

**British Dance and the African
Diasporas,
the Discourses of Theatrical
Dance and the Art of
Choreography:
1985 to 2005**

PhD Thesis

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to devise a theoretical approach to writing histories of theatrical dance, which draws on African and Diaspora forms. Most choreographers who work with these forms in Britain are usually of African or Caribbean descent and are racially black. I call the theoretical approach the choreosteme.

I use the theoretical approach to historicise some of the developments that take place in dance as an industry in Britain and I design it to address issues of discourse, representation and cultural politics. My interest is in investigating the historical debates about the definition about the work of black choreographers in Britain especially those who draw on African and Diaspora forms. The choreosteme is based on social constructionism, Michel Foucault's notion of the episteme, Brenda Dixon Gottschild's conception of African aesthetics and the analytic tool called the chronotope, which I have borrowed from Mikhail Bakhtin. I devise the theoretical approach in

chapters 2 and 3 and I write five micro-histories about dance artists using this approach in chapters 4 to 8.

In chapter 4, I discuss the construction of the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector in 1993 following the debates about the nature of black dance in Britain. In chapter 5, I will look at the various means by which dance artists and managers tried to generate a critical discourse for their work and explain how the dominant discourses emanating from larger organisations rendered much of their work invisible. In chapter 6, I write about dance artists who were based in London and working as dancers and teachers (amongst other things) between 1994 and 2005. I discuss how they developed their dance practices through research and formal study at a time there was little formal training for the kind of practices they were interested in. They are Hopal Romans, Paradigmz, Ukachi Akalawu, Sheba Montserrat and Diane Alison-Mitchell. Chapter 7 is about two choreographers: Sheron Wray and Robert Hylton. I also discuss and analyse the idea of choreographic fusion in this chapter. Choreographer Beverley Glean is the focus of chapter 8. The chapter 9 is the conclusion.

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Chapter 1

Introduction, Literature review and Chapter plan

1.1. Introduction: Autobiographical Preamble

I begin this chapter by explaining why the topic of the work of black dancers in Britain from 1985 to 2005 became of interest to me. I became interested in the issues about definition in the field of dance on moving to Britain from Nigeria in 1994. I was a journalist in Nigeria but I had a love for dance. I was the artistic director of the university's poetry club and I also gained experience performing and choreographing at university mainly in an extra-curricular context although I did take some theatre arts courses. Based on this experience, I began performing professionally in Britain, learning on the job and taking master classes and training courses as I went and attending events and meetings organised for dancers. The Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) was established the year I arrived in England in 1994 and I started writing for its newsletter as a volunteer in 1995. In Nigeria I used to write freelance amongst other things. I wrote for the Arts pages in Nigeria's *The Guardian*, *The Daily Times* and a few lifestyle magazines. I reviewed books, exhibitions and interviewed artists. What struck me when I started writing in Britain was the difference in perspective I had with the dancers around me. There were a lot of informal discussions about whether African dance was a static form. 'No' I would say, 'we would make up dances all the time'. However the more I went to performances, read books about Martha Graham, the more I

understood there were different understandings of what creativity was. My point of view seemed to be invisible not just to white people but also to some black people. I struggled to explain what I meant. I realised we understood dance through different concepts. I had many experiences like this as my career developed, changed and shifted. As a teacher, dancer, and programme manager I would experience time and time again situations where an issue of definition got in the way of developing a project, running a project, making sense to an audience. I realised terms did not stick without a discourse and generation of histories were a good way to develop a discourse. Whilst I was programme manager of ADAD in 2003 I instigated the idea of a year long Heritage project which spanned the years 1930s to 1990s, which consisted of a photo exhibition, a programme of activities and a book, *Voicing Black Dance* (2007). This project took place in 2007. Over time I have seen what this relatively small-scale project achieved. There was something to the politics of representation. Perhaps it is my beginnings as a journalist and a poet that has fuelled my interest in discourse and meaning. It never left me when I moved into dance.

1.2. The Aim of this thesis

The aim of this thesis is to devise a theoretical approach to writing histories of theatrical dance, which draw on African and Diaspora forms. Most choreographers who work with these forms in Britain are usually of African or Caribbean descent and are racially black. The theoretical approach I am

devising is to be used to historicise some of the developments that take place in dance as an industry in Britain. In this introduction, I provide a literature review which contextualises my research interest and describes my methodology.

In Britain, dance as an industry, is funded by a mixture of subsidies from charities, public agencies, business sponsorship and income generating activities (Dance UK 2001, p. 14). I am mainly interested in dance artists who work predominantly in the subsidized dance sector. These are the areas of the British dance industry that rely heavily on subsidy such as the making and touring of dance to arts and dance venues as opposed to commercial venues like the West End theatres, community dance and education (Dance UK 2001, p. 12). I will then use this theoretical approach to write five short histories about the work of black choreographers and dance artists between the 1985 and 2005. I am calling the approach I am devising the choreosteme.

I have chosen this timeline because in 1985 the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) was established which was the first support organisation for African and Caribbean dance companies. It closed in 1990. In 2005, Pan-African Dance Ensemble, which was the flagship company of the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector was defunded. These two organisations were part of the debates about Black dance in Britain and came out of the same dance movement, the African Peoples' Dance Movement that began in the 1970s and gained momentum in the 1980s. During this timeframe there were certain debates between dance artists and other dance professionals involved in theatrical dance, which took place partly due to the existence of these

organisations. After the demise of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, dance companies that were associated with hip-hop theatre and African contemporary dance received the funding allocation Adzido once received, signalling a change of focus, voluntary or otherwise for the funders and artistic communities involved.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, my aim in creating this theoretical approach is to produce a way of historicising some of the developments that take place in dance as an industry that have to do with black dancers and black-led companies. The debates about definitions that take place within professional dance arise from a variety of reasons and some of them have gone on in various contexts for long periods of time. My argument is that these debates in themselves are a worthy subject for historical research. Through researching them one would gain insights into how dance as a field in Britain has been evolving and why. In the literature below I look at different types of texts. Some are Arts Council reports which are evidence of certain debates, others are produced by professionals in the dance sector on their work and experiences, and the last group is of academic literature. Only recently have academic articles and books about the work of black artists in Britain been published. I also look at a small selection of texts about what is called, in the subsidized dance sector, 'mainstream dance'. These refer to white-led companies using a dance technique or form, which can be studied within dance institutions. In carrying out this review of literature, I am making the case that

these publications are evidence that there is a conceptual and historical issue here that requires academic analysis.

1.3. Literature Review

This literature begins with Arts Council reports. Between 1993 and 2000, the Arts Council commissioned some reports to look at the infrastructure for dance professionals who were black. In these reports the terms 'Black dance' and 'African Peoples' Dance' (an alternative umbrella term for the work of black choreographers) are defined and redefined. The four most important Arts Council reports looking into the issues of infrastructure are *African Peoples' Dance: The State of the Art in 1987* (1987), *Advancing Black Dancing* (1993a), *What is Black Dance in Britain?: A meeting for Practitioners* (1993) and *Time for Change: A Framework for the Development of African Peoples' Dance Forms in Britain* (2000). They address the issue of infrastructure at a national scale, hence their importance. The first report *African Peoples' Dance: The State of the Art in 1987* (1987) was written by an external evaluator Ann Millman after doing an assessment of the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) which was the support organization for companies working in African Peoples' Dance at the time. She defines African Peoples' Dance as relating 'specifically to the work of African and Afro-Caribbean dance companies to the techniques, skills, music and traditions of their work' (Millman 1987, p.1).

David Bryan wrote the second report. It was commissioned after the defunding of BDDT. It is a discussion document for the dance sector written to support decision making about the nature of a new national organisation to fill the gap left by BDDT. He states in his report that African Peoples' Dance is not an appropriate definition for the work of black choreographers as he felt it focused on tradition exclusively and he considered Black dance to be a better term. The 'working definition' of Black dance offered states:

Black dance must continue to cherish, represent, reflect and advance the cultural heritage and aspirations of various black communities. To have Black dance without Black music would be a travesty and therefore disengagement with the kernel of African culture. For Black dance in Britain to advance it must be allowed to establish its distinct identity. Part of this identity will involve the continued interpretation of Black experiences and cultures as they evolve. Consequently the development of African traditional and African modernity has to be advanced by Black dancers, Black choreographers and Black companies

(1993a, p.12).

Ann Millman's definition related to a specific type of dance practice - that of African and Caribbean dances within the framework of a dance company. David Bryan's definition relates more to a conception of dance and music as part of Black culture and not a professional practice.

The third report *What is Black Dance in Britain? : A meeting for Practitioners* (1993) is the proceedings of the meeting that was organized by the Arts Council to give members of the dance sector an opportunity to respond to *Advancing Black Dancing* (1993). The article by Peter Badejo appears without page numbers in the appendices of the report, which is written by Shaila Parthasarathi. In his article, which is also called, *What is Black Dance in*

Britain? he rejects the term black dance saying that in Britain the term did not have the meaning that it had in America, and that it could easily be co-opted by funders. He suggested African Peoples' Dance forms as a better umbrella term for the work that the sector carried out. He said African Peoples' Dance forms could encompass any number of discreet dance forms, or techniques that come from Africa and the African Diaspora. Dance forms such as Bata and Reggae were codified in relation to specific music genres and could be approached as dance techniques and considered as the basis of creative practice for the black dancers. Badejo rejected black dance because the term could easily be manipulated by funders and used to divert support meant for black dance professionals to social inclusion projects for black people (1993, unnumbered).

The fourth report, a *Time for Change: A Framework for the Development of African People's Dance Forms* was commissioned by the Arts Council of England and written by Hermin MacIntosh, Lorraine Yates and Claudette McDonald. It suggests that the black dancers did not need one specific organisation but a framework which would enable the wider dance sector in general to work together to support the work of black dancers. They choose the term African Peoples' Dance forms as proposed by Peter Badejo. However their definition focuses on choreography based on these forms rather than the forms themselves. They describe the term as meaning: 'that which draws its main influence, sensitivities, means of expression and technical base from the cultural heritage of Africa and the peoples of Africa living in the Diaspora' (McIntosh et al 2000, p.15). They describe the African Peoples' Dance sector as comprising four categories of dance practice - Traditional African and

Caribbean, Contemporary African, New Black British aesthetic, and Black people in dance. They describe each category as being dynamic and innovative. They give the label 'Black people in dance' to Black dancers who work in a non-African or Caribbean influenced aesthetic. And they describe this group as outside of the scope of the report (McIntosh et al 2000, pp. 54-55).

The reports reviewed above show that there were political issues behind every choice of dance terminology. These reports were commissioned by the Arts Council to recommend a way of developing infrastructure to support the work of the black dancers. Three of four definitions were devised to place the focus of the definition on to the dance forms that black dancers used and how they were used in their choreography or staged performance. With the exception of *Advancing Black Dancing*, the reports attempted to present definitions that not only represented the relevant dance practices correctly but also categorised them as professional dance practices and so protected them from being considered cultural resources, which could be used to further social inclusion initiatives. The definition in *Time for Change* was also coined so that the wider dance sector could gain an insight into the various ways practitioners choreographed with social and traditional dance forms and therefore know which group of dancers they could support and how to support them. It is interesting to note that David Bryan is not a dance practitioner and he was therefore probably not considering the same issues as the other consultants and advocates in terms of specifying what the context of professional dance demanded (Bryan 2002, p. 3). The reports demonstrate that the consultants

and advocates involved were looking for definitions of 'black dance' and 'African Peoples' Dance' that took into consideration how dance artists approached the use of the dance forms that come under these umbrella terms. The historical question this poses is how has the context that supports the use of these forms of dance for theatrical and professional purposes developed.

The next four reports were commissioned by the British Council and the Arts Council. They include short overviews of the development of British dance as a preamble to the main content of the report. The overviews usually start in the 1950s with the establishment of Ballet companies, moving to the 1960s with the establishment of the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, the 1970s with the emergence of New Dance and end with the blurring between high art and popular culture in the work of choreographers such as Lea Anderson and DV8. The first, *A Booker's Guide: British Dance in Companies in Profile (1990)* provides an overview of the evolution of the support for British dance and types of dance supported. The companies, that were presenting Africa, Asian and Caribbean dance forms, are mentioned as emerging in the 1970s when British agencies began to fund these companies as a part of what Chris de Marigny (1990) describes as Britain's 'socio-political agenda for dance.' He is referring to funding of dance projects and companies to promote social inclusion, ease unemployment and reduce racism (1990, pp. 6-7). The overview in the *Independent Dance Review Report (1998)* gives a shorter but similar outline describing the a, the amateur movement, and the emergence of African Peoples' Dance and South Asian dance companies as parallel occurrences.

The last two are described as being stimulated by funding from local authorities and the Manpower Services Commission in the 1970s and 1980s (1990, p.5). This narrative includes African Peoples' Dance in British dance on the basis of a social - political agenda.

The third report, the Arts Council of England's, *21st Century Dance: Present Position, Future Vision* (2002) provides a short historical overview of the evolution of the Arts Council's support for dance. It starts at the end of the Second World War with the Arts Council supporting two classical Ballet companies up until the 1990s when the Dance Agencies were established. In 2000/1 Dance Fellowships were introduced for individual artists and dance support was organised. The report mentions the opening of dance development organisations as part of its remit to plan to develop an healthy dance ecology and includes dance support organisation for dancers with non-western backgrounds. In the timeline at the end of the book it mentions that culturally diverse work became more visible in the 1980s. As this is a history, which outlines the Arts Council involvement in the development of dance in Britain, local authorities and employment schemes are not mentioned. Culturally diverse dance is presented as being supported as part of British dance development. The fourth report is *Dance Mapping: A Window on Dance 2004 – 2008* written by Susanne Burns and Sue Harrison and published in 2010. It gives a similar overview, focussing on the increasing diversity of dance and no longer alludes to the cultural policies, which underpinned the raison d'être for funding these dance companies (Burns and Harrison 2010, p. 29-30). The

earlier reports outline how the work of black dancers began to be supported by funding bodies in order to serve a socio-political agenda. However the historical overviews in the last two reports *21st Century dance* and *Dance Mapping* do not mention the socio-political agenda that was attached to the work of black dancers. They simply present contemporary dance as amalgam of cultural influences and dance forms (Burns and Harrison 2010, p.22). The adoption of this inclusive approach to presenting contemporary dance in the subsidized sector is positive in one sense as it shows that attitudes in the subsidized dance sector toward culturally diverse forms of dance had evolved but they do not however give us any historical insight into how the work of black dancers had come to be considered in this way in this context.

Besides the narrative reports there are a number of other publications on 'Black dance'. *Black Dance* (1989) by Edward Thorpe was for a long time one of the only books that provided any information about black British-based dancers and choreographers. The book focuses mainly on African American choreographers and dancers but provides a section on black choreographers in Britain. The book is important, as it is one of the first to document their work. Thorpe states the aim of the book as being

to chart the main course of black dance in a white world, to touch, briefly on its African origins and point to a number of prominent features in a large, often uncharted terrain of Achievement' (1989, p.7).

The history it recounts is one of black achievement and presence rather than one about the historical evolution of dance. The book starts with the description of dance in Africa and moves on to look at dancing during the slavery period in

America and then focuses on the contributions of black choreographers and dancers in American and Britain. Thorpe makes useful comments on how he thinks the then newly founded black dance companies in Britain would thrive, considering the cultural politics of the terrain. He says of Union Dance Company for example that Corinne Bougaard's vision of creating a dance company 'freed from the boundaries and limitations of one culture' might leave it struggling to establish an artistic character given she was introducing a new way of working (1989, p. 181-182). He also says that IRIE! Dance Theatre might be limited by its focus on 'Caribbean themes', which would mean that in spite of its hybrid dance language it would be considered a black dance company, presumably as opposed to multicultural (1989, p. 179). Thorpe gives the reader insights into the cultural politics that these new British companies had to confront. What remains however is a story of how the context evolved or not as a result of their efforts. It is instructive to note that in discussing both companies Thorpe discusses their hybrid dance languages in terms of racial integration, which has Which suggests the agendas these two dance companies were being funded to further or represent.

Black Dance in the UK: Articles and Interviews (2000) edited by Helen Roberts and compiled by Deborah Baddoo was commissioned by the support organisation, The Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD)¹. As its title states, it is a collection of articles and interviews about black dancers and black-led companies published in books and magazines between 1977 and

¹ ADAD merged with four other dance organisations to form One Dance UK in 2016.

