissertation together in an autoethnographic and practice-based research output that places my own body as the final site of inquiry.

The first chapter⁷ discusses Black female bodies as a site of multifarious inscriptions and investigate a politics of Black female bodies and how Black women carry these inscriptions. The second Chapter explores and focuses on Black female bodies, spirituality and how the body as a site may be understood as text (Benard 2016). It also explores Black African feminisms and their impacts of understandings related to Black female bodies. Here I use scholarly works that speak on the positionality and framing of Black female bodies. This chapter also includes my theoretical framework and methodological approaches for this study. In Chapter Three, I explore case studies of four Black female South African performers (Buhlebezwe Siwani, Lhola Amira, Mamela Nyamza and Nelisiwe Xaba) These case studies are used to situate my own praxis which is engaged in Chapter Four through reflection around the development of my solo screen dance offering. The symbolism in the performance, conversation through and with the lens and performance analyses brings together the various strands of this dissertation. The concluding chapter provides a summary of my learning and the various (un)learning that I have now gained through the process of this research.

⁷ Chapter: within chapter Four of this dissertation, I have included 'Reflections': The reflections are a continuous feature of personal narratives/experiences are included in the dissertation as part of writing methodology using the lens of autoethnography (Spry 2001; Humphrey 2005; Chang 2008; Holman-Jones, Adams and Ellis 2013)

CHAPTER ONE:

A Site With Multifarious Inscriptions

*dark phases of womanhood
of never having been a girl
half-notes scattered
without rhythm/ no tune*

*... this must be the spook house
another song with no singer
lyrics/ no voice
& interrupted solos
unseen performances*

*...somebody/ anybody
sing a black girl's song*

(Shange, 1975, p. 3-4)

A POLITICS OF THE BODY

I am coming into a new understanding and learning that the body is multifaceted, and cannot be viewed as one thing according to Brenda Dixon-Gottschild (2008, p. 3).

The body speaks. The body tells us what is valued in the culture. Bodies are mirrors that absorb, remember and reflect society's politics, art, religion, aesthetics, hopes, fears, strengths, failings—both the officially sanctioned versions and the sub-rosa, closeted taboos. Bodies are barometers measuring the pulse of society.

Our bodies tell our histories and reminds us of who we are and where we come from. Wanelisa Xaba (2021) speaks of the body as a moving ancestral archive; a beautiful interweaving of generations, ideas, dreams, hope and blood. This body, our bodies, are the very vehicle/s we utilise to express ourselves and move around. This living body that holds our spirit to be able to exist in the physical plane. This very body that can lend itself to channel, in isiZulu we say *ukukhuphukwa or ukuvukwa*⁸ *idlozi*⁹, to them give voice to impart and share wisdom, to guide and to dance.

The normative standards as the general public is that, we consider and judge bodies then place them in categories. According to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996 p. 203) "The body signifies through both its appearance and its actions", as the body stands as a

⁸ Ukukhuphukwa/ukuvukwa – to give rise/ to awaken.

⁹ Idlozi: Guiding ancestral Spirit.

visual marker or identification for gender, race, and class. Mgcineni 'Pro'Sobopha (2005), further argues that the body is a common bond that we all share, yet, also the very thing that sets us apart or, "separates us in its public display of identity, race, and gender [as well as class and age]" (Angaitis cited in Ewing, 1994, p. 324). He further argues the body as being an 'object' of great interest and wealth for socio-political theories, depending on ethnicity as well social institutions that may be inscribed based on the normative beliefs and values that one may have placed on their bodies. Pro'Sobopha (2005), maintains that the body stands as a highly contested site.

I agree with the above and add that Black South African female bodies are sites that are riddled with multifarious inscriptions, as will be discussed variously through this dissertation. As specified by (Adair 1992; Boyce Davies 1994) [Black] women's bodies simultaneously stand as a site of subjugation, and prejudice by this suffers double/multiple oppression. Black female bodies have been positioned as a highly objected site, therefore exposed to double and intersectional prejudice for being both female and Black. The effects of this double prejudice manifest but are not limited to forms sexism, misogyny, and racism. This double jeopardy of being Black and female brings focus what (Crenshaw, 2014) identifies as intersectional identities of gender, race, and class and how they are located in and on Black female bodies. It also shines a spotlight on the conversation of policing women's bodies (hooks 2000; Gqola 2005; Lomax 2018). The politics of physical appearance and how women are to present and package their bodies, at home, in public, through conversations, in movement and in posture are all socially mandate conventions that are inscribed upon women's bodies. A prime example can be seen in relation to conventions of beauty that routinely have historically excluded Black women, those deemed 'overweight' and those who do not have straight hair, for instance. These conventions have been harmful in the promotion of stigma, prejudice and stereotypes that endanger Black women. For example, it is expected that women cannot dress in a manner too revealing, without being labelled promiscuous. Tamara Lomax (2018, p. xii) argues that "black women and girls are marked by hypersexuality and pursuance as an essential component of coming of age—regardless of sexual experience or consent". Society and patriarchy dictate that a woman should not appear to be independent, 'masculine' or too confident this is read as emasculating and threatens patriarchal and heteronormative conventions of what is expected of women and men socially. In this context, literature reveals, women

must be hyper-maternal, soft-spoken and subservient (hooks 1981, 2000; Gqola 2001, 2005; Lomax 2018). With the politics of physical appearance and with the inscriptions that Black female bodies carry, I argue that Black bodies as the primary factor/focus plays a pivotal role in being a medium of communication this is aligned with Akeia Benard (2016, p. 2) argument that,

The body is an appropriate cultural symbol to explore the links between colonialism and patriarchal capitalism. Since the body is a physical text in society, laden with meaning and positioned within particular systems of meaning, it is always in view and on view.

This offers the opportunity to challenge socio-political expectations and inscriptions placed on Black female bodies and thus to also understand that these bodies can be resistant, resilient, and subversive. I find it imperative to also explore how Black female bodies have been historically viewed under the gaze of difference and the constant gendered gaze as indicated by Story (2010, p. 24, cited in Benard 2016, p. 2), Black female bodies “[invite] a gaze of difference, a gaze of differentiation — the most historically constant being the gendered gaze”.

BLACK BODIES AND HISTORY

Black female South African bodies, throughout history, have been brutalised and presently continue to be violated, denied justice and recognition. This is evident through various records of the lived experience of Sara ‘Saartjie’ Baartman¹⁰ also dubbed “The Hottentot Venus”, her body was hypersexualized, objectified and reduced to subhuman status. It is also evident in the treatment received by Olympic runner Caster Semenya and also prevalent in the escalating cases of femicide and gender-based violence cases in South Africa¹¹. The Black female body has been positioned as Other; “impure, savage and embodied evil” (Pro’Sobopha, 2005, p.120). Pro’Sobopha (2005, p.120) further argues that,

¹⁰ Baartman was exhibited in the 19th century in Europe as part of a “freak show” attraction. She was of KhoiKhoi decent and her steatopygic body type was the site of scientific curiosity as well as her public humiliation.

¹¹ See Statics South Africa: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-11-23-unacceptable-spike-in-gender-based-violence-and-femicide-as-lawlessness-continues-to-grip-south-africa/#:~:text=Attempted%20murder%20of%20women%20went,marks%20an%20increase%20of%2015.9%25>

The black female body endured the most degradation, functioning as an 'icon' in the construction of the apparently innate difference between the civilised and the uncivilised white and black, male and female. While the white body has always been seen and represented as pure, holy and civilised, the black female body has been viewed as impure, savage and embodied evil.

This positioning of Black female bodies as Other is also evident in various performance practices. The historical marginalisation and oppression of Black women has meant their positioning often on the fringes or completely removed from the stage. Here, I also consider performance not only as an act of presenting a form of entertainment but also as an act of everyday life within our society (Schechner, 1988 and Goffman, 1959). Buhlebezwe Siwani (2016, p. 20) outlines that "As a young Black female, my appearance and presence is political". Pro'Sobopha (2005, p. 117) argues that, it stands as a site of a "constant struggle against marginalisation, objectification, [and fetishization]". Buhlebezwe Siwani also argues that "the [Black female] body is a site of transformation" (Siwani, 2016, p. 18). The body is constantly evolving, undone and becoming due to factors such as time, experiences, and space or environment. If the body is exposed to traumatic experiences such as discrimination, racism, dehumanisation and systems of dehumanisation and oppression, these stressors "[precipitate] unpleasant emotions intense physical sensations [...] traumatized individuals become hypervigilant to threat at the expense of spontaneously engaging in their day-to-day lives" (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 12-13). Our lived experiences and memories that we live through never leave us the same. We are forever changed by them, be positively or negatively. We are enlightened, shaped and burdened by the experiences we go through, making the body "a site on which these struggles are negotiated" (Pro'Sobopha, 2005, p. 117)

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995, p. 322) point out that "the [Black female] body has also been the literal 'text' on which colonisation has written some of its most graphic and scrutable messages". Bodies tell a story of the political and socio-economic conditions; historically and present, we have observed how Black bodies have been represented. The myriad negative connotations that the Black female body has been inscribed with include connotations of being animalistic, a body seen as a commodity and hyper-sexualised. It is observable in how the Black female body has been viewed and positioned as problematic within the social and political structures. I intend to investigate and decipher these messages and investigate what they mean in my Black female body as I experience the world with, in and through my body. Acknowledge

and speak to the various inscriptions that the body holds. Looking at our history in South Africa, there are inscriptions that have carried over to this present day that Black female bodies still hold. Pather (2006, p. 9) declares that “the colonial onslaughts on Africa have long been likened to rape. Similar words denoting extreme pervasive acts of violence such as plunder, annihilate and maraud often follow, and for a good reason”. The body is left with scars, we are forever changed by these acts of violence against us, and the body remembers. The scars that have materialised can be identified as inequality, psychological trauma, poverty, discrimination, socio-economic and political injustices and exclusion. The wounds of colonisation deepen as Bathabile Dlamini (2018) declares by stating that “the inferiorisation and exploitation of indigenous knowledge systems, Black spirituality, Black bodies, and customary laws became the central feature of colonial monopoly over indigenous people”. A narrative that holds the reality and a lived experience for many and that of my own growing up. A narrative that plays a significant role and has subconsciously and unconsciously influenced how we as a society have viewed Black female bodies, African spirituality, and culture. Colonial impositions cannot be left unchallenged, which pleads for the forging of (un)learning, reconceptualization and (re)learning of Black female bodies not only as a medium or tool but also as a site of spirituality and socio-political discourses. George Yancy (2005) speaks of the body as a battlefield, one in which wars are fought repeatedly across particular historical moments and within particular social spaces. In religion (Christianity) and in African culture (AmaZulu), being a female comes with the expectation to submit and be humble. To let the man lead, not question him and be soft-spoken as a woman’s primary social role, conventionally speaking, is being a mother and a caregiver. The bible in the book of Timothy chapter two verse twelve reads, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent” (Timothy 2 verse 12, NIV).¹² Ellitot Mncwango and Monica Luvuno discuss (2015, p. 246) how,

In traditional Zulu society, as in many other traditional African societies, the father is the head of the family and he has absolute authority and control over the wife and children. The father sets rules and punishes whoever does not obey his rules. Women hold less powerful roles and lack formalised control.

While the western patriarchal society further generally views women as damsels in distress needing saving by a man, dutiful, childbearing, as sex objects requiring

¹² New International Version (NIV), Bible scripture: Book of Timothy chapter two verse 12

approval and wanting women to maintain beauty standards that are mainly unattainable. Black female South African bodies carry this history, culture, and trauma.

MY OWN BLACK FEMALE BODY

The dissertation inquiry is done with the intention of (re)discovering re(learning) and further understanding my embodied self as a Black female South African woman, dancer and choreographer with all the socio-political challenges that I experience. It is also a reflection of being Black and female growing up in South Africa (1986 till present). Amongst other avenues and arenas, I investigate how settler colonisation and the apartheid regime affected how I see myself as a Black woman; and how this is experienced through my body. In turn, this is also a continuous journey in which I revisit, (un)learn and (re)learn self through the lens of *ubungoma*¹³ while attempting to shift the colonial gaze on my Black female body (Yancy, 2005; Grottschild, 2003; Gqola, 2001) and redefine self. This process or ongoing exploration takes place in many different forms. It happens through conversation, through this research and the writing of this dissertation, through guidance, exploring and expressing my body through performance, space and movement. Also, through introspection, from the community, holding space for Black bodies, mostly Black women.

CHRISTIANITY, THE BLACK CHURCH AND BLACK FEMALE BODIES

Growing up in a staunch Christian household, divorced my family and I from many of our cultural practises, alongside any beliefs of, and communing with *amadlozi*¹⁴ or *ubungoma*. The belief proposed was that this was not the work of God but rather dark magic, demons, and sorcery. Looking back, as a child, I was spiritually inclined before I even understood the meaning of what that means or might entail. There are experiences of the spirit within the body, or rather body/spirit encounters that I am unable to explain in words, and neither do I believe would make sense to some. These experiences allowed me to view the world differently and lead me to believe there is

¹³ Ubungoma: refers to the spiritual calling of divination and healing practice (Mkhize, 2018, p. 136) in Thorpe, J. 2018. *Feminism is: South Africans speak their truth*. Cape Town: Kwela Books.

¹⁴ Amadlozi: Guiding Ancestral Spirit

more to life than what the eye can see. In hindsight, this brought forth the realisation philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (The Clearing, 2021)¹⁵ articulates best in stating that, “we are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience”. The way I understand this philosophy is by saying that I am spirit before I am a body, *umphefumulo wami*¹⁶ can exist without the body; however; it needs my body to live in the physical. Therefore, today align my thoughts and beliefs with this shared thought in assertion with Pumla Gqola (2017, p. 12) in saying that, “my body is the home of my spirit- not its temple”. The primary premise of our being is that it is spiritual. Our spirit is the natural state of existing it is who and what we are. The human body is not only a capsule in which our spirit resides but also a catalyst for it to thrive. Once the human body retires/dies in the physical, the spirit lives pass that physicality. Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1995, p. 214) speaking on the body states that,

The body is considered [...] a powerful vehicle, a spirit who lives with us, a prayer in its own right [...] the body is a multilingual being. It speaks through its colour and temperature, the flush of recognition, the glow of love, the ash of pain, the heat of arousal, the coldness of nonconviction. It speaks through a tiny dance, sometimes swaying, sometimes a jitter, sometimes trembling. It speaks through the leaping heart, the falling spirit, the pit at the centre and rising hope

When I was a teenager, I showed signs of being *umtwana wedlozi unesiphiwo sobungoma*.¹⁷ At the time, this was foreign and contradictory to what I had known for most of my life, resulting in senior pastors at our church praying for me. The ‘demons’ that try to lure me into the pit of hell exorcised, now no longer a child, at the beginning of the (un)learning of all childhood teachings. Along with the knowledge of having *amadlozi*, something I once viewed as demonic and ungodly, and this being my belief from the teachings I was exposed to growing up in a Christian home. A gift passed and was initially refused by my grandmother and mother because of the fear cast in their heart of *amadlozi* not being the law or the will of Jesus, the saviour. The very beliefs in retrospect assisted in exacerbating the demonising and degrading of the Black body’s worth in consequence of the colonialist views placed on my ancestors

¹⁵ The Clearing is an online Blog available on: <https://www.theclearingnw.com/blog/spiritual-beings-having-a-human-experience> [accessed on 16 November 2022]

¹⁶ Umphefumulo wami translates to my spirit

¹⁷ umtwana wedlozi unesiphiwo sangoma translates to being a child who bears the calling and gift of the ancestral spirit

that further removed part of our identity. Upon researching, I am finding that due to the passing of the 1957 Witchcraft suppression act three in South Africa (Department: Justice and Constitutional Development Republic of South Africa, 2012, p. 1-3). The law was passed in the effort of abolishing African spirituality (*ubungoma nobu Nyanga*), and tradition as it was deemed not of God, unholy and uncouth. The outcome leads to the spearheading of Christianity through missionary work as a by-product; placed as a lifeline of redemption from the eternal damnation. According to Siwani (2016, p. 18) “*ubungoma*,¹⁸ the blanket term for the spiritual affliction is often misconstrued, exoticised or othered. People misunderstand what is otherwise a medical practice for witchcraft or a magical practice Siwani (2016, p. 18) further explains, “*Ubungoma* is a malleable word that can also mean a song or a drum, which are both used to induce trance states and to awaken the ancestors within the body of *isangoma* as though s/he is a vessel”.

Yves Kayemb “Uriël” Nawej, (2007, p. 9) points out “Christianity has been used as an instrument to enslave the conquered African nations, ensuring that they lose their identity. Trevor Noah (2016, p. 13) reiterates this in saying,

Like indigenous peoples around the world, Black South Africans adopted the religion of our colonisers. By “adopt” I mean it was forced on us [...] I learned about how Christianity works: If you’re Native American and you pray to the wolves, you’re a savage. If you’re African and you pray to your ancestors, you’re a primitive.

Steve Biko (1997, p. 74) identifies that “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed”. Colonisation and apartheid were destructive in that way and did just that. Both systems oppressed the minds of Black people. This can be considered as a form of mind control or manipulation where the oppressed majority are programmed in how they should view themselves and their surroundings as discussed below in relation to Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s (1981) notion of the “cultural bomb”. Under the systems of colonisation and apartheid, people were removed from their homes, beliefs, cultures and identities. Selaelo T. Kgatla (2013, p. 120) argues that

Forced removals in South Africa were carried out by the white government, especially in the late 1950s and 1960s, with the support of the white churches

¹⁸ Ubungoma: refers to the spiritual calling of divination and healing practice (Mkhize, 2018, p. 136) in Thorpe, J. 2018. *Feminism is: South Africans speak their truth*. Cape Town: Kwela Books.

(particularly white Afrikaans churches) underpinned by a series of laws which entrenched racial segregation and inequality and which led to millions of black peoples being forced to leave their ancestral land and white cities to live in barren and overcrowded places.

This echoes Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981) when he speaks of the "cultural bomb". The cultural bomb is defined as a weapon formed and unleashed through colonisation against collective defiance: "The cultural bomb was done with the aim to annihilate [Black] people's belief in their names, languages, environments, and heritage of struggle and makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves" (Ngugi, 1981, p. 3). The cultural bomb was executed by employing religion, colonisation, apartheid and the like as a form of indoctrination. Experiencing this mental shaping alongside the segregation of people due to the colour of their skin and class, the harsh socio-economic conditions and inequalities has further played a role in the shaping racist, prejudicial and discriminatory cultures present today. An indication to heredity and environmental factors are significant role players in shaping a person as a whole: spiritually, mentally, and physically. What we inherit genetically, spiritually, and historically influences us as well as affects the body. Genetically I have inherited the body of a Black female; spiritually, I have inherited *ubizo lokuba umngoma*.¹⁹ Historically in South Africa, Black bodies have inherited colonisation, racial segregation, apartheid, inequality, and racial discrimination. Black women's bodies have been soiled and stripped of all dignity and dehumanised not only due to the colour of their skin being the,

inescapable, visible sign of oppression and denigration [with the Black female] body being the central feature of the post-colonial standing as it does metonymically for all the 'visible' signs of difference, and their varied forms of cultural and social inscription, forms often either undervalued, overdetermined or even totally invisible to the dominant colonial discourse (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1995, p. 321).

Part of the inheritance of Black women is presented by the colonial imposition that still largely dictates how Black women are and have been represented. These thoughts have permeated Black Churches, and the Bible is used as a tool to condemn,

¹⁹ Ubizo lokuba umngoma: spiritual calling to be "diviner, spiritual practitioner and spirit medium" (Mkhize, 2022, p. 23)

hypersexualise, dehumanise and disempower Black female bodies. Tamura Lomax (2018, p. xi) discusses,

church culture [...] subconsciously and consciously reads black women and girls in terms of sexual deviance, excess, accessibility, and pursuance—the activity of literal and ongoing pursuit, approach, availability, access, and entry [...] the everydayness of these sorts of projections and how black girls are given rules for covering and closeting while black boys are taught to explore and conquer.

The church can be and is often, viewed as a place that brings about the feeling of wholesomeness and uplifts the spirit, a place of hope that renews one's faith. A place of rejuvenation and where one finds refuge. Where the spirit is enlightened. It is also a place that can be very detrimental to the representation of Black women due to sexual policing and subjectivity and the shaming. Lomax (2018, p. ix) further states that

The Black Church at its best is a wellspring of black religiosity, cultural formation, and liberatory acts. It is [a] complex communal space where many black [people] feel human, valued, loved, and hopeful; where black participation, voice, expression, leadership, artistry, and survival may be affirmed; where chosen familial ties, psychic space for alternative realities, and new beginnings can be made; where black protest and politics might be explored; and where black folk beaten down by false racial narratives might construct new and redemptive bylines. But while the Black Church provides hope and guidance for many of today's maladies, in some cases it dispenses the illness, diagnosis, and prescription. That is, the Black Church sometimes mirrors the antiblack, sexist, classist, homophobic, transantagonistic violence experienced in the rest of the world. And for black women and girls, it can be a battleground for simultaneous erasure and stereotypic seeing, or, more explicitly, marginalization and sex discrimination on some days, and sexualization, clandestine catcalling, unblinking stares, name calling, sexual harassment, and sexual violence— emotional, physical, epistemological, and otherwise—on others.

Certain shame, weakness and disgrace can come with this type of gendered construction of being a woman.

Being Black and woman carries a lot of connotations that come with this identity— frequently depicted stereotypically as the angry Black woman, loud, bitter, ill-tempered, provocative and aggressive. Hill-Collins (2000, p. 81) argues that “the image of jezebel portrayed black women as sexually aggressive, thus providing justification for the pervasive sexual assaults that black slave women reported at the hands of white men”. This explains how Black female bodies were and, arguably, are still perceived²⁰. Lomax (2018, p. 13) offers the following in support of this sentiment:

²⁰ The American expression of pervasion of the Black body to the South African context offers a fascinating area of further study. The transatlantic experience framing the Black body in a specific way that bridges

From black Venus to jezebel sluts to “ain’t loyal” hos, black women are miswritten into religious and cultural history as sites of ultimate human and sexual deviation. While not always explicit, the ideology on black female sexual savagery and immorality runs rampant.

Growing up in a Christian home also played a crucial role into how I viewed my body, identity and also further how I viewed the world. The flesh of my body was always spoken of as something to be tamed, that is dirty and inherently is sinful. A body that is always in need of repentance is how I grew into my body self. For me, this meant to be a devoted Christian by keeping my body pure, feeding my spirit, and not giving in to so-called desires of the flesh on account that as a Christian, my body is the temple of the Lord, pure and free from sin. In the bible Galatians chapter five verse seventeen reads, “for the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want” (Galatians 5:17, NIV).²¹ Following these teachings meant walking on the path of righteousness through Jesus Christ praising him to be the ‘one true’ God. This affirms the yoke placed on the female bodies through teachings of religion, culture, and by the standards of society to be subservient and meek. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2014, p. 18) maintains this in stating that from a young age “we teach girls shame, close your legs, cover yourself. We make them feel as though by being female, they already guilty of something”. In this light, the label of “woman” is by default one of shame and guilt.

Being born a woman, from childhood, gender roles and body politics are heavily inscribed on both body and mind. These repeated teachings over time lead to the indoctrination of (amongst other bodies but specific to this dissertation) Black female bodies, which implies and raises the expectations of how women should dress, look and behave. All of these constructs are further rooted in the Apartheid government’s “social hierarchal context [where] the Black female occupied the bottom place in the social, racial, and gender hierarchy” (Pro’Sobopha, 2005, p. 120). Where growing up Black in apartheid South Africa was equated with being a crime. South African History Archives (SAHA)²² reiterate this in the following passage:

between the US experience and that of the black SA body (as depicted in this study) could offer a further research area but I have opted not to detail this in keeping with my own stated research focus.

²¹ New International Version (NIV), Bible scripture: Book of Galatians chapter 5 verse 17

²² South African History Archive - Website/blog with no specific author or date of publication or article (no date); SAHA - South African History Archive., (n.d). Women fighting racism and sexism. [Online]. South Africa.

Black women in South Africa faced discrimination on a number of fronts. They were oppressed by the apartheid government because they were black. In this way black women experienced the same discrimination and harsh treatment as black men. Under apartheid, black women were forced to live under a wide range of repressive laws that denied them freedom in a political, social and economic context. [...] As a result, [Black] women in most homes were treated as second-class citizens. They were expected to clean, cook and look after children and they were expected to submit to the demands of their husbands. They had very few rights within the household. Often women were subject to severe forms of domestic violence and they had no recourse to any kind of justice.

Apartheid in South Africa is one of the most evident examples of the dehumanisation faced by Black people. Remnants of dehumanisation left behind due to racism, oppression, inequality, hyper-sexualisation, and the degrading of the Black female body are still felt today. This is evident and witnessed historically through the apartheid legislation laws that authorised and permitted the forceful removal of Black people from their land and homes. This is evident in the monitoring of Black bodies through dompas/pass Law (Suzman, n.d) and curfews to the enforcement implementation of the Bantu education, the government put an inferior education system for Black students. The results of this are that Black people have historically only qualified for low level jobs with low level earning potentials. Black women still largely represent this category of employment as domestic workers or “general cleaners”.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored how the Black female body stands as an intersection or meeting ground where gender, race, class, culture, tradition, and spirituality intersect and overlap. The body is not a singular entity it carries spirit. These intersecting identities are all experienced in/on/through the body, with race, gender, and class being the most visible markings of oppression and points of marginalisation. Therefore, the body is a great instrument for understanding how oppression is inscribed on the Black female body. Vanessa Dickerson (in Bennett and Dickerson, 2001, p. 195) notes that the inscriptions scribed on the Black female body through history have read as different things at certain times,

for white men a site of political empowerment; for black males a source of being, love, and shame; for white women a source of among other things freedom aestheticization - the body of the Black female matters deeply.

The Black female body has been exploited through cheap labour, dehumanized, exposed to racism and sexism, and marked with perversion. I echo Dickerson's sentiments above that "the body of the Black female matters deeply" (Bennett and Dickerson, 2001, p. 195): How it is represented and situated within history, the world, and our daily lives matters deeply. Black female bodies do not always have enough agency to narrate their stories in their voice, their way. The agency and autonomy of Black women matter.

Chapter two explores the body as text and reviews literature on what American and African Scholars discuss about the Black female body. I also review Black and African feminism and how they situate the body. Lastly, I look at how performance can be used as a site for negotiation.

CHAPTER TWO

The Body as Text

“Social relations, rather than psychological dispositions, determine how bodies are seen and perceived” (Magubane, 2001, p. 816).

“black women and girls are marked by hypersexuality and pursuance as an essential component of coming of age regardless of sexual experience or consent” (Lomax, 2018, p xii)

INTRODUCTION

The above reflection outlines how, “the gaze”²³ (hooks, 1992; Yancy, 2005) has always been political in my life. Imagine the terror felt by the child who has come to understand through repeated punishment [and experiences] that one’s gaze can be dangerous” (hooks, 1992, p. 115). My lived bodily experiences as a Black woman have prompted me towards conversations, seminars and numerous scholars that have argued for, written about and spoken about and around the framing, positioning and policing of Black female bodies. It further gave me a leaning toward trying to excavate how Black female bodies in society and history have been framed and positioned. Julia Jordan-Zachery (2017, p. 4) gives an understanding that, “the scripts ascribed to Black women’s bodies become an important factor for understanding the positionality of Black women vis-à-vis Black women”.