1999. These are compiled from magazines, journals and newspapers such as *Animated*, *New Dance* magazine, and *Dance Theatre Journal*. The book is divided into sections under the following headings: Perspectives on Black dance, White perspectives on Black dance, Black dance from a traditional perspective, Black dance from a contemporary perspective and Social/Street Dance influences. The foreword of the compilation, written by Deborah Baddoo, states that the book was commissioned the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) in response to requests from students and practitioners for a resource (2000, p.i). It is organised to highlight issues of racial and identity politics. The books written by Thorpe and Baddoo have different organisational centres and represent the two main ways that Black dance was represented in historical narratives. It would take another five years before a new book was published. In 2007 ADAD published *Voicing Black Dance: The British Experience 1930s and 1990s* as part of the ADAD Heritage project which was supported by the Arts Council and Heritage Lottery. The book, which I co-edited, consists of articles and interviews with black British dance artists. The articles in the book give an overview of the dance companies and artists working in Britain since the 1930s. One of the articles in the book is by Hilary Carty entitled '*Black Dance In England: The Pathway Here*'. It describes the establishment of dance companies as occurring after a period of post-war migration to Britain. These companies represented cultural backgrounds of black migrants – African dance companies, Caribbean dance companies. Her history recognises the professional status or institutionalised context that these dance companies sought to gain with recognition in Britain and she also draws

attention to the professional dance sector as a place where issues of ethnic minority status collides with the artistic aspirations of migrants. This framing of 'black dance' proposes a history of dance, which relates the dance of black people to a dynamic social context. The book includes interviews with several well-known choreographers such as Greta Mendez, Corinne Bougaard, Beverley Glean, Jackie Guy, George Dzikunu, Peter Badejo and Sheron Wray. They speak about their professional development, their political convictions, their thoughts about dance and creativity. It also contains articles, which talk about the historical evolution of the practice of Hip-hop and Lindy-hop in the UK demonstrating the overlaps between social and theatrical dance. The book begins to focus on the practice of dance in Britain and begins to articulate the nature of the context in which black dancers produce their choreographic work.

Hidden Movement: Contemporary Voices of Black British Dance (2013) is the conference proceedings of a professional meeting that took place in Leicester and provides significant narratives from people who have worked in professional dance in Britain since the 1970s. For example, Sue Harrison's article sheds some light on the funding context for dance, Bob Ramdhanie, who founded the Black Dance Development Trust, speaks about this experience, while Jackie Guy, who was an artistic director of Kokuma Dance Company, discusses the company.

Entries on the topic of 'Black dance' in companions of black British history and culture describe practices that come under the umbrella of black dance as

collectivised on the basis of artistic criteria. *Black Dance* by Diana Omo Evans in the *Companion to Black British Culture (2002)* espouses a perspective from British cultural studies at the time, which sees 'black' as encompassing African, Caribbean and Asian heritage. As acknowledged in the introduction of the companion, the politics of this formation is constantly changing. Evans's essay is a survey of various companies run by choreographers or artistic directors of African, Caribbean and Asian heritage, describing the aesthetics of the companies and categorising them as either traditional or innovative and hybrid. Her narrative starts in the 1970s when black companies started to receive subsidies from agencies and funding organisations. It is concerned with the increasing diversification and experimentation of choreographers who work with traditional and social forms of dance (2002, p. 88- 91). Bob Ramdhanie's entry on *Black dance* is in the *Oxford Companion to Black British History (2007)* defines 'black dance' as an African and Caribbean dance practice performed in Britain as an assertion of identity (Ramdhanie 2007, p.52). His narrative starts in the 1940s and focuses on the African Peoples' Dance movement and how it grew in Britain until there were over forty companies in the late 1980s. Due to the considerable number of companies that existed, company leaders decided to canvas for the establishment of a support organisation which appeared in the form of the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT). Ramdhanie explains how the interest of funding organisations shifted away from BDDT in the 1990s as more dancers who had trained in modern dance agitated for support and more foreign dance companies which visited England presented work which was made from a fusion of forms (2007, p. 50-53).

There are points of intersections between the two narratives discussed above. Evans's entry focuses mainly on contemporary dance created through a choreographic fusion of forms whilst Ramdhanie's entry ends with the rise to prominence of new forms of contemporary dance discussed by Evans. This suggests the two entries are telling two different stories of black dance, both factual but focusing on different trajectories in the British dance field. Each entry, however, appears to be posited as if the narrative it presents has outlined the whole field. Evans, also, states erroneously that the demise of BDDT was due to it not being sure whether its definition of 'African and Caribbean dance' referred to the heritage of its members or to work they were creating. This was not the case. BDDT was very clear that their work was about black people and African and Caribbean forms. The organisation was founded to cater for a specific grass roots movement of dancers who were black and, who for the most part, held a particular political and cultural perspective. They were defunded not because they were vague but because the funders wanted all dance practices that were associated with the term black dance to come under one umbrella organisation. Nevertheless, the two entries express points of view of dance practitioners, their politics, thoughts and the aesthetics of their work and together demonstrate that there was more than one performance trajectory in the field. Both entries relate to work supported by the Arts Council and in a sense explore the evolution of dance as funded by the Arts Council.

The narratives by individual dance artists that appear in the books above show that what they consider important is the ability to describe their work in their own terms. Definitions of black dance in the reports mentioned above show that there was a struggle by practitioners to negotiate their position in relation to the Arts Council, but there has been little historical investigation into the nature of this process. It was not until about the middle of the 2000s that academic literature on black dancers and black led companies began to appear. Two narratives, which situate black-led dance companies and black choreographers in the context of wider British dance, are Emilyn Claid's *Yes? No! Maybe... Seductive Ambiguity in Dance* (2006) and Christy Adair's *Dancing the Black Question: The Phoenix Dance Company Phenomenon* (2007). Claid's book opens up the discussion of parallel dance practices within contemporary dance in the 1970s and 1980s. Claid was a key member of the New Dance movement, which started in the mid-1970s in Britain. The MAAS Movers, the first funded black dance company, started around the same time. It was founded in 1977.

She writes:

In the 1970s, we were aware of the equal and parallel emergence of black dance. We did not theorise in the same way, being more concerned with the all-embracing liberation politics of race and class than with the in/visible agendas within that frame (2006, p. 108).

Her book begins to articulate how different dance styles, movements or genres were affected by different dominant discourses and therefore had different struggles to be seen and heard, and problems in being recognized in cultural discourse. Her book also demonstrates that we require concepts through which we can come to understand dance practices that we are not familiar with. Claid

refuses to assume she understands a dance practice and its politics when she does not, but she perceptively points out where there are gaps. Christy Adair's book *Dancing the Black Question: The Phoenix Dance Company Phenomenon* focuses on a single dance company but gives the reader an insight into the cultural context from which the company grew, and thus provides a socio-cultural history of dance in the 1980s. Founded by five young men of Caribbean background from Leeds, the company made a massive impact on the dance scene in the 1980s and 1990s. Adair follows the development of the company from the year it was established in 1981 until 2001. Adair based her case study on theories from cultural studies and postcolonial studies (2007, p. 4-6). After the founders successfully attracted funding, they began to leave the company they started, one by one, due to struggles with the new organisational structures within which they had to work (2007, p. 117). Adair's book engages with the context in which Phoenix Dance Company was established and worked, so that we gain an understanding of how it evolved as part of the British cultural landscape. Adair (2007) provides a history of the context for 'black dance' in the 1970s and 1980s which was supported by Arts Council policies (p. 90) and the youth dance movement (p.35) which opened the door to a career in dance for many young black people in the 1980s. She also discusses the positive and negative impact on Arts Council policies on Phoenix in particular as well as others associated with black dance in general (p.104-108).

Bonnie Rowell's 'United Kingdom An Expanding Map: Towards an Un-unified Theory' (2000) is one of the chapters in the collection *Europe Dancing: Perspectives on Theatre Dance and Cultural Identity*. Her discussion about black dancers looks at their work from the point of view of how it might represent the integration of black communities into Britain. The author thus looks at the work of black dancers in terms of a socio-political agenda. The overall chapter defines British dance in terms of its increasing complexity. Sections of her article address the blurring line between 'High art' and 'Popular culture', the relationship between dance and other art forms and the 'Dance Politics' of the X6 collective. In the section called 'Questions of Identity, Geographic and Artistic', Rowell discusses the changing relations between British and American dance companies, and multiculturalism and the impact of the National Dance Agencies. She discusses Shobhana Jeyasingh in order to give the reader some idea of the hybridity of her work, and the growth of the African Peoples' Dance Movement through organisations like the Manpower Services Agency who targeted unemployed youth. She describes the debates around the work of ethnic minorities being about either the 'preservation of cultural heritage' or 'the fusion of this heritage with contemporary western experience'. Her overview implies that the work of dance artists of non-western background is a result of changes in British culture due to its increased multiculturalism. Whilst this historical perspective is not incorrect, it is limiting as it implies that artistic work by people with non-western background in dance is inspired by one of two issues; the need to preserve roots or explore current living circumstances. It anchors the work of black and Asian artists to a history

of migration where the aesthetics of the work of non-western artists are considered to be reflections or representations of different stances on, or attitudes towards, social integration (Sporton, 2004). Rowell's history in effect limits the value assigned to the work of black choreographers to discourses about social inclusion. Stacey Prickett's *'Hip-Hop Dance Theatre in London: Legitimising an Art Form'* (2013) investigates how theatrical practices using a social dance form have become accepted in a theatrical dance context. She contextualises this development as part of a global phenomenon, which sees Hip-hop practitioners pursuing, careers in theatrical dance. She touches on the work of Rennie Harris in America and the success of his company *Puremovement*. In *London*, she discusses productions seen on the West End stage and at venues like the Barbican as well as the annual festival at Sadler's Wells Theatre called *Breakin Convention*.

British Dance: Black Routes is a collection of essays edited by Christy Adair and Ramsay Burt, about work by British dancers and choreographers who are black. The introduction by the editors give an overview of the two year project from which the book emerged and throws more light on the context of theatrical dance in Britain so that the environment in which black-led dance companies were established can be better appreciated. It is the first book of its kind and contains academic essays on the topic. The book includes a chapter by Thea Barnes' chapter on Berto Pasuka, the founder of the first black-led company in Britain, Les Ballets Nègres (pp. 15-34), another on choreography and spirituality (Ramdhanie, 2017, pp. 78 – 98) as well as revisionist histories of dance in

Britain. Jane Carr's '*Researching British Underground Jazz Dancing 1979 to 1990*' (2013) looks at the development of a popular dance form, British underground jazz, and its intersections with the media. Carr uses the oral history methodology of re-remembering in constructing a history of jazz dancing in British clubs through interviews with key dancers of the era such as Irvn Lewis who went on to run a dance company, which toured Britain. She weaves a narrative from the various interviews she conducted with dancers about the development of the form in clubs. Some dancers brought moves they had learnt from their parents, most were of Caribbean heritage, into club dance while others included movements they learnt from watching Ballet performances and martial arts movies. The book offers several perspectives from which the work of black British based choreographers can be researched. Significantly, it contains a timeline which privileges dance development in Britain from the perspective of black dance practitioners. All these academic studies draw on cultural studies theories and discuss the work of black choreographers, companies and dancers in terms of their institutional context and look at them as cultural producers of theatrical dance. The narratives provide a history of practice and show the dialogic relationship between the work of dance artists as an expression of cultural values and British society.

1.4. Methodology

This literature review outlines that there is little historical work that looks into how the work of choreographers who use African and Diaspora forms have

evolved as part of British dance. The books by Adair, Burt and Claid, mentioned above, address the funding and cultural policy context for dance as it relates to the topics they address. However the remit of their research does not cover looking into the struggle that black choreographers have had to define their work so that it can be understood as an artistic and professional practice within the subsidized dance sector and remain culturally meaningful to them. I maintain that it is important to look at how this has evolved over time. As explained in above in 1.2, I am looking at the years 1985 to 2005. To write this history I require a theoretical approach or historiography. Historiography consists of methods used to produce accounts about the past, and the theoretical approach chosen by a historian to write a history (Bentley 1997). I require a theoretical approach on two accounts; in order to look at the work of choreographers who use African and Diaspora forms as I will be discussing them as a group or sector within this thesis. Their work is generally described as African, Caribbean or Diasporic, or by other names, which relate to cultures of nations outside of Britain, but I will be looking at how their work makes meanings in the British context. I also require a theoretical perspective to guide me in knowing what issues to engage with in formulating this history. I will devise a theoretical approach called the choreosteme, which will address these two areas in one framework. I will theorise the choreosteme in chapter 2 and 3. I will then use the choreosteme to guide me in writing five micro-histories, which will be presented in chapter 4 to 8. My conclusion is chapter 9.

As mentioned above in 1.2, my aim in creating this theoretical approach is to produce a way of historicising some of the developments that have taken place in dance as an industry that have to do with black dancers and black-led companies. The subsidized dance sector is considered to be a professional context as well as an artistic and social context. One could study the topic at hand from various perspectives. My interest, however, is the historical issue of definition that has played out in this sector, and the struggle that dance artists have experienced to describe their work and their intentions.

My chapter plan is below.

1.5. Chapter Plan

In chapter 2, I theorise the concept of Africanist theatrical dance building on theories within critical dance studies, media studies and cultural geography. Chapter 3 will theorise an approach to writing narratives about Africanist theatrical dance based mainly on the heuristic device called the chronotope that has been used in cultural studies by a number of scholars but was first made popular in literary studies by M. Bakhtin (1981). In chapter 4 I will use the choreosteme to analyse how dominant discourses generated through the concept of Ethnic Minority Arts contributed to the debate around the definition of the black dance in Britain. I also discuss the construction of the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector. The chapter ends with the closure of Adzido. In chapter 5 I will examine issues of critical discourse. I will look at the various means by which dance artists and managers tried to generate a critical

discourse for their work and explain how the dominant discourse emanating from larger organisations rendered much of their work invisible. Chapter 6 is a narrative of five independent dance artists who worked in London and how they developed their practices. The aim of this chapter is to recuperate the work of these artists, which have been made invisible by various discourses generated around notions of ethnic minority arts and cultural diversity. In chapter 7, I discuss the work of Sheron Wray and Robert Hylton, two choreographers whose choreography is based on jazz and hip-hop respectively. Their work could also be described as choreographic fusion. I look at the idea of choreographic fusion and investigate why little critical attention was given to dance artists whose work was considered in these terms. I also describe a piece of choreography made by each of these choreographers. Chapter 8 is about Beverley Glean, the artistic director of IRIE! Dance Theatre. I assess reactions to her work and explain why the notion of ethnic minority arts did not provide any insight into her work. I also describe some of her choreography. Chapter 9 is the conclusion. I summarise my thesis and I discuss wider implications of this work.

1.6. Conclusion

I started this chapter with a short narrative about the circumstances, which inspired me to write this project. Through a literature review I demonstrated that issues of definition have been a historical issue for black dancers and choreographers in Britain especially those who use African and Diaspora forms in their work. I presented a chapter plan, which outlines how I intend in this

thesis to develop a theoretical approach and use it to write five micro-histories that address issues of cultural politics. I develop the approach over chapter 2 and 3.

Chapter 2:

The Choreosteme: Theorising Africanist dance practice

2.1. Introduction

Dance was just one of the disciplines in the humanities in which scholars began to adopt for their research theories from cultural studies in the 1980s, particularly those of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Culture was being redefined across disciplines as being the totality of various systems of representation through which people interact and organise their lifestyles (Turner 2006, p. 59). The interaction of dance studies with cultural studies caused the emergence of a field called critical dance studies. In 1990s this field arrived at a point consolidation. *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* (1997) is the title of a book published to mark the consolidation of the field. In the introduction the editor Jane Desmond describes critical dance studies as a move away from focusing on the historical research of theatrical dance forms, the biographies of significant dancers or dance makers and evaluation of their work to a focus on the 'operations of social power' and the 'complex analyses of dance as a social practice' (1997, p.1). Power is a key concern of critical dance studies because it has taken on the aforementioned view of culture from cultural studies as consisting of systems of representation.

Power and power struggles are inherently involved in the activity of producing meaning. Cultural theorists Glen Jordan and Chris Weedon for instance state:

All signifying practices – that is, all practices that have meaning – involve relations of power. They subject us in the sense that they offer us particular subject positions and modes of subjectivity.... We are either active subjects who take up positions from which we can exercise power within a particular social practice, or we are subjected to the definitions of others...Power enables some individuals to realise for themselves particular possibilities which it denies others (1995, p.11)

The interrogation of theatrical dance as a signifying practice by scholars has led amongst other things, to an increase in the scholarship on the work by black choreographers, many of whom are underrepresented in theatrical dance history, as seen in the literature review in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, I will discuss the theoretical perspective of this thesis.

I will then look at a range of literature (omitting those discussed in chapter 1) and discuss the possibilities critical dance studies has opened up for the study of theatrical dance which sits outside the conventional Euro-American dance tradition. Critical dance studies has destabilised the Euro-American dance canon and an expansion of the discursive context for theatrical dance, a production of more case studies on black choreographers and their dance companies, and the writing of revisionist histories. The historically problematic issue of language as it relates to the dance practices of black choreographers and dance artists has been effectively analysed by scholars such as Brenda Dixon Gottschild and Thomas DeFrantz which lies a foundation for further exposition. After looking at the positive developments in the field, I argue that

the destabilisation of the Euro-American dance canon does not replace the need to develop the critical discourse and intellectual context for the work of black choreographers. Without a shared critical language this body of artistic work continues to lack social power. To contribute to this area, I theorise the idea of an Africanist dance practice. I base this on Brenda Dixon Gottschild's conceptualisation of 'Africanist aesthetics'. I argue why I consider African aesthetics to be a counter discourse to 'Europeanist aesthetics', another term she uses. I argue that it provides a conceptual framework for the 'indeterminate' dance practices produced by black choreographers. 'Indeterminate' is a term used by Gottschild which I explain below. Furthermore, this positioning of Africanist aesthetics allows a theorising of Africanist dance practice. I use theorising as opposed to theorisation explaining why theorising will contribute to the production of a critical discourse for the work of black choreographers. The definition of Africanist dance practice I give here forms the basis of the choreosteme, the theoretical model that I continue to devise in chapter 3. I begin by outlining the theoretical perspective of this thesis.