In this chapter I move on to explore scholarly works that bring attention to the politics and presence of Black bodies more so; Black female bodies. The chapter leads with a review of some significant literature that informs this dissertation. This is followed by what I see as relevant theoretical frames that have guided my exploration of Black female bodies. My methodological engagements employed in the writing of this dissertation, as well as in making the digital screen dance bring this chapter to a close

²³ The Gaze: is referenced to the male gaze and The colonial gaze. In this instance it is written in relation to the reflection it is within the context of the male gaze

and enable a setting up of my onward engagements with the case studies which are central to my research posed here.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This dissertation and my own journey is informed by scholarly works that bring attention to the lived politics of Black bodies and, more so, Black female bodies. These include scholarly works by Zora Neale Hurston (1937); bell hooks (1981; 1984; 1995; 2000); Patricia Hill-Collins (2000); Kimberly Wallace-Sanders 2002; Janell Hobson 2003, 2018; George Yancy (2005; 2017); Francis Beal (2008); Deborah Willis (2010); and Shatema Threadcraft (2016). I recognise (and acknowledge) the prevalence of American thought in this scholarship and; this is said with the understanding that the Black bodies in America and South Africa do not share the same history or imprint or experiences. There is, however, some synchronicity in shared ideas around Black identity, prejudice, oppression, discrimination, and racism. Some experiences we share as Black women and some we do not, and some we share as Black bodies. For example, as Black bodies we share the experience of being marginalised and segregated due to race and class. bell hooks (1984, p. 14) mentions this in saying that,

to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body. As black Americans living in a small Kentucky town, the railroad tracks were a daily reminder of our marginality. Across those tracks were paved streets, stores we could not enter, restaurants we could not eat in, and people we could not look directly in the face. Across those tracks was a world we could work in as maids, as janitors, as prostitutes, as long as it was in a service capacity. We could enter that world but we could not live there. We had always to return to the margin, to cross the tracks, to shacks and abandoned houses on the edge of town.

In the South African context Selaelo T. Kgatla (2013, p. 120-122) addresses this in identifying the apartheid system as

[a] series of laws which entrenched racial segregation and inequality and which led to millions of black peoples being forced to leave their ancestral land and white cities to live in barren and overcrowded places ... black people were removed from towns and dumped in reserves where they would provide cheap labour.

I draw on these similarities while considering the different inscriptions our Black bodies carry, that call upon the investigating of confluent philosophies, narratives, and arguments that Black female bodies carry. In what South African Ntombi Gasa (2004, p. 15). calls the “re-remembering history and a sense of origin” My history and origins

are that of a Black female South African body that carries scars and is soiled by the apartheid regime, patriarchy, sexism, inequality, and the like. Yancy (2017, p. 7) articulates similarly “my Black body is situated within history, a history that is racially oppressive and violent”. With this past being a prominent feature, for many Black South Africans in this contemporary Post-Apartheid South Africa, Zine Magubane (2004 p. 35) argues that “the Black female body has been viewed as the object of denigration, primitive and exotic other”. Similar thoughts of the Black body as deemed suspicious, unfitting, sexualised, made inferior and oppressed are key features of the colonial gaze (Fanon, 1952; hooks 1992; Yancy 2005) the colonial gaze, predominantly white, but as Fanon and others argue, is also a self-turned gaze of colonised people. Stuart Hall (1994, p. 233) elaborates “this ‘look’, from - so to speak - the place of Other, fixes us, not only in its violence, hostility and aggression but in the “ambivalence of its desire”. While Hall argues this point in relation to Black bodies in general, in the context of this research, the Black female body stands as a site of both desire, ridicule and othering/otherness inscribed with external projections that objectify Black women and girls and their female bodies. Objectified Black women and girls are depicted as hypersexual and promiscuous, which further exacerbates the ongoing violence against Black female bodies. These views are further shared by hooks (1981; 1984; 1995; 2000), Yancy (2005; 2017) and Fanon (1952).

I will now proceed to investigate the distinction of some of the synchronicity in shared ideas around Black identity, prejudice, oppression, discrimination, and racism between Black bodies in American and African scholarship. The intention here is to draw links into my case studies in the following chapter as well as my own screen dance practice and reflection which sit at the heart of this dissertation.

AMERICAN SCHOLARS AND THE BLACK FEMALE BODY

In American history, one of the most evident examples of the dehumanisation of Black people is slavery, Kimetta Hairston (Haiston, 2008, p. 65) states that “dehumanization serves to morally exclude individuals from the norms of society”. Black people were violently and forcefully taken and migrated from their ancestral lands to be made slaves across the Atlantic Ocean (trans-Atlantic slave trade) they were stripped of their possessions, and deprived of freedom. Turned into slaves, these Black men, women

and children were tortured, beaten and forced into labour, their names and identity removed (Hairston, 2008). The residual of slavery and segregation is still visible today and the continued dehumanising of Black African Americans is well documented and televised. A prominent contemporary marker of the ongoing institutionalised racism in North America is the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM), which calls attention to the racial inequality, discrimination and racism experienced by Black people in the USA. Mary-Frances Winters (2020, p. xiii) states that,

In 2013, before the 2020 rebellions for racial justice, the Black Lives Matter movement was started by three young women in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who killed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin as he walked home from the store with a bag of Skittles.

George Yancy (2017, p. 1) expresses how,

Black Americans have had to proclaim, through expressed mass protest, resistance, and pain and suffering, that Black lives matter. There is something very peculiar about being human and having to demonstrate that humanity, to announce it, to fight for it to be recognized.

He further outlines how Black bodies in America have historically been

Lynched, castrated, raped, branded, mutilated, whipped, socially sequestered, profiled, harassed, policed, disproportionately arrested and incarcerated, the Black body has endured a history of more than symbolic white violence. (Yancy, 2017, p. 7)

The narratives above provide a positionality and framing of Black bodies in contemporary North America. 'Black Lives Matter'²⁴ a chant shouted through the streets, through social networks, breaking across the globe emerged as a movement in 2013 to highlight the plight of African Americans in the twenty-first Century. Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and recently George Floyd have become synonymous with the Black Lives Matter mantle.

Black female bodies have not been absolved from the above mentioned violence. This raises the importance of the 'Say Her Name' Movement created in 2014²⁵ that fights

²⁴ Black Lives Matter (BLM): #BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives. Available online: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/> [accessed 16 November 2022]

²⁵ Launched in December 2014 by the African American Policy Forum (AAPF) and Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (CISPS), the #SayHerName campaign brings awareness to the often invisible names and

for Black women and girls who have been murdered by the police and have police brutality exacerbated by disproportionate experiences of gender-based violence upon female bodies. Black Lives Matter is predominantly associated with police brutality and Black Men (for instance, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and recently George Floyd). There are few women named /associated with the movement,

Black women and girls as young as 7 and as old as 93 have been killed by the police, though we rarely hear their names. Knowing their names is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for lifting up their stories which in turn provides a much clearer view of the wide-ranging circumstances that make Black women's bodies disproportionately subject to police violence. To lift up their stories, and illuminate police violence against Black women, we need to know who they are, how they lived, and why they suffered at the hands of police (The African American Policy Forum, n.d)²⁶

Malcom X in a 1962 address²⁷ argues, “the most disrespected person in America, is the black woman. The most un-protected person in America is the black woman. The most neglected person in America, is the black woman”. Black women and their bodies have been deemed ugly, erotic, demonic, animalistic, scary, and grotesque (Dickerson, 2001; Hobson, 2003). An example of the denigration of the Black female bodies can be seen in prominent stars like Tennis player Serena Williams, former First lady of the United States of America Michelle Obama and in the South African context, Olympic runner Caster Semenya to name a few. These women have been subjected to social media scrutiny, and often their Black female bodies are shamed. This shame is further exacerbated by the colonial and male gaze, including the media through a constant portrayal of Black women stereotypes. Lomax (2018, p. x) explains “some of the same stereotypical images and ideas thrust upon black women and girls by society were pervasive in the Black Church”. These stereotypes which include Black women as promiscuous, threatening and overly assertive are harmful and are used to disempower Black women (Harris-Perry, 2011; Boylorn, 2017). bell hooks (2015, p. 12) offers the following: “More often than not racist, sexist stereotypes characterized black females as loud, rude, overbearing, and in relationship to black males dominating and castrating”. These harmful stereotypes of Black women through media “helps to construct the racist assumption that the Black female body needs to be

stories of Black women and girls who have been victimized by racist police violence, and provides support to their families. Available online: <https://www.aapf.org/sayhername> [accessed 16 November 2022]

²⁶ The African American Policy Forum, website: Available online: <https://www.aapf.org/sayhername> [accessed 16 November 2022]

²⁷ <https://speakola.com/political/malcolm-x-speech-to-black-women-1962>

placed under control” (Yancy, 2017, p. 252). This norm of needing to control Black women continues to subjugate Black female bodies and as hooks (1984, p. 14) provides places Black women

in an unusual position in this society, for not only are we collectively at the bottom of the occupational ladder, but our overall social status is lower than that of any other group. Occupying such a position, we bear the brunt of sexist, racist, and classist oppression.

AFRICAN SCHOLARS AND THE BLACK FEMALE BODY

As mentioned briefly in Chapter One, in South Africa, the system of Apartheid has been a prime historical example of extreme dehumanisation of Black bodies. Apartheid in South Africa has, by political and social design, effectively kept Black bodies within systematic and racial borders²⁸ the system by design and intention was about racial segregation using systematic violence to implement the separation. This being evident in “the ways in which systemic violence and dispossession affect one’s sense of being” (Makhubu, N and Mbongwa, 2019, p. 10) for remnants left behind caused by racism, oppression, inequality, hyper-sexualisation, and the degrading of the Black female body is felt post-apartheid. In an account of the Black female bodies in the South African context, *City Press* writer Bathabile Dlamini (2018)²⁹ articulates that,

Black female bodies [...] have historically been dehumanised and regarded as grotesque and animalistic. This is evident in the horrific lived reality of Sara Baartman, whose black body was hypersexualised through state-sponsored scientific racism in the early 1800s. From South Africa to London, to Paris, she became a widely sought-after international prostitute. So perverse was the Western gaze on Baartman that she was used to measure Western self-reflection.

Black Female bodies though exposed to daily indignities and humiliation, subjected to socio-economic hardships, forced into cheap labour, exploitation and oppression because of the apartheid laws. These acts of dehumanisation did not deter Black women and the crucial role they played in the struggle against apartheid which is

²⁸ Some of the Apartheid legislation: Group Areas Act, Act No 41 of 1950; Bantu Education Act, Act No 47 of 1953; Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, Act No 49 of 1953; The Natives Land Act, No 27 of 1913 and The Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923. Available at

<https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/sites/default/files/DC%20Metadata%20Files/Gandhi-Luthuli%20Documentation%20Centre/ApartheidLaws/ApartheidLaws.pdf> [Accessed 7 September 2022]

²⁹ Dlamini, B., (2018) Caster Semenya and The Continued Dehumanisation of the Black Body. *City Press*. [online]. Available at: <https://city-press.news24.com/Voices/caster-semenya-and-the-continued-dehumanisation-of-the-black-body-20180504> [Accessed 12 June 2019].

insurmountable. Black women formed part of the cornerstone that challenged the apartheid regime.

Black women experienced the humiliation of the pass, the lack of choice of where to live under both the Group Areas Act and the homelands policy of the apartheid state. They were treated shockingly by white employers and faced a future without any political representation. This political oppression on the basis of race led many women to join the struggle against apartheid. They were also discriminated against on the basis of their gender. South Africa was and remains a strongly patriarchal society. In a patriarchal society men hold the positions of power in wider society and in the household. Men are dominant and dominate women by making the decisions and determining what the structure of society looks like. In this way, women had to fight a struggle against the power and dominance of men (SAHA, n.d.)³⁰

Driven under challenging circumstances to be the strong Black woman, to be a 'rock' as drawn from the saying '*wathinta abafazi, wathita imbokodo* - you strike a woman, you strike a rock'. Statements, I believe, pull away from feelings and desensitise the pain and experiences of Black women. Experiences that place Black women in society and their households as inferior, not fit to occupy leadership positions and are exposed to sexist and patriarchal views. In truth, I stand as an angry Black woman. I have shared sentiments with Owethu Makhatini (2018, p. 186-187) when she says,

I have fought long and hard not to be the angry Black woman, and yet here I am. I am livid. I have denied my anger. I have been shamed of my anger. I have felt like a monster and scrambled to find ways to disguise my fangs. I have held my anger deep in pit of my stomach and let it eat me up. I furrowed brows and tears of pure, animalistic anger well up my eyes and burn my cheeks.

My anger from how historically and in recent times, Black women have been positioned/disadvantaged by class and socio-economic status. This is exacerbated by how Black women have been considered subhuman and inferior and have been discriminated against. I am angry at Black female bodies have been erotised, policed, and inscribed as "grotesque, strange, unfeminine, lascivious, and obscene" (Hobson, 2018, p. 88). Relatedly, Makhatini (2018, p. 192 – 193) explains

Serena Williams often gets slammed in popular publications for her physical features, most notably her posterior. The same publications that laud the Kardashian for their shapely behinds are the first to label Black features as vulgar. Full lips, dark eyes and generous behinds seem only to be desirable when they aren't on black women.

³⁰ South African History Archive - Website/blog with no specific author or date of publication or article (no date); SAHA - South African History Archive., (n.d). Women fighting racism and sexism. [Online]. South Africa. DOJ&CD. Available from: https://www.saha.org.za/women/women_fighting_racism_and_sexism.htm. [Accessed 9 June 2022]

This violence is observable in dubbing Black female bodies insignificant, immoral, and bottom of the social chain. The dehumanisation of Black female bodies is noticeable through cat-calling and being called derogatory names. Being called derogatory names is not unfortunately, uncommon in relation to Black people. Terms like “Nigger” in America and “Kaffir” in South Africa hold historical significance in relation to dehumanising Black people. Women have a dual experience of this as there are further terms used to denote and dehumanise women specifically as Gqola (2001, p. 16). Points out, “similarly we are well aware of the derogatory names accorded to Black women: cherrie, chick, hoe, magosha, babe, s’febe, s’kebereshe to name a few”. According to Mncwango and Luvuno (2015, p. 246), “African societies in particular, have extended such practices even to the way in which derogatory language is used when referring to women”. For these reasons and others, it is imperative that the voices of Black women are uplifted and amplified through advocacy. Having a Black female body in South Africa means resistance. It is challenging naming and writing about the complexities of our oppressions, but it is a necessary space towards agency and positive change.

MY OWN BLACK FEMALE BODY

It is the within these systematic and racial borders that I, a Black South African woman, am moved to interrogate the performances of Siwani *uNgenzelaphantsi* (2014)³¹, and Nelisiwe Xaba *They look at me and all they think* (2006) which richly reflects and interrogates the colonised and racialised Black female body that has been viewed as an object, has been dehumanised, subjected, and demonised. I also look into Lhola Amira’s, (aka Khanyisile Mbongwa) work in the form of a pre-recorded interview titled *LHOLA Amira – here’s what you need to know about the artist who calls herself an ancestral presence* (2018)³². Further Nyamza’s (2017 and 2022) engages how colonial impositions, religion (Christianity), culture, and African spirituality sits on the Black (South African) female body. Amira’s performative interview asks pertinent

³¹ In Chapter 3, The case studies of Buhlebezwe Siwani, Nelisiwe Xaba, Lhola Amira and Mamela Nyamza will be unpacked and extensively interrogated.

³² YouTube Interview: The Narrative. 2018. LHOLA AMIRA | Here's What You Need to Know About the Artist Who Calls Herself an Ancestral Presence. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk2-fYLYDMk> [Accessed 2 March 2021]

questions that inquire, “What is similar, what is the thread that continues the pain and the violence? What makes the Black bodies to be seen as a body that is available for such violence?” (Amira, 2018). Amira asks pertinent questions which have assisted me in my journey to unearth the strategies I can implement to redefine and reimagine my own Black female body in my performance practice. Such as staying conscious of the framing and positionality of the Black female body. In engaging Amira’s (2018) interview critically, I am prompted to think carefully about how and explore the inscriptions embedded in my own body extensively in trying to decode these inscriptions and to simultaneously consider my body as a medium of scripting the response messages through practice. Lastly, to carefully consider the message/s and images I want to share and the inscriptions that the body (my body) carries and find/ negotiate this language to speak through my body. In considering my body, a tool for “scripting” (Jordan-Zachery, 2017, p. 4):

Scripting suggests that all bodies are surfaces that can be written on; thereby, carrying cultural assumptions and understandings of how the body should behave and perform. As such, the body as corporeal text serves as a discursive tool in which meanings may be extracted.

Further advancing the notion of the body as a knowledge maker/power (Grosz, 1990; Spry, 2001; Dixon-Gottschild, 2008), as outlined by Liane Loots (2010, p. 122) in relation to her own working processes as a choreographer when she states that “these embodied performers and the choreographic process of writing and creating dance politicises the body as text to speak [...] thus historically and politically resisting hegemony”. My understanding of this is that, through creative practice and placing the Black body in performance. As Black female dancing bodies, we have the capacity, in the work we generate to claim back control of the narratives hegemonically written for our bodies by giving our own voice to our bodies, to rebel and resist what has been written for us (and on us). As Gqola (2005, p. 3) further outlines that “rather than being a mere tool, then, the body acts as both the site and the language through which [its] positioning is negotiated”. I will engage this in my fourth chapter in relation to my own screen dance solo work that sits as part of this practice-based dissertation.

The body of literature explored above - particularly the writings Gqola (2001), Yates (1996), Jordan-Zachery (2017) and Loots (2010) - aligns with my interrogation of the

Black female body as complex and having possibilities for multiple identities. Buhlebezwe Siwani (2016, p. 16), for example, argues that “the song, AbeNguni by Thandiswa Mazwai, evokes this multiplicity in that the self is constituted of others who, even in their absence, have strong presence”. This song evokes and validates that we are not singular or alone, we are of multiple presences though may be seen as single body. We are with *amadlozi*³³ that walk with us constantly. It also echoes the dynamics, visibility and invisibility of the inscriptions my Black female body carries in my continuous journey of *ubungoma*.

The experiences and lessons through the teachings of *ubungoma* have me experience my body’s possibilities that come from that is hyper-visible (my body) through working with/within or from that which is invisible. My hyper-visibility stems from the recognized difference, identified as Other, and being scrutinized. My body’s possibilities come also comes from that which is beyond my hyper visible body and what you can see in the physical sense, the existing in a multi-verse. My physical body is something that is tangible, that can be held, touched and seen. What is not visible to the eye, the spirit which seen through my body and embodiment may defy common understandings. The multitudes I am walking, conversing and communing with and spirit, through guidance and indigenous knowledge systems passed down, Siwani, (2016, p. 16) states that in her practice as a *sangoma* and artists,

I am invariably faced with the fluidity, multiplicity and malleability of the self [...] the self is constituted of others who, even in their absence, have strong presence. The key principle in both practices, therefore, lies in negotiating what is visible and invisible.

This is one example, there are multiple and could be multiple possibilities beyond that for each and every one of us, for instance the possibilities are being more and excelling beyond the historical positioning of Black female bodies. The Black female body as a site for possibilities for subverted meaning against the stereotypes that exist around these particular bodies. The possibilities are being empowered, being seen and heard for who Black female bodies are not what they told they, occupying spaces and socio-political positions that were not meant for our Black bodies. Things that were not possible for our ancestors, now a possibility for many of us. The possibilities are

³³ Amadlozi: guiding ancestral spirit

having bodily autonomy taking power back and being leaders. Audre Lorde (2020, p. 25) argues that “the places of possibility with ourselves are dark because they are ancient and hidden; they have survived and grown strong in darkness”. Mowatt, French, and Malebranche (2013, p. 645) argues that “invisibility is a fundamental aspect of being Black in a white-dominated society”, this is evident in how as Black bodies and Black female bodies we and have been denied our pain, denied the reality of our lived experiences, disrespected, silenced in the pursuit of equality and justice and in not being seen as human. Invisibility as a concept helps to unpack the experiences of Black women in South Africa in the absence of the white gaze.³⁴ The History of Black South African bodies in South Africa has been one of invisibility and hyper-invisibility. Vanessa Dickerson (2001, p. 197) explains that,

the Black female body is unseen because it is socially constructed as body not worth the effort of seeing. Such invisibility proves, of course, damaging and denigrating. Yet all too often when the black female body is looked upon or made the object of the gaze, the body is still perceived as unworthy.

Having Black female bodies, we are challenged with having to constantly negotiate the visible/hyper-visible inscriptions that our bodies carry in relation to gender, race, class, and body politics. Mowatt, French, and Malebranche (2013, p. 645) confirms this in the statement below,

when Black women’s bodies are on display to be ridiculed [...] or when sociopolitical agendas use Black women[’s] experiences as scapegoats... We consider Black women’s presence in [academic]studies as invisible through the consequences of systemic sexism and racism throughout society and the academy.

Kadiatu Kanneh (1995, p. 348) further states that “Black and female identities are not simply figurative or superficial sites of play and metaphor, but occupy very real political spaces of diaspora, dispossession and resistance” and this engagement with resistance that Kanneh notes is also supported in Hartman’s (1997, p. 51) statement that Black women’s bodies are profound sites of “possibilities”. It is these possibilities that sit at the heart of this dissertation and my interrogations and engagements. The identities that Black women carry and the trauma and oppression that they have and continue to face through lived experience are made up of real moments. Therefore,

³⁴ White Gaze: White gaze: in the context of this dissertation: The way in which whiteness has influence and or is control of how we think and operate within society or in relation to the male gaze.

Black women cannot be asked to not acknowledge the experience they have had and hold in their Black female bodies. Black women cannot be asked or expected to remember the pain, dispossession, and the daily micro aggressions that affect their identities. That would be an invalidation of Black women's realities, the denial of boxes/categories (inscriptions) we are put in and how we exist in contemporary societies.

These ideas above in relation to Black women's identities as sites of resistance (Kanneh, 1995) and possibilities (Hartman, 1997) have influenced my practice and the development of my screen dance and critical reflection that sits at the heart of this study. Moreover, these link Madison's (1993) theories of the flesh which I use in the following chapters to unpack and interrogate Black female potentials and embodiments through performance. These enable me to consider and explore the identities I am inscribed with as a Black woman, choreographer, dancer, Masters student, daughter and as a body with a spiritual calling within my practice. These ideas provide context to the intersectional inscriptions that the Black female bodies carry. These intersecting and shifting identities recognised here as possibilities (Hartman, 1997) enable me to engage Black female bodies as (sites, knowledge maker and modes of expression as I will discuss in the next section of this chapter).

THE BLACK FEMALE BODY AS A SITE OF POSSIBILITIES

The engagement with some of the politics and theory offered by Black and African feminisms enables space to interrogate specifically the politics in and on Black female bodies, which in turn promote growing understanding of Black female bodies as sites of resilience and possibilities (Hartman, 1997). In considering the Black female body as a site of resilience, it affirms what American Critical Race scholar George Yancy (2005) states when he speaks of the body as "a battlefield". Yancy (2005, p. xxxvi) asserts that "the body is a battlefield, one that is fought over continuously across particular historical moments". John Keefe (in Murray and Keefe, 2007, p. 7) further argues that "the physical body is the meeting place of worlds, spiritual, social, political, emotional and intellectual worlds are all interpreted through this physical body". I find this notion of thinking of the body as a meeting place or intersection intriguing as it is

where the spirit, ancestors, gender, history, and experience intertwine, as they are all experienced in an embodied sense of self.

Thus, to dive into understanding the specific struggles, of the Black female body. I turn focus to the Black female body and my own Black female body as a source of knowledge and 'knowing', following Grosz (1990); Spry (2001); Dixon-Gottschild, (2008). By this, I offer the understanding that Black women's bodies become a way of articulating narratives, discourses, and inscriptions written on it, following Madison's (1993, p. 213) "theories of the flesh". I rely here on the idea that it is "a story of the body, told through the body, which makes cultural conflict concrete" (Langellier, 1999, p. 208). In this light, and in the context of this research thus it is imperative that the/my Black female body is placed at the centre of research and part of what is researched. This further elevates ideas related to the body is a site of knowledge which is supported by Siwani (2016, p. 20) in the statement that "the body is not just a physical medium, the body is a powerful symbol". These ideas are further elaborated further in the following chapters of this dissertation, and are given concrete expression through the various case studies I explore.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

BLACK FEMINISMS

Principal theories upon which this research rests are primarily Black feminisms (hooks 1981, 2000; Madison, 1993; Boyce-Davies 1994; Ogundipe-Leslie 1994; Hill-Collins 2000; Gqola 2001, 2005, 2017; Oyěwùmí 2005; Beal 2008; Willis 2010; Jordan-Zachery 2010; Crenshaw, 1991, 2014; Adichie 2014; Moraga and Anzaldua, 2015; Thorpe 2018; Mackinlay 2019; I engage Black feminist thought – in its myriad forms – alongside emerging African feminisms. Black feminisms primarily focus on Black women's experiences and understanding their position concerning socio-political identities, as Hill-Collins (1990, p. 126) observes, "the same way that White feminists identify with their victimization as women yet ignore the privilege that racism grants them". This beckons for Black feminist thought and African Feminisms debates to unchain and give back power to the Black female body as argued by Venter (2018) who state that feminism is about the will to engage.

African feminisms address the conditions and needs of African women who reside on the African continent. Gwendolyn Mikell (1997, p. 3-4) in *African Feminism – The Politics of survival in Sub-Saharan Africa* writes that,

The new African-feminist approach differs radically from the Western forms of feminism with which we have become familiar since the 1960s. African feminism owes its origins to different dynamics than those that generated Western feminism. It has largely been shaped by African women's resistance to Western hegemony and its legacy within African culture.

Much of this research thus draws on Black feminist thought, African feminisms as well as the sister theories of intersectional feminisms Intersectional feminist discourse, following Crenshaw (2014); Hill-Collins and Blige (2016); and Nash (2019) explores individuals' identities as multiple and intersecting which thus warrants complex intersecting engagements as this dissertation attempts to do. Black African Intersectional feminisms work to confront and challenge the socio-political framing; racial, gender and class prejudice as well as and sexual discrimination against Black women and their bodies (Moraga and Anzaldua, 2015; Ggola, 2001 and 2005). Black and African feminisms focus on the rights of Black women and their bodies, and they question the legitimacy of the structures that keep Black women subjugated while developing strategies that bring about transformation (Ogundipe - Leslie, 1994; Guy-Sheftall, 1995, Katrak, 1995; Hobson, 2003, 2012 and Hill-Collins and Blige 2016. As previously stated Black and African feminisms explore Black women's bodies "as a site of possibilities" (Hartman, 1997, p. 51), while also emphasising how the Black female body has been positioned /framed within socio-historical standings or community in ways that redefine them and their identities. How Black women have pursued the idea to 'write back' on their own terms, challenged systems, trail blazed and have been the voices of many Black female bodies and have the hope of being heard and seen (see, for example, Carole Boyce-Davies, 1994, 2019; Julia. S, Jordan-Zachery 2010; Pumla Gqola 2017; Morgan Jerkins 2018; and Venus E. Evans-Winters 2019). African feminisms differ from Black feminisms in that they specifically address the struggle, oppression and circumstances of women from the African continent and their experience as part of the global South. Black feminism emerges from mainstream feminism solely focusing on Black women across the globe and in the African diaspora. It is the inclusion of the intersectional feminisms that enables the breadth of my thinking around the intersections of Black and African feminisms in my dissertation.