2.2. Theoretical perspective of this thesis

In the introduction to *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* (1997), Jane Desmond, the editor states that the critical dance studies marked a move away from producing biographies of important dancers and choreographers, evaluating dance productions in line with the standards of a particular canon of works to focusing on how the power relations between cultural products and

institutions contributed to and sustained dance practices in specific cultural contexts (Desmond 1997, p.1). Desmond states:

Dance as an embodied social practice and highly visual aesthetic form powerfully meld considerations of materiality and representation together. This is the productive interface of dance studies and cultural studies that this book seeks to make more visible and to encourage in future' (Desmond 1997, p.1).

She describes the conjuncture that critical dance studies creates as making dance a site for investigating questions around embodiment, aesthetics, the specific kind of representation afforded by dance, kinaesthetic and the production of social meanings amongst other things, and the critical analysis of dance as 'a process and as a product' as well as various categories of dance such as 'social dance practices' and 'elite art products' (Desmond 1997, p.2). The manner in which dance melds 'considerations of materiality and representation together' makes discourse a key object inquiry. One important move made within critical dance studies was to interrogate and expand the discourses through which we understand theatrical dance itself. Originally theatrical dance was posited in dance writing as an artistic form of cultural production to be contemplated only in terms of the genius of those who made it. The perspective described by Jane Desmond is broadly social constructionist. This is the theoretical perspective I have chosen for this thesis. Below I describe social constructionism and then describe theatrical dance from a social constructionist perspective.

There is not a singular definition of social constructionism. However, there are a number of features that tend to occur in most definitions. Social constructionism insists that 'the categories and concepts we use, are historically culturally specific' (Burr 2003, pp.2-3). This means they can shift and transform over time depending on the economic, political and social change. For example, the age someone is considered to have become an adult differs from society to society and changes from one generation to the next. Social constructionism also holds that 'knowledge is sustained by social processes' (ibid, p. 4). In other words, people produce knowledge through interaction and relationship and developing a shared language about their object of interest. Lastly, social constructionism maintains that the 'descriptions' we use in society shapes people's behaviours. For example, a drunk is likely to be treated differently by people if he or she is described as sick as opposed to irresponsible (ibid, p.5). The roots of social constructionism are in sociology and psychology (ibid, p.5). It however, is very prominent in cultural studies, with cultural theorists like Stuart Hall drawing on Michel Foucault's ideas in discussions about the work and politics of representation (Hall 2013, p. 29). Approaching theatrical dance from a social constructionist perspective means that we focus on its power as a representational practice. Representational systems or practices come in different forms. They are also called signifying practices. They do not only consist of words, spoken or written, but can also comprise of sounds, gestures, colours, movement, images or a mixture of these. A representational system can be made up of any material, which can stand for an idea or concept (Hall 1997, p.25). Theatrical dance is therefore a powerful representational practice.

The choreographer and the dance artist can create a social context and meanings for those invested in the practices they offer.

As a social practice, theatrical dance requires a discourse. It is produced within an institutional context, which involves schools, higher institutions, funding bodies, venues, public relations organisations amongst others. The discourse about theatrical dance circulates these various sites, though not always evenly. It is from those working in these sites that discourse emerges about dance as an object of knowledge which is a shared way of speaking and writing about the practice which regulates how it is understood. For this reason, discourse is considered as producing objects of knowledge. Discourse governs the conduct of people because 'meaning and meaningful practice' is constructed within discourse (Hall, 2013, pp.29-30). In order to participate in a discussion about a practice or object of knowledge, one has to speak in terms that the discourse has set. It creates 'subject positions' for people to take. A subject position is a place in a discourse that one must take in order to be considered to be making sense. In doing so one has to 'subject' themselves to its 'rules and regulations.' In this way, discourse gives power but also constraints (Hall, 2013, p. 40). A practice or an object may exist but without a discourse, that is a way of speaking about a practice or object it will be without meaning within a given society at a given point in time. For this reason, critical discourse is important to theatrical dance. Without one, it can tend to feel meaningless to those involved. For one's choreography and theatrical dance to make an impact in society and on audiences, it must be part of a discursive regime and participate in cultural

politics. To have power in a cultural field of representation according to Glen Jordan and Chris Weedon means that one has:

- The means to represent oneself and one's interests
- The means to get one's work published, displayed and distributed
- The means to define oneself, for example, what it means to be a person of colour, a woman or working class
- The means to define meanings and shape social values. (1995, p. 13)

They say above in other words as; "the power to name, to the power to represent common sense, the power to create 'official versions' and the power to represent the legitimate social world" (1995, p. 13).

Chris Barker, after Stuart Hall, describes the production of knowledge in cultural studies to be a form of critical intervention on behalf of the underrepresented (Barker 2008, p.5). Practitioners who do not have the power to 'name' their artistic practice or describe it in terms of their own values have little possibility of being part of a dance history. This is one of the reasons that scholars investigating the work of black choreographers and theatrical dance practitioners are concerned with generating critical discourses about their work. There is a tension in discursive regimes between the use of social power to dominate and control others and the use of social power to create community. This however according to Baker and Galasinski is part of the process through which society changes. They say that

'Change occurs through the linkage of rethinking and re-describing with material practices that are implicated in it. Rethinking ourselves, which emerges through social practice and more often than not through social

contradiction and conflict brings new political subjects and practices into being.' (2001, p. 47).

In other words, they are saying, that power struggles in cultural field are inevitable and part of sustaining society. However, engaging the production of discourse can be undertaken with the goal of creating an equitable society, I will below discuss the reconceptualization of theatrical dance in critical dance studies. This has destabilised of the Euro-American dance canon and expanded of the discursive context for theatrical dance. There are more case studies on black choreographers and their dance companies, and there has been the writing of revisionist histories as a result.

2.3. The reconceptualization of theatrical dance in critical dance studies

2.3a. Destabilising the Euro-American dance tradition in dance history

The evolution of theatrical dance in western societies produced a history of ideas about theatrical dance which Susan Leigh Foster says has placed, theatrical dance also called concert dance, with its status as art, 'in the unmarked realm of aesthetics, removed from both the social and the political.' Foster says theatrical performances, which display or incorporate traditional and social dances are considered not as art but as ethnic or cultural and valuable because they represent 'a way of life' (2009, p.5). A key starting point for challenging the use of the Euro-American dance canon as a measure for all dance practices and forms was the seminal essay by Joann Kealiinohomoku

'An anthropologist looks at ballet, as an ethnic dance' first published in 1970. In this essay, Kealiinohomoku compares classical ballet to the hopi dance culture of North Arizona in order to make the point that all dance forms and techniques bear the traits of ethnicity and the culture from where it emerged. She consequently refutes the notion that classical ballet as a form has achieved universality and could represent all people (Dils and Albright 2001, p.4).

Scholars who engage with cultural studies have looked for ways of writing dance histories, which do not place this tradition at the centre of the discipline but use it look only at appropriate dance practices and situations. The editors of *moving history/dancing cultures* (2001) for example avoids building their book around tropes that are common to 'Western art history' such as 'expressionism', 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' or using timelines constructed from the activities of pioneers like Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey but divide their book into four sections called 'Thinking about dance history: Theories and practices', 'World Dance Traditions', 'America Dancing' and 'Contemporary Dance: Global Contexts' (2001, p. xv – xvi). Another example is found in the introduction of *Worlding Dance* (2009). Susan Leigh Foster uses the introduction to suggest an alternative way of writing dance history. She turns to Dipesh Chakrabarty who from a postcolonial perspective argues for a history that arises from the exploration of different 'worldviews' and will 'excavate subjugated knowledge and construct new forms of narration' (2009, p. 11). Foster suggests, after Chakrabarty, that we look for the 'knots' in history, the points at which we begin to compare dance forms or practices and and can question our basis for comparison. For Chakrabarty these 'knots' should not be

addressed with cultural relativism but with the acceptance of plurality. Foster then asks if there is any universal notion of dance technique or form and suggests that histories could explore the difference in outlooks that people hold about these kind of concepts (2009, p. 10).

The idea of a linear progressive narrative became problematic for many dance scholars. This is because the trajectory of classical dance to modern dance to postmodern dance, which is the narrative of artistic development in Western theatrical dance, excludes so many dance practices from theatrical dance history. According to Janet O'Shea, there was a shift from narrative dance history to issue based history as dance scholars began to draw on the theories of Michel Foucault. This mirrored a similar shift in History as a macro discipline that was taking place during the same period. Michel Foucault asserted a conception of time was that it is best understood in 'sets of episteme', which are constituted by power relations as opposed to causality or to the links between each episteme (O'Shea 2010, pp. 12). In issue based history power becomes to be of interest to those researching the field such as looking into how the practitioners of a particular dance practice have been able to position their practice in dance discourses as being superior to others (Desmond 1998, p. 1). Alexander Carter's contextualising essay in *Rethinking Dance History: A Reader* (2004) examines a number of the critical debates in dance history including the artificial packaging of time into neat periods for the sake of narrative order, the supposed neutrality of the historian, and the privileging of certain types of knowledge such as the achievements of great choreographers

whilst ignoring studies about audiences or production teams. She encourages dance historians to work with an awareness of the artifice of historical writing and probe for dance productions that fall between time periods and to be reflexive of their own bias towards certain kinds of knowledge and subjects (Carter 2004, 10-17). The second edition of *Rethinking Dance History* (2018) is subtitled 'issues and methodologies'. The aim of this edition is to introduce new ways by which researchers could review dance practices of relation to 'time, continuity and change' and so expand the boundaries of dance history as a discipline (Morris and Nicholas 2018, p. xiii). Decolonising dance history by Prarthana Purkayastha looks at dance history as 'a site of knowledge production'. Through her study of Indian dance from the turn of the nineteenth century she draws out themes that provide insights into themes such as transnational citizenship and national ideologies (Purkayastha 2018, pp. 123-124). Issue based histories that have resulted from this tend to interrogate dominant ways of looking at dance in order to reveal other ways of seeing which have been rendered invisible. The interest of scholars in this field in revealing hidden narratives and investigating alternative ways of looking at dance has led to changes in how theatrical dance is perceived as a mode of performance.

2.3b. Expanding the discursive context of theatrical dance

With critical dance studies, theatrical dance began to be considered by scholars to be an artistic form, which is embedded in histories of cultural exchanges

between social classes, countries and ethnic groups and contexts of cultural production. Below are three essays in this book that argue for this perspective. Norman Bryson's contribution to the aforementioned book is entitled 'Cultural Studies and Dance History' (1997, pp. 55-81). In it, Bryson expresses his desire that Dance as a subject be situated in the field of cultural studies and visual culture. This he said would break dance out of the silo it had found itself, dominated by a single cannon, that of the Euro-American theatrical dance tradition (1997. p.57). Using ballet as performed historically in the court of Versailles as an example he explains what situating dance studies within cultural studies would do for the study of ballet. He argues that ballet at the court would be seen as part of the wider field of 'social structured human movement' in Paris rather than a practice separate from others. If observed from in a cross-contextual perspective which cultural studies would encourage, a scholar would be encouraged to analyse the relationship between the 'the bow' that the dancer would take before performing in the court in Versailles with the bows people performed before they commenced dancing in social circles. Ballet would, therefore, be understood as being part of a continuum of organised systems of movement, which operate in various contexts in society (1997, pp.58-59). Bryson argument is not against aesthetic evaluations of dance made for proscenium arch stages but as in the case of ballet, he insists that its standards can only be applied to its self and should not be used in regards to other types of performance and movement. Bryson in promoting this perspective argues for the value of theatrical dance to be found in how it exists

as a system through which people make their lives meaningful and through which they organise their social lives rather than in an artistic canon.

The second essay, which serves as an example of this shift in dance scholarship approach to theatrical dance, is by Brenda Gottschild. Her contribution entitled, 'Some thoughts on choreographing history', also addresses the hierarchies surrounding the Euro-American dance tradition and issue of evaluation. Her focus is on the superior status accorded to theatrical dance based on western 'professional performance forms' and created in a Euro-American tradition over theatrical dance which draws on African and Diaspora aesthetics. Gottschild uses the example of a review written about Garth Fagan's choreography to demonstrate the need for space within established discourses for new categories or genres of theatrical dance to be recognised. She quotes the reviewer as writing:

For dancery directness, simplicity, cohesion and strict kinetic pleasure, the most rewarding moment in a performance by Garth Fagan Dance occurs during the curtain calls. Neatly lined up across the stage, standing in recognisable First Positions (sic), the company bends forward into smooth and unaffected bows. The uncomplicated actions, clearly centred in consistently loose lower backs, give a potently elemental effect: they tell of the plumb-line stretch, central force, and plastically easy articulation (1997, p. 170)

The reviewer evaluates and dismisses Garth Fagan's choreography measuring it by the aesthetic criteria of Classical Ballet. He ignores the fact that Garth Fagan's choreography was not presented as classical ballet but was a deliberately produced from a fusion of forms, which included ballet. Gottschild

disagrees that the Western model of theatrical dance should be held up as a standard for such forms of theatrical dance. Instead, she says that the 'merger should be the measure' arguing the dance writer needed to investigate the context of the work itself in order to formulate a model of evaluation (Gottschild 2006, pp. 170-171). She argues for the recognition of theatrical dance, which might belong to a category that could be described as 'indeterminate'. She writes:

' As writers and historians, we can choose to communicate process and contexts instead of following the traditional, deterministic route for Europeanist scholarship which looks for linear, vertical flashpoints – trends and hierarchies – in the evolution and development of our histories. Indeterminacy is a valid approach. We don't need answers: we need questions; we need the dancing, not the dance.' (2006, p. 174).

Gottschild's argument for the recognition of 'Indeterminate' artistic categories in theatrical dance validates and makes room for the emergence of theatrical dance practices from communities and societies where theatrical dance as a mode of performance was adopted through colonial legacies. Her argument is that the artistic categories emerging from such circumstances should be understood on their own terms.

Whilst Bryson argues for a way of analysing theatrical dance that will bring it into comparison with non-theatrical systems of movement, Gottschild, on the other hand argues for a way of evaluating theatrical dance by appreciating the socio-cultural context of its production. This approach argues for appreciation on its own terms, of theatrical dance that draws on dances from social dance contexts or takes aspects 'social structured human movement.' She suggests

that the critical discourse that has evolved for 'professional performance forms' should not be used indiscriminately. Theatrical dance made by other means might not fit into established genres of dance or understandings of how dance evolved historically according in the conventional Euro-American dance tradition and might be considered 'indeterminate'. Indeterminacy however she argues is not invalidity.

The third essay 'Embodying Difference' by Jane Desmond addresses how hierarchies are established when dance forms are borrowed or transferred from one culture or society to another. She discusses two scenarios. Firstly she points out that it is problematic when dance forms or aspects of a dance form or technique is borrowed by practitioners in one society or community from another but the discourse they produce to promote the emerging dance practice seeks to render invisible the cultural borrowing. At times the discourse of the emerging dance practice positions it as superior to the cultural forms, which contributed to the formation of the emerging dance practice (Desmond 1997, pp. 36). The second issue, which Jane Desmond addresses in the same essay, is the validity of dance practices, which are formed through the borrowing of dances from other cultures. She argues that the dance practice formed as a result of such borrowing requires its own discourse and standards of evaluation and these should not be imposed from the culture from where the dance form originated. The example she uses to argue this point is the migration of the European form - classical ballet to China. In China, ballet has not only taken on elements from dances from that locale but it has also been absorbed into its

repertoire of popular performance practices. In China, classical ballet is not a high art form but part of popular Chinese culture and is blended in so that it is meaningful to the local audience and is for this reason promoted by the Chinese government. Considering this, the practice of ballet in China can not merely be considered to be an 'appropriation of a western form'. It has its own local meanings (Desmond 1997, pp. 44). Desmond's essay is, therefore, arguing that the cultural exchange of dance forms and aesthetics is not the problem but the erasure of one discourse by another. In short, she is arguing for equal recognition or consideration for the meanings produced by different social groups through the production or performance of dance. These three essays argue for a discursive context for theatrical dance that goes beyond the intellectual context of the Euro-American theatrical dance tradition. Their suggestions when followed change how to dance as an art form is appreciated and valued.

2.3c. Case studies on black choreographers

Owing to the social constructionist theories used in critical dance studies, scholars have produced case studies of companies that look at choreographic work by black artists. Though there are not many of these case studies, their existence is a step forward. Case studies of individual dance companies show how choreographers experience and express modernity differently through their aesthetic choices. DeFrantz (2004) looks at Alvin Ailey's company in relation to high modernism, African American cultural life, the civil rights movement and

the improvisation methodologies of jazz and considers how Ailey carefully positioned his company so that it retained credibility as a concert dance company whilst symbolising the African American experience and garnering a black audience. Both Nadine Georges-Graves (2010) and Ananya Chatterjea (2004) give accounts of the work of Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, the founder of the Urban Bush Women. Chatterjea sees Zollar's company as part of dance theatre and postmodern dance respectively. Chatterjea describes Zollar's work as being anchored in 'received artistic form' and yet 'resistive' of received notions of gender and politics (pp. 20-21). Georges-Graves defines Zollar's work as mixture of womanist and black politics, rooted in blends of white and black dance traditions and acting, using 'breath, emotion, vocalisation, playfulness' (pp. 22-35).

The histories of individual dance companies bring to light the disagreements that take place over the narratives of black choreographers and highlight's liminality that surrounds their work. Thomas DeFrantz, for example, describes the work of Alvin Ailey's dance company as 'modernism failing on black dancing bodies' because 'the act of performance supersedes its implications in the Africanist paradigm'. He is refereeing to the modernism as an artistic movement. Ananya Chatterjea on a similar note challenges Sally Banes's observation that late postmodern dancers reintroduced the musicality to the genre, which enabled black artists, enter into their movement. She quotes Carl Paris who argues that it was black artists who were working in inventive ways that revitalised the 'postmodern aesthetic' and the 'reconceptualization' of

postmodern dance consequently permitted their work to be thought of as part of the postmodern dance movement (2004, pp. 1). These histories of individual dance companies reveal that what the work of these companies have in common is that they exude a sense of double consciousness. They can be interpreted in several ways.

2.3d. Expanded notion of choreography

The theorization of choreography as a signifying practice has widened the gap conceptually between 'choreography' and 'dance'. Choreography has come to mean more than the structuring of movement to make dances. Choreography also includes the manipulation of the signs, stereotypes; association's people make with a particular type of body when seen in a specific cultural context and other forms of cultural production such as music, media, texts and ideologies, to communicate the values of particular social groups. 'The body', a key concept in the postmodern theory of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler became of interest to dance scholars from the 1990s. This interest manifested in 'the dancing body' being formulated into a unit of analysis for dance scholarship. The concept locates the value of dance in the activity of dancing and the human propensity to dance and make dances over and above the aesthetics of the dance or artistry of the choreography. It brought idea of dance as art into dialogue with other concepts like subjectivity, identity, class, gender and sexuality which are studied in anthropology and sociology. The concept of the 'dancing body' has changed the idea of choreography. Three seminal texts The

Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacles and Sexualities (1995, 2007) by Ramsay Burt, *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power* edited by Susan Leigh Foster (1996) and *The Dancing Black Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool* (2003) by Brenda Dixon Gottschild show the diversity of perspectives and areas that this concept opens up for analysis.

The Male Dancer (1995) by Ramsay Burt is 'a study of the meanings that come into play when men dance on stage' and how patriarchy is reinforced by the narrow depictions of masculinity that are permitted in theatrical dance (p. 2). The body is a central concept in the book and creates the unity between the diverse sections that make it up. Headings include 'Looking at the male', 'Nijinsky' (an important dancer in the European classical ballet tradition), 'Masculinity and Liberation' and 'Dancing in the City'. The focus on 'the body' allows a history to be written which spans a wide range of places and subjects. Furthermore, since the body is a nexus for identity and site where the politics of race, ethnicity, and gender and sexuality intersect it is a useful concept for Burt to look at the work of Alvin Ailey and Bill T. Jones, two black choreographers, from different vantage points. He looks at Black Masculinity in the work of Ailey and in Bill T. Jones' performance of *Rotary Action* with Arnie Zane. *The Male Dancer* by Ramsay Burt shows how theatrical dance can be used to construct gender and sexuality in performance by refereeing to social, political and other artistic contexts. This book shows that theatrical dance also functions to produce group identities in competition with other representations in circulation.

The Black Dancing Body written by Brenda Dixon Gottschild in 2003

investigates how the politics of race and racism in America impacts on the dance as a social and professional activity. Black social dances in the 1950s, for example, were made appropriate for white people to dance by white dance teachers who removed principles of moving which signalled the lifestyles and aesthetic sensibilities of people of African descent such as the use of polyrhythm or seated body positions (2003, p. 27). Another example is the discrimination that black people face in the world of classical ballet (2003, p. 32). Dixon Gottschild's book discusses racial politics in theatrical, popular and social dance realms and what happens when certain aesthetics are associated with black bodies or white bodies (2003, pp.14-16).

In *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power* edited by Susan Leigh Foster (1996) choreography is approached as a 'theorisation of relationships between body and self, gender, desire, individuality, community, and nationality' (pp. xiii). She describes the essays in the volume as meeting the challenge of dance writing by generating 'new relations between history and memory, the aesthetic and the political, the social and the individual' (1996, pp. xiv). In other words, the essays interrogate the discourses in which dance is embedded as a practice as well as those these discourses overlap with. The body in the book *Corporealities* is also used as a unit of analysis but in a performance studies matrix. Here the body, its physicality and movement capabilities, is approached as a site of meaning making, due to the way it engages with signs through practices - The body is a common factor in a vast

array of performance beyond theatrical dance – in pageantry, education, tourism and demands an array of disciplinary approaches from anthropology to psychoanalysis for analysis (pp. x). The modes of critical inquiry in this book places dance in a performance studies spectrum flattening the hierarchy between art dance and everyday movement, revealing hidden connections between aesthetic categories and the social practices of dance, producing knowledge, which was not formerly discussed in dance studies. Signifying practices might be draw on the same cultural repertoire but produce different meanings because the uniqueness of a practice is not derived simply from its symbols but also how these symbols are systematised arranged and layered and named (Hall 1997, pp. 17). Value began to be accorded to choreography for its meaning making potential and not just its ability to attain certain ideals of beauty. How meaning is made through choreography, therefore, might also include how movement interacts with effects such as sound, imagery and actions, which might not be classified as dance (Hall 1997, pp. 49). The concept of the dancing body in certain instances, as in the examples of scholarship given here, serves as an approach to evaluating the social significance of dance and even as a means of appreciating its aesthetics which without resorting to making the artistic standards of any dance genre the measure for all dances.

2.3e Revisionist dance histories

Scholars returned to periods of dance history where black choreographers have been omitted and addressed these omissions seeing that dance history does not only revolve around the Euro-American dance tradition. The 'dancing body' is one of the concepts that has facilitated the writing of revisionist histories. As a unit of analysis, the body facilitates comparisons and analysis across the borders of different cultural spaces and brings together a variety of discourses and disciplines. One could say that this concept locates the value of dance first and foremost in the 'dancing body' and what it sets in motion, rather than in dance form or technique and therefore creates possibilities for the equal treatment of dance practices in scholarship. Histories have been generated which bring together choreographers whose dance practices have differing aesthetics but through constructionist analysis can be seen to be addressing the same or similar ideological concerns. Some scholars have returned to certain periods in modern dance, which have excluded Black choreographers due to their aesthetic and artistic choices and included them.

In *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (2004) Susan Manning returns to the 1930s to the 1960s when the term 'Negro dance' was in use and explores the relationship between these two categories, showing them to be 'mutually constitutive' and not simply defined by the colour of the dancers skin, as people of both racial groups were involved in each one. Blackness and Whiteness in dance were also constructed by whose history and culture a performance was considered to be representing (Manning 2004, pp.xiv-xv). Manning produced a racially inclusive dance history by looking at how race informed discourses of

spectatorship and shaped the meanings dancers could construct through their performances during the aforementioned period. She explores the power differentials in dance. Gay Morris similarly, in *A Game for Dancers: Performing Modernism in the Postwar Years, 1945-1960* (2006) covers the gradual acceptance of Africanist movement into the American avant-garde in the 1950s and documents the contributions of black choreographers both those who drew on African dance forms such as Pearl Primus and others like Janet Collins who was a ballet dancer, in this group. The basis of this grouping is their relationship to modernism and its universalizing objectives. In the same vein, Rebekah J. Kowal draws similarities between Merce Cunningham and Pearl Primus in the book *How to Do Things with Dance* (2010). The similarity she finds is not on the basis of the aesthetics of their work which is extremely different but on the basis that they shared 'conceptions of the moving body as constitutive' (2010, pp. 12).

As an artistic practice, theatrical dance is bound up with the value of modernity. If considered from a Eurocentric point of view theatrical dance that displays Africanisms can not be considered to be modern on its own terms. Ramsay Burt in the book *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, 'Race' and Nation in Early Modern Dance* (1998), looks for a definition of modernity which is not Eurocentric, and on this basis he groups together the African American Katherine Dunham, the white American Martha Graham and the German Mary Wigman as modernists whose work address the alienating experience of the metropolis and as purveyors of the primitivist school of thought. He draws on the research of sociologist Janet Woolf who turns 'the social experience of

metropolitan modernity' into a trope by which to explain the social conditions which produce new artistic expressions. Metropolitan centres attract artists, immigrants and fortune seekers. The density of different lifestyles and cultural experiences create situations, which destabilise definitions of class and appropriate gender behaviour for the inhabitants. The mixture of elite art and popular culture and 'news spaces and new experiences of time' create fecund situations (pp. 23-25). The uneasiness of the metropolitan centre is projected onto 'others' who were then considered the 'alien bodies' of modernity (pp. 55). Through this Burt is able to re-investigate the 1920s and 1930s in Europe and America, cross-borders between dance types and describe the choreographies of popular entertainers such as Josephine Baker as well as the Tiller girls and early American modern dancers who were associated with high art.

In her essay 'African-American dance revisited: undoing master narratives in the studying and teaching of dance history' Takiyah Nur Amin rejects the narrative that posits African-American dance as 'contributing' to a pre-existing white dance history and argues that modern and postmodern genres of dance in America were borne out of a diversity of movement practices (Amin 2018, p. 47).

2.3f. Raising the level of critical discourse about black dance

The use of social constructionist theories has facilitated the emergence of a critical discourse about the work of black choreographers which highlights the

difficulties of generating an intellectual context for their work. The scholars have also produced concepts, which can facilitate the development of theory in this area. Thomas DeFrantz, for example, discusses in the introduction of the anthology *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American dance* (2002) the problems of making audiences aware of the inventiveness of dance produced by black dance artists. He reflects on his own use of the terms 'Black dance' and 'African American dance'. The former he might use with an all black audience but the latter with a multiracial audience for whom the term African American compels them to engage with 'the implications of cultural hybridity and invention' (pp. 4). The cultural hybridity he refers to places the aesthetics of the work by black choreographers outside the parameters of narratives that have been constructed for art dance in the Euro-American dance tradition. DeFrantz argues that in spite of the awareness amongst scholars that race is a construct; the term black is still used in an essentialist manner, as solely a biological signifier (2002, pp. 4-16). DeFrantz would rather the 'black' of black dance be considered in terms of a discourse of blackness. This would cover the politics of race and issues around hybridity. DeFrantz's essay suggests that if the term 'black' is used it must be taken into consideration that it exists in several discursive contexts. Furthermore, the meanings in each context have the potential of evolving over time. He proposes a reflexive use of the term in historical writing stating the discursive and political position from which the term is being used must be stated for it shapes the through-line of the narrative. This perspective however, is not widely known or acknowledged or implemented in depth. DeFrantz reviews a number of dance publications in the fore mentioned

essay and brings into relief the assumptions or theoretical perspectives behind the use of 'black dance' in that particular narrative. I discuss these below.

Lynne Fauley Emery's book *Black Dance in the United States: 1619 to 1970* (1972) was for many years the only book available on black dancers. DeFrantz describes it as a sympathetic account, which encompasses dancing during the slave trade to dancing in concert dance situations. The 'bibliographic' work is held together by a narrative of the white imperialism which is he considers to be reductive. Marshall and Jean Stearns' book focuses on a genre, *Jazz* (1994). The Stearnes locate the position of African American dance in American dance in that it exists as the basis of American popular entertainment. This is again problematic in that it is apolitical and brackets Jazz off from art dance. Concerning tropes around which to organise historical writing, DeFrantz prefers the strategy used by Richard Long in writing *The Black Tradition in American Dance* (1989) to those organised around race. Long posits the work of black choreographers as a 'coherent as part of American history' and thereby discusses their work in relation to politics, choreographic approaches, artistic movements and artist biography. On the other hand, he describes books like Edward Thorpe's *Black Dance* (1989) which is organised around race as presenting the dance practices of black people as an 'amorphous mass shaped by its variance to dominant (white) histories of dance' (pp. 15-16). DeFrantz analysis makes an important point. A writer chooses a theoretical or historiographical position from which to write a history and the method was chosen has to be appropriate (Bentley 1997, p. no page numbers were given).

When writing about the work of black choreographers writers have to be sensitive to context. In the Euro American theatrical dance tradition, professional performance forms and a dance terminology, which is solely used within theatrical contexts has evolved over time, this is not the same for the work of black choreographers. However, choreography created with the use of social dance forms is not necessarily being created as entertainment or as a demonstration of 'the way of life' of black people. It could be created to explore artistic concepts or be experimental. Black choreographers whether in Europe and America and in Africa and the Caribbean historically tend to draw on dance and movement from other contexts than the theatrical to create produce theatrical performances and use some of the same terminology that is used in the non-theatrical dance contexts to describe work produced for the theatre. A lack of sensitivity to this by dance writers, however, means that the intellectual context for the work of black choreographers, dancers and companies is underdeveloped.

One term that has had been used as a strategy for creating an intellectual context for the work of black choreographers is the term 'Africanist.' People who have used the term include Joseph Holloway, the writer Toni Morrison and the anthropologist Melville Herskovits (Gottschild 1998, p.xiv). In dance it is used to describe features or groups of features, which are commonly found in cultural repertoire from Africa or the African Diaspora. It usually used an analytical tool to identify such features in artistic works or traditional performance or popular culture and explore their relationship to African and Diasporic cultures.

Africanist dance aesthetic is not a finite group of features and has been listed in different ways by different writers although in all lists certain features are consistently present. Dance scholar Kariamu Welsh Asante defines African dance aesthetics as in as polyrhythm, polycentricism, curvilinear, dimensionality (Asante 2001, pp. 146-147). Brenda Dixon Gottschild describes them as being 'embracing the conflict', 'polycentricism/Polyrhythm', 'High-Affect Juxtaposition', 'Ephesism', 'the aesthetic of the cool' (1998, pp. 13-16). Choreographers who use African and Diaspora forms in their work have used it as a means of making visible certain aesthetics, which they value.

Brenda Dixon Gottschild's theorization of the term is unique in that she theorises 'Africanist' alongside the term 'Europeanist' and addresses how these two groupings of aesthetics are both positioned as overlapping and yet separate depending on the cultural discourses involved. She writes:

'I use it here to signify African and African American resonances, trends, phenomena. It indicates the influence, past and present, and those forms and forces that arose as products of the Africa diaspora...in sum, the term denotes concepts and practices that exist in Africa and the African diaspora and have their sources in concepts or practices from Africa.... 'Europeanist' is used to denote concepts and practices in Europe and America, which have their taproots in concepts, and practices from Europe. Although these two massive cultural constellation – European and African – are fused and interwoven in many aspects, they also manifest distinct, discrete, and somewhat opposing characteristics and lend themselves to discussion as binary opposites, if not separate streams' (1998, p. xiv)

Whilst Gottschild's definitions refers to the cultural origins of 'concepts' and 'practices' she also refers to the discourses that pit them as binary opposites recognising the working of social power in the positioning of these categories.

Using different terms, Gottschild is discussing a similar problem to that of DeFrantz' (above) when he points out that black dance is reduced to being dance that is not white or not Europeanist. By theorising these categories Gottschild is making visible the paradoxes surrounding dance and race - the arbitrary nature of the categories, the power struggle between them and the necessity of discourse in order to have a shared language for dance practices to be meaningful. The type of tensions between the terms 'Africanist' and 'Europeanist' are featured in the narratives in Susan Manning's book *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (2004). Africanist dance aesthetics could be used more effectively by scholars as a way of developing a critical discourse for Africanist dance practices because it provides a way of talking about the tensions between practices described as Europeanist and Africanist as well as creating a space to delve deeper into the constitution of Africanist aesthetics when used in choreographic practices.

2.4. Theorising Africanist dance practice

An Africanist dance practice is defined here as a dance practice which draws on Africa and diaspora forms and is produced for teaching in a studio, presentation on stage or the creation of choreography for stage. This definition is based on a social constructionist perspective. From a social constructionist perspective, a dance practice should be defined by its present context not its place of origin.