Black feminism enriched by African feminisms which include histories of colonialism, African cultures and traditions of Black women on the African continent. It stands on the foundation and ideology of community and *isintu*³⁵ and as much also engages racial and ethnic oppression experienced by African women and men.

Seminal to the field are various writings and proclamations offered by the late bell hooks. She offers the following, which is a useful foundational thread for this research:

Initially, black feminists approached the women's movement white women had organized eager to join the struggle to end sexist oppression. We were disappointed and disillusioned when we discovered that white women in the movement had little knowledge of or concern for the problems of lower class and poor women or the particular problems of non-white women from all classes (hooks, 1981, p. 188)

Black feminism is affirming the struggles, grievances, and perspectives that Black women (and women of colour) offer (hooks, 1992). Black feminisms, follow the second wave of Western feminism in contesting the easy notion of a 'global sisterhood' that was promoted through the former. As hooks (1984) maintains the failure of early Western feminism to acknowledge, meaningfully, racial hierarchies resulted in the intersections between race and class being suppressed. By that, Black women and other women of colour were not represented within the white hegemonic discourses that were represented in the early Western feminist movements. Adair (1992) attests to this in asserting that often-unaware white women assumed that when they spoke for, or of 'women' they spoke for all women where else the experiences of black women were not addressed. Hill-Collins (2000, p. 5) correlates this in saying that,

Western feminisms have also suppressed black women's ideas. Even though black women intellectuals have long pressed a distinctive African-influenced feminist sensibility about how race and class intersect in structuring gender, historically we have not been full participants in white feminist organizations.

METHODOLOGY PART 1: PERFORMANCE AS SITE FOR EMBODIED NEGOTIATION IN THEORY³⁶

³⁵ Isintu: Relating to and coming from African social, cultural and spiritual cosmologies and idiom (Mkhize, 2022, p. 13)

³⁶ Methodology Part 2: Performance as A Site of Embodied Negotiation in Practice is written in Chapter Four.

Central to this study is my use of performance as a site for interrogating the politics of Black Female bodies — and most specifically my Black female body — as a site of resilience in contemporary South African performance in my own screen dance making. In doing so I explore Conquergood's (1985, p. 9) notion of "dialogical performance" to frame and aid in the interpretation of the performance aspect of this study. According to Conquergood (1985, p. 10), dialogical performance occurs in instances when "a text [...] reengages the past, and brings it alive in the present". Importantly, and for the purposes of this study:

This text does more than invoke empathy, it interrogates, criticizes, and empowers. This is dialogical criticism. The dialogical performance is the means for "honest intercultural understanding. (Conquergood, 1985, p. 10)

I have tried to capture these elements of dialogical performance in my practice by creating a screen dance solo performance that is negotiated from the stimulus of the four case studies offered in Chapter Three. I set out to keep the dialogue and conversation of the Black female body present and ongoing while working from external case studies towards my own internal and embodied practice. According to Soyini Madison (1993, p. 213),

Black feminist thought supports the interdependence of what are called "theories of the flesh" and "specialized knowledge." Theories of the flesh reflect the distinctive interpretations of the world carved out of the material realities of a group's life experiences. Specialized knowledge infuses elements and themes of black women's culture and traditions with critical interventionist thinking to provide black women with new tools of resistance [...] As a result, black feminist thought and the performance paradigm augment each other as analytical constructs in unveiling the many ways people "lettered" and "unlettered" theorize themselves.

The Combahee River Collective (1979) outlines that "as Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color (*sic*) face" (cited in Isoke, 2013, p. 13).

I have further used the idea of research critical friends which is common in creative research outputs methods (see Costa and Kallick, 1993; Appleby, 1998; and Costantino, 2010). The use of critical friends during the practice component is considered to address issues around the autoethnography in academic study which are related to potential solipsism. To ensure that I have a research mirror to reflect my own praxis. I have invited into my process three Black South African women, who are

my peers in terms of age, race, gender and context. The critical friend protocol for this study occurred through a workshopped process of shared narratives of the three Black female voices of my critical friends. The conversation was not in person; however, it was conducted using a popular social network app (WhatsApp). The conversation evolved around their lived experiences as Black women in South Africa. This discussion influenced my practice in creating the solo digital film for this research project. I was able to expand on the conversation of the narrative inscribed onto and common lived experiences of Black female bodies. I was able to mirror and reflect on my own experiences, as further explained in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

Conquergood (1985, p. 10) articulates that,

Dialogical performance is a way of having [an] intimate conversation[s] with other people and cultures. Instead of speaking about them, one speaks to and with them. The sensuous immediacy and empathic leap demanded by performance is an occasion of orchestrating two voices, for bringing together two sensibilities. At the same time, the conspicuous artifice of performance is a vivid reminder that each voice has its own integrity.

In employing performance as part of my practice, I have looked to the following performance writers, and theorists, Richard Schechner, 1988; Baz Kershaw 1999, 1992, 2011; Peggy Phelan, 1993; D. Doyini Madison, 1993, 2006; Rebecca Schneider, 1997, 2011; Dwight Conquergood, 2002, 2013; and Kathrine Profeta, 2015. Each remind me (in differing ways) that the body is central to physical performance and any related interrogation of such practice. According to Ervin Goffman (1959) and Richard Schechner (1988) performance theory suggests that we are constantly performing our lives in our everyday modes of being. Into this a “dialogic performative” (Madison, 2006, p. 321) may be employed

order to widen the door of our caravan and to clear more space for others to enter and ride [...] Our caravan is not as interesting or as enlivening without Others to perform with and to help us name the different symbols, alliterations, and possibilities within the landscape of our journey. (Madison, 2006, p. 321)

I have taken inspiration from selected Black (South African) female artists who have asserted themselves in and through performance, “these women practise art as a means of imagining a world of greater possibilities for themselves and their communities” (Richards, 2015, p. 1). Performance – as a dialogic space following

Madison, (2006) – makes it possible to reimagine, redefine and unveil the multiple identities situated on Black female bodies and further to see the body as “site of possibility” (Hartman, 1997, p. 51). Through performance, to the ability to live through, capture and advocate the multiplicities that our bodies hold, exists, as performance does not hold bodies in spaces of singularity. Elizabeth Grosz (cited in Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, p. 205) states that,

because the body is open to multifarious inscriptions which produce it as a dialogic, ambivalent, and unstable signifier rather than a single, independent, and discrete entity, it is not surprising that the production of some sort of personal or cultural subjectivity via the body is complex indeed.

With Grosz’s (1996) ideas, in the development and creation of my own performance output I consider my body being “open to multifarious inscriptions” (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, p. 205) as it offers a way of reading gender, race, class, the colonial, historical, patriarchal and cultural inscriptions. The creative screen dance film that I created as part of this research dissertation is a dance performance. I utilised the means of digital instead of live theatre production due to the COVID -19 pandemic protocols that were in place at the outset of my research journey. The creative screen dance film that I offer, which incorporates multimedia, is included in my academic reflection writing in Chapter Four which engages with my screen dance work and the influence of the four case studies that make up Chapter Three. I am considering the creative work my screen dance film – as an interweaving of the (un)learning. The (un)learning that there is one story, of the fear, of not having voice, of imposed inscriptions and ideologies. An (un)learning of self and my body letting go of the Western standards of beauty.

For decades, our Black bodies have demonstrated this resistance, performing in revolt in relation to historical protests against Apartheid In South Africa in opposing the racist apartheid government through protests³⁷ and toyi-toying³⁸ including the August 9 1956, Women’s march; March 21, 1960 Sharpville Massacre; June 16 1976 Soweto uprising in 1976 for instance, performed to fight for and preserve Black cultures. Mary-

³⁷ August 9 1956, Women’s march; March 21, 1960 Sharpville Massacre; June 16 1976 Soweto uprising to name a few

³⁸ iToiytoy: Stomping of feet and chanting that include political slogans or songs a form of dance used during protests in South Africa

Frances Winters (2020, p. 2) in her book *Black fatigue: How racism erodes the mind, body, and spirit* declares that,

Black people have been marching, protesting, resisting, writing, orating, praying, legislating, and commentating for centuries for equity and justice, and—young and old—we are fatigued.

My experience as a Black South African woman, is similar in some ways to an African American woman but also very different in terms of our cultural engagements. Although an African American woman will share a certain level of embodiment in terms of race, gender, and sexuality there is also a vast class and cultural difference where they might be intersecting points. This is also in relation to a Black woman from South Africa and a Black woman from Ghana, there are intersecting points but there are distinct cultural differences the rituals of emancipation do exist across cultures and they are all not the same. One of the ways that I am learning and also understanding is that being Black South African we have a myriad and varying cultural rituals and cultural celebrations each attending to where we are in our cycle of life. The act of these rituals and cultural performances, I believe has aiding Black bodies find healing and rhythm, the emancipatory healing of dance/rituals. Black bodies have and continue to dance to find a voice, find self, healing and empowerment through *ukuGida*³⁹ and *ukusina*⁴⁰. On the account of using dance performance and the body as site to investigate the findings. Boylorn (2008, p. 489) argues that,

[I]ived experience speaks to the personal and unique perspective of researchers and how their experiences are shaped by subjective factors of their identity including race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, political associations, and other roles and characteristics that determine how people live their daily lives.

In my practice, I have used my body as a vehicle to speak to the personal and a site for critical performance explorations into Black female embodiments. This is done with the understanding that “both feminism, as politics, and dance [performance] as cultural practice shares a concern for the body” (Brown, 1983, p. 1981). These understandings offer a way into discussing how my Black female South African body’s experience and

³⁹ Ukugida: Invoking ancient ancestor spirits through stomping bare feet on the ground

⁴⁰ Ukusina: A vigorous traditional Zulu dance that is high spirited and involves stomping of feet usually done in traditional celebrations and ceremonies

those of my critical friends have shaped us as Black women and our perception of the world while opening up potentials to engage our bodies as “site[s] of possibilities” (Hartman, 1997, p. 51).

CONCLUSION

It is pivotal that Black female bodies undergo (un)learning and develop a resistance to internalised oppression, internalised racism, and patriarchal teachings that support oppressive gender norms in our societies and cultures. The literature on Black feminist thought and African feminisms offered in this chapter, bell hooks (1981; 1984; 1992; 1995; 2000); Soyini Madison, 1993; Boyce-Davies 1994; Ogundipe-Leslie 1994; Patricia Hill-Collins (2000); Pumla Gqola 2001, 2005, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991, 2014; Kimberly Wallace-Sanders 2002; Janell Hobson 2003, 2018; Oyérónké Oyéwùmí (2005); Francis Beal (2008); Julia Jordan-Zachery 2010; and Moraga and Anzaldúa, (2015) I believe, provides a strong foundation in acquiring this (un)learning. The theory has armed me with careful considerations in viewing the body as a site and in also placing it as the site for embodied and negotiation. The sources used not only a global lens, but, a local and cultural lens to speak of and think about Black female bodies in South Africa, in relation to. The performance practice which will be discussed in Chapter Four, in the case of my research, acts as a form of (re)learning and resistance. Caldwell and Bennett Leighton (2018, p. 17) write about the importance of

reconnecting to our bodies, reclaiming our embodied experiences and, finding place of clarity and resistance against oppression that often serves to sever us from this core of who we are.

Explored in this dissertation – and directly related to my use of Black and African feminist frameworks, is also a form of reclaiming and giving back autonomy to Black female bodies. For though we may move and experience the world as marked bodies, our “bodies as sign systems, texts, narratives, rendered meaningful and integrated into forms capable of being read in terms of personality, psychology, or submerged subjectivity” (Grosz, 1994, p. 141). The Body is a political site, that becomes a medium of, negotiation, speaking to and speaking through – especially in performance. The

inscriptions that the Black female bodies hold within different sites/locations can be used as places from which to resist and explore the possibilities of Black female embodiments as sites of agency.

In the following chapter, I provide four Black female artists/performance makers who have served as a stream of influence for my own performance-making. The artists and their work discussed provide case studies, for further solidifying my engagements in this dissertation thus far, but also act as inspiration and foundation for my own screen dance work which is explored in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER THREE

Case Studies

Black women are chained by a triple yoke of oppression. Under apartheid, each component of their existence as women – their sex, their colour and their class – combine to negate their right to social inequality. Within the racist and sexist system, women are not only oppressed in relation to men, but in relation to each other. – *Systematic oppression – Unyielding Resistance, date unknown.* (SAHA, n.d.)

INTRODUCTION

The above last reflection in chapter two summons for me that the following quotation,

Even the seemingly smallest microaggressions build up over time and take a toll on our bodies and mental health. Every level of oppression from micro or macros experienced in and by our bodies and can even become traumatic over time (Caldwell and Bennett Leighton, 2018, p. 28).

Such could be said about the woundedness that Black bodies carry caused by systematic historical and intersectional oppression (as discussed in chapters one and two) and which can often be referred to as trauma. This trauma or woundedness has manifested through socio-economic and political (and personal) micro and macro aggression in the form of racism, prejudice, discrimination, dehumanisation and the like, which positions Black bodies as sites of trauma. To understand the depth and the impact of this trauma as inscriptions placed on Black bodies (and specifically for my dissertation, Black female bodies), Bennett Leighton (2018) unveils, for example, the discrepancies between how the world/society at large engages and perceives Caucasian/white bodies. She writes,

Because of my whiteness, I received the message that all spaces were for me and that I belonged in them. I can move through most spaces in my world with relative ease, without having to change myself or the way my body looks or acts, and no one questions why I am there—whether in a restaurant, a graduate school, or any particular neighbourhood. (Caldwell and Bennett Leighton, 2018, p. 12).

My Black South African body's experience is not the experience of a white South woman in relation to gender, class, and race. These intersectional traumatic

experiences also imprint on the mind, emotions, and psyche. Van der Kolk (2014, p. 12) reiterates this by saying,

traumatic experiences do leave traces, whether on a large scale (on our histories and cultures) or close to home, on our families, with dark secrets being imperceptibly passed down through generations. They also leave traces on our minds and emotions, on our capacity for joy and intimacy, and even on our biology and immune systems.

This embodied trauma speaks to what Soyini Madison (1993) and Cherrie Moraga (2015) calls “The theory of the flesh”. For context the theory of the flesh is “where the physical realities of our lives—our skin colour, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longing—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (Anzaldúa and Moraga, 2015, p. 19). Trauma which is experienced in our bodies becomes part of the embedded theory that lives in our flesh as it affects, how we identify, speak, think, move and understand the world around us. It determines how we relate to each other as a community and how we may see and navigate the world. This embodied trauma or “theory of the flesh” (Anzaldúa and Moraga, 2015, p. 19) further also speaks to how oppression, privilege and power systems have positioned and affected Black bodies historically and in contemporary contexts.

In this chapter, I now set out to interrogate the interconnected performance reading of four case studies. I will engage here, the of the installation and performance works of Buhlebezwe Siwani and her work *uNgenzelaphantsi* (2014); Lhola Amira’s (also known as Khanyisile Mbongwa) work/conversational discourse in the form of a pre-recorded interview titled *LHOLA Amira – ‘here’s what you need to know about the artist who calls herself an ancestral presence’* (2018); and Mamela Nyamza’s *Grounded* (2022) which premiered live at JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre in 2022 and *De-Apart-Hate* (2017). These are engaged alongside Nelisiwe, Xaba, *They Look At Me, And That’s All They Think*, which was performed as part of the JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience at the Elizabeth Sneddon theatre in 2006. I explore how these four selected Black South African female artists use their bodies as sites of resilient performance-making and how they explore their identities thus. I explore how the Black female body is conceptualised and thought about in these contemporary performances. Further, I interrogate how gender, race, class, body politics, systematic oppression and African spiritualities are negotiated through the Black female bodies in these four

contemporary performances that I discuss throughout this chapter. I investigate how they use the performance/dance paradigm to explore the dynamics of their complex identities to speak about their bodies as a site of trauma and simultaneous resilience and resistance through their lived experiences of being Black and female in a South African context. I will also, using Madison's (1993) theory of the flesh, analyse each of the performance/performative outputs selected for review here. I do this in order to interrogate the systems of oppression and power that have distanced Black women from their engagement with possibilities from their beliefs and identities outside of a Western canon, in line with Ngugi's (1981) idea of the cultural bomb. Finally, my investigations in relation to the performance and performative works selected for review here, seek to expose how Black bodies and Black female bodies in particular, have been dehumanised throughout history in order to do so I use ideas around the colonial and patriarchal gaze as articulated in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Using selected works, I offer a close reading of these four female artists/performance makers and their performance/performative negotiations of intersectional oppressions that sit within their bodies, and emerge in and through their performance presentations and interventions. The close reading of works also serves as a deeply significant stream of influence on my own performance-making and practice and this will unfold in the ongoing discussion of their work later in this chapter and discussion of my own work in Chapter Four. I make overt connections and offer links to how my practice has been inspired by the works of the above-mentioned performance practitioners and how they have encouraged me and my practice to speak from my body as a Black South African female, performer and choreographer.

Stuart Hall (1994, p. 227) argues that "practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write - the positions of *enunciation*". Therefore, I argue that the four case studies give – and have given - context and substance to intersectional ideas related to gender, race, class, body politics, systematic oppression; ancestors/African spirituality that I explore in my performance making and reflection. Engaging these four case studies reflectively and in the writing about them has been crucial in aiding me in looking at myself as a Black woman, choreographer, and performer and engaging in representational performance politics. This is discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

BUHLEBEZWE SIWANI,

Buhlebezwe Siwani is a South African multidisciplinary performance and visual artist who is also a practising *sangoma*.

Siwani works predominantly in the medium of performance and installations, she includes photographic stills and videos of some performances. She uses the videos and the stills as a stand in for her body which is physically absent from the space. Siwani completed her B.A. Fine Arts (Hons) at the Wits School of Arts in Johannesburg in 2011 and her Masters in Fine Arts at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts in 2015. She has exhibited at the Michaelis Galleries in Cape Town, a site-specific exhibition in collaboration with APEX Art, New York City, in 13th Avenue, Alexandra township, Commune 1, and Stevenson in Cape Town. (Siwani, n.d.)⁴¹



Buhlebezwe Siwani, 'uNgenzelaphantsi' (2014)⁴²

⁴¹ Buhlebezwe short biography sourced from Buhlebezwe Siwani's website:
<https://www.buhlebezwesiwani.com/bio-i-cv> [accessed 16/11/22]

⁴² Images credit: <https://www.buhlebezwesiwani.com/ngenzelephantsi-2014>

Buhlebezwe Siwani's - *Ungenzelaphansi* (2014) is a digital screen dance film where Siwani "examine[s] the body as medium through a consideration of pain and mortality [...] but more significantly it is represented as a critical site for thinking about race, gender and mortality" (Siwani, 2016, p. 50). In the digital performance, the screen is split into two frames. The left side of the screen captures Siwani in two frames one on top of the other, standing, her upper body covered in what appears to be feathers, starting from her hair and face to just below her naval. On the right side of the screen, we see her bare legs and feet from the knees going down to her toes, also in two frames, one on top of the other (as per the image supplied above). She starts by shaking the feathers off and making a subtle crackling sound on the floor as they drop.

Perhaps the feathers may also be read as a kind of inscription/narrative placed on and given to her body, reminiscent of a baby chicken maybe shedding old feathers in order to reveal the new. The feathers are white in colour, Siwani (2016, p. 50) explains this choice in saying,

the reason I used white feathers rather than black feathers in my performance is that black chickens are used to rid one of evil spirits while white chickens are used to bring about light and luck. In this way, the body of the chicken is seen as a carrier, a site and a medium through which good or bad forces are transferred.

What is profound is that as a Black woman Siwani (2016, 50), she plucks off white does this with the intent to "destabilize the dichotomies of black as evil and white as light and good luck". Siwani, in this performance begins plucking the feathers from her afro hair, starting slowly, diligently, then at a faster but still controlled pace. These actions take me to early teachings where Black bodies in the face of colonialism were subjected to 'the pencil test'⁴³ can be made to shedding the 'flesh' making way for 'new' inscriptions Siwani (2016, p. 62) explains that in her performances she is

challenging the inscriptions of violence on the Black body [...] Plucking feathers from my body [...] is conscious transgression. It takes into consideration women who have fought for their convictions and whose narratives have been suppressed

⁴³ The pencil test- A test used to distinguish racial identity/ classification process during apartheid in South Africa. A pencil was inserted through a person's hair if the pencil fell, you were classified as white, or coloured, however, if the pencil remained/stuck in the hair you were Black

During apartheid in South Africa, Black Afro hair, became a point of contention and one of the distinctive features that set Black people apart from other racial groups. Allowing for Black people with coarse Afro hair (and mixed race people too) to be classed as lower class. The plucking of the feathers from her Afro hair can be read as a sort of defiance, denouncing, and political statement of the colonial implication and or inscription written of our Black Afro Hair.

In line with Siwani's ideas I believe that Black Afro hair as symbol of Blackness and ownership of the self was and for decades have been categorised for decades as unruly, untamed and bad hair. Khulekani Madlela (2018, p. 3) reiterates this in stating,

The politics of black hair in South Africa is largely rooted in the segregation laws introduced during colonisation and apartheid. During colonial and apartheid eras, African hair and hairstyles were disparaged (Barnard 2000:351) and presented as bad, inferior and uncivilised, while the white ideal of long straight hair was represented as superior.

Black hair, as an extension of our bodies, identity and who we are as a people, became a point of contention, rendering our Black African Afro hair very political this remains so today. This has been prevalent in the recent times as the ramification presents itself as colourism, Black women chemically treating their hair to be straighter, the wearing of weave/wigs and skin bleaching to alter skin tone in order to gain social acceptance by adopting the westernised beauty standards. We have witnessed this also with the incident that took place in Pretoria Girls High in 2016. Where Black female learners were required to straighten their hair by the school's administration. In order for their hair to be considered 'neat'. The discourse about the politics of the Black Afro hair been kept open and picked up by writers Mathias Fubah Alubafi, Molemo Ramphalile & Agnes Sejabaledi Rankoana (2018); Khulekani Madlela (2018); Tshegofatso Ndabane (n.d.) they speak on the representation of African Black female bodies, hair and body politics, the policing of Black female bodies, conformity to the Eurocentric standard of beauty and the resistance.

Siwani's continues with the plucking, some of the feathers move quickly off as a clump. Some need a gentle pull, others a vigorous one. Pain is visible on her face from what I assume to be caused by the glue that has stuck the feathers on her face and body. These images read as a very subtle yet overt message of the pain that may be linked to the global displacements of Black people. The predicaments that come with

(un)learning/s of the westernised teachings, and uprootedness, we face and realising as a Black community that calls for deep introspection and a reclaiming of a sense of self which was taken from us, while taking strides to decolonise our minds and bodies as Black People. Fannie Lou Hamer (1965, cited in Isoke, 2013, p. 13) in a paper titled *Urban Black Women And The Politics Of Resistance* reiterates that

For three hundred and more years they have had 'time,' and now it is time for them to listen. We have been listening year after year to them, and what have we got? We are not even allowed to think for ourselves. They tell us, 'I know what is best for you,' but they don't know what is best for us! It is time to let them know what they owe us, and they owe us a great deal.

Black African communities have learnt and been taught more about the Western world, its history and the history of Black people from the perspective of the colonial gaze (hooks, 1992; Yancy, 2005). The Jan Van Riebeeck's, Vasco De Gama's, The conquering West, the mighty explorers and the slaves, savages and the oppressed. bell hooks (1981, p. 19) writes,

Crucial in the preparation of African people for the slave market was the destruction of human dignity, the removal of names and status, the dispersment of groups so that there would exist no common language, and the removal of any overt sign of an African heritage.

Ngugi Wa'Thiongo (1981, p. 3) describes and names these actions as the "cultural bomb", and the consequence of this was,

it makes them [Black people] see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own. It makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those which would stop their own springs of life

I also find it immensely symbolic that Siwani does not speak or share a verbal sound throughout the performance, but you can see by her face and how her body moves that the 'plucking' causes her great discomfort and/ torment. In analysing the message or choice for this I am of the mind that her constraint of voice even when in pain is to depict the silence that Black female bodies have been subdued under in the form of patriarchy, social standing, and coloniality. Ogundipe-Leslie (2001, p. 139) asks, "Are African women voiceless or do we fail to look for their voices where we may find them, in the sites and forms which these voices are uttered?". Her work echoes the words of African American playwright Ntozake Shange, (1975, p. 4) from her seminal choreopoem for *Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When The Rainbow Is*

Enuf, “Sing her song of life she’s been dead so long, closed in silence so long. She does not know the sound of her own voice, her infinite beauty”. I, therefore, offer that the plucking of the feathers becomes a finding of her voice, her resistance and resilience. A form of plucking out the old teachings, inscriptions and negative connotations that have been placed on our Black bodies. A form of taking power back; that had been stripped through violence and trauma, from Black bodies and emerging from the shadows resisting the silence and/silencing. This is also a moment of redefining and repositioning how the Black female bodies can be viewed or positioned in space and in movement. For Black bodies to be seen as bold, courageous, and fearless rather than docile objects. Siwani’s performance reads as a silent (and very painful) protest. A reclaiming her body, voice, and autonomy. By the end of the performance, Siwani stands bare-chested, her breasts revealed not as an object or commodity but as a reminder that her bare chest may also be perhaps, a reminder of identity, culture and heritage in our South African context. One of the things that I draw from Siwani’s work is the concept of shedding, stripping and of letting go in order to run towards self. In my practice, I have used this concept and have framed it as a form of skin peeling/shedding. I discuss this further in Chapter Four.

KHANYISILE MBONGWA

Khanyisile Mbongwa obtained her Master’s degree in Interdisciplinary Arts, Public Art and Public sphere from the Institute for Creative Arts, University of Cape Town. Award-winning sociologist, and curator based in Capetown

who works with public space, and interdisciplinary and performative practices, unpacking the socio-political, socio-economic, socio-racial and historical-contemporary complexities and nuances of the everyday⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Institute for Creative Art, The ICA Podcast. 2022. Khanyisile short biography sourced. Available on <http://www.ica.uct.ac.za/ica/theicapodcastepisode4> [accessed 16 November 2022]



Image from: SMACgallery ⁴⁵

Lhola Amira's recorded YouTube interview with curator Khanyisile Mbongwa opens with her discussing her varying identities. She explains that Lhola Amira is an appearance that manifests through Khanyisile Mbongwa's Physical body. Mbongwa clarifies that Lhola Amira, "is not a performance; it is not a dual existence or a persona but an ancestral presence that has a plural existence with Khanyisile" (Mbongwa, 2018)⁴⁶, Amira "defines their practice as 'appearance' – a term that draws from African Nguni spiritualism" (Biennale of Sydney, 2020)⁴⁷. Upon further research Mbongwa provides us that Amira is/was birthed by the real-life situation of her childhood friends' traumatic experience that she encountered while in high school. "I wanted to respond to the situation, and because I am a creative person, I did not know what other way to respond" (Mbongwa, 2016)⁴⁸ Amira is an embodied response to a traumatic situation that aids Mbongwa in expressing herself and engaging Black female embodiment in a performative and artistic way.