Therefore a dance practice produced for teaching in a studio or for performance on stage will be defined in those terms. Considering how theatrical dance has

been reconceptualised through critical dance studies this definition can be used without placing Africanist theatrical dance in a hierarchy above African and diaspora dance forms which are social dance or traditional dance practices. It does however allow a specific history for theatrical and professional dance practices to be developed in a more structured way.

This definition puts an emphasis on the organisation and structuring of dances for use in these contexts as opposed to the cultural origins of the movement or dances. It places a distinction between the Bata dance, a Yoruba dance from Nigeria performed in worship of Sango the god of thunder, when it appears on stage in a theatre to that which appears in the Shango festival even if the same dancers appear in both. This definition privileges space above time. The dance practice is defined by the context in which it is practised as opposed to from where it originates. This, of course, means there could be different types of practices using the same forms of dance. Defining each dance performance by context encourages the dance researcher who is researching Bata dance in the theatre, for example, to begin looking at politics of staging traditional dances or the rationale behind the cultural policy that encourages the staging of traditional dances. This perspective would also encourage research into the nature of the work which Bata dancers would do if they moved to England as a dance company. This would include looking at debates amongst funding bodies in England about supporting them. This definition not does seek to measure the authenticity of a theatrical production. If authenticity is considered it is to understand how the artistic team or the choreographer of a production has

decided what authenticity is and what choices they have made artistically to achieve authenticity in their performance; what the selection of movements they had made, the gender and age of performers, what costumes or props they have chosen, what customary behaviour and traditions are translated into the piece, how company decides to engage with the audience and so on. This definition focuses on how dance is produced in professional contexts and the processes by which it is produced.

A constructionist perspective is generally accepted for the work of dance companies such as Dance theatre of Harlem or Phoenix dance theatre where a fusion of dance forms appear in their choreography. I however for the advocate this approach to all theatrical dance including dance productions which might display neo-traditional dance forms, carefully staged to replicate as much as possible the way the dances are performed in their original context of performance. Referring to dance as a social practice also draws attention to other features. It places an emphasis on the context through which the practices are carried out. This reminds us that theatrical dance not only consists of staged performances but that production of theatrical dance requires a number of processes. It is a field of cultural production. From this point of view, choreographers are not the only 'producers' but so are dance teachers, administrators, funders. There are also 'intermediaries' such as marketers, cultural policy makers and public relations officers and 'consumers' such as audience members and workshop participants (Venkatesh and Meamber, 2006, p. 13). Furthermore, practices are 'routinized' or 'scheduled' behaviours,

meaning that they are organised to take place at specific times, usually at regular times. They are 'zoned' in that they take place in certain locations or in conjunction with certain individuals or institutions. John Postil, says that practices are on-going activities in specific contexts. Their contexts and regularity are part of what sustains them. They are embodied because they require performance, physical and mental application, by those involved in the activity being practised (2010, p. 12).

I use the term theorising in relation to what I am proposing here about Africanist dance practice rather than theory. Cultural studies promote theorising over arriving at a theory. Jennifer Daryl Slack states that:

cultural studies works with a conception of method as 'practice', which suggests both techniques to be used as resources as well as the activity of practising or 'trying out'. In this double sense, techniques are borrowed and combined, worked with and through, and reworked. Again, the commitment is always to be able to adapt our methods as the new historical realities we engage keep also moving on down the road (1996, p. 115)

Slack is refereeing to the fact that in cultural studies the aim is to move forward rather than find an explanation to suit all cases. I make these propositions mindful that as the practice evolves so will the way we theorise practices. The aim here is to provide a method of theorising various indeterminate practices within theatrical dance and build up a body of work which will in turn demand new ways of theorising. The aim of the theoretical approach I am devising, the choreosteme is to contribute developing a body of knowledge about African dance practice in relation to the different societies these practices, particularly in

Britain.

The discussion of critical dance studies above demonstrates that to study theatrical dance contextually we have to be mindful of time and space. We see attention is paid to time and space in the entire revisionist histories discussed above and in the discussion on urban bush women and other choreographers. Theatrical dance is produced in different cultural spaces. There is a movement across borders between different parts of society, which are zoned along racial lines as in *Modern Dance, Negro Dance* (2004) by Susan Manning or between the social and the theatrical dance contexts as in the work of Urban Bush Women. In Africanist theatrical dance practices the choreographer brings concepts and movement and music from the social space to the theatrical dance space. These borders are important to recognise when we theorise about Africanist dance practices. Due to the historical facts of slavery, colonisation, ethnic minority status, many signifiers used within the cultural production of black people in institutional contexts relate to race and ethnicity. For this reason, the history of ideas and intellectual context that has evolved in relation to a practice of cultural production such as choreography is often overlooked and related dance practices are considered to be part of the 'way of life' of black people.

The setting of conceptual borders around theatrical dance which draw on social and traditional forms is not being proposed with the aim of placing theatrical

dance in a hierarchy above other dance types or to deny a strong relationship between theatrical dance and other dance types wherever that strong relationship exists. The aim of the Choreosteme is to promote what Walter Mignolo calls Border-thinking. Mignolo describes border-thinking as

‘the decolonisation and transformation of the rigidity of epistemic and territorial frontiers established and controlled by the coloniality of power in the process of building the modern/colonial world’ (1999, p. 12).

The knowledge produced through the ‘decolonisation of rigid colonial epistemology’ is described by Mignolo as Border Gnosis or gnoseology defined as the emergent knowledge of the subaltern (1999, p. 12). Mignolo points out that he uses the term ‘Gnosis’ for knowledge in the same sense as V.Y Mudimbe does in his book *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (2008) in which Mudimbe uses the term to capture the philosophies from traditional African thought systems left out of modern discipline of philosophy due to colonial dominance of the discipline (2008, p. 10). For analysis for to be carried out on an activity, which crosses conceptual and contextual borders as in the case of theatrical dance or choreography, which draws on non-western forms, the significance of these borders and their function requires attention. The postcolonial perspective of the Choreosteme places theatrical dance as a practice as a product of the public sphere.

Much is at stake in generation of discourse for theatrical dance for the practitioners involved. Theatrical dance occupies a position in society where it can reach audiences beyond the social group of those that produce it.

Theatrical dance can impact higher education curriculum, gain the attention of the media and be recorded for posterity. These are the ambitions particularly of black choreographers and dance leaders in Britain as recorded in major Arts Council reports (Bryan 1993, McIntosh et al, 2000). The ability to be able to communicate meaningfully in society is crucial. Barker and Galasinski state:

Social change becomes possible through rethinking and re-describing the social order and the possibilities for the future. Rethinking ourselves, which emerges through social practice and, more often than not, through social contradiction and conflict, beings new political subjects and practices into being (Barker and Galasinski 2001, p.56).

Theatrical dance that draws on African and Diaspora forms offers a space for 'rethinking and re-describing the social order', and for wrestling with cultural contradictions.

2.4a. Africanist aesthetics in dance as a counter discourse

My argument is that Africanist dance aesthetics is a counter discourse. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin identify Richard Terdimann as the inventor of the term 'counter-discourse' which they say has been adopted by postcolonial theorists as a means of describing 'symbolic resistance' towards the ability of colonial discourses to overlook or undermine subversion (Terdimann 1985 cited in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2007, p.50) Considering how the term 'Africanist' has been used by scholars working in Dance Studies, I would say therefore that it has produced a counter-discourse to a tradition of Eurocentric aesthetic evaluations, which posit as universal, ideals, which have

emerged out of Euro- American scholarship (DeFrantz and Gonzalez 2014, pp. 3-4). Terms such as modernity, modernism, postmodernism might be described as universal but in practice and in relation to many artistic movements they are defined by ideals which have emerged from a canon of dance luminaries who are mainly white, and part of European and American histories of theatrical practice and who were engaged with ideas and principles that were relevant to their artistic world. Scholars who use these terms to describe work which are not from a Euro-American tradition must theorise their use of these terms as Thomas DeFrantz has done for example in using the term 'modernism' to describe the work of Alvin Ailey calling it 'black modernism'. The term modernism had to be qualified by Thomas Defrantz for it to communicate th sense he wanted. Academic knowledge is dominantly Eurocentric. According to Tariq Jazeel, the focus of Subaltern studies was in response to the 'Eurocentricism of theory cultures' in the academy worldwide (2011, p.164). Eurocentricism is where forms of knowledge from a western history are posited as universal, free from ethnic origins and able to represent progress for all peoples everywhere (Grosfuguel 2009, p. 6). He argues that though challenging eurocentrism in this area is not new it must continue because the university in the Northern Hemisphere is becoming increasingly commercial and global in its reach and continues to impact on how people in different geographical situations or social or economic situation are able to produce knowledge about areas of life that concerns them (2011, p.168). Tariq Jazeel supports Aamir Mufti challenge to theorists to introduce unfamiliar concepts from

underrepresented forms of knowledge into theoretical field to serves as counterpoints to western epistemologies (2011, p.169).

Africanist aesthetic refers to a body of choreographic work some of which is indeterminate. This concept gives indeterminate dance practices a place with the discourse on theatrical dance. It creates a conceptual space in which enables theorists to discuss specific concepts in greater detail. For example Carl Paris discusses how spirituality manifests in the concert dance of Ron K. Brown. In doing so he creates a method of describing 'spirit in the Africanist concert dance body' (Paris 2014, pp. 101-103). The methodology of that Carl Paris has developed can be describe as part of this counterdiscourse that is Africanist dance aesthetics. In short it is a way of developing a body of work and terminology, which enables us to talk about theatrical dance by choreographers, which draw on African and Diaspora forms. Developing histories in relation to African dance aesthetics is more important than it serving as a counterpoint to eurocentrism, This critical discourse is needed for the work of choreographers and dance artists who create in this way to fulfil their potential in the field of cultural production. The destabilisation of the Euro-American dance tradition is not the same as the generation of histories and critical discourses for the work of black choreographers. As discussed above there is social power in being able to develop a shared language about a practice. One of the challenges is evident for the generation of discourses about the work of black choreographers is that many of the signifiers and descriptors use to describe the work have a reference to race or ethnicity such as African, Caribbean, Black. This, however,

is an outcome of the histories of black people. Due to histories of slavery, colonisation and the present ethnic minority status or subaltern positions of black people in various social contexts, many of the labels used to describe their activities relate to race or ethnicity. It is, therefore, important to theorise theatrical dance practices in relation to the context in which they are produced.

2.4b. Africanist theatrical dance and Modernity

It is important to generate histories of Africanist dance practices because they provide an understanding of modernity. In this section I discuss the concept of modernity and why Eurocentric definitions of this term have resulted in the choreography of black choreographers, which relate to other notions of modernity than those of the dominant discourse to being overlooked by dance historians. I argue that the counter discourse of Africanist dance aesthetics provides a conceptual space from which dance histories that relate to various trajectories of modernity can emerge. Ron Eyerman defines modernity from a sociological perspective with a focus on European societies. He writes

the concept of modernity has its roots in the attempt to come to grips with the meaning and significance of the social changes occurring in Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century, namely, the effects of industrialization, urbanization, and political democracy on essentially rural and autocratic societies. The term "modernity" was coined to capture these changes in progress by contrasting the "modern" with the "traditional." The theme, if not the concept, of modernity pervades sociology and the work of its founding fathers, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. In their work modernity was meant to be more than a heuristic concept. It carried connotations of a new experience of the world. Modernity referred to a world constructed a new through the active and conscious intervention of actors and the new sense of self that such active intervention and responsibility entailed. In modern society the world is

experienced as a human construction, an experience that gives rise both to an exhilarating sense of freedom and possibility and to a basic anxiety about the openness of the future (Eyerman 1992 pp. 37-38).

Eyerman's definition though focused on Europe describes an experience which occurs globally – that of social change which comes about through a 'conscious intervention' of the people in a particular society to renew their society and which creates a distinction between the old and new ways of living.

Generally however the idea of modernity is defined as a western phenomenon and other societies beyond the west becoming modern as a result of western forms of control and influence such as colonisation and capitalism. An influential definition of modernity comes from Anthony Giddens (1990). He considers modernity to be a western phenomenon first and foremost. He describes it as an extreme form of social change characterised by its pace of change, which is more vigorous than social change in traditional, feudal or farming societies. The scope of modernity, he states, is global in its reach. It pulls societies into networks. Furthermore it produces nation states and systems that propagate urbanisation, capitalism and individualism (Giddens 1990, p.6-7). For Giddens the dissemination of western institutions across the world is a process that overrides and suppresses the knowledge produced in other cultures and societies and it propagates that 'systematic capitalist production' that has resulted in globalization (Giddens 1990, p.174-175). For Giddens, postmodernity is the experience of extreme modernity, which disorients

societies in the way it connects the local to the global (Giddens 1990, p.176). Giddens's definition is an oversimplification of the concept of modernity,

Giddens does not consider that there were other factors that stimulated modernity in non-western societies besides importation of western institutions to those nations. Long distance trading across Africa between people from different societies in the eighteenth century created modern societies and during the colonial period certain African societies birthed new forms of 'chieftaincy', 'Islamic organisation', and 'witchcraft' which functioned as a form of social control. These resulted in modes of social organisation that differed from the previous generation (Geschiere, Meyer and Pels, 2010, p.4). These developments created modern societies and ways of living which were overlooked by definitions of modernity which focus on the impact of western institutions in Africa, or on the national building initiatives of postcolonial countries. Furthermore, Giddens's does not consider the responses of non-western people and how they adapted and adopted western institutions for use in their societies as part of the discourse of modernity (Geschiere, Meyer and Pels, 2010, p.5). Whilst touching on the positive and negative impact that western institutions might have when imported to other countries like those in Africa or Asia, Giddens does not discuss in any depth the agency of local producers of knowledge in these places. Giddens's definition of modernity provides useful insights into the role that western institutions play in modern developments around the world but it is altogether a more varied phenomenon than he describes. Modernity emerges at intersections of different systems of

social organisation within the same society and between societies. Furthermore different groups in society can experience modernity differently.

Even in Europe, modernity is experienced or conceived differently by different groups of people in the same society for historical reasons. For example if one has a cultural background, which is from a nation, that was a former colony of Britain, one might conceive of modernity in a different sense to someone who does not. Multiculturalism is ignored as a form of modernity. Eurocentric definitions of modernity tend to consider modernity as only taking place when there is a rupture between old and new. They ignore cultural and social forms, which are 'mediations' and 'translations' between these polarities (Geschiere, Meyer and Pels, 2010, p.3). Writers who hold a Eurocentric perspective of modernity have omitted of many modern developments in black communities in Europe from its social and cultural histories. The Eurocentric view of modernity as discussed above sees modernity as arising solely in the west and as only including cultural forms which represent the rupture between a past way of way and a new way of life in the terms that the West experienced rupture. When modernity is defined in Eurocentric terms many modern developments from non-Western nations or black communities in the West will not be considered to be modern. A number of scholars have intervened to challenge this Eurocentric perspective. Paul Gilroy wrote *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) in order posit a way of conceptualising the modernity of diasporic communities whose histories were being suppressed with in national

narratives. He described modernity from the African Diaspora as a counterdiscourse.

Modernity is now being defined in various ways. The concept of modernity, for instance, is now being marked with descriptors or written in plural form by certain scholars to express this change of perspective. The following titles propose diverse descriptors of modernity: *Global Modernities* (Featherstone, Lash and Robertson, 1995), *African Modernities* (Deutsch, Probst and Schmidt (2002)), *Multiple Modernities* (Eisenstadt 2002), *Planetary Modernism* (Stanford 2015). Peter Geschiere et al propose the idea of 'Genealogies of modernity' in their introduction to their edited collection *Readings in Modernity in Africa* (2010). These scholarly interventions demonstrate that there are several discourses not one discourse of modernity, each proposing different means of achieving social change, investigating, conceptualising and progressing ideas about how society should go forward.

A number of dance histories have been written, which explore theatrical dance practices, that are an expression of genealogies of modernity that differ from the Euro-American tradition. The following are a list of publications that explore this. Francesca Castaldi (2006) writes about the national dance company of Senegal exploring how this company was shaped by the philosophy of Negritude. Royona Mitra has written on the choreographer Akram Khan from the point of view of 'interculturalism' (2015) and Yutian Wong has edited a collection of writing on Asian American dance looking at issues of multiculturalism (2016).