⁴⁵ Lhola Amira Image sourced from SMAC gallery. 2020. Lhola Amira. Available from:

<https://www.smacgallery.com/art-fairs/loop-barcelona-%7C-2020> [accessed 12 September 2022].

⁴⁶ Reference Lhola Amira's Youtube interview: The Narrative. 2018. LHOLA AMIRA | Here's What You Need to Know About the Artist Who Calls Herself an Ancestral Presence. Available:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk2-fYLYDMk> [Accessed 2 March 2021]

⁴⁷ Website: <https://www.biennaleofsydney.art/participants/lhola-amira/> [accessed 16 September 2022]

⁴⁸ Khanyisile Mbongwa YouTube interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EXEtKbTYNO> [Accessed 2 March 2021]

In my dissertation at different intervals, I have been drawing or referencing to my journey related to *ubungoma*⁴⁹. I would like to state that within my limited and new understandings that what Mbongwa describes as an appearance ‘birthed’ is not the same or interchangeable with being *umngoma/isangoma*. This is also not to deny that as Black African bodies, we are all with *idlozi/amadlozi* who protect, intercede and guide us along the way in walking our life’s journey. The difference is in being gifted with healing as *inyanga/isangoma/umthandazi/umprofhethi*⁵⁰ being susceptible to channelling or having *idlozi* manifest through or using your body as a tool of expressing and healing. There are, however, rites of passage that aspirant *sangomas* - have to honour and complete in a very rigorous period of training and honing of skills (initiation/ukuthwasa). The *Isintu*⁵¹ or ancestral spiritual calling, from my understanding, comes from one’s lineage (*either paternal, maternal or both*). They (the ancestral presence) are not birthed; we are born already with signifiers of our calling from birth and when these manifest, we are to take our journey as *isangoma*. As *isangoma* we are able to trace who we walk with, who leads and manifests as our guiding ancestor, and we may access the ones who gifts us with the endow of healing. For example, my gifts of healing that have shown or presented themselves so far are from my maternal side. My lead guiding ancestor is my great-grandmother from my mother’s side, and the *idlozi* that has trusted and gifted me to continue with his work is my great-grandfather, also from my maternal side. They are parts of me as they manifest through me and, my body. By this though, I am still Marcia, I am recognised and called by those who walk with me and therefore called either *Gogo*⁵² or *Mkhulu*⁵³ as they live and operate from my body.

In African *Nguni/Isintu*⁵⁴ beliefs, when we die, or those we love cross over and leave this physical plane, we only bury the physical body, however, their spirit continues to stay and be a part of us. With the above being said in trying to compare and contrast

⁴⁹ Ubungoma: The institutional framework of initiation, work and practice of izangoma (Mkhize, 2022, p.196)

⁵⁰ inyanga/isangoma/umthandazi/umprofhethi: spiritual healer- through bone divination and a prophet

⁵¹ isintu: Relating to and coming from African social, cultural and spiritual cosmologies and idiom (Mkhize, 2022, p. 13)

⁵²Gogo: Grandmother

⁵³ Mkhulu: Grandfather

⁵⁴ Nguni/isintu: Relating to and coming from African social, cultural and spiritual cosmologies and idiom (Mkhize, 2022, p. 13)

what is said and experienced by Mbongwa and what is experienced by myself in my body, I draw on Malidoma Patrice Somé, (1994, p. 2) as he argues that,

There is usually a significant violence done to anything being translated from one culture to another. Modern American English, which seems to be better suited for quick fixes and the thrill of a consumer culture seems to falter when asked to communicate another person's world view [...] trying to ferry meanings from one language to another, and from one reality to another-a process that denaturalizes and confuses them.

In some way, Somé's declaration above that the idea of writing in a second language and cross/multiple identities seem to me to, unpack the lived experience of being plural existence. Perhaps also, the English language in translation does not seem to quite hold the ideas of being a body, an African body of plural existence. Within the context of African spirituality, however, and through the lens of *ubungoma*, I have begun to navigate the ideas of shared and of plural existence as a way to support my understanding of what Lhola Amira is engaging in her own life and her own performative work. This has, and continues to inspire and influence my own thinking and performance works as a Black South African performer and performance maker who carries an ancestral calling.

For example, when my *Idlozi* manifests, this is channelled through my body, and this has been translated as a type of possession. The *idlozi* are a part of us. *Idlozi* will speak, communicate prophetic revelations and or dance through the body of the person who has been gifted with rites of passage to do so. Somé (1999, p. 196) further notes that,

Ancestors are at a disadvantage because they know how to improve things and yet they do not have the body required to act on what they know. We are at a disadvantage because although we have bodies we often lack knowledge to carry things out properly. This is why spirits like to work through us; the person with a body is an ideal vehicle to manifest things in this world. It is important to understand that when we feel that something is missing in our life, when we feel somehow disconnected or displaced, that these feelings are a sign for us to repair our connection with the world of ancestors and spirits.

Personally, I struggle with the term 'possession' due to the ongoing colonial (and Christian) demonising of the practice of *ubungoma*. Amira speaks on how the older Black generations before us have assimilated to whiteness and Christianity that have dulled our senses into understanding our customs and traditions as the present Black generation. The assimilation was further fuelled by the South African witchcraft

suppression act 3 of 1957⁵⁵, which made assimilation not a choice but an act of survival. Siwani (2018) says,

Thinking about ways in which the body has been colonized and how the body is the first point of entry for colonization and how that works. As Africans I believe that it happened through the missionaries where you know with the Bible. Where they were able to take the Bible and make us believe and then by doing it they started desecrating and demonizing our own spiritualisms and our own religions and now we're here (Siwani, 2018)⁵⁶

This action made Black communities move further away from their indigenous cultural and religious practices. Assimilated Black bodies began to view the ancestral gifts as demonic and unChristian. Mission and colonial Christianity was presented as a way of cleansing and saving one's soul contributing to the challenge of African descendant/s finding their indigenous identity. The return to self, for me and in the context of decolonisation means a (re)learning of my own culture and ancestral teachings, and the (un)learning of colonial teachings or schools of thought. This is – and needs to be – a very conscious process and is difficult as it causes internal conflict within the self (Ngugi, 1981). For me, the crucial point of reference in Lhola Amira's performance interview and her work as an artist is how she frames and addresses these wounds left by colonisation, wounds of lost identities and the dignity of Black bodies, social inequality, patriarchy, oppression, labour exploitation, and the educational imbalances.

Amira makes it clear that Khanyisile and herself are of one body as they manifest through the body of Khanyisile. Affirming the considerations of the body as a site of spirituality and the plural existence, Amira (2018) says,

Performance, performance art and performativity cannot read what I am doing and, I also think it cannot read what a lot of Black artists who are called performance artists, what they are doing. It cannot [...] Because it is still reading Black lived experience through a specific white, educated gaze [and] theory. A very specific theory because when the theories of performance art cannot understand what you are doing, they say ritual, and for me, that's problematic because we do have actual rituals as Black people that we do.

⁵⁵ Department: Justice and Constitutional Development Republic of South Africa., (2012) Witchcraft Suppression Act 3 Of 1957. (Governor-General). [Online]. South Africa. DOJ&CD. Available from: <http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/acts/1957-003.pdf>. [Accessed 17 March 2019]

⁵⁶ Siwani, B. 2018. *Sangoma & Artist BUHLEBEZWE SIWANI on Her Upcoming Show, African Spiritualism & the Land Issue*. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKCvCorTXn8>. [Accessed 25 May 2021]

Lhola Amira's words impact my work as they offer grounding to navigate viewing my own practice as both performer and as somebody who is undergoing a continuous journey of *ubungoma*. In knowing and understanding the framing of my body in practice, and knowing it is not ritual performance, but the centring of self and my lived experience, I feel it is a call to remember who I am within this Black female South African body. I begin to consider my body in practice not only as a medium or vessel but also as a site rooted in bodily experience as a Black woman from an intersectionally disadvantaged background and who has experienced inequality and discrimination in life and who now has an ancestral calling. Something Christian religion has taught me is not of God and is therefore demonic. I begin the journey to making sense of myself away from the shameful feelings that there was something wrong with me. Healing the wounds – through my performance making – of colonisations and intersectional racism has been (and continues to be) a reclaiming of self, of body, culture and religion. It has been and an uphill battle to find myself (un)learning this “cultural bomb” (Ngugi, 1981) that has asked to peel and shed the old to reveal the new. In my screen dance film I depicted this as literal peeling/shedding of old skin, I discuss this further in Chapter Four.

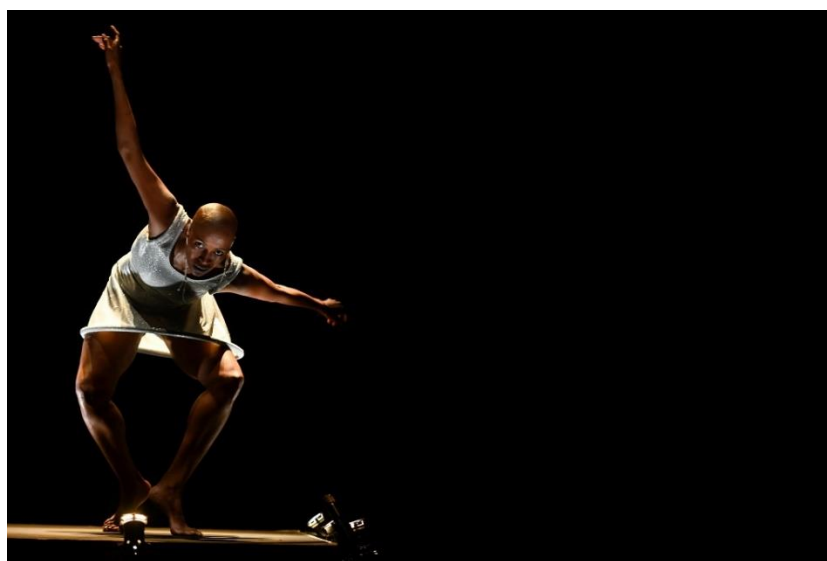
TWO FURTHER PERFORMANCE POINTS OF INSPIRATION

Though the primary focus of my dissertation is on the above two case studies of Buhlebezwe Siwani and Lhola Amira. I also draw inspiration and understanding from two further Black female South African artists. Both are performance practitioners who also review how gender, race, class, body politics and systematic oppression are negotiated on and through the Black female body with their contemporary performances. The performance works explored are of South Africa's Mamela Nyamza and Nelisiwe Xaba. I engage Nyamza's *De-Apart-Hate* (2017) and *Grounded* (2022) following which I turn to Xaba's *They Look At Me, And That's All They Think* (2006). These performances offer points of inspiration and insights into in how Black South African female bodies as sites can be transgressively located in spaces of, and through performance.

MAMELA NYAMZA

Multiple award-winning dancer, choreographer, teacher and development activist Mamela Nyamza, the 2011 Standard Bank Young Artist Award Winner for Dance, started using dance to translate the world around her as a child growing up in Gugulethu in the 1980s.⁵⁷

Nyamza's Choreographic style is a combination of contemporary and traditional South African dance. Nyamza's work focuses on issues of culture, women's sexuality, queerness and the oppression of women, in relation to both African and Western and tradition.



Mamela Nyamza's 'Grounded' (2022) at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre for JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience

The photograph was taken by Val Adamson⁵⁸

On the 8th of September 2022, I was honoured to watch Mamela Nyamza's work titled *Grounded* at the annual *JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience* hosted by the Centre for Creative arts in Durban, South Africa.⁵⁹ *Grounded* is an intimate and vulnerable piece of work that Nyamza performs with her son Amkele Mandla. Nyamza's work has resonances with Lhola Amira as she also engages in addressing wounds left by racism and its intersections with colonisation. Nyamza tackles head on

⁵⁷ Mamela Nyamza's Biography taken from: Buala. 2011. *Mamela Nyamza: the body as instrument*. Available at: <https://www.buala.org/en/stages/mamela-nyamza-the-body-as-instrument> accessed [16 November 2022]

⁵⁸ Image sourced from: Jomba! Contemporary Dance Experience Facebook page : <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=5774568409229746&set=pb.100063586720707.-2207520000>. [16 November 2022]

⁵⁹ URL for JOMBA!'s official site: <https://jomba.ukzn.ac.za/> [accessed 16 November 2022]

how colonialism has had effects on the naming and history of Black South African people, and how this wound in naming has festered. The opening up, engaging and addressing of these wounds is shared – in performance – from two different generational perspectives by both Nyamza and her son. The conversation takes form in a question-answer format giving us a glimpse of understanding of the background of the mother and son duo. The conversation moves from culture, peer pressure, relationships, family dynamics, and growing up in a time without technology versus a time that is technologically advanced. Colonialism and the effects it has had on the naming and history of Black people is at the centre of the work and its conversation. The work importantly also engages the importance of culture in modern life. Weight and perspective are given from both sides as Nyamza and Mandla reach deep inside to impart their bare selves unto us, the audience, and draw strength from each other. Reviewing the title, there is ambiguity in its meaning; Positively, grounded can mean, stability, reliability, a moral compass and self-esteem. Negatively, grounded can mean, punishment, confinement, and segregation/apartness” (Jomba, 2022).⁶⁰ Watching Nyamza perform evokes so many feelings in me, feelings of longing, sadness, and questioning the colonial/racist history that we – South Africans – have been birthed from.

She does this first without saying a word: Nyamza places her body in performance as a tool and site of reconciliation and negotiation where her body becomes the means of speaking to, speaking through and speaking for different notions of identity, her sense of self, the social roles that have influenced her life (as parent, daughter, granddaughter and spouse) and mostly in seeking and finding healing with her son Mandla through seeking truth and understanding across a generational divide.

As the work begins, Nyamza stands on her toes, graceful, yet unsteady, she struggles to balance. Her movements are controlled, yet staggered – her heels, never touching the ground – a poetic juxtaposition. Mahali (2016, p. 1) in referring to Nyamza’s body of work offers the following that resonates strongly in *Grounded* “the image reads like a struggle between antithetical yet recognisable worlds: that of the westernised

⁶⁰ JOMBA! Features. 2022. Grounded - Mamela Nyamza. Available at: <https://jomba.ukzn.ac.za/jomba-2022-features/mamela-nyamza/> [accessed 16 November 2022]

ballerina and the archetypal rural Black African woman". This staggering almost unbalanced ballerina on her toes has me thinking of the divide I have witnessed within myself over the last few years. This divide or internal conflict between how I have been brought up, and how I now have to (un)learn and adjust to, what for me are new Afrocentric ideals, especially in how I view myself as a Black African woman. For me following Caldwell and Bennett Leighton (2018, p. 20) "This practice involves dissociating [...] from the expectations that Western, colonial, patriarchal society might have ingrained in us [Black people]". Nyamza's work offers interesting journeys into embodied territory as she refutes the colonial political discourse of what is considered cultured or not a cultured body, and the politics of the body through her movements. Nyamza in her performance does this through act of the act of the call of her ancestors, *ukuxhensa* (Xhosa dance), a barefoot ballerina who is rigid in some of her movements instead of graceful, and lastly when she kneels on stage. Creating intimacy with the ground revealing the hidden yet overt language, connection, and relationship our spirit and our bodies have with our ancestors. In the practice of African traditions/ African dance, the black body moves a certain way. When we dance, it is free, expressive, and rigorous. Our hips gyrate, we stomp our feet, and this in the Western gaze is not received as an art form (Hanna, 1973).

Grounded also speaks of the predicament in finding Black women's placement as oppressed, wounded, silenced and inhabiting marginalised bodies. Nyamza does this by sharing the difficulties/challenges she experienced a Black female growing up in South Africa, how her grandmother and mother were forced to live under an apartheid system. Having a name not of choosing nor one that she liked 'Miranda' as her grandmother and mother also had English names and the injustice she feels from her mother's death. The process of redefining the body, can be a difficult negotiation but one that is also necessary in order to return more authentic manifestations of the Black female self. By redefining what it means to be a Black women navigated pre and post-apartheid, the narratives we choose to have the body scribed with, in asking questions and peeling layers back. The body may be inscribed with internalised racism and an internalised "white gaze". White gaze in the context of this dissertation: The way in which whiteness has influence and or is control of how we think and operate within society or in relation to the male gaze. Yancy (2005, p. 58) explains by saying "the internalization of the white gaze creates a doubleness within the Black psyche, leading

to a destructive process of superfluous self-surveillance and self-interrogation". Imara Ajani Rolston (2016),⁶¹ further goes on to identify that "Black bodies continue to be bound and unbound by histories not yet resolved, by present day realities that have not escaped the past". To decolonise the body, for me, thus becomes a claiming back of self, of names, of learning forgotten or silenced histories and by honouring and loving our bodies in all their femaleness and Blackness. Nyamza, as a performer, makes me acknowledge the freedom and power our Black female bodies have as sites of resistance. She says she uses her body as a prop – a tool for reclaiming, redefining and telling her story (Nyamza, 2022)⁶².

'*Grounded*' really picks at the themes of identity, gender, blackness, culture and colonisation. It is in challenging colonial impositions by giving her son a name in *isiXhosa* to change the cycle of the perceived shame in not having an English name. The work thus becomes a proclamation of her pride in her culture and tradition as *umxhosa*. In acknowledging that she is because of her community and those who came before her, her ancestors, Nyamza Claims back parts of her that she had to deny. Nyamza also gives insight into how colonisation has framed, positioned and its effect on Black bodies and mostly Black African female bodies in the work, as she draws from the lived experience of her grandmother, mother and herself.

⁶¹ Online article: Rolston, I. A. 2016. *Black body to Black body: decolonizing Self and Liberating My Gaze*. Available from: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2016/04/04/black-body-to-black-body-decolonizing-self-and-liberating-my-gaze/> [accessed 11 May 2021]

⁶² Nyamza at the JOMBA! *Contemporary Dance Experience*. 2022. *choreographer Talk-back session*.

Image one⁶³Image Two⁶⁴

Mamela Nyamza "De-Apart-Hate" (2017)
 The photographs were taken by Val Adamson

Nyamza's 2017 performance, *De- Apart- Hate* is a duet consisting of Nyamza and Aphiwe Livi. It depicts, explicitly and exposes how Christianity, race, patriarchy, and sexism have been positioned on the Black female body in South Africa. The performance work illustrates how the oppressive political system, as per the title *De- Apart-Hate* (2017), has been inscribed on the Black African female body. Nyamza and Livi sit on a rainbow-coloured bench, reminiscent of the rainbow nation we have been sold to believe in. The bench is unsteady and hinged in the middle so that every shift of weight affects its stability, much like a seesaw conveying the struggle to find balance. I consider this a representation of tenuous and unbalanced freedom that hints at a context that still encounters oppression, classism, issues of race, and gender equality within the social, religious, political, and economic hierarchal structures. The seesaw is an evocative image that implies that challenge that Nyamza faces in finding a balanced sense of self in the midst of chaos and the heavy burden placed (perhaps) upon Black women to be deemed suitable, worthy and respectable in the eyes of a colonised society. At the same time, we (Black women) try to push the opposite

⁶³ Image one sourced: https://nationalartsfestival.co.za/news/mamela-nyamza-2018-featured-artist/attachment/mamela-nyamza-in-de-apart-hate-at-jomba-2017-pic-val-adamson_preview/ (These images are by VL Adamson) [accessed 16 September 2022]

⁶⁴ Image two sourced: https://nationalartsfestival.co.za/news/mamela-nyamza-2018-featured-artist/attachment/mamela-nyamza-in-de-apart-hate-at-jomba-2017-pic-val-adamson_preview/ [accessed 16 September 2022]

direction to assert ourselves to be seen and heard. We see this in the performance when Livi heavily sits on the right side of the bench, causing the bench to be unbalanced and the left side of the bench to have a seesaw effect and where Nyamza sits is elevated in the air. Nyamza then tries to weigh it down using her body to try and level the bench, however her efforts seem futile as Livi's heavier body does seem to budge. Nyamza's performance pulls from her personal lived experiences of being a Black, queer South African woman: "born during apartheid into a very patriarchal culture, which means that she continues to battle oppression on the grounds of her race, gender and sexual orientation" (Hutchison, 2018, p. 37). The conversations of the political, social and economic dynamics and it affects the Black female bodies are not hers alone. It is the story to which, as women and Black women, we may see ourselves being mirrored and relate at some parts and different points. The performance reflects the complexities inscribed on the Black female body in the South African context. As Nyamza kneels on fours and Livi stands boldly on Nyamza's back while she kneels, Livi loudly and constantly repeating Ephesians chapter six verse five that reads "Slaves, obey, your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ" (6 v 5, NIV⁶⁵). I draw from Nyamza's work the reminder that,

while the Black Church provides hope and guidance for many of today's maladies, in some cases it dispenses the illness, diagnosis, and prescription. That is, the Black Church sometimes mirrors the antiblack, sexist, classist, homophobic, transantagonistic violence experienced in the rest of the world. (Lomax, 2018, p. ix)

This is evident in Nyamza's work showcasing how religious structures can be oppressive, discriminatory, and sexist towards Black female bodies. It is observable when Livi takes on the role of praying for Nyamza to cast her 'demons' out so she may be pure because of her queerness. The forced church singing as you come into the theatre. To Nyamza, sitting legs wide apart, her dress pulled up and her placing the bible over her crotch as an act of defiance.

From Nyamza's work I take the courage to interrogate and peel back the layers of shame. To dismantle, question, speak and to not be afraid.

⁶⁵ New International Version NIV Bible, Book of Ephesians chapter six verse five.

NELISIWE XABA

Born and raised in Dube, Soweto Nelisiwe Xaba began her vibrant career in dance almost 20 years ago. In the early 1990s she received a scholarship to study at the Johannesburg Dance Foundation, as well as the Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance in London. Returning to South Africa in 1997, Xaba joined Pact Dance Company and later launched her solo career, and began working with a variety of esteemed choreographers, including Robyn Orlin. Since then Xaba has been involved in various multi-media projects, collaborating with visual artists, fashion designers, theatre and television directors, poets and musicians⁶⁶. Her body of work is politically driven and challenges stereotypes of the Black female body and cultural notions of gender mainstreams⁶⁷



Image one⁶⁸



image two⁶⁹



image three⁷⁰

Nelisiwe Xaba's "*They Look At Me And That's All They Think*" (2006)

The photographs were taken by Val Adamson

Xaba's 2006 *They Look At Me, And That's All they Think* presses on the issues discussed in Chapter Two, of how Black female bodies have been positioned as objects; hyper-sexualised, objectified and thought of as commodities. In her 2006 performance, Xaba walks on stage, wearing a white Victorian style crinoline petticoat hoop skirt, giving her a distinctive silhouette and extenuates her buttocks and widened her hips. This silhouette is distinctly the stereotype of Black women's bodies – wide hips and protruding buttocks – neither of which Xaba, a Black woman, possesses.

⁶⁶ Nelisiwe Xaba Biography sourced - Berliner Festspiele. 2016. Nelisiwe Xaba. Available at: https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/en/berliner-festspiele/programm/bfs-kuenstler/bfs_kuenstler_detail_177881.html [accessed 16/11/22]

⁶⁷ Nelisiwe Xaba Biohraphy sourced- ZAZ10TS. n.d. Nelisiwe Xaba. Available at: <https://www.zaz10ts.com/nelisiwe-xaba> [accessed 16/11/22]

⁶⁸ Image One sourced: <https://www.kaaitheater.be/fr/agenda/plasticization-they-look-at-me-and-thats-all-they-think> [accessed 16/11/22]

⁶⁹ Image two sourced: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/theplacefordance/6197278779> [accessed 16/11/22]

⁷⁰ Image three sourced: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/755367/pdf> [accessed 16/11/22]

Hips swaying side to side, a roll of meticulously folded bubble wrap, and on top of that a folding ladder balances on her head. Xaba (2015)⁷¹ says, “I’ve accepted the fact that I am [seen as] a queen of exoticism and the exotic,” she says: “[My body is] political. But what I’m interested in is the gaze and its angle. The angle that you view or gaze from is the point that it becomes political”. Xaba’s performance work conveys the oppressiveness of the(white/colonial) gaze and racial and gendered politics located on the Black female body. This is reflected in her title for her performance, “*They Look At Me, And That’s All They Think*”, and reinforcement of gender stereotypes. A Black female body being reduced to the assumptions and inscriptions of the colonial and male gaze (hooks, 1992), assumptions of the erotic object, labour, a commodity that has the piercing “imperial gaze – the look that seeks to dominate, subjugate, and colonize” (hooks, 1992, p. 7). Fanon (1952, p. 82), explains that the white gaze positions/inscribe the Black body into “an object in the midst of other objects”, a thing to be bid, used, sold, and replaced, a nameless accessory to look at. A degraded object and a target that is not treated as a human being.

Xaba’s performance references the story of Sarah (Saartjie) Baartman, who was taken from South Africa, enslaved and displayed in a “Human Zoo” in the 1800s. Sara Baartman, a Black African woman was forced to perform and exhibit her body between the year 1810-1815 in London (Piccadilly Circus) even after her death parts of her body were preserved and placed for display in the Paris *Musée de l’Homme*. Hobson (2018, p. 1) further explains that,

the Hottentot Venus came to symbolize both the presumed ugliness and heightened sexuality of the African race during her era...Baartman’s body had been exhibited in nineteenth-century freak shows to display her “large” buttocks, and it remained on display posthumously at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris until the late twentieth century.

Drawing from Saartjie Baartmans life, Xaba’s work *They Look at Me, and That’s All They Think* (2006) propels and calls for the reframing and re-conceptualising of the Black female body’s identity as a form of decolonisation. The multiple gazes that Xaba confronts can be classified as the male gaze and the white/colonial in placing her body in a performance that plays the ideas of how she is perceived as a Black South African

⁷¹ 2015 Online interview with Mail and Guardian written by Stefanie Jason: <https://mg.co.za/article/2015-03-03-nelisiwe-xaba-makes-her-moves-on-the-politics-of-exoticism/> (accessed 16 November 2022]

woman, erotic, hypersexualised, shamed and a body under constant scrutiny. A Black female body in exhibition and an object of sexual desire. The male gaze may also be inclusive of the attack on certain bodies to fit/suit the hegemonic Westernised beauty standards. I reflected on the earlier chapters of my childhood experience; my body was inscribed with sexualisation and objectified narratives. The gaze left me conflicted within my body. My experience on a small scale, in no form placed as a comparison to being an enslaved person in a 'human zoo', nor does it compare to the indignity that Sara Baartman experienced. I can only imagine this being at an accelerated and heightened experience for Baartman and how maybe, at times, loving her body as it was must have been a conflicting battle. Sexually trafficked, the pain and frustration of being in a foreign land and being made a spectacle of and exhibited inhumanly without choice. After death, she was mutilated, and parts of her body were placed in museums. All for being categorised as different and for being Black. The critique and historical representations of the Black female bodies where they are placed on display and ridiculed is still a prominent feature showcased in today's society through colonial and media gazes (for example Saartjie Baartman, Caster Semenya and Serena Williams, to name a few who have been discussed in this dissertation briefly). These Black female bodies have been racialised, their bodies considered masculine, they have been degraded, dehumanised and subject to public ridicule and scrutiny based on their appearance. The work of Nyamza (2017) and Xaba (2006) speaks on the socio-political narratives embedded in the South African Black female body. According to Lliane Loots (2009, p. 449),

The physical body is understood to be a text written by race, class and gender and such it is a very powerful tool for challenging social and political discourses around repression especially in the context of South Africa.