Francis Nii-Yartey in his book, *African Dance in Ghana: Contemporary Transformations* (2016) discusses how pan-Africanist thought informed the development of theatrical dance practice in Ghana. Prarthana Purkayastha has written on a history of dance in India, which starts at the turn of the nineteenth century and challenges colonial discourses (2018). Moreover, dance historians are also approaching 'Blackness' as a discursive space as opposed to a racial marker and in this way are able to produce narratives, which explore artistic developments in theatrical dance, which relate variously to notions of identity, heritage, continuity, race, racism, and double consciousness. *British Dance, Black Routes* (2017) edited by Christy Adair and Ramsay Burt, and *Black Performance Theory* (2014) edited by Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez are two books that explore this terrain. By positioning Africanist dance aesthetics as a counter discourse to the Eurocentricism of dominant theatrical dance discourses I am contributing to developing this intellectual context to make space for theatrical dance discourses, which explore trajectories of modernity, which relate to Africanist discourses.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I defined Africanist dance practice based on social constructionism and the revisionist theories of critical dance studies. I define an Africanist dance practice as a dance practice which draws on Africa and diaspora forms and is produced for teaching in a studio, presentation on stage or the creation of choreography for stage. I position Africanist aesthetics as a

discourse which includes the evolving discussion on theatrical dance which draws on African and diaspora forms of dance and a counterdiscourse to Eurocentric discourses about theatrical dance. I demonstrate the importance of recognising that theatrical dance practices can be related to different ideas of modernity and of time and space. The aim of the choreosteme is to support the generation of narratives, which reveal the different sense of time and space experienced by postcolonial and diasporic subjects. For this reason I introduce the chronotope as a heuristic device to support the development of narratives about choreographers, dance artists, and their work. This is what I discuss in chapter 3.

Chapter 3

The Choreosteme: Objects of Inquiry and Chronotopic Values

3.1. Introduction

Africanist dance practice is defined here as a dance practice which draws on African and diaspora forms which are produced for teaching in a studio or performance on stage. These practices could be described as 'Africanist' in relation to a body of work that has emerged from the use of African and Diaspora forms in these contexts. This does not mean such work cannot be described in other ways or come under other banners such as 'contemporary dance'. I

discussed the contextualisation of these dance practices in chapter 2. In this chapter I will describe the choreosteme. It is the method I am devising to support the production of issued based historical writing. The objects of inquiry of the choreosteme are the politics of representation, critical and cultural discourses, cultural politics and related issues. The choreosteme uses a heuristic device called the chronotope as a way of developing narratives and delineating issues for analysis. In this chapter I will describe what the chronotope is and how it can be used. Lastly I will describe a methodology of using it. I show how the choreosteme can be used in relation to dance in Britain.

3.2. Objects of Inquiry

In the introduction of *Worlding Dance* (2009), Susan Leigh Foster suggests an alternative way of writing dance history drawing on ideas from postcolonial theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty. He argues for a history that arises from the exploration of different 'worldviews' that will 'excavate subjugated knowledge and construct new forms of narration' (2009, p. 11). Foster suggests, after Chakrabarty, that we look for the 'knots' in history, the points we begin to compare dance forms or practices and at this point question our basis for comparison. For Chakrabarty these 'knots' should not be addressed with cultural relativism but with the acceptance of plurality. Foster then asks if there is any universal notion of dance technique or form and suggests that histories

could explore different outlooks on these kinds of concepts or 'knots' (2009, p. 10). The choreosteme is built around looking for and at these knots within the practice of dance. Unlike Chakrabarty, however, I am not insisting on cultural relativism or pluralism in the manner these knots are discussed. I propose 'theorising' and 'border thinking' as discussed in the pervious chapter. I am interested in looking at the clashes and differences in perspectives as well as making hidden points of view visible.

My thesis is looking at the work of Black dance artists produced in a particular context in Britain called the subsidized dance sector. Dance as an industry in Britain is made up of several sectors supported by different types of economies, organised around different networks and underpinned by different values systems and aims and objectives (Whitely 1995). Dance artists have to create work by fitting into different roles and working with different concepts. The roles might include dance teacher, choreographer, dance manager, artistic director and the concepts might include choreography, dance technique, dance form, staging or dance teaching. The concepts might be aesthetic categories like modern, postmodern, classical, experimental. I consider these categories and roles as being the 'knots' or 'borders', which we have to attend to when writing about Africanist dance practices. Dance artists from different backgrounds bring different knowledge and skills to the aforementioned roles and the work with the aforementioned concepts in different ways. This has to be considered when writing about these artists and their work. Two concepts, which are useful to looking at these knots or borders, are intentional hybridity and praxis.

3.2a. Intentional hybridity and Praxis

Intentional hybridity is a concept proposed by Pnina Werbner (Werbner 1997, p.5). I have theorized it further so that it can be used as a guide to gain an understanding of the praxis of the choreographic work that draws on African and Diaspora forms. Graham McFee argues that artistic appreciation of any art form requires knowledge of the concepts, which relate to it. He argues that all experience is concept-mediated and that our experience of a situation relies on our conceptual understanding of it. For example he argues that unless you understand the characteristics of a category of music called 'Serial music' you might listen to it and like it but you will not be able to evaluate it or appreciate it as serial music. Your appreciation will be aesthetic but not artistic as you are unable to comment on any of its properties (McFee 1992, p. 42). I am proposing that discovering the praxis of a piece of choreography which draws on African and Diaspora forms enables an artistic appreciation of the work to take place. Below I explain further how intentional hybridity can support an engagement with a choreographer's praxis or artistic intent and attainment.

Building on Bakhtin (1981) Pnina Werbner in an essay looking into the politics of hybridity in multicultural societies defines artistic practices, which mix forms from different cultural origins as intentional hybrids. She says they reference as 'organic hybridity' which is a process that takes place when cultures evolve over

time through 'borrowings', 'exchanges' and 'inventions', which usually come about when there is forced or willing contact between different societies or communities, through colonialism or through migration for economic reasons. Intentional hybrids, which might reference organic hybrids, differ in that they are created deliberately by artists who are knowingly 'fusing the unfusable' with 'an ironic double consciousness' (Werbner 1997, p.5). In doing so, such artists are engaging in a politics of representation. Werbner's concept of intentional hybridity can be further theorised to describe the specific nature of hybrid choreography. The aim of using this concept to theorise choreography that draws on Africa and diaspora forms is to create a means of giving its own terms of reference and context of evaluation.

Choreographers are not producers of 'organic hybrid' dance practices. The method of cultural exchange used by choreographers involves working through and with institutions, which have specific histories, working practices and agendas. Even where choreographers and dancers might constitute a community of practice they do not create work as an ethnic group. They work within the milieu of cultural citizenship in relation to socio-political systems. They make many individual decisions as to how they run their dance companies and projects and who their audiences are even though they may draw on the support of a community who are invested in the aesthetics and cultural lineage of their performances. There may be correlations between how they would create performance in social dance situations but ultimately the social dance scene is a related but different context to that of the theatrical. The choices that choreographers and other artists make to work with particular performance and

dance traditions are significant and specific to that context.

An intentional hybrid is also an articulation. An articulation in the tradition of Stuart Hall is the bringing together in a practice or structure, elements, which would not otherwise come together and might even be thought of as incongruous. Jennifer Daryl Slack (2005) reflecting on Hall's work describes articulation 'epistemologically' as

A way of thinking the structures of what we know as a play of correspondences, non-correspondences and contradictions, as fragments in the constitution of what we take to be unities. Politically, articulation is a way of foregrounding the structure and play of power that entail in relations of dominance and subordination (Slack 2005, p.113).

She submits that an articulation can be empowering and disempowering but that when used purposefully it can offer a means of 'shaping intervention within a particular social formation, conjuncture or context' (Slack 2005, p.113). The concept of articulation enables us to consider what kind of statement or meaning choreography creates when it appears in the form of an intentional hybrid. The choreography can signal potentiality and possibility or stereotypical notions and déjà vu. From a constructionist perspective what choreography articulates, in the Hallian sense of the word, offers a method of evaluating the choreography.

The praxis of a choreographer can be seen in the level of awareness and intentionality he or she brings to the manner in which he or she combines dance

forms from different contexts. Intentionality encapsulates the choreographer's politics, with a small 'p'. The vision of the choreographer shows up in the creative choices they make, in their intentionality, in why he or she sees the importance of creating such an articulation. The idea of praxis, which originates from Aristotle, was introduced into postcolonial contexts through the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire who in the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) theorises the concept as 'a transformation of the world' through 'reflection and action'. Freire is critical of what he describes as the 'banking concept of education' where students are simply treated as 'receptacles' of information and knowledge and they are encouraged to reproduce the system they have been taught (Freire 2000, p. 83). The 'banking concept of education' in other words sets the colonizer or former colonizer's view of the world as the standard to which the student must attain and therefore turns the student's attention away from analyzing and reflecting on his or her environment and circumstances seeking solutions which are suitable or appropriate for their problems and aspirations. A choreographer who is invested in creating choreography using dance forms from Africa or the Diaspora may be producing work that is theatrical but not necessarily exploring the artistic concerns of the Euro-American tradition of theatrical dance. To engage with the praxis of the choreographer therefore requires an engagement with how the choreographer's work might be in dialogue with the Euro-American tradition rather than how it fits into it.

Praxis is dialogic and therefore encourages us to thinking about how diverse cultural and artistic elements of the work exist together in the hybrid piece of

choreography. As we notice what has been experimented with, modified, changed, shifted we are positioned to think through what is being communicated or what questions are being posed by the work. Choreography requires an investigation into the genre and artistic or dance practices that are involved in the choreography. The choreography that uses artistic categories that emanates from different socio-cultural contexts has a performativity that constructs a modernist or postmodernist discourse of dance, which is generally overlooked due to its indeterminacy. The meanings produced by the choreography are not solely about the personal identity of the choreographer because the theatrical conventions and genres of dance being mixed in the choreography and the dance production have social and artistic histories and have been produced through institutional structures and discourses. There are three areas that are worth noting in this regard. One issue we should consider is the positionality of the theatrical dance genre or performance category of the work. We have to consider whether the choreographer is working mainly in the confines of one genre for example dance drama or dance display or whether they are drawing elements from a variety of performance categories or traditions or dance forms or techniques for the purposes of creating the work. The choreographer might be intervening into a known established category like modernism or working in a modernist aesthetic which is indeterminate. Whether one or the other the artistic categories brought into play by the choreography have histories of practice and standards of evaluation. Secondly, we also have to consider the choreographer's own politics or intentionality for the specific work we are looking at or the works they have produced over the

course of their career. The choreographer's intentionality is informed by his or her politics with a big 'P' or with a small 'p'.

Choreographers who are interested and invested in working with traditional and social dance forms in a theatrical context have an attitude towards and expectation of that context. The ethics and politics of choreographers and dance artists guide how they work. They might use their choreography to explore or investigate ideologies or ways of being or seeing. The ideologies, world views, cultural movements such as - pan-Africanism, Afro-futurism, Afrocentricity, cosmopolitanism, Rastafarianism, Negritude might be influences or even foundational principles for their practices or the choreographers might be exploring personal narratives, seeing the personal as the political or they might be invested in the discourse of dance as an art and contributing to that conversation. Lastly we have to consider the borders made visible by the choreographic work we are looking at and what knowledge can be produced when we turn our analytical focus to these borders. I describe borders as points in the choreography or dancing where we notice that aesthetics have been manipulated or shifted from how they exist in their original context. It is at these points we can think and theorise about the meanings being produced by theatrical dance practices, which draws on African and diaspora forms. It is necessary for us to discuss the work of black choreographers and dance artists in conjunction with others and at work in their particular institutional context. By doing this we can consider the various discourses that they work with and

through and at times seek to change. We can also look into the impact of discourses and look at the cultural politics of different situations. This is where the chronotope comes into play. It is a device that can facilitate the scoping of the time-space in which the particular issue or event being researched inhabits.

3.2b. The chronotope and its role in cultural and historical research

The literary chronotope is a unit of analysis formulated by M.M Bakhtin, the literary theorist, who borrowed the concept of the chronotope from Einstein's Theory of Relativity (Bakhtin 1981, p. 84). He devised it as a way of categorising literary genres according to their use of time space. In the essay 'Forms of time and chronotope in the Novel, he writes, 'we will give the name *chronotope* (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature'. His focus was the chronotope in literature where 'spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole' (Bakhtin 1981, p. 84). This 'concrete whole' or 'time space' in fiction refers to the world of the novel or the play. Chronotope has however also been applied to historical narratives and in this context it brings together selected happenings and locations relevant to the historical narrative being constructed and leaving out others. Chronotope therefore constitutes a useful device for mapping out what incidents and locations should appear in a historical account of a dance practice or dance, which exists outside documented artistic movements and therefore requires the researcher to map out its context.

In describing a number of literary genres in the aforementioned essay, Bakhtin shows how each genre focuses on particular types of characters, and particular activities, that play out in time, in particular locations and spatialities – therefore how time and space are fused to create narratives of certain types. One example he expounds is that of the ancient Greek novel which he tentatively called the ‘adventure novel of ordeal’, which makes use of ‘adventure-time’. The action plots of such novels, which usually are about two lovers overcoming a variety of obstacles in order to be married, takes place over large expanses of space. The novels usually include detailed descriptions of the customs of the places visited and speeches by characters which reflections on religious, philosophical and scientific subjects (Bakhtin 1981, p. 88).

The chronotope manifests time space through chronotopic motifs. Bakhtin identifies metaphors that are found in a range of novelistic genres as representatives of ‘chronotopic values’. The adventure-time for example can be thought of in motifs such as ‘meeting/parting, loss/acquisition, search/discovery, and recognition/non-recognition’ (Bakhtin 1981, p. 97). Some motifs take the form of locations, which have symbolic significance such as the chronotope of the road, the chronotope of encounter, the chronotope of the castle. When these chronotopic motifs appear in fiction they suggest the kind of activities will take place or events will unfold. For instance Bakhtin describes the chronotope of the castle as being characteristic of the Gothic novel. He writes that ‘legends and traditions animate every corner of the castle and its environs through their constant reminder of past events. It is this quality that gives rise to the specific

kind of narrative inherent in castles and that is then worked out in Gothic novels' (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 245-246). Time space is therefore characterised by the values in which it is steeped.

The concept of time space is recognised as being important in the communication of cultural theory and history as much as fiction. The literary chronotope has inspired scholars in the fields of narratology, reception theory and cognitive approaches to literature and gender studies (Bemong and Borghart 2010, p. 3). Bakhtin scholars see the chronotope as a 'cognitive concept as much as a narrative feature of texts' and consider it to be representative of worldviews. Rather than see the chronotope as applying to a limited number of literary genres scholars see chronotopes as being present in all forms of narratives and as even offering a way of analysing 'popular culture' as well (Bemong and Borghart 2010, pp. 8-9). Jan Blommaert discussing the role chronotopes play in historical research calls these chronotopic motifs, 'tropic emblems'. He gives the examples of Stalin as an emblem which could evoke 'a cold war chronotope' and Che Guevara as a symbol which rearranges 'contemporary moments of social activism in an older historical lineage of left-wing rebellion' (Blommaert 2015, p. 111). Jan Blommaert relates the chronotope to 'Foucauldian discourses of truth' due to the relationship between human values and time space (Blommaert, 2015 p. 112). He argues that Bakhtin considered history to be a 'spatiotemporal concept' not simply a temporal one. Indeed the manner in which the chronotope fuses the spatial and temporal makes it a useful concept in the writing and analysing of histories. He

writes 'specific chronotopes produce specific kinds of persons, actions, meanings and value. Interacting, decoding and deploying them are also in themselves, chronotopic phenomena, in which other histories convene in the here-and-now historicity of production and understanding' (Blommaert 2015, p. 109). The chronotope shows the relationship of time space to 'human consciousness and agency'.

The chronotope provides a framework for generating narratives that are reflective of a particular value system. The value system need not be justified by an established way of working or making art. It instead focuses on how the values of those involved inspire activities that engage with specific spaces, how values fuse time to space, activity to location. The chronotope therefore provides a basis for creating narratives about choreography that might not fit into theorised artistic movements such as the work of choreographers who see their artistic training as being the product of dancing in nightclubs as well as training in the academy, who see their work as contemporary though they are interested in the continuity of tradition within their contemporary practice. Moreover, the chronotope offers a way of conceptualising how history can be told as a web of micro-histories. Jan Blommaert demonstrates how the chronotope can be used to depict the manner in which human agency operates at different level or scales. He uses an example of an election to illustrate this point. The election takes place at the level of the individual who votes, at the level of the political party celebrating victory, and at the level of the winning party setting up a parliamentary cabinet (Blommaert 2015, p. 110). Each level of

activity in the election has the potential to produce narratives, which exist in different time spaces, interrogating different values and the activities of different players and yet intersecting at points. The chronotope could enable the writing of histories about dancers involved in different dance practices working in the same society during the same period of time and how their practices connect and disconnect. A web of dance histories would posit history as a means of exploring value systems and worldviews rather than the insistence of a dominant narrative.

Judith Hamera uses the chronotope in this fashion, to look at the world of amateur ballet practice in a global city. The focus of her study is Le Studio, a facility in California, which has produced many professional dancers but whose main focus, is to increase 'the creative life of the community' through dance (Hamera 2011, p.63). She looks at how the learning of ballet technique impacts on the activities and places that the dance student is occupied with and the value system that binds them to this time space. Technique acts as a chronotope, which organises the world of the dance student through its 'representational grammars and protocols' (Hamera 2011, p.72). Ballet technique gives the student 'new places' to visit, 'a new body' transformed by technique and inserts the student into 'new communities' of practice. Ultimately ballet technique does not offer a real location but a 'utopia' 'performatively constituted from the daily labors and daily longings demanded of and inspired by technique' (Hamera 2011, p.70). Time space is used to map out a field of

theatrical dance activity around key questions – in this case how ballet itself creates the environment the students inhabit.