If the body is to be understood as a text as has been argued previously in this dissertation; it therefore can be used as a site for communication that can contradict common stereotypical narratives that Black female bodies are often subjected to. In my performance practice, I have utilised my body and own experience to challenge and explore the social and political discourses I have experienced as a Black South African female. I have listened to the voices of three critical friends who have also shared their own lived experiences and inscribed narratives of their bodies that come with the colonial and male gaze. This is discussed further in Chapter Four. Through these performances, the Black female South bodies speaks a transgressive language

that acts and enforces resistance to gender politics, patriarchy, culture, religion and the like.

CONCLUSION

Poet and radical Black feminist Audre Lorde (1984, p. 23) explains, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” which brings forth the importance of these discussions that interrogate the inscriptions that engulf Black female bodies and which the significance of the theories that aid me to dismantle the structures/readings that oppress and decolonise ourselves. The notions that “the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 1984, p. 23), also demonstrates the importance of the performance works of the four Black South African female artists mentioned and engaged in this chapter. To note that Black women do have something to say power, systems of oppression, the gaze, colonial imposition, and culture/tradition.

Looking at the performance works of the selected South African Black female bodies has offered me an opportunity to reflect some of the politics, nuances and the languages that Black South African female bodies carry (and have the potential to explore) through performance practice in our contemporary spaces. These four women’s work dance/performance has also illuminated for me how the Black female body can carry different, and at times shared narratives within the spectrum of shared experiences as Black female women artists who work in embodied ways to deliver their artistic product. This has included an engagement with body politics, hyper-sexualisation and reclaiming and redefining intersectional identities that surround Black female bodies. Most importantly the works allude to a dialogical conversation with and through the performing body, by allowing the body to speak and by questioning and exploring what is inscribed on the body and significantly, a will to shift narrow colonial, sexist narratives that still permeate Black female embodiments in our contemporary experiences. These Black South African women’s voices and bodies have equipped me with critical perspective on how to view and re-think my own Black female body in space, listen to it and mostly be authentic to the message it wants to relay. They have inspired me in guiding my practice to find the language to stage the complexity of my Black female body as a representation of shared Black female

experience, and to remain mindful of the gaze and my own internalised oppression. These short critical interactions into the work of Black South African female artists have aided me in serving my truth within my practice and encouraged me to be weary of superficial aesthetics that overly engage in the objectification and subjugation of Black female bodies.

I have found the performative strategies discussed above of vulnerability, honesty, strong African beliefs, and truth, to be deeply inspiring and challenging. These performances have pushed the boundaries of not allowing limiting stereotypical inscriptions or beliefs of Black bodies of as 'other', 'object', 'savage' (and so forth) to be embedded within the performances and practices of the aforementioned Black female artists. Melissa Harris-Perry (2011, p. 29) notes that,

When they confront race and gender stereotypes, black women are standing in a crooked room, and they have to figure out which way is up. Bombarded with warped images of their humanity, some black women tilt and bend themselves to fit the distortion.

The representation, humanity, dignity and truth poured into these four performances makers' works straightens the "crooked room" (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 29) by the very act of articulating and challenging them. The selected performances also offer alternate possibilities experiential and therefore individually authentic journeys and lived experiences of Black South African women. For me, these case studies have become the melting pot and a crucial part of my journey into practice and the power of knowing that there is a community of Black women storytellers who challenge the social, political and religious systems that continue to subjugate Black female bodies, even in the Twenty-First Century.

These four performance makers are advocating for the voices of the women who cannot and have not been heard. I have engaged Black female bodies liberating themselves through peeling of layers and interrogating the historical and social inscriptions embedded in their bodies. They offer guidance as to how we may tell our stories as Black women on our own terms, in our own voices and through our own experiences; and how to use our agency as Black female African bodies to reclaim and redefine ourselves through critical performance making and reflective practice. I expand on this in the following chapter, Chapter Four, where I reflect on the case studies and the theories underpinning this dissertation. In the next chapter, I offer

extensively discuss into my own the practice, process, data collection and the methodology used in the writing of the dissertation and my solo digital screen dance film in relation to my own screen dance work created as part of the research for this dissertation.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Practice, Process, Final Dance Film and Data Collection

INTRODUCTION

In this, the final chapter of my dissertation, I focus on, firstly, the methodical approach of how I have captured data using narrative autoethnographic practices. This then leads to an overview of the methodological strategies I have used for the dissertation and accompanying practice that has culminated in my own screen dance project which is at the heart of this research. It is at this point that I draw on a reflection of the case studies offered in my previous chapter as a point reference and stimulus for my screen dance project. The particular focus here is my performative readings of the case studies of the installation and performance works explored as part of my research in developing my own screen dance project I reflect on how all of the selected Black South African female artists discussed in Chapter Three have provided a foundation for the exploration of my own dance practice. Lastly, I link my own back to my own practice in order to reflect on how Black feminist thought and African feminisms which were discussed in the first two chapters of this dissertation have influenced my evolving practice, thinking and performance choices.

Finally, this chapter ends with a critical discussion of my dance film; what I have created and how I went about creating it. It will engage reflexive writing on the screen dance I have made, framing the creating and making process, and finally the recording of my creative component solo performance. I also reflect on the symbolism/s and images used for the dance film. My reflections on the written feedback reflections from three “critical friends”⁷² who joined me in the dance film project. Details of their involvement will unfold in the chapter below.

⁷² Critical friends: The use of critical friends during the practice component – or other audience/participant possibilities – is considered to address the issues around autoethnography relating potential to solipsism. In order to ensure that I have a research mirror to reflect my own praxis. I have invited into my process three Black South African women, who are my peers in terms of age, race, gender and context. This was done through a workshopped process of shared narratives of the three Black female voices.

METHODOLOGY PART 2: PERFORMANCE AS A SITE OF EMBODIED NEGOTIATION IN PRACTICE

This section discusses the overall methods used to explore the academic writing in the form of this dissertation alongside my practice-based engagements as they have evolved through this research process. These are presented under four subtopics, dissertation: autoethnography, practice-based research and, film- The Digital Screen Dance. The autoethnographic and practice-based research methods will be unpacked and extensively interrogated in this chapter.

DISSERTATION

The Methodology used in my dissertation is a qualitative research approach. Pritha Bhandari (2020)⁷³ suggests that “Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (text, videos or audios) to understand concepts, behaviours, opinions or experiences”. Generally, this approach allows me to investigate and get a broader perspective of the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015), which in my work remains the contested terrain of Black female bodies in performance – especially in South Africa. I use two research methodologies in qualitative, explorative paradigm: Autoethnography and Practice-Based Research

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

This research is an act/form of re-conceptualizing, (re)learning, and redefining Black female bodies throughout history and my own lived experience using autoethnography as a methodology (Spry 2001; Holman-Jones 2005; Humphreys, 2005; Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis 2013). I draw on varying autoethnographic approaches in the hopes of (re)discovering (and a further understanding of) my own embodied – and performing

⁷³ Bhandari, P. 2020. *What Is Qualitative Research? | Methods & Examples*. Available from: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/#:~:text=Qualitative%20research%20involves%20collecting%20and,generate%20new%20ideas%20for%20research> [accessed 17 March 2021]

– self as one of many transgressive Black female South African bodies. Bodies that hold and are inscribed with narratives that problematise and deny stereotypical racist and sexist inscriptions in lieu of more complex representations of Black female embodiments – and especially as this pertains to my screen dance performance-making project.

Autoethnography is form of inquiry that allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the research and the sharing of experiences not only by written texts but also their own lived bodily experience to allow the/my body to speak. Using autoethnography as a writing methodology and interweaving it through my performance practice makes working, creating and choreographing with my body a site for an interrogation of and engagement with “theories of the flesh” (Madison, 1993, p. 213). Thus my body, both in its invisibility and numerous possibilities, including the inscriptions it carries, becomes embodied theory – a site – where my bodily and lived experiences become a point of exploration/investigation and a source of knowledge. Following this it is then the researcher's truth as they have observed through lived experience that sits at the heart of the research project and its findings. This allows me to engage with personal experiences of being in the world while exploring my connections to socio-political meanings and understandings surrounding my Black female body, some of which have been engaged in the preceding chapters.

According to Anderson and Glass-coffin (2016), autoethnography is the reflection of our personal experience, and by that, not only shaped by the scholarly traditions but also with the life and career trajectories of individual scholars. Denzin (2003) maintains that autoethnography is constructed of debates around representation and the presentation of knowledge, also closely linked to identity politics and feminist praxis. I have used autoethnography as a primary method into my own exploratory and practice-based research output in the solo screen dance work titled ‘*INTO EMDAKA*’. The work focuses on reimagining the Black female body as a “site of possibilities” (Hartman, 1997, p. 51) that unveils its multiple identities focusing on where the invisibility in relation to systematic oppression and hyper-visibility in my body politics, dwells (Mowatt, French, and Malebranche, 2013).

Holman-Jones (2005, p. 22). defines autoethnography as “the use of personal experience to examine and or critique cultural experience”. In light of this, I have used my own, and my “critical friends” personal lived experiences of being Black women born and bred in South Africa through the lens of autoethnography to explore the narratives and complexities inscribed on the bodies of Black women in this context. The intent of autoethnography is to interrogate the nuances of experiences in light of the general phenomena and cultural practices, merging personal text, the embodied knowledge with scholarly writing (Holman-Jones, Adams and Ellis 2013). Boylorn (2008, p. 489) states that lived experience

speaks to the personal and unique perspective of researchers and how their experiences are shaped by subjective factors of their identity including race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, political associations, and other roles and characteristics that determine how people live their daily lives.

This dissertation is a written research investigation merged with a performance encounter/dance using the lens of autoethnography as a catalyst. To de-stigmatise the taboo undertones of western ideologies and Christianity branded on the Black body in what Spry (2001, p. 706) defines as “calling on the body as a site of scholarly awareness and corporeal literacy”. In using autoethnography to engage myself in the research there were factors that I had to consider, the first being why the choice of framing a creative project resulted as a digital screen performance. The conceptualisation of the performance was thought of pre-covid-19 and had initially been planned as a live theatre production. Due to the changing times and the Covid-19 pandemic, other considerations had to be made. The covid-19 restrictions and protocols had to be factored in and adhered to. I then had to look at other strategies to accommodate my autoethnographic study, this which resulted in the filming of the screen dance offering that my research is centered on. Another factor I had to consider in autoethnography is using critical friends during the practice component – or other audience/participant possibilities. Critical friends were considered to address the issues around the autoethnography relating potential to solipsism. In order to ensure that I have a research mirror to reflect my own praxis, I invited into my process three Black South African women, who are my peers in terms of age, race, gender and context. This was done through a workshopped process of collecting shared and differing narratives of other Black female voices and bodies. I employed the "Critical

Friends Protocol” (Costa and Kallick, 1993; Appleby, 1998; Constantino, 2010) in the workshopping of my screen dance performance. Further to this, as already indicated, another layer to this study includes four local performance-makers and a selection of their works. The performance-makers, including Buhlebezwe Siwani, Lhola Amira (also known as Khanyisile Bongwa), Mamela Nyamza and Nelisiwe, Xaba; all of whom I have engaged in Chapter Three inform my performance output for this research project. I have applied autoethnography in my research by creating a solo digitally recorded screen dance performance⁷⁴ and using my body as means to engage with myself. I do so in order to assess and reflect on the impact of the colonial impositions, the gaze and the effect it has had on me, as a Black female body in South Africa. To further use the personal experience to examine and or critique cultural, socio-political meanings and understandings (Holman-Jones, Adams and Ellis, 2013).

PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

This research employs both traditional research methods as well as applied ones such that this dissertation is one part of the research evidence – the other being my digital screen dance project that accompanies it. I have adopted a cognate practice-based research approach (Gilbert, and Tompkins 1996; Candy, 2006) as part of the research findings that will be brought forth as a recorded creative component. On the basis that the artefact (my dance film) presented is done as a contribution to the knowledge gathered and as an integral part of the research (Candy, 2006). Practice-based methodology “celebrates writing with its richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity” (Mason, 2002, p. 1) as it allows the researcher to draw from the world around us and permits the interweaving of everyday life experiences and understandings within the research. As a result, I was able to contribute to the knowledge by making a creative solo digital performance alongside the writing of my dissertation. Studying the possibilities of a transgressive Black female embodiment, using my body in performance aligns with autoethnographic practice as discussed in the section above and this has synergy with practice-based research as a method of

⁷⁴Screen dance performance: A combination of choreography and filmmaking, the final format of the performance work is presented in the form of a film and not a live performance.

investigation that I have used in developing this research project. Practice-based research and cognately autoethnography both enable embodied engagements with spirit – in other words – both methods enable an acknowledgement of ancestral spirit or *idlozi*. The practice obtained and inspired through the findings of this research should not be viewed or thought of as the end or the final product but the first component/instalment of my exploration of my Black female body as a “site of possibilities” (Hartman, 1997, p. 51). The practice will serve as a foundation/ point of departure to further my continued research and act as support in broadening my perspective in rethinking and framing Black female bodies in performance and within the spaces/ different narratives. Candy and Edmonds (2018, p. 63) state that:

A basic principle of practice-based research is that not only is practice embedded in the research process but research questions arise from the process of practice, the answers to which are directed toward enlightening and enhancing practice.

I have therefore used the personal lens of autoethnographic practice to explore my body related questions of how a Black female body may be understood as a site in a South African context and potentials towards redefining Black a female embodiments in contemporary performance practice. Siwani (2016, p. 20) argues that, “The body, in performance art, is the medium; it is a transformative instrument that compels one to face one’s own corporeality”, this too is true of dance practice and performance mediums. In creating my dance film as part of this research output, and using my body in performance and reflecting I do so with understanding that,

the artifact plays a vital part in the new understandings about practice that arise. In this sense, practice and research together operate in such a way as to generate new knowledge that can be shared and scrutinized. (Candy and Edmonds, 2018, p. 63)

My practical screen dance performance reveals personal experience and speaks to various political concerns me as a Black South African female and how the meanings of this are inscribed on my own body. In developing and conceptualising my screen dance performance, I have been guided by Johnson (1993, p. 600) who explains that to theorise the Black body, one must “turn to the [Black] body as the radix for interpreting racial experience”.

My creative component – my practice-based research – firstly involved the creation of a screen dance film (an artefact), and secondly, offers a largely descriptive account or a personal narrative as an artefact (screen dance film and the process of making, in this case, a solo recorded screen performance). The performance titled '*INTO EMDAKA*' – and the processes I followed in creating it are recorded and reflected upon here in writing, also with the inspiration and focus given from the case studies – as a form of linking the theory I have been engaging with my own performance and performance-making practice. In setting out to address the above research objectives, this research began in chapter one and two by using secondary resource materials (in the form of newspaper articles, journal articles, scholarly books and prior MA dissertation on related themes). This has already offered any linked writing and research on performances and performance methodologies within the ambit of South African contemporary dance and performance as it links to the above-articulated theoretical framework and literature review provided in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

I have accessed, with permission, archival performance footage of Buhlebezwe Siwani Siwani and Nelisiwe Xaba's performances discussed in Chapter Three. Alongside this I have watched live, the two works of Mamela Nyamza that are discussed in the same chapter and I have accessed via YouTube and the pre-recorded interview with Lhola Amira – all of which form a vital component of my research project. With the stimulus of these case studies, I have worked to create a solo screen dance project that accesses tools related to Conquergood's (1985) notion of dialogical performance discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation. According to Conquergood (1985, p. 9), "this performative stance struggles to bring together different voices, world views, systems, and beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another".

In the making of my own performance and screen dance and my own interrogation via practice-based research, I draw from the scholarly works related to practice-based research from Gilbert and Tompkins (1996); Candy (2006); Biggs and Karlsson (2010); Candy and Edmonds (2011); and Mark Fleishman (2012). A primary consideration in my own engagements is that "practice-based research is undertaken to gain new knowledge by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice" (Candy, 2006, p. 3). In this light, practice may be understood as "a creative and critical form of human

engagement that can be conceptualized as research” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 19). Using my body in performance and Practice-based research as a method of investigation aids me in understanding and discovering what my Black female body means/reads in different spaces and through movement in the “conflicting or connected ways in which my body can be read” (Gqola, 2017, p. 7). With my ongoing processes, experiences and learning in *Ubungoma*, this too allows me to self-examine the internalised “white/ colonial gaze” (Fanon, 1952; Yancy, 2005) as my exploration of self understands Black bodies “within the context of whiteness, a context replete with contradictions and mythopoetic constructions” (Yancy, 2005, p. xxx). The fear the judgement, the misconception and the demonising I have carried asks for both learning and (un)learning of my inscribed Black female body (Siwani (2016); Ngungi (1981); and Hund (2000).

The creative project, therefore, becomes a filmic depiction or a possible embodied translation of theories and influences engaged throughout this research process. Meaning that the inspiration from four case studies, conversations with critical friends about their lived experiences of their own Black female bodies, my body and my enquiries stemming from this dissertation research into ideas of resilient Black female performing bodies moulds the solo creative project which will be discussed in depth below.

I have created a visual dialogue, using images and sound to tell a story and make conversation through body language of how my Black female body has been situated in society and the inscriptions on it. In my practice, I consider my body a tool, instrument, and site of and for study in relation to my body’s relationship with the people and the environment around it and the socio-political discourses of race and gender that are inscribed on and through my Black female body.

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CREATIVE REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS⁷⁵ - EARLY TEACHINGS AND REMEMBERING

It is a hot Friday afternoon. I have just come back from school, and to my surprise to find my mother home early and guests in our house. It is my mother's older sister (aunt) and her husband (uncle). They will be staying the night as there is an event they are attending the next day, which makes for convenient travelling departing from our house as their home is in Zululand. My ten-year-old self greets and makes my way to the kitchen, where my mother prepares a meal for our guests. What happens in the next five minutes is something I never thought ever since nor thought it would be of any significance in my adult life, but here I am, finding myself remembering ... "Are you a girl, or are you a boy?" my uncle asks me. "A girl", I respond confidently... again he asks the question only to get the same response "I am a girl" ... He continues, "Then why are you wearing boy's clothes?"

I am wearing white shorts, a plain round-neck white t-shirt, and sneakers with socks. This was a standard school uniform for Physical Education (P.E.) classes. Looking at him confused and dead in the eyes (something I also never thought to be wrong), I responded, "These are not boy's clothes; they are my P.E clothes".

"Do you not know pants and shorts are only to be worn by males and not females? He turns to my mother and asks, "Nawe uyabavumela baqoke amabhulukwe? Uthini uSbari⁷⁶?" (You allow them to wear pants, what does your husband say about this)

My mother quickly interjects and answers, "My children have the freedom to do and wear what they want, Ubaba wabo akasho lutho" (my husband sees nothing wrong with it).

My Uncle's perspective and opinions were deeply rooted in the Christian religion, Deuteronomy 22 verse 5 "A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God". My Uncle believed that women should be covered at all times, wear maxi skirts, dresses, and tops that revealing nothing. No revealing of the shoulders, for this is considered sexual. Females should not wear pants as they are not males, and older

⁷⁵ Reflections: The reflections are a continuous feature of personal narratives/experiences are included in the dissertation as part of writing methodology using the lens of autoethnography (Spry 2001; Humphrey 2005; Chang 2008; Holman-Jones, Adams and Ellis 2013)

⁷⁶ A Zulu word referring to my father, loosely translated as brother in law or in-law

women should always have their heads covered in a scarf. His views on how women should dress and behave sit on the very problematic views of religion and culture as they are patriarchal. The incident became a topic at my house after they had left, and I remember my oldest sister's protest as to how we should never be made to feel uncomfortable in our house. Nor be made to succumb or asked to subscribe to how other people run their households or choose to raise their families. Growing up in my family meant being given the freedom allowed to climb trees and play with balls, marbles, cars and boys as much as dolls and tea sets. It meant I had the power to choose and wear whatever felt natural and comfortable for me around my parents.

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REFLECTIONS – GROWING PAINS

I have gone a majority of my life not placing my gender and race at the forefront of my thinking, wants and hopes. I was a body to self. A moving body, a creating body, a growing body and an ever-changing body. An intentional body.

Though community and surroundings play a crucial role in being guided, being conditioned, finding identity, and feeling safe. My personal experience in growing up as a Black and a woman in South Africa meant having to always stay on edge of what could happen when I turn the corner, on hyper-alert of/in my surroundings when talking on walks, running errands or going to the shops a constant flight or fight mode. A constant struggle to be seen on some days and to disappear on other days.

There is a certain shame that comes with being a Black girl, and this shame starts when we are very young. It is not shame that we seek but rather it is seems be placed upon us. I see this happening in the present time, through social media and conversations that happen with and around me. Where you do not see the similar shame being attached to girls of other races. This shame comes with getting wider hips, getting a fuller body and getting your period. This shame, around puberty is not racially specific... it is common across race groups, and culturally there are different markers - confusing ones that are both about celebration and shame simultaneously. These above-mentioned physical changes come with being told to "watch yourself",

“not sit a certain way”, to not talk to boys. If you talk to them then you are lustful, uthanda bafana,⁷⁷ and forward.

I came to a realisation as I got older in years and understanding, and those realisations really hurt me sengimdala.⁷⁸ I felt, as a young Black female child, there was a lot of shame that was attached to my body, shamed for my body sitting a certain way, getting wider or fuller hips, and developing breasts. I remember also, I think I was traumatised when at the age of nine, I received my first period because of the lecture that I got. It was not a ‘welcome to’ or an experience that settles you. It was awkward for me because one, as a child, you, are trying to understand your body and the information that, you are bombarded with, “stay away from boys, do not look at boys, do not talk to boys, do not play with boys, because if you’re do you going to get pregnant. You are now a grown woman”. Instead of a comforting understanding and being handled with care, there was slight shame placed to it. It took me a while to get comfortable with my period or my body changing in that way. As my body developed, I, remember being at a point where I was so uncomfortable with my own body as the stares and tones changed I was and sexualised as a child. I would overdress to ‘move’ eyes away. I would put on a looser-fitting top, baggier pants, long skirts, and maxi dresses because there was just this unsaid scrutiny that seemed to ask, “how dare you look like that!” Or, “how dare your body decide to mature”.

I was tomboyish in my teens, the friends that I had were mostly guys that I grew up with or shared through mutual friends. That affiliation, as platonic and innocent as it was, was treated with suspicion. I was labelled a wild promiscuous girl. On the hunt for unsuspecting victims to lure into my trap of poison.

In 2015 now much older in life and experiences, I remember meeting a girl I grew up with who, very briefly, was a close friend. A mutual friend whose birthday we had gathered for causally said, “you two were very close at some point then stopped; what happened?” her response was very honest and unfiltered. Her dad had suggested/advised that she not befriend me as I was into boys and I would in turn influence her into doing the same.

⁷⁷ Uthanda abafana: you love boys

⁷⁸ Sengimdala: when I was older

As a child, I did not realise what those comments meant until I was older and realised what it actually meant and how it made me feel. I was taken aback by the realisation that these insinuations came from mothers, neighbours, aunts... the community my community. Adults in my community, people that I trusted.

I only knew/had known that my family was supportive of who I was as a person. Whom I befriend and interacted with was not policed, as the same guy friend could come and knock at my house to check if I was there and available to 'play or chill' no questions

How they viewed me and how they viewed my body was not in relation to the innocence of a child. During these interactions, I was never seen as a child. I was seen as a loose woman with no morals or integrity. Realising this at first, I was not sure how to feel. It shook me, thinking about it now still boggles my mind.

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REFLECTIONS- YOU THINK YOU ARE BETTER!?

Whatever your experience, I'm guessing you can tell somewhere that your fighting back and your collusion have cost you. It's certainly cost me [...] to act like a sexist comment didn't bother me or to smile and look down and make myself small when getting hit on by a man on the street because it feels too dangerous not to. All these small, everyday interactions cost me by becoming a lump in my throat, a tensing of muscles, a shrinking into myself. Sometimes, it feels like I've left my body, as if it were suddenly no longer mine and I'm just floating above, observing" (Caldwell and Bennett Leighton, 2018, p. 27-28)

It's a sunny Saturday, and I have asked my partner to drop me off at Pinetown city central to purchase some things. If you know Market Durban city centre, it is somewhat similar, busy; one has to be vigilant walking and walk with purpose. Instead of waiting in the car, he offers to accompany me to look for the things I need.

Without realising within minutes of walking, I had gone into an auto mode which also may be said to be flight or fight mode. My whole demeanour has changed; I am walking at a really fast pace, my face is tight, and I have this permanent 'do not mess with me' face. I have been teased about this face a lot, even in my teenage years. I'm constantly told I look angry/mad, disgusted or about to go off, even when I'm peacefully quiet.

I hear my name being called; without stopping turn my head briefly and realise that I am being signalled to slow down. I stop; the stopping makes me agitated, which makes me angry. He asks why are you rushing? My response, without thinking, "why are you walking slowly? can you not see where we are?"

This space for my body raises a lot of arguments, fear and memories. So I have to walk with purpose and be aggressive in my stance. I do not want to appear weak or as someone who can be taken advantage of. I do not want to be stopped or engage in unwanted conversations.

He responds, "I am aware of where we are we are, but you are with me, and you are safe...you are safe. You get that, right?" This sends me in annoyance, followed by a slow realisation. I realise how I unknowingly fall into the habit of being aggressive, changing my body composition to ward off unwarranted attention and somewhat gain control of my environment. As a female, I have been catcalled and aggressively had my hand held to be stopped so I could share my number. I have been slut shamed and called horrible names for refusing an advance. I have, at different intervals, had a golf stick poked through my chest for refusing to respond to anything further than that hello and further threatened to be beaten with that golf stick. I have had a knife taken out to show me 'life' because I think I am smart and better than everyone. I have been slapped across my face for not engaging in unwanted conversations and therefore think I am special. I have had to change routes to and returning back from school for refusing male attention. I have had a beer poured on me for simply saying, "I do not want to talk to you."

I eventually had to fight school boys, older men and men, some of who were old enough to be my father and continued receiving numerous threats simply for being a female who did not want male attention. I kept to myself and stayed at home. Only ever leaving the house to go to the shops, school or church. Because dare I think I should not respond to anything further than a hello, and not be grateful for being complimented by being accepting of the advances, was war.

The face that I now permanently have comes with a smart mouth, a quick “uzongenzani?”⁷⁹ or zama⁸⁰. Without thinking about the repercussions of what could happen next. That face is a face of dealing with and surviving trauma, a face of protection. My body composition grounds itself, taking a hard stance, and being “masculine”, leaving no room for weakness.

My dad did not stay with us due to work reasons, and growing up in an all-female household, I quickly had to step up. My mother, never wanting me to be scared or feel I have to give in to fit in, would let it be known that she’s a bigger man. Should she hear that any man dared stop, or touched her child, she threatened to show her phallus. That no one feeds this mouth that they feel entitled to, so let it be known that if they think that they know a crazy person, they will see one on that given day.

Being in this space reminds me of all of that, and this is the realisation. The realisation of the impact spaces holds in our bodies without even realising.

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ACADEMIC REFLECTIONS

FILM- FRAMING THE DIGITAL SCREEN DANCE PROJECT

The name of film is titled ‘*INTO EMDAKA*’, loosely translated as something dirty/unclean. The title is a play on words and, perception, the viewer reads with their own understanding of what they see/deem/understand to be unclean. The film was filmed on the 1st and 2nd of August 2022 at the University of KwaZulu Natal Howard College Square space theatre, as well as on and around campus King George V statue and lastly at Paradise Valley Reserve in Pinetown.

The intent of the practice was to create a contemporary ‘dialogical performance’ (Conquergood, 1985, p. 9), to opens dialogue around addressing and challenging the

⁷⁹ Uzongenzani: what do you think you will do to me?

⁸⁰ Zama: try

stereotypical, racist and sexist discourses situated in relation to Black female bodies in South Africa. My intentions in doing so are primarily to offer a performance that reimagines the Black female body as a “site of possibilities” (Hartman, 1997, p. 51) and unveils the multiple intersectional identities (gender, race, class, religion) it holds beyond what has been imposed by the colonial/white gaze.

As Conquergood (1985, p. 9) states, “the aim of dialogical performances is to bring self and other together so that they can question, debate, and challenge one another. It is a kind of performance that resists conclusions; it is intensely committed to keeping the dialogue between performer and text open and ongoing”, and this has been my intention both in the process of this written research document and the creation of my screen dance solo as a research artefact. The practical project is choreographed, performed and recorded and directed by me; it is aimed to be an intimate conversation between the/my Black female body and the lens of the camera and sets out to engage/explore/express how/ my/the Black female body is seen, positioned, redefined and unveiled in its South African identities. The recording and all the material written during the process of making the solo have been saved as various appendixes which are attached and labelled following this final chapter of my dissertation.

A REFLECTION ON CASE STUDIES

My departure point reflecting on the case studies of Buhlebezwe Siwani, *uNgenzelaphants* (2014); Lhola Amira’s (also known as Khanyisile Mbongwa) work/conversational discourse in the form of a pre-recorded interview titled *LHOLA Amira – ‘here’s what you need to know about the artist who calls herself an ancestral presence* (2018); Mamela Nyamza’s *Grounded* (2022) and *De-Apart-Hate* (2017). Alongside Nelisiwe, Xaba’s *They Look At Me, And That’s All They Think* (2006) my first recognition is that these Black performance makers “redefine the terrain altogether” (Gqola, 2001, p. 11) within the context of this dissertation that the terrain is their Black female bodies in space and movement. The terrain also being their negotiations of their lived experiences that are central to the performances they present. They do this by being authentic and unapologetic in their chosen

engagements around Black bodies, histories, African spiritualities and the like. In having and trusting in their voices as Black African women, using their voice to share stories and, importantly to create dialogue around the black female body as a “site of possibilities” (Hartman, 1997, p. 51). Gqola (2001, p. 12 -13) identifies that as Black women, “we refuse to inhabit the world passively and reject the myriad of ways in which we are defined under white supremacist capitalist patriarchy”. This refusal becomes a form of resistance and challenge which opens up potential possibilities of Black female identities that transcend oppressive stereotypes that overwhelmingly frame these in contemporary life and discourse. The performances are a decolonial confrontation of both personal and political history. Through their performance works and presentations, the Black women artists challenge the inscriptions and meanings attached to being a Black female body, personally, politically and or culturally front. In doing so, these Black women artists also work dialogical, by making new meanings and potentials for reading Black female bodies. In the words of Dixon-Gottschild (2008, p. 5), I acknowledge that

The body is my medium, and I recognize that the body—the dancing body, the black dancing body—thinks, speaks, writes its signature across world history, whether we know it or not, whether we recognize it or not. There's a language of the body and a language of the word, and I simply do not intend to give the word the last word!

With the understanding/consideration of my body as a medium, having not been on stage at a professional level in almost ten years, I needed guidance that would articulate the thoughts/words I was expressing in the process of making my performance. I reflect on moments at the start of my rehearsal when I experienced difficulty accessing myself and my body to find the language for the movement performance that I wanted to create. The four case studies acted as great stepping stones in this light as they offered me different embodied articulations that inspired my own explorations around Black female bodies and my own sense of self relatedly. This impacted me positively in trying to find language within movement and space when filming my screen dance solo. I draw/drew from the various stories and the understanding that Black female bodies are complex and that they carry different experiences. Through the different experiences, I was offered the insight that there is not one/singular story. It made me assertive and decisive in the images I chose for my screen dance film. Throughout history, the Black female has been positioned by colonisation, systems of oppression, capitalism, the educational system, media,

socioeconomic factors and subconscious biases based on hair, speech, and physical appearance. Black female bodies have historically had little or no agency in how we are and have been perceived. In my screen dance film, I could position and represent myself, my own Black female body so as to be able to speak for myself in my own truth about of my own lived experiences as a Black woman in South Africa.

There is now constant repositioning, redefining and reclaiming of autonomy, that I witness through the above-mentioned case studies. These performance practitioners do this in how they carry themselves, their agency and in their experiences of being Black female bodies. By finding voice and being heard, in being seen, by and interrogating the inscription placed on their bodies. I have watched and connected with performances from Black South African female artists in the following ways.

1. Buhlebezwe Siwani's performance work, looking at the plucking of feathers from her body, made me think of a body in defiance and the act of resilience. It brought forth the conversation peeling of removal of the unpleasant. I used this as a frame of reference for my dance film. I found the symbolism profound and considered the abject body and the skin peeling. I had to consider the things I set to peel or strip away in my performance practice, such as shame, fear, sexualisation, misconceptions, stereotypical framing and discrimination, to name a few. I set out to say these are the wars that Black women are fighting, and these should not be things that we are accepting of. We pluck or shed our skin to reveal the wounds and inner turmoil that have caged us in silence. To revolt and change the inscribed narratives that plague our Black bodies, to reclaim the self and body. To seek new ways of how Black bodies should be presented and seen and not be covered nor clothed in false narratives.

It also felt an important decision to focus on Black female performance practitioners who are engaged with their ancestral spirituality as I journey through mine. It felt important as aided with structure and understanding of how to involve or speak of the complexity of my spiritual and ancestral Black female body. Buhlebezwe Siwani is a practising *sangoma*, I am still on this journey, so when I speak about the body being plural, a site of spirituality in this context of ancestral presence, I do not speak from a void. Though no two journeys are ever the same spiritually as spirituality, or

ubungoma is not a one size fits all equation – it is shaped by the preferences of one’s ancestors and family traditions. However, guided by other artists’ offerings, depth of knowledge and understandings, I have used these as a foundation for my own artistic explorations and processes. This has enabled me to reflect, on and question what this means for me as a Black female body, a performer, and a choreographer seeking to develop work that explores my own possibilities and in doing so the possibilities of Black bodies who have agency. Having these foundations and sources to draw on, compare to and contrast from has informed my practice performance by enlightening me of ways to express and capture the essence of my spirituality. For instance, in my screen dance performance I speak about how I struggled with accepting the part of me having an ancestral calling due to the early teachings I had been exposed to which I have discussed in relation to Ngugi’s (1981) notion of a “cultural bomb”, in Chapter One. I had also, until accepting *ubungoma*, walked my life’s journey thinking of myself and my body as a singular and individual entity. Since accepting *ubungoma* I am learning that I am not alone, I walk with multitudes who came before me. Those who guide, who intercede and show me light. *oGogo no Mkhulu*⁸¹, *Okhokho nobabemkhulu*⁸². Those I know and call by name *oMkhize, Mbanjwa, oDludla, Mzindle no Mbili*⁸³ and those I do not know by name. I feared being possessed by the devil and demons. I was taught that this was evil, uncouth, sorcery, witchcraft, not of God INTO EMDAKA⁸⁴, the South African witchcraft suppression act of 1957 supported this.

2. Lhola Amira’s interview invoked in me the importance of being rooted and knowing our history as Black people and being unapologetically Black. In my screen dance film I created a scene with an effort to capture this, I spoke about how Black women historically have been positioned and disadvantaged by class and socio-economic status. The so-called unskilled labour that many Black women undertake, work that may have left them looked-down and frowned upon but has fruitfully carried families, fed bloodlines, secured futures through their hard work. The images for this scene were based on the women who raised me: my mother, my neighbour,

⁸¹ Ogogo nomkhulu: Grandmother and grandfather

⁸² oKhokho noBabeMkhulu within the context of this dissertation: ancestors

⁸³ oMkhize, Mbanjwa, oDludla, Mzindle no Mbili: Lineage surnames

⁸⁴ Into Emdaka: Something that is dirty

my great-grandmother. The women in my community who created magic with the little that they had; I felt it imperative that I remember who they are, and where I have come from as part of addressing my colonial wounds, to be able to bear witness to what it looks and feels like for Black female bodies and Black bodies in South Africa to honour and remember our ancestors and those who have come before. This to celebrate their strength and resilience in the face of adversity. Also drawing from Mamela Nyamza's work the importance of our names, and the names of those whom we come from. In my screen dance film there is a scene that I reflect on my names and those of my forefather I am called by.

*Ngingu, uMzindle, KaMbanwa
uSokhela,
Nyon'emyama, Eyabizwa ngekhwela yasabela yathi tshiyo,
Gqabela KaVezi,
Wena ozalisa abafazi baliwe amadoda abo,
Mzukuzeli,
ulwandle aluwelwa luwelwa zinkonjane ezindizela phezulu,
Khathini, Mpazela,
Sisho wena nkanyezi yeZulu,
Samelihle, wena owaphekwa netshe kwavuthwa lona kuqala
Macnishana kancane,
Mzekwa, Galaza,
Magujwa, Dindela!⁸⁵*

3. This was done as a form of acceptance, acknowledgement, and cementing of my identity, culture my heritage. Nyamza's performance also speaks of being grounded and knowing God or being in communion with spirit, our ancestors. Having to (un)learn that those whom I come from though now having departed the earthly plane are not ruthless demons who came to plunder and ruin. Nyamza's performances engaged as part of this dissertation have made me stop and think of how growing up religious or rather in a Christian household came with a form of violent indoctrination. This has impacted me as I have experienced gender

⁸⁵ Izithakhazelo: This portion of writing in italics consist of my clan names

oppression rooted in Christianity As a result was encouraged into silence and submission, told not to speak for myself, as women are to be submissive. My body has been depicted as lustful, sinful and dirty as discussed in Chapter Two. Religion should be interrogated, such as some cultural aspects that degrade and dehumanise women as it can also be sexist and classist. When I think about what I grew up viewing the world through Christianity and the Black church, I feel like I was walking partially blind or rather with blinkers on. I am learning that God is at the centre of it all. That *amadlozi* intercede for us to God and these are not opposing ends. For me, I believe that Amira's and Nyamza's work asks that as Black women we are accepting of self within the spaces and world we are navigating. To tap into the greatest source within with the understanding that God and our ancestors are not on opposite ends of each other. They ignited a fire in me and through their performances enabling me to both articulate and challenge as well as reinvent the multiple and possible identities and inscriptions that Black female bodies carry.

4. Xaba's performance explores the discourse of to the framing of Black women as Jezebels and the harmful stereotypical views inscribed on the Black female body and being a marked body. Marked by race, gender, socio-economic politics, shame, by otherness, eroticism. These markings have claimed Black female bodies as subhuman, primitive and savage. Through my engagement with the works and performance practitioners discussed in the previous chapter, I have been able to positively place my Black female body in space while extracting meaning through movement. In Chapter One, I have discussed the shame that comes with being Black and living in a female body. For my dance film I inserted a scene where I am in the dark theatre and there numerous words projected onto my body. These depict common stereotypical invisible/visible inscriptions that shape my embodiment as Black and female. This scene is set to question and interrogate the impact of "the gaze" (Yancy, 2005, 2007) on my own perception of self. I state that when we are born we are given names and called by them, however when I am catcalled, dehumanised or discriminated against I am not called by given names instead, I'm inscribed by histories of oppression that continue to subjugate my Black female body.

Xaba's performance work made consider in my screen dance film, bodies that have been stripped of power and voice, thus rendering them invisible. Black Bodies that are forcefully taken, disposable bodies and slave bodies, all of these labels are associated with Black female bodies – and this is evident in Xaba's exploration in *They Look At Me, And That's All They Think* (2011) Xaba's performance made consider how to frame or position my body in a positive light which meant constantly being aware, directing and considering the gaze in how my body was being captured by the camera and positioned on site.

Choosing the above-mentioned artists was a deliberate and conscience decision for the reasons mentioned above and in Chapter Three. As these performance practitioners are intentional and deliberate about their Blackness, their stories, bodies, and histories and this is projected in and through the work they produce.

REFLECTION ON THE THEORIES

On reflecting on the theories, I would first like to acknowledge following Mdluli (2019, p. 187) that,

The theorists referenced in this discussion offer useful tools with which to understand the evolving question of what it means to be a black subject and, particularly, what it means to be a black subject who is also a woman.

Black feminist thought and African feminisms have guided this research, and my understandings of how issues of Blackness, womanhood, and my Black female African body are regarded within different spaces/site/locations. These discourses have given me the language and lens to make the connections to discuss and explore the positioning of Black female bodies in their oppression and struggles. I have, in turn, looked at four Black female South African performance artists, conversed with three critical friends and explored my body in a solo screen dance film. My intention has been to investigate how the “assumed impurity and being out of control is linked to the fear of thinking about [Black] women's bodies” (Gqola, 2017, p. 10). In my performance practice, I have considered the importance of speaking about our struggles, issues,

injustices and triumphs as Black women, women in Africa, and for me, a Black woman in South Africa. Audre Lorde (2000, p. 326) writes,

We were never meant to survive...So it is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive.

I have found feminist theories (Black feminist thought and African feminisms) useful in advocating and championing for change in terms of how Black female bodies are and can be perceived. I reflected on this while creating my screen dance film and incorporated some moments that capture this ideal as an act of interweaving theory into practice. For example, the peeling of the skin, advocating for newness and change and the confrontation and cleansing of the King George V statue on University of KwaZulu-Natal's Howard College Campus. I further discuss the confrontation of King George V below in this chapter and lastly I include other voices of Black South African women to share and speak their truth to use their voices in breaking the silence by telling our stories. In redefining our narratives and in claiming our autonomy, feminism gifts us as women with the tools to do so. It offers a frame from which denounce and challenge sexism, patriarchy, dehumanisation, racism and the white gaze (Yancy 2005, 2017). To be vocal about the concerns that affect us as women and more especially as Black women within a society that may be/have been silent or has silenced us about our choices and agency. According to bell hooks (2015, p. 14),

Daring women to speak out, to tell our stories has been one of the central life transforming aspects of feminist movement. Confronting the fear of speaking out and, with courage, speaking truth to power continues to be a vital agenda of all females.

Hooks (2015, p. 13) further asserts that,

Feminist commitment to breaking silences inspired individual black females writing theory to create work that would connect us to those black women who either did not know about feminism or were hostile to the movement, seeing it as being for white girls only.

It is within the writing of hooks and similar Black feminist scholars that I too, have found depth and understanding as to what feminism is. In my younger years, without full understanding, I avoided the stance of feminist discourse due to not wanting to be perceived as another angry Black woman and for seeing it as being only for white women. This was said and thought in ignorance and without understanding. I am indebted to the women who have collectively kept the conversation and fire burning.

bell hooks (2015, p. 15) in her writing offering titled *Talking Back, Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* identifies that, “finding our voice and using it, especially in acts of critical rebellion and resistance, pushing past fear, continues to be one of the most powerful ways feminist thinking and practice changes life”. Through my practice and in this research, the theories have been impactful in my investigations of the tensions around Black female bodies in South Africa, as shown in my screen dance film. I showcase how the colonial impositions; societal and systematic oppressions have been inscribed onto Black female bodies. In this I seem to be finding my voice as I question, challenge and push past my fears and begin to speak from my Black female body. I believe that the underpinning theories chosen for this of this dissertation embodies this statement and does bring a certain change in how we may (re)view ourselves as women, and as Black African women in our daily lives and within the public and private spaces we occupy. Women writers and performers who have been committed to the cause of demystifying, cultivating and unveiling what feminism is, and the importance of the feminist stance in our lives, more so as Black African women. To hear, and see women like me educate, fight for, reflect, and honour my lived experiences as a Black woman and voice. As feminists, and as Black women, speaking, therefore, becomes a necessary tool of resistance and expression.

REFLECTING ON MY OWN DIGITAL SCREEN DANCE FILM- INTO EMDAKA

VIEW THE FILM HERE: https://youtu.be/45vJHriH_Yo

For my own screen dance offering, I considered, following Hartman (1997, p. 51), that my body is a site “of possibilities” and set out to capture the interactions that inscriptions contained in each different place/location chosen for the creation of my screen dance, has with my body. For example, the inscriptions my body may have within the church will be different from how I am perceived and received in an academic environment. What I did in my performance was to capture the different ways in which the different spaces I chose for performance speak to my body and vice versa. For my screen dance work, I considered my body in relation to the following categories: A Traditional/Cultural body and labour/domesticated body

A Traditional/Cultural body — The aim was to capture my Black female body in relation to various cultural and traditional norms that I follow. In doing so, I was interested in how my Black female body reads within traditional confines of being a woman *owuMzulu*, and the cultural beliefs of African spirituality and *ubungoma* that I interact with. My screen dance film, in this light, begins to interrogate my own sense of who I am through the lens of my traditional and cultural practices. To capture *ukuziqhenya* (self-affirming), knowing and embracing self, culture and identity in exploring the narratives that the body carries and locate how Black female bodies have been framed or positioned through the lens western ideals, which had shunned and thought of Black Bodies to be savage, primitive and demonic.

The second framing that I set up for exploration in my screen dance film is that of a domesticated body. The intention here is to capture how women's bodies are policed by patriarchal views, and this is experienced through society, church, religion.

PROCESS –

1. WHERE DID I BEGIN?

The process started with creating a production schedule which is included here as Appendix D. This was to aid me in the planning of the overall production. It helped in the logistical planning of my screen dance research component for this dissertation. It also enabled me to keep track of which props and costumes needed to be acquired and to secure the shoot/performance dates. The process started with acquiring a venue/rehearsal space to creatively explore, engage and rehearse. I obtained and utilised the Square Space Theatre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal with permission as a rehearsal venue.

The rehearsal process started on the 4th of July for four weeks ending on the 31st of July 2022. The rehearsal time was set for three hours each day, from 8:30 am to 11:30 am, Mondays to Fridays. I created a movement performance from the dance rehearsals, that is the basis of my movement language in my screen dance film. In this process I invoked Minnie Bruce Patt (cited in Holman-Jones, 2005, p. 763) who argues that “we cannot move theory into action unless we can find it in the eccentric and

wandering ways of our daily life...[stories] give theory flesh and breath". Within this understanding, I have drawn from my lived experience and the identities that I hold and have used these as the basis for the movement language I have used in this screen dance work. I reflect, through voice and body, on my identity as a Black woman growing up in South Africa through my intersecting. I explore the internal conflict caused by growing up in a Christian household and now having a spiritual calling that is in opposition to what I have learned in following the Christian faith. I reflect on the politics of the white/colonial and patriarchal gaze on my body, and how these inscriptions are imposed. It also felt important that this process of finding language through my body was not too cerebral. I had to access and trust that my body would reveal her language and its possibilities through my working processes. Working in the rehearsal venue made my body familiar with the space, stage setting, and props required. It also assisted me with being able to choreograph the dance movement and each scene accordingly.

During the rehearsal process, I developed a movement piece that was filmed in the square space theatre. In it, I explore the interplay between my traditional / cultural and labour/domesticated self. The movement piece looks at being stuck between both worlds, trying to find some way to reconcile the/my cultural body with my religious one; it depicts my internal struggle with the teachings I had learned in the church and the new understanding and acceptance of my spiritual calling.

Throughout the process, I kept video journals, as I would self-record myself using a mobile device and a tripod, these were kept to trace my thoughts and reflections and review my developing movement language for the screen dance film. My choice of the Square Space Theatre was due to wanting a closed interior location to create intimacy. It was also pulling from the concept of the church being interior and Umsamo being indoors at home, a level field where I could be within the two worlds and the worlds could interact and merge.

I wanted to frame my body within different spaces/locations to extract some of the narratives it may hold within that particular venue. I decided to have some scenes filmed as site-specific work. I went location scouting, looking for venues that would allow me the freedom to film without permits and or have heavy foot traffic.

The next step was to find a director of photography (camera person), Naomi Gumede, who was assisting in filming the performance and an editor to consolidate and arrange the video visuals and audio. As I would be the one performing, I needed a camera operator to take recordings under my guidance. I already had my own equipment to be utilised, such as a camera, reflectors, lights and the necessities needed. I sourced from online images to create a mood board to forward to Gumede, so she was aware of the type of images we would be working with on the filming days and how they would be structured per scene. I also forwarded to her via, WhatsApp, recordings of the dance performance that I was doing in the theatre as she was not in rehearsal with me, so she was aware of what the performance looked like to be able to plan camera shots in advance.

The next step was to acquire the costumes and props needed for the filming and performance as my body was to be framed within different locations/spaces and parts site-specific to extract some of the inscribed narratives that my body holds within that particular venue/s. I needed the wardrobe and props to match each scene. Such as for the river scene, costume for traditional Zulu maiden attire, beads and a calabash to collect water in, or props such as *izinkun*⁸⁶ to carry on my head. Part of the performance that was filmed in the theatre, some of the props and sets I used were already available in the square space theatre. For example, for the set, the white wooden frames, the grass mat, the white bench, the drums and for props, the stereo, to name a few, were readily available. I then had to purchase props used in the different scenes in the film, such as the grass broom, calabash, big enamel round bowl, glue, fake blood, milk and so forth. Similarly, as the costume, some of the props used in the film, some were already available, and some needed to be purchased.

MUSIC AND VOICE OVERS

The music aspect of the dance film needed to not only fit into the process but also set the tone and speak to the experience of the film. The choice/selection of songs was not an easy selection as I had to be cognizant of music copyright laws. As a student, I did not have the funds or sponsor/s to pay for the song copyright usage. I wrote an

⁸⁶ izinkuni a bundle of firewood sticks

email to performance artist Sibusile Xaba to request permission to use his song *Nomaphupho* from his 2017 Album titled “Open Letter to Adonia” in my performance. Xaba kindly and graciously agreed to let me use the song for my screen dance film, as it has been uploaded online. I also reached out to a friend, Mojalefa ‘Mjakes’ Thebe, a music producer, to enquire if he could assist with a maskandi track and sent him a couple of original songs I had sourced online that had the feeling that I wanted. Though I had asked last minute, He was able to produce for me the most beautiful maskandi rendition. Lastly, I was able to acquire the audio of live drumming through an old varsity friend Mthandazo Mofokeng who assisted me by recording the drumming himself and forwarded it to me. I made the decision to include the voiceovers of Black South African women whom I had discussions with, who played the role of being my critical friends in the process of creating this work. I felt it imperative to add the testimonies of other Black South African female women, so I am not only speaking from a singular place.

FILMING DAYS, TEAM AND FILMING LOCATIONS

The filming took place on the 1st and 2nd of August 2022. The first day was at Pinetown’s, Paradise Valley, and the second was at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Howard College. Before filming days, I had gone to the venues and pre-selected spaces for the needed scenes. While filming, we still had to adhere to safety Covid-19 protocols by testing for covid-19 before filming, ensuring all team members were vaccinated, wearing masks when necessary and having sanitisers readily available. I had a team of three people with me; Naomi Gumede captured footage as the director of photography. Siyanda Mbanjwa to assist with carrying equipment, setting up equipment and holding reflectors and Muzi Mchunu, who was our motorist for the filming days and the purchasing of the props and wardrobe. I sent the team call sheets to prepare for the day/s of the filming ahead of time and make them aware of the schedule that was set for the two days

WORKING WITH AN EDITOR

After filming, the editing commenced and was done by Gumede who was also my Director of Photography. I wrote two scripts for the editing process as Gumede and I were not going to be within the location for the editing process due to conflicting schedules. The scripts I wrote had to be very detailed and easy to read, as the editor

and I were not going to sit together through the editing process. The first script was a word document with a visual arrangement script (mood board per scene), and the second script was an excel spreadsheet audio arrangement spreadsheet. The first visual script has direction for visual the meaning-making of the film arranged by shot, scene sequence from first to last. The audio script had the layout arrangement of how the song or voiceovers would be situated depending on the scene. Gumede and I worked with a 90/10 editing/ director relationship, with the editor having 10% intervention and I as director retaining 90% of the decision making capacity. I choose the visual and audio sequences in terms of what goes where with which the corresponding voiceover. I also selected which voiceover would be used for which scene for the project. Gumede as editor was given intervention rights as they were certain parts or elements that I was not sure would work together or clash in editing. These would be highlighted in red or made a note in the scripts. Gumede would then make what she thought would be the best decision in that particular scenario under the guideline given to her. I emailed Gumede all the songs, voiceover and any slight changes.

The process of working with an editor was stressful, challenging and strangely too, seamless. Challenging due to not being in the same vicinity and seeing edits as they were being done, seamless as Gumede understood what I wanted and was patient and kind. Gumede and I communicated through emails and WhatsApp if there was uncertainty about something or if something needed clarification. On the 24th of August, 2022, Gumede sent a first draft of the entire final film. This copy was shared with my supervisor for extra notes and feedback. The feedback received for the edits from Dr Loots as the major note to be mindful of is the false ending that was occurring at 20min23sec of the video that goes from the video projection wearing white scene to where I am wearing black with the blood on my body scene.

SCREENSHOT IMAGES FROM SCREEN DANCE PERFORMANCE

INTO EMDAKA



Video projection

false ending

Wearing black scene

Dr Loots suggested doing a crossfade of the scenes rather than a snap edit, as there was too much time between the edits that it read as a false ending. The major changes I suggested at this point were the tweaking and changing of the drumming, a slight reshuffle of the order of scenes and some voiceovers. The proposed changes were sent to Gumede as a new 'video edit changes' script on the 26th of August, 2022.

SOME OF THE CHOOSSEN IMAGES EXPLAINED

PROJECTED IMAGES/ SYMBOLISM

I choose to use projected images or words on the body to depict the inscriptions and narrative that the body has been labelled with and also try to imagine what they would look like to the visible eye making the body a surface of inscription. Part of my learning and lived experience as a Black Female body is acknowledging that the body carries myriad and diverse inscriptions. It becomes a site of projections; people call/name or place assumptions about whom you are transferring their beliefs/projecting on you. I have interpreted this in my work by creating a scene where the body is covered with different words in a dark room, moving in the shadows. I draw here from Jordan-Zachery's (2017, p. 4) discussion of "shadow bodies" – where they explain:

shadow bodies does not suggest that they are completely absent, but exist in a space in-between—a space of both proximity and separation. Some Black women are rendered shadows of other members in the Black community as they are often vaguely represented.