Arguably the most well known chronotope within cultural studies and race studies is that of the Black Atlantic, a chronotope devised by Paul Gilroy. It is a 'single unit of analysis' that asks cultural historians to look at the modern world as being produced through transnational and intercultural journeys (Gilroy, 1993a, p. 15). Gilroy's chronotope of the Black Atlantic has inspired the generation of artistic and cultural histories, which are expressive of Black Modernity which would not have been conceived without a framework to theorise them in those terms. These expressions though not traditional, would not have been considered modern from a Eurocentric perspective. The book, *Afromodern: Journey through the Black Atlantic* which accompanied an exhibition that took place in Liverpool's Tate Gallery in 2010 documents examples of art by black people, some of which has been left out of documents on modernism. The book examines the cross-cultural exploration by artists from Africa, the Caribbean and America which resulted in the production of modern art which both contributed to the European modern art movements and created counter discourses (Barson 2010, p.10). Whilst the Black Atlantic has been used to produce narrative histories of various cultural and artistic activities, the choreosteme as a chronotope is dance specific and aims to provide a framework for documenting dance within the Nation state engaging with the categories produced by this environment as opposed to by passing it, in the way that the Black Atlantic does. It however can work in tandem with the Black

Atlantic as it focuses on examining the values and activities of choreographers and dancers who draw on African and Diaspora forms and how this elicits their engagement to the national space, whilst not negating their engagement with other spaces.

I will explain this further later in the chapter. In the next section I will discuss the time space of the framework I am devising which is called the Choreosteme.

3.3. Looking at dance in the British subsidized dance sector

In general dance is considered as consisting of two main sectors: the subsidized sector and the Commercial sector. The subsidized sector includes organisations that support dance and engage dance artists in activities, which explore or present dance as an art form and provide room for artistic freedom, and creative inquiry. Most work is small and medium scale. Mainly ballet companies are the only companies in this sector that are large scale. The subsidized sector is mainly supported by grants and funds from the Arts Council of England and other agencies. The commercial sector offers dance jobs, which are usually better paid however The choreographers and dancers in this sector must be able to work within an artistic team, as commercial productions are rarely led choreographers. The choreographers and dancers in the commercial sector must know what dances and cultural images are fashionable and trendy and be able to find out how to use dances to represent different historical eras and cultural perspectives. At the head of a commercial production is usually an

artistic director. Commercial productions or shows tend to be larger scale productions (Dance UK 2001, pp. 11- 14).

The subsidized dance sector is generally associated with community arts, dance as a higher education subject, dance in schools, high art venues and organisations with a socially engaged or cultural remit. The commercial sector is associated with west end shows; dance in advertisements, fashion shows and dance in the music business. There is a blurred line between the two sectors as dancers seek to work in both contexts although this is difficult, as they require different skill sets, or ways of using dance forms. Overall however dance as an industry is considered to be a 'mixed economy' due to the various way dance producers raise money (Dance UK 2001, p. 14). Dance artists and organisations also seek financial support from commercial organisations and businesses to match the funding they receive from funding bodies though this is often difficult (Cooper 2001, no page numbers).

The subsidized dance sector is at times referred to as the Independent dance sector. This includes not just dance artists but also dance managers and producers and other practitioners working in this field (IDMN, about). A network of organisations supports the independent dance sector; dance agencies, which exist, in different regions of the country as well as support organisations, which facilitate the professional development of dancers and carry out strategic projects on behalf of the sector. These organisations might be geared to meet the needs of dancers depending on the nature of their dance forms or the areas

in which they work as well as support their professional development. They include AKADEMI which supports dancers using South Asian dance forms and ADAD, now part of One Dance UK, for artists using dance forms of the African Diaspora. Together these organisational networks are called the dance ecology (Siddall 2001, pp. v-ix). Independent dance artists often describe themselves as dance artists. Gill Clarke, one of the directors of Independent dance often used this term. The term was used to indicate that independent dancers work in a number of creative capacities. They might perform as dancers but also teach and choreograph (Bramley 2007, no page numbers). My focus on theatrical dance that draws on culturally diverse forms in these fields of cultural production which support the staging of dance performances for organised audiences in venues or for events associated with art dance or popular culture. I am interested in producing histories which demonstrate the engagement of choreographers and dance artists with British institutional politics, and which looks at their work as part of Britain as a multicultural society.

3.3a. The time-space of dance production

The Choreosteme fuses 'the space' of dance production with the 'time' or activity of theatrical dance production. In Britain the subsidized dance sector is bound up in the development of the public sphere and civil society and the promotion of social interaction (Stevenson 2003, p.23). Considering this the time space of the Choreosteme is that of cultural citizenship. According to Nick Stevenson, Cultural Citizenship is driven by questions of 'inclusion and

exclusion' and the participation of citizens in a 'communications-based society' (ibid 2003, p.19). The work of producing dance involves the development of the public sphere. The nature of the subsidized dance sector is that it demands that an individual or team of workers take responsibility for the production of dance not only in aesthetic terms but also in social terms. The producers of dance productions have to meet funding criteria in order to access funds from agencies. They have to work with the standard frameworks and the policies of various institutions. They raise funds, organise the recruitment of dancers, the publicity of the upcoming performances and audience development. Choreographers and dancers are involved organising and running in research and development processes, rehearsals, planning with the artistic teams and technical crews, the presentation of the finished work, for performance in theatres and in spaces temporarily used for site-specific work.

The values placed on the social practice of making dance, as an artform from the point of view of both artists and stakeholders, is what creates this time space. The narratives about producing, making, performing, developing audiences and touring mark the passage of time in the chronotope. The chronotopic motif or tropic emblem of the Choreosteme is deemed to be 'the dance studio' for this reason. Choreographers, who draw on African and Diaspora forms like others, work in the subsidized dance sector in Britain because they wish to impact society through the dances they make. They are also expected to support government agendas and fulfil cultural policy in return for subsidy. The dance studio is the place where the choreographer or dance

artist in the making of a dance production or researching a dance vocabulary begins to confront the discourses that sustain theatrical dance in a particular place at a particular time, consciously or unconsciously. As a location 'the dance studio' has chronotropic values. In the dance studio the intentionality of the choreographer and the dancers, the economic or funding context, issues of reception, aesthetic aspirations, ideas of authenticity and ideas of community, inform the process, of making work, as does a politics of representation. The time space of cultural production is a sphere where cultural citizenship is expressed. For this reason it is appropriate to approach happenings in this sphere from a postcolonial perspective.

Examining the time space of dance production from a postcolonial perspective brings to light that it is a site for looking at the power struggles between social groups in the multicultural context of Britain. In postcolonial studies there has been a 'rerouting' of its key concerns of change and continuity in the postcolony to examining global discourses such as migration and dislocation and multiculturalism and to exposing the roots of inequality that arise in different places due to historic colonialism and to the search for more equitable practices. The idea of rerouting has arisen from the engagement of postcolonial studies with globalisation, cosmopolitanism, migration and other global trends. This inquiry has moved the concept of the postcolonial from being considered a 'historical marker' to being a mode of investigation (Wilson et al 2010, pp. 2-3). In chapter 2, through an analysis of literature from critical dance studies I stated that the perspective that the ideas and aesthetics of Euro-American theatrical

dance as the standard for all forms of theatrical performance or dance types is no longer tenable. . Building on key interests of these two disciplines, I suggest that theatrical dance should be defined from the point of view of how it has evolved historically and transnationally as a performance type. Over the course of time theatrical dance has evolved away from being a solely a European practice to being a global one which connects with complex notions of modernity. I also discussed in chapter 2, how Anthony Giddens' definition of modernity which looks at it as a product of social and political institutions which spread from European to other parts of the world via colonisation and slavery does not account for the agency of former colonised peoples . Former colonies have produced 'alternative modernities'. These modernities are represented by the cultural forms, which have emerged through experimentation with European cultural forms and institutions. This experimentation has been instigated by the need to adapt European institutions to work with the material conditions and realities that former colonial and diaspora people find themselves (Ashcroft 2005, pp. 87). Moreover, historically, from the 1920s significant artistic movements accompanied liberation movements; post-independent and civil right movements in America, Caribbean and Africa. The cultural manifestations which accompanied these political movements evolved genres of dance theatre and dance display each with their own teleology and which through the Black Atlantic (1995) to use Gilroy's concept, have also circulated around the world. The Choreosteme therefore posits theatrical dance as a performance mode that is the product of modernity as a transnational social condition, as opposed to a mode of performance that upholds western standards due to the fact it

originated in the west. The implications of this for theatrical dance that draws from African and Diaspora forms in this time spacetime space are that it is defined by postcolonial exigencies, which rest on constructionist theories.

Dance as an industry in Britain is evolving as a product of the public sphere that is infused with ideas and practices from various sources. It has evolved through the tensions between institutions of the nation state and multinational companies vying for ascendance, the resistance of civil society, entrepreneurship, multiculturalism and cultural citizenship. Jeffery Archer (in Stevenson 2003 p. 23) argues 'the civil society is not merely an institutional realm, but is constructed through symbolic codes of inclusion and exclusion.' The Choreosteme encourages a focus on choreographers, whether black or white, as workers in the public sphere, engaging with modern institutions and transnational networks to create dance for audiences, which are developed through these institutional networks. As we observe them working however it becomes apparent that they have different types of institutional support for the creation of dance. In many instance though they might use the same venues they have different audiences. At times they use different venues. They have different levels of power when it comes to participating in cultural politics. The media might be more interested in the work of some choreographers because of their ethnicity, aesthetics and themes or lack interest in them for the same reason. The power differentials between choreographers as they engage in this enterprise are brought to the fore.

The Choreosteme is designed for issue-based micro- histories that will support the generation of narratives that will contest 'subalternization' and produce knowledge about situations, which might have been invisible previously to the public sphere. The public sphere as a sphere of culture is a place where there is a 'power struggle' over meaning and where the capacity to describe, define and label people or activities is a form of 'cultural politics' (Barker 2008, p.441). I envisage that all objects of inquiry of the Choreosteme will have something to do with discourse. As a signifying practice theatrical dance produces meaning and to negotiate the public space the producers and creators of theatrical dance have to translate their practice into language so that it can have social power in this sphere. Through discourse, objects of knowledge are produced. Discourse governs the conduct of people because 'meaning and meaningful practice' is constructed within discourse' (Hall, 2013, pp.29-30). Cultural policy has an influential role in theatrical dance because it produces discourses.

Theatrical dance, the type which aspires to be considered to be an art or which strives to create meaning for specific audiences through the use of symbolism and discourse, is generally not commercial and requires funding or subvention. For this reason producers of theatrical dance must engage with cultural policy. Cultural policy has an important part to play in its sustenance as a social practice. The relationship between theatrical dance and cultural policy however is uneven – at times harmonious and at time fraught.

Theatrical dance produces culture and culture is a 'zone of contestation' over meaning. Cultural production as an industry is therefore a site of contention with

various parties jostling over the over the direction, priorities and aesthetics of the arts. Since what we believe value and express effects the way we behave, governments are interested in culture and intervene through cultural and social policy. According to Toby Miller and George Yudice:

Cultural policy refers to the institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life...(it) is embodied in systematic, regulatory guides to action that are adopted by organisations to achieve their goals. In short, it is bureaucratic rather and creative or organic. (Miller and Yudice 2002, pp. 1)

They describe the emergence of cultural policy as being related to the rise of modern capitalism and the nation state. They draw on examples of the monarchies involvement in patronage of the arts and the development of languages in Europe from as far back at the 16th century. They use Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality to explain how government mechanisms used cultural policy to create and maintain a 'docile and healthy labour force'. 'Health' which extended to 'education and hence culture' began to be a key interest of governments as the control of these made a healthy, hard working and obedient workforce more likely (Miller and Yudice 2002, pp. 5).

The issue for theatrical dance companies in general in this terrain is how to create meaning in the circumstances where cultural policy might seek to dictate or repurpose theatrical dance. The aims of cultural policy are considered by most scholars to be socially positive. It however is an uneven concept. Jim Macguigan describes it as emerging from the social-democratic agenda of European governments after the Second World War. This agenda, which strived

to reduce class discrimination gradually superseded the 'social' agendas of economic well being to include issues of 'cultural citizenship' (Macguigan, 2004 pp. 33-34). The relationship between cultural policy and arts policy is often unclear. The two are often used interchangeably. Cultural policy is so broad it includes sport and recreation, education and the environment (Quinn 1998, 72-73). In short one could say, cultural policy can overlap with social policy and ideas of cultural citizenship. Cultural citizenship is about social participation. It calls for the right for all citizens in spite of cultural differences to be allowed to fully participate in a democratic society (Rosaldo 1994, p.402). In the public sphere therefore theatrical dance companies are in a process of negotiating meaning, engaging in dialogue with other kinds of cultural producers and putting the ideas that are embedded in their dance practice into language is a necessary part of this.

How well theatrical dance practitioners are able to negotiate the meaning of their practice and how it is developing is partly due to the strength of its critical discourse. In relation to the amount of theatrical performance that draws on African and Diaspora forms, there is a dearth of information about this in which case cultural policy perspectives easily dominate the discourse. Additionally the advocates of other theatrical dance forms can also do so. Theatrical dance, which is generally, thought of as Black dance can be 'othered' under such circumstances and is positioned as the opposite of dances from a Euro-American tradition. The similarities are overlooked and an emphasis is on their differences and by implication, under development. Theorists , have often used

the concept of hybridity from postcolonial studies to generate a discourse to combat this situation of othering. The chief advocate of the trope, Homi Bhabha for example, argues that the hybridity of culture is empowering on the basis that it demonstrates that the colonizer and the colonized play a part in the formation of each other's subjectivities. He postulates that all cultures are hybrid and the fact that each borrows from the other to renew itself demolishes any claims of cultural superiority the colonizer might have (Bhabha 1994, pp. 38). There are several scholars however who have challenged the idea that hybridity is an effective concept. .

The literary scholar, John C. Hawley for example describes hybridity as 'a reconciliatory' rather than 'a critical' or 'anti-colonialist' strategy, one that permits the absorption of non-western cultural products into the Western academy on terms provided by the Western academy (Hawley 2010 pp. 770-771). Amar Acheraiou puts the problems with hybridity down to that fact it can be used to place all postcolonial artistic expression in one category; in opposition to western art history. Whilst this categorization might provide them some space in the western academy it does not offer any critical framework to examine them in relation to their individual socio-political contexts. This 'lumping together' also obscures the practices within the category which may differ from each other. Their histories and political and aesthetic meanings are effectively erased and the hybridity discourse simply arranges them within a 'monolithic meta-narrative' (Acheraiou 2011, pp. 107). 'Hybridity' when used in this manner effectively

places practices so-called outside of history in the way that the term 'primitive' has often been used.

For the forementioned reason, dance scholar Sabine Sorgel whilst acknowledging the potential of hybridity, chooses the trope of creolisation over hybridity to guide her writing on the National Dance Company of Jamaica as a postcolonial institution. She argues that though the rhetoric of creolization is contested it reflects 'the political struggle' that has taken place in the Caribbean for a postcolonial identity (Sorgel 2007, pp 19). 'Creolisation' in other words as a way of thinking or system of thought and action has a history in the Caribbean and had guided activity with its modern institutions. Building on Brah and Coombes, Sorgel describes the trope of cultural hybridity as being weakened by a

conflated notion of cross-cultural synthesis, which lacks historicity and a theorizing of the exact institutional frameworks through which such discourse and it propagated hybrid identities, actually come into being' (Sorgel 2007, pp.19).

The implication of Sorgel's choice of creolisation is that for a concept to be considered to be empowering there needs to be historical evidence such as a history of activity sustained by the discourse of that activity.

Considering the well-founded arguments of the aforementioned scholars it is necessary to consider hybridity in an institutional context. Traditional and social dance forms enter into theatrical dance productions through a process.

Additionally dancers who may have gained their skills of dance in family or club setting also go through processes of training either within a dance company or through dance workshops in order to work confidently within theatrical contexts. These processes may not be the same as those who have attended three year training in a dance conservatoire but they are equally as significant in terms of how they shape theatrical performance. They are also the spaces in which ideas and practice combine where the 'praxis' of the field is transmitted.

The introduction of border thinking to this situation is necessary to bring into visibility these overlooked and under theorised processes. These processes are usually set up as events or programmes by advocates and managers with particular visions or philosophies about how the theatrical performance should develop. Dancehistories which are about Africanist practice will should therefore include information about these events, programmes and projects. These events and programmes require the validation of history. Overlooking them is overlooking a context and the relationship between the work seen on stage and performances of dance in original contexts will seem acrimonious because there is little understanding of the processes that are required to create stage performance drawing on social dance forms or traditional dance forms.