To explore and expose “the representation of the Black female body and the institutional and structural ways in which it remains a site of oppression, pain, trauma, violence and suffering” (Mdluli, 2019, p. 171). This relates to my work as Black female South African bodies have been riddled with inscriptions, as shared in my reflection/s in Chapters One and Two. I see this as an opportunity to further open and continue the discussion that advocates for the rights and the voices of Black women in South Africa.

BLOOD SCENE/S

In the screen dance performance, I used blood, and *imbovu*⁸⁷ smeared and/or sprinkled on me as a symbol for blood and the loss of life we have experienced as a country. I felt it important to speak on realities we experience daily, received by the news, social networks or neighbours caused by gender-based violence.

Between July and September 2021, 897 women were murdered in South Africa. For the same period this year, that number increased to 989, an increase of 10.3%. Additionally [...] more than 1,200 women were victims of attempted murder between July and September 2022. Attempted murder of women went up from 1,155 to 1,277 – an increase of 10.6%. Alarming, 13,701 women were victims of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm between July and September 2022, an increase of 1,877 incidents from the same period in 2021. This marks an increase of 15.9%. (O'Regan, 2022)⁸⁸

South Africa has one of the highest rates of Gender-Based Violence in the world. Statistics released under Covid-19 lockdown revealed an increase in these statistics. In my dance performance I wanted to capture this terror I created a scene where I have blood sprinkling over my body I wanted to try and capture a feeling of being ‘showered’ with blood. The idea behind this scene/s was also to consider the idea of a ritual. I say ritual in the sense that the alarming rise in violence against women and children has almost turned into a (South African) ritual

We hear stories We hear stories (for example, Karabo Mokoena, Uyinene Mrwetyana, Tshegofatso Pule, Nosiselo Mtebeni, Namhla Mtwana, and those that I have met and

⁸⁷ Imbomvu: red clay

⁸⁸ 2022 Stats received from Daily Maverick, article written by Victoria O'Regan. Available online: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-11-23-unacceptable-spike-in-gender-based-violence-and-femicide-as-lawlessness-continues-to-grip-south-africa/> (Accessed 26 November 2022)

known in person Popi Qwabe and Bongeka Phungula)⁸⁹, the receiving of the news of the deaths of the women, as mentioned above, shared through traditional and social media, caused devastation, frustration, and anger in communities and the country. As mothers, grandmothers, sisters and women, we are scared, but we are also outraged.

I remember, in May 2017, seeing a social media status post of a photograph of a woman's body found, laying head and body facing the ground. A photograph of a woman wearing a solid camo green colour jacket, dark blue jeans and hair covering her face was circulating on social media. The author of the post was asking for friends or family members who have persons missing to come to identify the body of the female shot dead and found at the dumping site in the Tladi informal settlement and who had been taken to the mortuary. I never thought that would be someone I was familiar with or had known, unfortunately I was wrong, this photograph was of an old varsity friend Bongeka Phungula. This relates to my work as it offers a broader perspective on bodies stripped of power and voice. Bodies that are violated, forcefully taken and dehumanized. It speaks to the trauma and the inscription that women (and particularly Black women) are disposable – and can be dumped like trash.

SKIN SHEDDING SCENE

I created the shedding of skin as a representation of letting go of the old, a renewal and acceptance of change. This change can be in the form of teachings, Ideologies, fear, and experiences. The process of (un)learning or letting go is always a challenging one. It is painful, uncomfortable and beautiful at the same time. It speaks about the renewal of self and ushering of new learning and understandings. The skin peeling represents and symbolizes unchaining and freeing the self from the internalised colonial imposition, redefining and reclaiming my body and the narratives it will hold and choose to carry going forward.

WATER SYMBOLISM SCENE

⁸⁹⁸⁹ These are some of the Black South African women whose life was ended shortly due to the grotesque act of gender based violence. The death of these women was shared through traditional and social media

Spiritually water through the lens of *Ubungoma* and *isintu*, it is a space where Black bodies go to connect with their ancestors through *ukuphahla*⁹⁰ and prayer. Water represents healing and renewal; it is a space where Black bodies cleanse unwanted energies or wash off evil luck/spirits. It is a place of connection, an ancestral space where we are offered change, spiritually elevate our gifts and give thanks. In the film, I use water in three ways; the first is as nature's source of life that we are gifted with in the scene and part of our daily routine to drink, bath, cook and so forth. In Act two scene, 4 I collect water from the river using a calabash representing heritage and traditions, and also, the day-to-day necessity of water. Secondly, water is a place to connect with my ancestors to commune, ask for guidance and give thanks as can be seen in Act 2 scene 5 where I *ukuphahla* by the river. Lastly, as a powerful tool for the renewal and cleansing of space in the confrontation and purification of the King George V statue at Howard College.

KING GEORGE V STATUE SCENE

As a Black South African student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the King George V statue, that commemorates King George V, "ruler of the empire that colonized South Africa" (The daily Vox⁹¹, 2015), is not a symbol of hope or justice for me. It is a symbol of colonial imperialist racism, and evidence of the violence placed on my ancestors and, by inscription, my Black body. The educational system in South Africa has long been challenged with movements like *Fees Must Fall* which called for free decolonial education in 2015 and 2016. As Black South Africans, we have suffered and fought for social justice and the right to equal education for decades and are now in the midst of challenging history in decolonizing our educational system. My parents, in the land their land of birth (South Africa), have never known or experienced quality education neither attained a matric certificate. It is as if being in a colonized country, robbed, stripped naked of the Black pride and turned into slaves was not enough historical Bantu Education has impacted generations of Black people. Bantu Education effectively stopped Black South Africans from receiving an education that would lead

⁹⁰Ukuphahla: communicating ancestral Spirits/guides

⁹¹ The Daliy Vox: An online South African Media Blog: <https://www.thedailyvox.co.za/statue-of-king-george-v-is-part-of-our-history-say-ukzn-students/>

them to aspire to positions that they would be allowed to hold in society. Instead, they were to receive an education designed to provide the necessary skills to serve their own people or manual labour jobs under white control.

The apartheid regime, through the introduction of the Bantu Education system, “aimed to annihilate people’s belief in their names, language, environment, and heritage of struggle and make them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves” (Ngugi, 1981, p. 3). Ngugi (1981, p.16) here acknowledges that “the most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control, through the culture of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world”.

King George V being one of the founders founding fathers of imperialist colonial governance in South Africa, to this day erected high at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Howard College, sends a negative message to me as a Black student. King George V’s statue stands as a symbol of dreams and rights denied. It is a reminder of the injustice of or past and recent histories in South Africa. The preservation of such monuments holds differing views to those within me and that of my Black female body. In the words of Mary-Francis Winters, “we are exhausted from dealing with racism and violence against Black people [and we are exhausted by symbols] of racism such as confederate flags and other historical monuments” (Winter, 2020, p. xii).

This discussion is not mine alone it is spearheaded and ignited by

Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) and Fees Must Fall (FMF) movements of 2015 and 2016. Both movements were driven by student-led protest actions that took place across South African universities, calling not only for the fall of colonial symbols, such as the Cecil John Rhodes statue on the University of Cape Town (UCT) campus, but, more broadly, for free, quality, decolonized education (Mdluli, 2019, p. 169)

The confrontation or cleansing of space of defaced King George V statue is an act of defiance, reclaiming and challenging colonialism. A call to dismantle these structures and reminders as they hold opposing values. A cleansing is needed for this body, an (un)learning and a removal of the old, for these grounds we walk on, for the history that denied us our humanity. For the buildings that were not designed to accommodate our Black bodies.

2. WHAT DID I WANT TO ACHIEVE?

What I wanted to achieve with the screen dance film was to capture the intersectional identities of my Black female body through the lens of autoethnography in my performance practice. The performance project informs the written research and the above-stated engagement with other black South African Female dance/performance artists. The performance is an investigation of how to think of ways to re-conceptualise and reframe Black female bodies in space and through performance. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding and new possibilities about Black female South African bodies and build on my personal experiences of being Black and being woman. I also wanted to create a performance that investigates the positioning of Black female bodies in and through performance as sites of possibilities (Hartman, 1997). Furthermore, contributing to knowledge in my field of study in reviewing the connotations that Black female bodies have, had or still may carry post-apartheid, as well as the possibilities of the body

3. WHAT WENT WRONG?

The mistake I made on the first day of the filming process was not viewing all footage immediately after filming. I ended up with some footage that I was not happy with, as some of the images were dark or outside the particular focus I wanted. I found myself conflicted, unhappy and dejected. I knew what I wanted to do with this performance, but looking at the footage, it was not resonating with me. This resulted in us reshooting the dance movement that was filmed in the theatre.

Looking back, I feel like I had rushed the process and was somewhat not as well prepared as I thought. I realize that I did not give myself time to breathe in the moments before and in-between shooting because I was trying to do everything (set up, dress, direct, perform etc.). That also led to the footage and energy feeling one-dimensional for me. I was more assertive with the types of shots, angles and cutaways. Reviewing most of the footage after each take, I tried to work smarter the second time.

CRITICAL FRIENDS REFLECTIONS ON THE SCREEN DANCE FILM

Critical friends can be described as “a trusted person who will ask provocative questions and offer helpful critiques” (Costa and Kallick, 1993, p. 49). Due to the autoethnographic nature of my study – I thought it essential to include critical friends in my study – and engaged three critical friends in my practice-based research component of this dissertation. To ensure that I had a research mirror to reflect my own praxis, I invited into my process three Black South African women, who are my peers in terms of age, race, gender and context. This was done through a workshopped process of collecting shared and differing narratives of other Black female voices. I employed the Critical Friends Protocol (Costa and Kallick, 1993; Appleby, 1998; Constantino, 2010), the study engaged a digitally recorded screen dance solo performance by myself. The critical friend protocol required that the friends “provides data to be examined through another lens” (Costa and Kallick, 1993, p. 50) by sharing their thoughts, understanding and truths of how they received the work. The participants were first asked to share their own lived experiences as Black women growing up in South Africa based on workshopped questions. They were then asked to view my final screen dance film where critical friends and provide feedback or new evidence to assist me in refocusing my work. Communication with critical friends involved using WhatsApp and email at a time/s convenient for the participants. The participants, who chose to be part of the study, were expected to be available for the duration of the interview. They were also to provide feedback for the screen dance film after watching as the study required

The interview session required the critical friends to:

- a) Share their perspective and lived experience of living in a Black female body in South Africa. The responses were digitally documented and used as influence for the final screen dance.
- b) Asked to respond verbally or in writing to a questionnaire of three questions, as a review/reflection of 300 - 500 words for the final performance as feedback or thoughts for the work

The following provisos were applied

- The work is voluntary and non-stipendiary.
- The Critical Friends Protocol was not to interfere with the academic programme.
- The sessions were to be audio recorded or video recorded
- Anonymity for participants within the dissertation was to be maintained.
- The study should not involve any risks and/or discomforts.

The assistance of critical friends aided and guided me in accessing the greater depth of understanding around pluralities of Black lived experiences. The Critical friends broadened my scope of thinking and challenged me to think outside of myself or my personal experiences. They watched the video and gave feedback reflection to a set of open-ended questions. The answers are attached and included in the dissertation as Appendix A.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the key areas of the making of the creative component. *INTO EMDAKA* is my efforts to speak on the lived realities of Black South African women accompanied by shared lived experiences testimonies of three critical friends. *INTO EMDAKA*, loosely translated, means something that is dirty, and is a performance that explores the internalised colonial gaze. It also shares an exploration of the acts, teachings, and lived experiences of my Black female body, which has been positioned/framed as dirty or Other. Through this performance, I have considered my body as a site of possibilities and liberation and truth. Using my body as a tool for expression and finding I am enlightened that our Black bodies

are mirrors that absorb, remember and reflect society's politics, art, religion, aesthetics, hopes, fears, strengths, failings—both the officially sanctioned versions and the sub-rosa, closeted taboos (Dixon-Gottschild, 2008, p. 3)

Our Blackness is the strength that keeps giving us hope. A reminder that I stand on the shoulders of my ancestors and the women who have carved the way through, blood, sweat and tears for my voice to be given a platform. That the shame of being Black and female is not mine to carry. The work it took to put this creative dance film

together was indeed a process of great teaching. Learning that to radically love myself and body alone is act of defiance and reclaiming autonomy and of self.

bell hooks (1999, p. 27) writes, “biases of racism and sexism as well as class elitism lead the American public to feel that black women’s voices are the least compelling when serious issues are at stake”, the same is true in the South African context.

Writing, speaking, and performing our narratives amplifies our voices. It also gives us strength to not limit our stories to be only of struggles, stereotypes and violence, but of triumph, resilience and brilliance. It enables us as Black women to redefine and reimagine ourselves and how our bodies are positioned within spaces.

SUMMARY AND FINAL CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

The primary focus of the research was to explore and examine Black female bodies as a “site of possibilities” (Hartman, 1997, p. 51), which allows for the redefining and reimagining the Black female bodies in and through performance. I set out to negotiate the confluence of all three of these shifting identities as they relate to my study of Black female bodies and how they are situated (as a site, a knowledge maker and a mode of expression) in selected contemporary South African performances.

The dissertation research was written into four chapters. The first chapter discussed Black female bodies as a site of multifarious inscriptions and investigated the politics of the Black female bodies and how Black women carry these inscriptions. In the Chapter Two, I explored and focused on Black female bodies, spirituality and how the body can site as can be understood as text. The chapter also investigated how Black African feminism situates Black female bodies and scholarly works that speak on the positionality and framing of Black bodies, followed by a discussion of my chosen theoretical framework and, my elected working methodology for this research project.

Case studies of four Black female South African performers (Buhlebezwe Siwani, Lhola Amira, Mamela Nyamza and Nelisiwe Xaba) were explored and reflected on in the third chapter in order to engage theory in practice, and finally Chapter Four discusses the reflective processes and the framing of the creating my creative component a solo screen dance performance Titled *INTO EMDAKA*.

CONCLUSION

Historically the Black female body has been exposed to tremendous pain and trauma and inscribed with a myriad of narratives.

Quiet as kept, the black female body is a hot thing. White men have secretly revelled in it, not only buying, selling and raping it but also assuaging the need and desire for mother’s milk with it. Black men have agonized over it, wanting to beat, bruise, possess, forsake, protect, and love it. White women have adored it for the relief it afforded from wifely, maternal, and household duties; for the beauty it gave them (Bennett and Dickerson, 2001, p. 195)

Though Black female bodies have been the grounds of various social and political discourses, they have also been the root of resistance in withstanding and opposing

the violent and constraining adversities, regardless of the connotations inscribed and the shame imposed. The Black female body stands as a “site of multiplicity, mystery and the changing name” (Bennett and Dickerson, 2001, p. 207) and in conversations with other Black female bodies, I am getting into the understanding of how we speak, see, and think of ourselves and how this is where we fuel our power of redefining ourselves through our bodies.

The Language of the word presented by colonisation, systematic oppression, social-economic standing, and the gaze are not the representations of the true reflections of Black female bodies. How we (Black female Bodies) project and voice ourselves as Black women and Black bodies is when we tell our stories and advocate for our rights.

Through this research and practice, I have engaged my Black female body as a site and tool of and for expression, and this has allowed me to find my voice and redefine some of the narratives inscribed on my body. I was able to undress and look at my body and all its corners and flaws and not be afraid; regardless of the fears, I have learned to find myself and situate myself in all the possibilities of my body.

What I have learnt through this process is the value of (un)learning as a form of decolonising my mind (Nguni, 1981). Some of the (un)learning’s I’ve had to accept are of the perceived notions and ideas of *ubungoma* being dark and demonic. I am slowly (un)learning these historical narratives that emerge out of our colonial histories and in South Africa have also been exacerbated by the system of Apartheid. This has created ugly, terrifying images like that of *Sitayi*⁹² I had watched growing up. I had watched growing up. Sabelo J Ndlovu–Gatsheni (2015, p. 485) writes that decoloniality is also “a way of thinking, knowing and doing”; in accepting my calling and the gifts that come with it, my psyche, tradition, culture and beliefs, I am reclaiming my body from the colonial gaze and I am letting go of the internalised racial shame as a form of dismantling power.

In findings, I am also understanding that shifting the gaze is to place advocacy and understanding rather than critique, scrutiny and objectification when situating the Black female body. It is challenging to constantly check in with yourself and interrogate the

⁹² Sitayi: A Black female Sangoma character played in the 2001, *Shaka Zulu: The Last Great Warrior* movie

gaze/positionality you are operating from and in this to recognise your own internalised racism/ racial shame and internalised colonial gaze.

As Contemporary art makers, decolonisation and further deconstruction should be evident in the body of work that we make; it should educate, speak, provoke and cause us to engage with the realities of who we are, not what we are told we are. Our conversation should “let the teaching and learning on offer reflect the post-1994 political and social climate of change, of hope and of opening the doors of learning for all” (Loots, 2017. p. 2).

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APPENDIX A:**CRITICAL FRIENDS OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- 1) Would you say the dance film as the dance film successful?
- 2) What would you say was the strongest image/s and why?
- 3) As a Black woman watching, how did it make you reflect on your Black Female identity

APPENDIX B

DANCE FILM REFLECTION FROM CRITICAL FRIENDS

Critical Friend # 1

1) Would you say the dance film as the dance film successful?

It was a successful film.

It depicted a lot of unspoken truths about being female in the world. Very honest from how we have to step up and fulfil roles while we're still trying to grow to affirmations and who we are, where we come from, how we are viewed and ultimately where we are going. It tells the ugly truth of how women are truly treated despite all the movements, outcries, laws etc. Loved, loved, and loved the emotions throughout; happy moments were bright (African attire and movement: which is part of our culture that we pride ourselves in).

2) What would you say was the strongest image/s and why?

"What do you see when you look at me" is the strongest image for me and is beautifully presented. It moved away from as women, we are judged based on our outward appearance, behaviour, preferences, activities etc.; for some women, it impacts their self-esteem. It affects how they interact with other women, the opposite gender and, unfortunately, how they view themselves. You get reminded that there is so much more to us than meets the eye.

I loved the image of a woman being made, indicating where we come from and what our moms did and sacrificed for us. It reminds me of a selfless, disciplined and motivated generation. A generation where they worked hard to ensure that we received their best which is what they could not receive growing up. It reminds me a lot of my mom and makes me so proud to be my mother's daughter. Being in academia is not easy. When ambition decides "not to come to the party", my mom's sacrifice and hope for my future keep me going.

3) As a Black woman watching, how did it make you reflect on your Black Female identity

I must celebrate being a Black female; we have so much strength and can be vulnerable when needed. I naturally got uncomfortable when a woman's "typical duty" was discussed (image of fetching water etc.) because I believe that the "so much more" that we possess is clouded by such duties that we are sometimes boxed and defined by. Nonetheless, I appreciated how this film beautifully portrayed and dignified a woman's duty to take care of a household and respect her significant other. I was reminded how we are naturally nurturing and caring creatures

Critical Friend # 2- Reflection on dance Film

The feedback was offered in a form of Voice notes on WhatsApp that was inscribed on the word document by me.

1) Would you say the dance film was successful?

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge *ukuthi*⁹³ we are now living in times where digital has taken up space. Digital has now claimed its position within the changing times in society and the pandemic has shown us *ukuthi idigita*⁹⁴ can actually reach *abantu abaningi*⁹⁵ as compared to having to go watch a show physically in a theatre. Growing up and claiming my position in arts, not just in any arts but entertainment technology behind the scenes. Where you get to learn how all this equipment works together, including the dancer, the art on stage. Needing to capture that and bringing it to life. I do feel that is actually, reaching out to more than the normal numbers of people that would take *imoto, angene ahambe ayothenga ithikithi*⁹⁶ and watch a show in the

⁹³ Ukuthi: that

⁹⁴ Ukuthi I ditigital: that digital

⁹⁵ Abantu abaningi: a lot of people

⁹⁶ imoto, angene ahambe ayothenga ithikithi: take a car, drive, and go buy a ticket

theatre. The Covid-19 lockdown had made it easier/possible for us to see the importance of film.

I grew up *espey'sini sika*⁹⁷ William Kentridge. Where William will be on stage performing but will never forget to bring in a projector and record/ pre-record some of the things and play them on stage. Showing that film, not just film, but dance film is important during his time and is important even now in the present times.

You would want to watch William Kentridge's show and you get...mostly *uthanda iMarket theatre*⁹⁸...so you would get to the Market Theatre main space and it is fully booked even prior to the dates of the show, even before setting it up. Because people did not want to miss out. Why? I believe it because William Kentridge does abstract theatre, where he plays more with video and the bodies on stage. This may be in narration and also be a dance body expression. Dance film has always been successful it is just that it has not had the demand *yayo*⁹⁹ simply because people were preferring to go into spaces. However, since covid-19 showed us that actually, you do not need to be in a space. You can watch it from home so for me I would definitely say film, or dance film has a space and that space if we were to explore it more success is guaranteed definitely.

2) What would you say was the strongest image/s and why?

Body covered with blood - my interpretation of that is when the body *ungasakwazi ukubekezela*¹⁰⁰. The way that it show that it has had enough *ukuthi ikhale*¹⁰¹. How does it cry? It cries blood, because there are wounds that have manifested. Those wounds show that the body can no longer endure, *ekukhaleni kwayo kuphuma igazi*¹⁰². So I would say *ukuthi* when the body cannot take anymore, the way that it cries/releases is by blood. Especially if there is physical contact to with whatever object present that will make the body get wounded to the point where it bleeds. Which state

⁹⁷ Espey'sini sika: around/within the space of

⁹⁸ Uthanda imarket theatre: mostly love the Market theatre

⁹⁹ Yayo: for it

¹⁰⁰ ungasakwazi ukubekezela: can no longer endure

¹⁰¹ Ukuthi ikhale: is that it cries.

¹⁰² ekukhaleni kwayo kuphuma igazi : in its crying out, blood emerges

that spiritually you have enough, and psychologically you have enough. The body is now the only thing that is left, but in it being the only thing left behind, it also not successful in being able to avoid the pain. Due to every part of you being exposed to this pain, the body then expresses itself through bleeding. I always say that if you can no longer be patient and able to endure, especially spiritually, and emotionally you get distorted and the first thing that happens is that you cry. I would equate the bleeding body as crying.

Another scene that I also liked or that spoke to me was the skin peeling off. When you are about to experience a new you, something has to be done or something needs to happen for you to meet that newness. Most would say you first need to be broken to place the pieces and start anew. Almost like or similar to a snake shedding its skin for a new beginning and letting go of the old. I saw the skin as that.

The cleansing scene by the water: I always say that our ancestor's prayers are carried out through the waters. How we relate to the water is by sending vibrations, vibrations meaning our prayers through the waters. I view water as letters, the connection between the past, present and future. Our ancestors have been communicating through the waters hence, the closest portal we have and is close to and connected to the most is the waters, the waterfalls and how we relate with the water. One must first, have a relationship with the basic elements, which are fire, air, earth, and water.

The image of the body with words projected onto it: we are or we have allowed society to say things to us, we have been taking in, absorbing all these words. So with the projection and the words on the body, it says to me we are still allowing society to say things about us. We are still giving society airtime to talk hogwash and smear our bodies. The image projection with mostly the choice of dominant colour being red. I read the colour choice as either the words being either a weapon to destroy you or a catalyst to strengthen you. I choose the latter, as after all that has been said we still come out stronger.

Lastly still on the same scene, but dress code- as you mention the way we are viewed or judged in our community is in accordance to how we are dressed. Even when we are communion or prayer with our ancestors. You have to enter that space dressed in an appropriate manner, that is dignified, respectful and presentable to them.

3) As a Black woman watching, how did it make you reflect on your Black Female identity?

I questioned how and why I tolerated pain in these different levels. As you grow older each and every year, each and every phase of being a woman that we go through. We get to see the different treatments, as mentioned in the video, once a girl child's body starts developing, there disturbing comments made upon that child's body. How you dress as woman.

Looking at the whole video it is me as woman going through all of these stages all over again and asking myself why I allowed my body to go through such pain. If only I knew this before, I would not have tolerated it this long. I would have expressed myself more. I grew up a very quiet person until it got to a point where I got fed up and could not tolerate the kind of treatment I was receiving as women and it was high time I expressed myself. It also recalling the harsh realities of how you treated at home does not equate or mean that you will be treated with same dignity and respect outside of home.

Going back to how the performance makes me feel, it was a sort of revisiting of the different life stages I have lived through all over again. Having to bleed, to peel my skin for new beginnings. Having to cleanse, to now think of me coming out stronger than before and standing in the boldness of self. A reminder of I now claimed my body and now live and express myself at my own terms now.

Critical Friend #3 reflection on Dance Film

1) Would you say the dance film was successful?

yes, it was successful in that I got to hear other Black women's unique experiences and yet there were my own experiences, which enabled me to open up conversations around the Black female body and what it continues to face.

2) What would you say was the strongest image/s and why?

Two images come to mind: When the lady is sweeping. We strive to be career women making boss moves out there and yet culturally, we have certain roles we still need to play no matter our pay cheques.

As well as the Thwasa/phahla scene: We live in western societies practising different things from how we might have been raised, and things such as ancestral calling might be difficult to understand and thereafter explain to others.

3) As a Black woman watching, how did it make you reflect on your Black Female identity?

I reflected a lot on my past experiences and those of others. It was an uncomfortable thing because it's easy to just ignore it, but I appreciate the discussion for happening.

APPENDIX C

Scene Breakdown, Visual and Location Planning And Mood Board Script

INTO EMDAKA

FILM DANCE SCRIPT
By Marcia M

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Synopsis
Scene breakdown
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Synopsis

I am a Black South African woman, a performance maker, and am currently on a continuous journey of Ubungoma (sangoma training). In the dance film, I set out to negotiate the confluence of all three of these shifting identities as they relate to my study of Black female bodies and how they are situated (as a site, a knowledge maker and mode of expression) in selected contemporary South African performances. In the meaning of 'site', I consider the Black female bodies a place or source where resistance, knowledge, power, spirituality, resilience, and empowerment are explored. Therefore, thinking of Black female bodies as a "site of possibilities" (Hartman, 1997, p.51) allows for the redefining and reimagining of the Black female bodies in and through performance.

It offers context to the intersectional inscriptions that the Black female bodies carries. Echoing the notion that Black female bodies are not to be considered or thought of as a single entity, but as multifarious (diverse). This is said considering how Black bodies read differently in different sites and or spaces, and the different inscriptions that derive from that. These spaces being and not limited to church, religion, spirituality, academia, performance, and history. The body in protest, colonised body, the cultural body, the conscious body, the privileged body, and the body at labour. Each site demands something different from the Black bodies. Black bodies "...is distinguished from other such symbols by its capacity to offer a multifarious complex of meanings" (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996, p. 203). The conversation that arises from these various sites is very much intertwined with the identities that the bodies holds.

The idea of my spiritual life and my performance life felt pivotal as it is something that I am living through and something I wanted to also go through in my research. The intent is "to explore the Black female performing body as knowledge maker...and address how the Black female performing body in South Africa sites" (Nqelenga, n.d. p.6).

SCENE BREAKDOWN/CONCEPTUALISATION

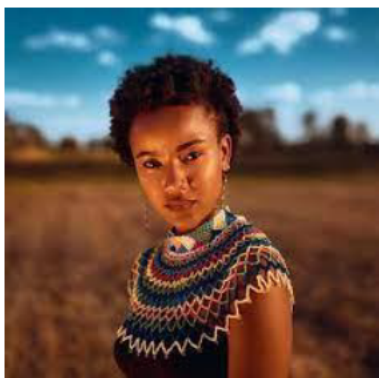
Scene 1	Traditional Body
	<p>The aim is capture Traditional-Culture Black body, and how it reads/positioned/frames within traditions and in the beliefs of African spirituality. Who I am through the lens of my tradition/Culture</p> <p>This is a capturing of ukuziqhenya, knowing and embracing self, identity (heritage)</p> <p>The body in within these spaces through the western lens, have shunned and thought of to be savage, primitive and demonic.</p>
Act 1	Intombi yomzulu:
Act 2	Ukugida/sina kwe ntombi
Scene 2	
	<p>Iziyalo(advice) zezintombi nomakoti (for young maidens and new wives</p> <p>The aim to try and capture how woman's bodies are policed by patriarchal views, society, church, religion</p>
Act 1	A woman getting dressed conservatively: VO plays
Act 2	Cut to
Act 3	A woman dressed underwear holding a board in between her legs that reads: "my clothing is not consent" / " I am naked and Still NOT asking for IT"
Scene 3	The body at labor/ domestication
	<p>The aim is to capture how Black women historically has been positioned/ disadvantaged by class socio-economic status. The work that may have left them looked-down/frowned upon but have fruitfully carried families</p>
	Woman toiling in the fields
	Woman balancing sticks on head
	Woman with child on her back ?
Scene 4	Religious body
Act 1	Mthandazi mountain
Act 2	Black church : How the Black female body has been placed in Church

Act 3	Sangoma/Mthandazi in Church: the redefining of how the Black female body, within the spiritual beliefs can coincide - these are not opposing ends.
Act 4	Movement/dance piece in the theatre
	Cultural Body
	<p>Phahla (praying/communing with ancestors) by the river:</p> <p><u>Water symbolism</u></p> <p>Represents the Black bodies that have died (ancestral space), spiritual space where Black bodies come to connect with their ancestors (through ukuphahla and prayer)</p> <p>Space where Black bodies cleanse or wash off bad luck/bad spirits</p> <p>Space to give thanks</p>
	ukuGida ngomgoma (grounding of self, healing self, lineages, giving thanks and connecting to those who come before us and walk with.)
	Immersed in water?? (see if possible if water is clean) or we can do water up to knees
	Phahla (praying/communing with ancestors) by the rmounain: <u>Mountain Symbolism</u>
	Political body
Scene 4	<p>Standing Naked (tan underwear) with words written on/ words projected on the body</p> <p>Patriarchy</p> <p>Slut</p> <p>Sexism</p>

	Religion Culture Am I next Political Femicide (Pouring of fake blood on certain parts of body)
	Dehumanized Body
Scene 5	Projection on of caster Semenya Sarah Baartman
	Myself in theatre walking about the stage: voice-over of guys sexualizing female/s, then slut shame her for rejecting advance
	(Un)learning/ redefining/ decolonizing the body
	Shedding of skin

Mood Board-Costume

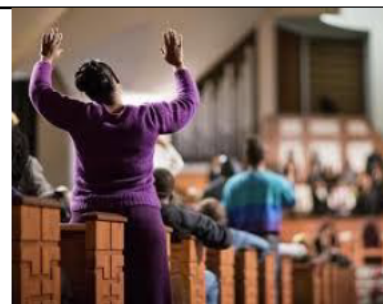
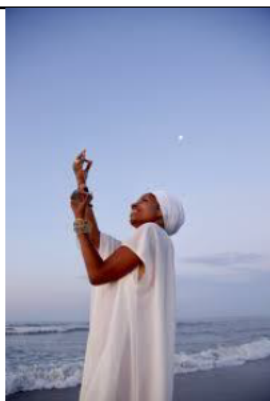
Traditional
- Cultural
Body







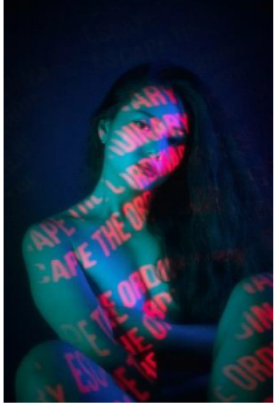





The body at labour








Religious body



Add:
Sangoma/Mthandazi at
Church

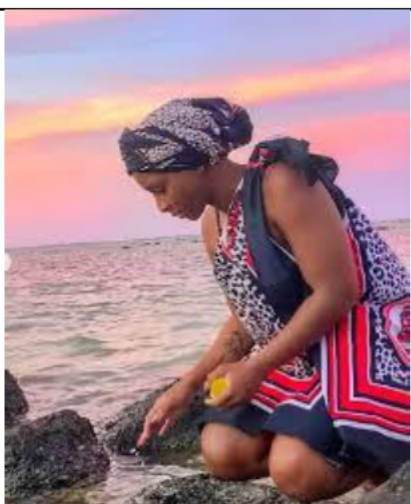
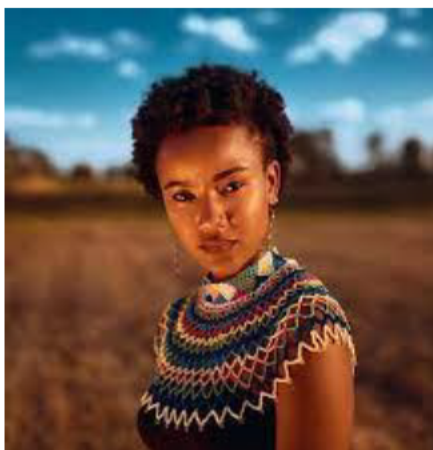
<p>Political body</p>	 	 	
<p>Dehumanized body</p>	 	<p>Example of projection of images look</p> 	<p>VO: Of guys sexualizing and insulting females while image projection is on</p>  <p>GBV: bodies that have been stripped power and voice. Bodies that are forcefully taken</p> 

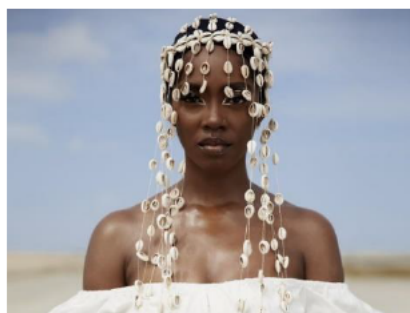
			 <p>Fake Blood poured on different body parts (intent ritual, disposable bodies, slave bodies)eradication of people(ancestry- Bloodline)</p>
<p>(Un)learning/ redefining/ decolonizing the body</p>	<p>Ukuchelwa- cleansing of the space using Water, rough salt and grass broomstick</p> 	  	<p>Cleansing of the body: Ukususa amathunzi</p>   

MOODBOARD: BY LOCATION

LOCATION ONE: PARADISE VALLEY (PINETOWN)




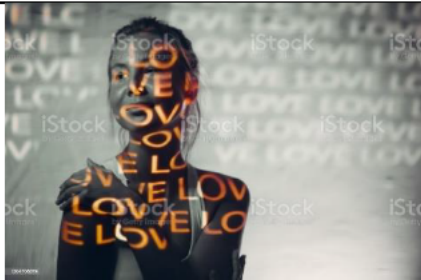


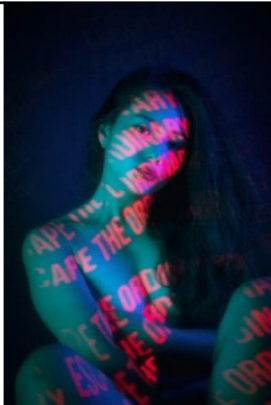

Traditional
- Cultural
Body













The body
at labour

LOCATION TWO: SQUARE SPACE THEATRE
HOWARD COLLEGE UKZN

The body
at labour

<p>Religious body</p>			 <p>Add: Sangoma/Mthandazi at Church</p>
<p>Political body</p>	 		 

<p>Dehumanized body</p>	 	<p>Example of projection of images look</p>  <p>GBV: bodies that have been stripped power and voice. Bodies that are forcefully taken</p>   <p>Imbovu</p>	<p>VO: Of guys sexualizing and insulting females while image projection is on</p>   <p>Fake Blood poured on different body parts (intent to capture ritual, disposable bodies, slave bodies)eradication of people(ancestry- Bloodline)</p>
<p>(Un)learning/ redefining/ decolonizing the body</p>		 	<p>Shedding of skin, the intent is to speak to/capture the decolonizing of the body. The (un)learning, removal of the old (metamorphosis)</p>



Cleansing of the body/Ukususa
amathunzi (water and milk)



LOCATION THREE: UKZN HOWARD COLLEGE KING GEORGE V STATUE BY PARKING

Ukuchelwa- cleansing of the space using Water,
rough salt and grass broomstick



APPENDIX D:
Call Sheet Day 1 and 2

<h2>INTO EMDAKA</h2>		
Tel: +27 62 --- --- / 068 --- --- Fax:		
Executive Producer:		
Executive Producer:		
Producer: Line Producer: Production Manager: Production Accountant	Director: Director Of Photography 1 st Assistant Director Continuity Production Coordinator	Marcia Mzindle Naomi Buthelezi Marcia Mzindle

SHOOT DAY #	01 of 02	CREW CALL TIME ON SET: 08h00 READY TO SHOOT @: 9H00			
DATE:	Monday 1 August 2022	Lunch @ LOC 1		14h00	
CALL TIMES		WEATHER:			
Breakfast FROM LOC 2	08H30	WEATHER FORECAST: TIMES OF CLOUDS AND SUN			
M/H/W-D CALL @ SET	09H00				
UNIT CALL:		WIND:			
AD'S CALL :		Min:	13°C	Max:	18°C
SET DRESSING CALL:	AS PER Marcia	Sunrise:	06:42	Sunset:	17:23
WRAP:	-				

SHOOTING SCHEDULE

LOCATION:		1. SQUARE SPACE THEATRE 2. KING GEORGE V STATUE (HOWARD COLLEGE)				Unit Manager:	
SCENE #	INT/EXT	DAY/NIGHT	SCENE DESCRIPTION	SCRIPT DAY	CAST	PGS	LOC
1	Int	Day	Traditional/ cultural body		1		1
2	Int	Day	The Body of Labour: sweeping/ ironing scene		1		1
3	Int	Day	The body of Labour		1		1
4	Int	Day	Religious Body		1		1
UNIT MOVE							
KING GEORGE V STATUE (HOWARD COLLEGE)							
5	Ext	Day	Cleansing space		1		2
					Total		

CAST

ID	CHARACTER	ARTIST	P/U	ON LOC	BLOCKING	WARD	M/U	ON SET
----	-----------	--------	-----	--------	----------	------	-----	--------

1	Dancer	Marcia M	06H00	08H00				

HOSPITAL	:	King Edward Hospital 031 360 3111	AMBULANCE	10177
POLICE	:	10111	FIRE BRIGADE	10177
Line Producer	:		1 st AD	:
Production Coordinator	:	Marcia Mzindle 062 --- ----	Extras Coordinator/D A	:
Unit/Loc. Manager	:			

PRODUCTION									
CAMERA	As per Naomi Buthelezi								
GRIPS	As per Team								
LIGHTING	As per Team								
SOUND	As per								
ART DIRECTOR	As per Marcia Mzindle								
PROPS	As per Marcia Mzindle								
SET DRESSING	As per Marcia Mzindle								
ACTION VEHICLES									
STAND BY									
CONTINUITY	As per Naomi and Marcia								
WARDROBE	As per Marcia Mzindle								
MAKE-UP/HAIR	As per Marcia Mzindle								
AD'S	As per								
UNIT	As per								
LOCATIONS	As per Marcia Mzindle								
SECURITY	As per								
CATERING	As per Catering : As per Marcia Mzindle								
	CRAFT FROM	09H00		CREW & CAST:	3 1	EXTRAS:		TOTAL:	4
	Breakfast @ LOC 1 READY FROM	09H15		CREW & CAST:	3 1	EXTRAS:		TOTAL:	4
	Lunch @ LOC 1 READY FROM	14H00		CREW & CAST:	3 1	EXTRAS:		TOTAL:	4

MOVEMENT ORDER

Team	ADDRESS & CONTACT	DRIVER	PICK UP TIME	TO BE ON LOCATION
Marcia Mzindle	Westville	Muzi 063 --- ----	06h00	08H00
Naomi Buthelezi	Glenwood	Muzi 063 --- ----	07h30	08H00
Siyanda Mzindle	Berea/Musgrave	Muzi 063 --- ----	07h20	08h00

PRODUCTION								
CAMERA	<i>As per Naomi Buthelezi</i>							
GRIPS	<i>As per Team</i>							
LIGHTING	<i>As per Team</i>							
SOUND	<i>As per</i>							
ART DIRECTOR	<i>As per Marcia Mzindle</i>							
PROPS	<i>As per Marcia Mzindle</i>							
SET DRESSING	<i>As per Marcia Mzindle</i>							
ACTION VEHICLES								
STAND BY								
CONTINUITY	<i>As per Naomi and Marcia</i>							
WARDROBE	<i>As per Marcia Mzindle</i>							
MAKE-UP/HAIR	<i>As per Marcia Mzindle</i>							
AD'S	<i>As per</i>							
UNIT	<i>As per</i>							
LOCATIONS	<i>As per Marcia Mzindle</i>							
SECURITY	<i>As per</i>							
CATERING	<i>As per Catering : As per Marcia Mzindle</i>							
	CRAFT FROM	09H00	CREW & CAST:	3 1	EXTRAS:		TOTAL:	4
	Breakfast @ LOC 1 READY FROM	09H15	CREW & CAST:	3 1	EXTRAS:		TOTAL:	4
	Lunch @ LOC 1 READY FROM	14H00	CREW & CAST:	3 1	EXTRAS:		TOTAL:	4

MOVEMENT ORDER

Team	ADDRESS & CONTACT	DRIVER	PICK UP TIME	TO BE ON LOCATION
Marcia Mzindle	Westville	Muzi 063 --- ----	06h00	08H40
Naomi Buthelezi	Glenwood	Muzi 063 --- ----	07h40	08H40
Siyanda Mzindle	Pinetown Mc Donalds	Muzi 063 --- ----	08h10	08h40

APPENDIX E

INTO EMDAKA
VOICE-OVER SCRIPT

A Dance Film – Written and Directed by Marcia M

ACT ONE

The screen is black, soft music is playing in the background. The light comes on we see a silhouette, a voice over is heard over the music.

INT. Theatre – silhouette

We see a silhouette moving, a voice over speaks

SFX: MUSIC

VO:

Marcia: There is a certain shame that comes with being a Black Female and this shame starts of when we very young. It is not shame that we seek but shame that is seemed to be placed upon us. I see this happening in the present day, social media and conversations that happen in and around me. This shame comes getting wider hips, a fuller body, breast, menstruation and maturing. These above mentioned physical changes comes with being told to “watch yourself”, “not sit a certain way”, to not talk to boys, to not be forward. I felt as a young **Black child** and **a female**, there was a lot of shame that was attached to my body. There is that innocence that kind of goes away and this expectancy of ukuthi usumdala manje, **so you need to act a certain way**. Where else you are still a child. There is a grossness, violation that happens and your body is shamed.

VO Ntombi:

Lengane ikhula ngokusheha

Cut to

INT. Theatre; Marcia sitting on a block in stillness, dress in tan underwear, we cut to face, eyes, feet

Quote appears on screen

“We teach girls shame. *Close your legs. Cover yourself.* We make them, feel as though by being female, they already guilty of something”

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Cut to

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. Theatre Marcia Covering herself to be more conservative.

VO:

Cover yourself you showing too much flesh, anything above the knees is calling for too much attention, uthanda abafana, unenkanuko. For Your body is lustful.

A woman must always know her place and that the man is head of the family.

We taught to fear our sexuality

Sinful, lustful, Jezebel

CUT TO

Skin Peeling

Cut to

FADE IN

INT. Theatre, Marcia turns on radio. A VO is plays, as it plays we footage of Marcia sweeping the floor the pinafore to navy housekeeper's uniform and EXT. Marcia balancing stick on her head.

VO:

Black women historically has been positioned/ disadvantaged by class socio-economic status. The work that *may have* left them looked-down/frowned upon but have fruitfully carried families...fed bloodlines, secured future thought their hard work. This is the woman who raised me, my neighbor, my great grandmother the women who created magic with the little that had

Cut T TO

FADE IN

EXT. Paradise valley, Marcia dressed in traditional attire walking, shoes, beads, and getting water VO is heard as the visual play on screen

FADE IN:

EXT. traditional body- Marcia dressed in traditional attire, walking to the river, getting water.

SFX: Music

Vo:

Ngingumzulu, uMzindle KaMbanwa uSokhela, Nyon'emyama, Eyabizwa ngekhwela yasabela yathi tshiyo, Gqabela kavezi, Wena ozalisa abafazi baliwe amadoda abo, Mzukuzeli ulwandle aluwelwa luwelwa zinkonjane ezindizela phezulu, Mpazela, Sisho wena nkanyezi yezulu, Mzekwa, Galaza, Magujwa, Dindela!

This is my identity culture my heritage,
usiko teaches me ukuziqhenya ngobumina, nokuzazi,

uthanda umzimba lo engikuwo,

Ukuzigcinina ngizengifikwe emendweni.

Ukuthi indonda inhloko yekhaya, ayibizwa imibuzo.

Indawo yomfazi ukuthobela umthetho nokuba nesizotha.

I am reminded that umuntu wesifazani, uyatheza, ukha amanzi, yahlakula, uyalima lo umsebenzi owenziwa umtunu wesifazine wasekhaya

FADE IN:

EXT. Umngoma, voice over play, Marcia walking to the river, kneeling and praying

VO:

I feared this part of me

I have walked this Journey thinking of myself as an individual. Single, separate. A Single human being. Kodwa angingedwa, I walk multitudes who came before me.

Those who guide, who intercede and show me light. oGogo no Mkhulu, Okhokho nobabemkhulu. Those I know and call by name oMkhize, oMbanjwa, oDludla, Mzindle no Mbili and those I do not know by name. I feared being possessed by the devil and demons. I was taught that this is... Evil, uncouth, sorcery, witchcraft, not of God. Into emdaka

The witchcraft suppression act of 1957 taught us this

Cut to

FADE IN

INT. Theatre Skin peeling

Cut to

FADE IN:

INT. THEARTRE – Dance

Nomaphupho by Sibusile Plays

Marcia is in the theatre, and she performs the movement piece

Cut to

FADE IN

INT. Theatre Skin peeling

Cut to

FADE IN

INT. Theatre. Praying in church and cross fade or spilt screen to praying in English and isiZulu

VO

I am learning that God is at the centre of it all. That amathongo, amadlozi intercede for us to God. That these are not opposing ends

CUT TO

FADE IN

INT. Theatre Skin peeling

CUT TO FADE IN:

EXT. Paradise Valley, Marcia Ukugida and ukusina

SFX: drumming

VO:

For decades Black bodies have demonstrated resistance, through performing in revolt in opposing the racist government in protest and toyi-toyi, Black bodies have performed to keep preserve our culture, they have and continue to dance to find a voice and empowerment through ukuGida noku usina.

ukuGida (, healing self, grounding of self, healing lineages, giving thanks, celebration and connecting with nature and to those who came before us and walk with.)

Black body in performance compared to the westernised standard of 'cultured' or 'perfect' body has not only been seen as hideous but also uncultured therefore, deemed hedonistic (Rani, 2003; Welsh-Asante, 2004). **The Black body moves a certain way when we dance it is free, loud, expressive, unrestricted, and rigorous. Our hips gyrate, we stomp our feet, and this in the Western gaze not received as an art form. Africans in dance requires our bodies to tend to be low and grounded. Creating intimacy with the ground revealing the hidden yet overt language, connection, and relationship our spirit and our bodies have with the ancestors (Welsh-Asante, 2004, p.34)**

CUT TO

ACT THREE

We see Marcia in the theatre, theatre is dark, there are numerous words projected on her body as she moves. Music plays in the background, a voice over is heard.

INT: FADE IN

Projection of different names reflecting on the body

SFX: Music and VO

VO:

Uma sizwalwa, sinikezwa amagama esibizibizwa sisabele ngawo.

What do you see when you look at me?

The female body...the Black female body

The body in protest, colonised body, the cultural body, the conscious body, the privileged body? Gender, race, class?

Iliphi igama ongibiza ngisabele ngalo?

In the light, in the shadows, in the in-betweens

Do you see me?

CUT TO

Skin shedding

CUT TO

The projection continues, Sarah Baaartman, Caster Semenya and the guys sitting on the corner and voice over

VO:

Dehumanisation, racism, oppression, inequality, hyper-sexualisation, and the degrading of the Black female body is felt till this present day

CUT TO

INT. Theatre Marcia wearing black, movement about GBV, pouring of blood, to painting the floor and the body with imbomvu

VO

: bodies that have been stripped power and voice. Bodies that are forcefully taken

A ritual. disposable bodies. slave bodies. Eradication of people(ancestry- Bloodline)

Lichithekile igazi

Cut to

ACT FOUR

Shedding of skin, the intent is to speak to/capture the decolonizing of the body. The (un)learning, removal of the old (metamorphosis). Cleansing of the body/Ukususa amathunzi (water and milk)

FADE IN:

INT. Theatre Marcia washing with milk and water

VO

Cleanse me of my sins... A cleansing is need for this body, an (un)learning, removal of the old...for these grounds we walk on, for the history that denied us our humanity. For the buildings that were not designed to accommodate our Black bodies. Let there be new teachings

Let there be new learnings

Cleanse me of my sins

CUT TO

Skin peeling

CUT TO

Marci walking up to the King George V statue, Ukuchelwa- cleansing of the space using Water, rough salt and grass broomstick

FADE IN

EXT: Howard College King George V statue

END

APPENDIX F: VOICE OVER QUE SHEET

[illegible]

APPENDIX G-
FINAL SCRIPT CHANGES FOR FINAL EDIT

OPENING CREDIT:
<p style="text-align: center;">Into Emdaka by Marcia Mzindle</p>

END CREDIT:
Choreography and Performer: Marcia Mzindle
Dramaturgy and Direction: Marcia Mzindle
Cinematography and Editing: Naomi Gumede
Voiceovers- still need to confirm with supervisor if I write names or continue to keep identities private as per the agreement for dissertation
<p style="text-align: center;">MUSIC CREDIT AND A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sibusile Xaba – Nomaphupho</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mojalefa “M’jakes” Thebe - Maskandi mix</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mthandazo Mofokeng - Drumming</p>

TIMESTAMP on VIDEO	CHANGES
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02:28 -02:41	<p>VN Marcia “ uthanda abafana... head of family” trimmed out</p> <p><i>Cover yourself you showing too much flesh, anything above the knees is calling for too much attention, uthanda abafana, unenkanuko. For Your body is lustful.</i></p> <p><i>A woman must always know her place and that the man is head of the family.</i></p> <p><i>We taught to fear our sexuality</i> <i>For we are Sinful, lustful, Jezebels</i></p>
	<p>These VNs below to be included in this “covering” scene (positioning them further down is a bit off. Can they please be inserted before the “labour body scene”</p>
03:40 – 03:58	VN “When wearing a short skirt” please linked with cover yourself scene
04:00– 04:23	<p>VN “And so it largely” please link with cover yourself scene – This Be trimmed and have it start at as</p> <p>“In most cases, its let’s not tempt the opposite gender ,lets cover up. I have a botty; I have hips I can’t hide that no matter what I can wear”</p>
03:03	When the radio is switched ‘ON’ here is a click can the Vn start at that point we hear The click (03:02) and close the slight gap
04: 13	Maskandi song AND VN to start with the image of beads: Maskandi Song and VNs: what we see- beads, feet, walking to the river
05:30 – 05:49	First VN: izibongo (I would like this VN move up and linked as the first VN)
04:41 – 05:13	Second VN: This is my identity
04:24 – 04:40	“We are looked at” VN - DELETE
05:53	This VN “I have walked my journey...” can be moved down to the earlier images of ibhayi (maybe at 05:37?)
05:56	<p>QUESTION: Would it be possible to start with the walking then kneeling?</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: I love how when the VN says (INTO EMDAKA and it coincides with the washing of the hands can we keep that moment? (reference 06:47 -07:10)</p> <p>“into emdaka, the witchcraft suppression act taught us this”= washing of hand and imphmbandlela</p>

07:35 – 07:37	The turn: To be a quicker transition, can we shorten it to half a sec or a one second
	DURING THE DANCE IN THE THEATRE
08:20	Second pointing close-up DELETE
08:22	Third pointing pose Close up - DELETE
09:29	Face close up during dance- trimmed down Original 08:29 – 08:32 Can it be 08:29 – 08:30 A brief second then transition back to
09:58 -10:01	Face close up - DELETE
10:08 -10:10	Close up during dance- DELETE
10:24 - 10:40	No special effects
10:50	Second Close-up slide DELETE
10:52	Third close-up slide DELETE
10:53	Fourth close-up slide - DELETE
13:01	Praying scene – QUESTION -Is possible to do a switch from English to isizulu during prayer? So instead of blurring the one... have them both side by side (reference 13:56) Eg: our father, who art in heaven Maligweliswe igama lakho, Umbuso wakho mawufike Thy will be done On earth as it is in heaven Usiphe namuhla isinkwa semehla ngemihla And forgive us our trespasses As we forgive those who trespass against us Lead us not into temptations And deliver us from evil Ngokuba umbuso ongowakho Namandla nomkhosi Forever and ever Both simultaneously: AMEN
14:18	I just realised I sent the wrong drumming, please use the one attached to email. Ukugida+ ukusina drumming ---please exclude the beginning vocals Also, can the drumming start simultaneously with the visual or during the slight blackout?

17:34 -17:42	VN- “ has been The most dehumanising experience as black person” DELETE
18:44 – 18:54	Catcalling scene -- (backdrop picture of guys sitting) Can we rearrange the VNs in the following As the guys with the picture starts 1) I think the most dehumanising experience that I’ve had
18:17 – 18: 42	2) You grow up and then you get
17:142 -18:14	3) Where my daughter
18:27 – 18:42	4) If it’s not somebody who would call
18:57 -20:04	5) You are a piece of property
20:09 – 20:18	6) So it’s just walking on the street
20:54	It feels like a weird Jump...is possible to include the putting on of imbovu on the body (a couple of seconds) Then move to the clip that already on QUESTION: are you able to trim out the Exit sign and the sandals on the left of this clip?
21:24 - 21:27	Washing Scene- can we rearrange the VNs “The cleanse of my sins” only can be kept and repeated while bathing The repetitive words can overlap?
20:58 – 21:26	King George V Statue scene The long VN: Cleanse me of my sins; a cleansing is needed for this body an (un)learning a removal of the old ... Also, can we mute the original audio of the vid SFX: Please can try to use the ukukhaya drumming attached to the email...if that doesn’t work the audio song on the projection (15:23)