A critical discourse is very important for theatrical dance in particular. It could be describe as the constantly evolving discussion about how the act of dance making and choreography is informing culture. The intentionality and views of the dance artists are a key component of this. The critical discourse comes from

various sources such as choreographer and dancer biographies, dance histories, the theorising of dance, the analysis of practice, and reviews of performance. It differs from the public discourse because what is central to this discussion is how dance makes symbolic meaning as opposed to the public discourse which circles around the application of dance to various social causes or the arguments in support of the public funding of dance as an art form. Critical discourse is vital for without it choreography is unable to make an impact over the course of time or in certain places. A social practice or an object may exist but without a discourse, that is a way of speaking about that practice or thing, it will be without meaning within a given society at a given point in time (Hall 2013, pp.29-30).

It is necessary to be able to discuss choreography – it processes and values, its innovations and effects with a certain amount of detail for it to make an impact socially. A publicity unit will require a different type of information about a piece of work than a school programme. Although dance in the main is considered to be a non-verbal activity, in professional contexts it requires an advanced level of language use. Being a signifying practice, however, without appropriate language it is harder for a type of dance or the work of a particular choreographer to garner institutional support, to make, perform and tour work. Dance scholars, historians, theorists and anthropologists contribute to producing a critical discourse for theatrical dance. Intervention is not only by academics but also administrators, publicists and artists themselves. Discourses create subject positions for participants to take in order to be part of

the discussion. A subject position is a position that a person must take in order to be considered to be making sense (Hall, 2013, p. 40). At times choreographers reject the subject position offered them by the commercial or even academic discourses of the time. They might feel they need to create a new subject position for themselves or their work if it is to be received in a way they consider appropriate. Ramsay Burt discusses instances in dance history where choreographers have stepped into the writing arena to intervene and 'create the discursive terms through which their work could be conceptualised' (Burt 2007, p. 22) Katherine Dunham is one of his examples of a choreographer who had to do this and describes how she used her anthropological research to create the discursive context for her choreography Burt 2007, pp. 22). It is not possible to intervene into a critical discourse with out a sense of history of the choreographic practice. The artistic practice of black choreographers especially those that use African and Diaspora forms and a history of their practice are objects of inquiry for the Choreosteme. The act of describing past choreographies is therefore part of generating a critical discourse of black choreographers.

Patrice Pavis would call the description of dance for historical documentation 'Analysis as reconstruction'. This is because it relies on the interviews with the artist and electronic recordings and other documents and is not produced from witnessing the live performance. He argues that what is being written is not an analysis of the performance but a study of the context of the performance, and its 'primary principles', which allow us an insight into the creators' objectives

and perhaps the audiences' response. He describes the end result of such analysis as being 'an object of knowledge' and 'a theoretical framework' to be used in the generation of a historical account (Pavis 2006, pp.10-11). The framework as outlined by Pavis is appropriate for the purposes of this historical method, as the aim of the method is to engender a way of looking at the theatrical dance which draws on African and Diaspora forms which will facilitate research and descriptions of dance production in such a way that they will be situated in a time and place historically and artistically.

Multiculturalism creates a situation whereby observers seek to understand culturally diverse theatrical dance through comparing and contrasting it with theatrical dance that has emerged from a Euro-American tradition. . This act of comparing and contrasting does not produce much knowledge about culturally diverse theatrical dance. In order to discourage descriptions that suggest that black culture is the opposite of white culture, and propagating othering, I propose that the writer's focus be on gaining an understanding of the choreographer's artistic vision in a piece of work or across the length of their career. I do not wish to insist there is only one way of gaining an insight into a choreographer's vision. Since this is not necessarily a straightforward process a theoretical framework to guide this process could be helpful. Even when the choreographer is available to be interviewed about their work, the researcher would still need a theoretical perspective from which to formulate the questions to ask him or her. Here the ideas of intentional hybridity, praxis and border-thinking could be useful.

The Choreosteme is specific in what can be achieved. It is not designed for anthropological research of dance and or for gaining an in depth understanding of dance as a spiritual practice or a community's values as it focuses on discourses and its emphasis is on the public sphere. It may not be suitable for the study of dance in every historical era and situation. It is geared to support investigations from a historical and artistic perspective, particularly questions relating to the politics of representation, social change and modernity as expressed in the context of dance as a profession as a result it encourages discourse analysis and research into written texts. What the idea of time space offers is a recognizable and explicit context, with attendant questions and concerns in which the answers for the question about essentialism and authenticity can be sought. It makes the terrain in which the choreographer works and his or her genealogy as a dance professional the frame of reference for historical research. Furthermore, it has the scope to be enlarged and combined with other theories such as the Black Atlantic.

3.4. The methodology of using the Choreosteme

From the point of view on which the Choreosteme is based, the practice of theatrical dance is one of cultural citizenship. The history of ideas of Euro-American dance is justified in this sense but is only one of many discourses generated by dance practitioners and choreographers in the creation of meaning through dance. An approach to using the choreosteme is to decide on

the issue that one wishes to research, usually an issue to do with cultural politics. One would have to decide on the period of investigation. Periodization for histories from the perspective used by the Choreosteme should be set to reflect the episteme or 'the regime of truth' of the issue being researched. This idea of periodizing time is taken from Michel Foucault. Truth for Michel Foucault was less about fact and more about who has the power to impose a particular perspective as being the truth in a particular context at a particular point in time. Truth for Foucault, therefore is the result of one discursive formation gaining dominance over others in relation to an activity, for a period of time. This period of time is what Foucault calls an episteme. An 'episteme' ends when another discursive formation gains dominance (Hall 2013, p 29). Michel Foucault describes the episteme saying:

By 'episteme' we mean in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalised systems; the way in which, in each of these discursive formations, the transitions to epistemologization, scientificity, and formalisation are situated and operate; the distribution of these thresholds, which may coincide, be subordinated to one another, or be separated by shifts in time; the lateral relations that may exist between epistemological figures or sciences in so far as they belong to neighbouring, but distinct, discursive practices (Foucault 1989 p.211).

The length of an episteme is not measured in days or year therefore but for as long as the 'set of relations' which might be the interaction between groups or the actions of an institution, that produce the discursive practice being interrogated. One should therefore choose a timeframe which suggests the length of a particular discursive formation or set of social relations that has to do with the issue that is under investigation.

After choosing the timeframe one could then research various conversations and discourses coming from different institutional sites concerning the topic of research. Where questions arise, about either the sectorial or critical discourse at a point in time, is potentially the period of time which is worth investigating. This way of looking at history is inspired by a method suggested by postcolonial historian Fredrick Cooper. He suggests a way of writing, which will:

Examine the limits as well as the power of European domination, the unevenness and conflict within Europe itself, it is to study systems of power and representation in interaction with each other, neither presuming the centrality of modern Europe as a reference point nor shying away from analysis of power as it actually was exercised' (Cooper 2006, p. 416).

Cooper's methodology argues for the value in examining the points of 'interaction' and even friction with Eurocentric systems of thought and those of minority groups in the west and postcolonial societies in Africa and the Caribbean, as opposed to a focus on the absences in knowledge that the Eurocentric perspective creates. His perspective suggests that we examine the points of tension or negotiation in society caused by different 'systems of power' coming into contact. Fredrick Cooper's approach resonates with recent scholarship in postcolonial studies on the concepts of 'Re-rooting and Re-routing'. These concepts inspire an examination of the 'global in the local' and the demonstration of how non-western cultural products in western cities are informed by contemporary politics and are thus 'rooted' in communities within the metropolis (Wilson 2010, p18). Cooper's approach to historical writing is

therefore useful for examining the use of African and Caribbean aesthetics within Britain.

Lastly, one should seek to comment or analyse the various discussions taking place during that timeframe and draw conclusions. One could theorise as discussed in chapter 2, concerning the dance practice. The *Choreosteme* aims to contextualise the theatrical dance work or choreographer in a specific way. A useful concept for doing this is suggested by the feminist scholar Donna Haraway's formulation of situated knowledge. She maintains that a researcher based at a specific site, or field of research, can only achieve partial knowledge due to their outlook on life and their research methods. Haraway is against the notion that theory can be produced from an omniscient viewpoint, which she calls the 'god-trick' (Haraway 1998, p.5). She insists that vision is an embodied activity, which comes from where one stands in the field, and therefore research outcome might be objective but will be partial. For Haraway, 'site' informs 'sight' (Haraway 1998, p.5). From a constructionist point of view choreographic works will be interpreted in relation to the discursive formation they inhabit – the cluster of ideas, images and symbols and forms of knowledge which the choreography can be associated within a particular place and point in time (Hall 1997, pp. 1-11). The idea of situated knowledge suggests that the discursive formation in which the choreographer is engaged with should be the starting point for looking at their work and how it interplays with others.

The Black Atlantic created by Paul Gilroy is a chronotope. It was not produced specifically to look at dance but at a wider culture. It, however, has successfully been applied to dance practice. My argument is that the Choreosteme can be used in conjunction with the Black Atlantic. The Black Atlantic produces a counter discourse of modernity that demonstrates that where Black people have been locked out of narratives of modernity and official histories of individual nations they are active and at work in transnational ones. It counteracts racist ideas, which deny the black person a role in constructing the modern world. It extricates the stories of strategic survival, collaboration and inspiration of black peoples and how the politics of race has changed from place to place over time, which again is often overlooked in national histories. The Black Atlantic allows investigations into the link between memory and history, which national histories overlook. The time space of the Black Atlantic is epic.

Susan Foster uses the Black Atlantic to look at how issues of Africanist aesthetic function differently in the choreography of two choreographers in different continents working at a similar time in history; Its conception of time space serves as a link between the work of the African American choreographer Diane McIntyre and African choreographer Germaine Acogny creating a basis for Foster to examine the similarities and differences between their work.

Looking at the work of choreographers in two different contexts she uses the time space of the Black Atlantic as a basis to explore their work. The Choreosteme's approach to modernity is through the interrogation of discursive formations of theatrical dance as it is represented within official histories. It

explores a different time space to the Black Atlantic. The Black Atlantic looks at the transnational outside the context of the national and it is not specifically designed for the study of dance. The Choreosteme however looks at the transnational within the context of the national and is specifically geared to theatrical dance. Both approaches could work together, providing different perspectives and seeking answers to different questions. In the next chapter I look at 1984 to 2005 as a set of social relations or episteme in which I explore why the debates 'What is Black Dance in Britain?' came about.

3.5. Conclusion

The Choreosteme frames theatrical dance as an artistic mode of performance which is a product of transnational notions of modernity emerging from various histories and traditions and as a practice of cultural citizenship. It seeks to rid theatrical dance of its eurocentrism whilst acknowledging the dominance of its discourses. The struggle between the discourses of theatrical practices is one of the starting points of historical research. The term choreosteme can be used to describe a period of time in which a particular discourse whether sectorial or artistic exists in a dominant position. As this framework is devised for researching how theatrical dance which draws on Africa and Caribbean dance forms makes meaning, the object of its inquiry is how theatrical dance with these aesthetics comes into the being or fails to do so within public and artistic discourses. It also interrogates power differentials between artistic practices and seeks to raise the level of discourse about them and contribute to refining terminology related to theatrical dance with African or Africanist aesthetics. In

the next chapter I explore why the debates 'What is Black Dance in Britain?' came about examining happenings in the subsidized dance sector between 1995 and 2005. I argue that this time frame is an episteme in relation to this debate.

Chapter 4

Ethnic Minority Arts and The construction of the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector

4.1. Introduction

The Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) established in 1985 with funds from the Arts Council of England and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, was a membership organisation for practitioners of African Peoples' Dance (BDDT 1986). Following the defunding of the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) the Arts Council of England commissioned a discussion document called *Advancing Black Dancing* which was published in 1993. Later that year it released the report of a meeting called *What is Black Dance in Britain?* These two documents are evidence of a debate about the meaning of black dance in Britain. I argue that these documents mark the construction of a sector within the British subsidized dance sector, which is sometimes referred to by administrators as the black dance/African peoples dance sector. Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, one of the members of BDDT grew to become the flagship company of the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector. In 2005 Adzido closed. Its closure marked the end of an era. I decided to investigate this period to find out what discourses were shaping the dance development for Black people at this time what part these discourses played in the debate about black dance in Britain. Since the choreosteme is about investigating cultural politics I have chosen to look at a period, which suggests that an episteme or a dominant discourse was in place as discussed in chapter 3. My aim is to

interrogate this moment to produce a critical history of dance practices associated with the black dance/African Peoples Dance sector, and the struggle of those involved in the sector to make sense of the discourses surrounding their theatrical dance practice in Britain.

To look into this issue I draw on constructionist theories, examining dance as a signifying practice through which meaning is created through systems of ideas, codes and images. I will argue that the mode of organisation of the subsidized dance sector in Britain constitutes part of the conceptual universe, which informs the capacity of choreography to function as a signifying practice (Hall 2013, p.11).

4.2. The subsidized professional dance sector as a 'zone of contestation'

In cultural studies, culture is considered to be a 'zone of contestation over meaning.' It is a place where the capacity to describe, define and label people or activities is a form of 'cultural politics' (Barker 2008, p.441). Choreography as a practice is involved in producing culture, and, as such, is engaged in the struggle over meaning (Hall 2013, p. 11). However choreography as a signifying practice, which conveys value through ideas and symbols, cannot make meaning within society without language. Discourse is not practice alone but practice joined to language. A practice might exist but without a language that is common to a range of groups within a socio-cultural context with which they can discuss it, it will not make sense in that context. Discourse is described

as producing objects of knowledge because it is through discourse that objects and practices become socially meaningful. The exchange of meaning through choreography between dance artists and audiences is not a simple one-way process. Symbols, signs, conventions, beliefs, texts and behaviours circulate around several sites in society. Whether these be in adverts, family traditions, school programmes, public relations offices, or political broadcasts, they play a role in how a choreography is received (Hall 2013, p11). As what we believe value and express effects the way we behave, governments are interested in culture and intervene through cultural and social policy (Bell and Oakley 2015, p.63). Discourse has the power to govern the conduct of people because people will adapt and change their behaviour in a situation in order to be understood. Discourse has the power to collectivise some and exclude others. For this reason cultural production, as an industry or sector, is therefore a zone of contestation, to use Barker's phrase, where various parties jostle over the direction, priorities and aesthetics of the arts.

The subsidized dance profession is ever evolving. Economic agendas increasingly impact on how artistry is expressed in dance. New histories and theories are generated so that artistic endeavours and choreographic innovation can remain in view as especially where artistic and economic agendas become enmeshed.. Dance scholars, historians, theorists and anthropologists have historically contributed to producing what I would describe as a choreographic discourse for theatrical dance. Through this, they keep in view the artistry of dance and dance making without which dance as art loses

its currency amidst the agendas of cultural and creative industries. Jennifer Roche, for example, theorizes the contribution of the freelance dancer to choreographic work. She found it important to bring the artistic contribution of the dancer to choreography to the fore due to the changes in dance company structures. Since the 1990s more choreographers and dancers work on a project-to-project basis. This means dancers, learn to draw on many dance styles and no longer focus on learning one dance technique or one choreographer's way of making dance (Roche 2015, pp. 8-9). Furthermore, flexible working conditions have led to the development of creative processes in which the dancer makes a significant contribution, which needs to be acknowledged as part of the creative process (Roche 2015, pp. 23-24). This situation made Roche decide it was important to reconceptualise the dancer's artistic contribution. Without interventions such as this, we would lose our sense of dance as an art as old ways of working fall away and we are left without a language to describe the new ways of working that are being formulated.

Intervention into a choreographic discourse however, is not only by academics but also administrators, publicists and artists themselves. Choreographers and dancers might intervene on their own behalf. At times choreographers reject the subject position offered them by the commercial or even the academic discourse of the time. Discourses create subject positions for participants to take in order to participate and make sense in a discussion (Hall, 2013, p. 40). They might feel they need to create a new subject position for themselves if they are to be received in a way they consider appropriate. Ramsay Burt

discusses instances in dance history where choreographers have stepped into the writing arena to intervene and 'create the discursive terms through which their work could be conceptualised.' Katherine Dunham is one of his examples of a choreographer who had to do this, and he describes how she used her anthropological research to create 'the discursive context' for her choreography (Burt 2007, pp. 22). Not all choreographers can or want to intervene in the choreographic discourse in this way. This is why the hierarchy of writing over movement might work against the artist (Burt 2007 p.22).

One of the draws of theatrical dance for Black choreographers and dancers is that it is an influential site of cultural production. It is a place where spiritual, cultural, political and artistic ideas can be shared widely and across time. It can be used to create and sustain community and improve race relations. Also, through theatrical dance, transnational links can be formed and maintained. Theatrical dance impacts on the curriculum of higher education, creates debate about issues, attracts media attention, and engages with cultural policy. It is a way of tracing the contribution of a social group to society. Furthermore it is now an arena where social dance has cultural capital and can form the basis of a career.

One of the challenges faced by Black choreographers is an insufficient choreographic discourse. For the work of Black choreographers to make this impact, there needs to be a choreographic discourse for it. A robust discourse would include: detailed discussions of the creative processes of making dance

for stage or descriptions of how it is used in professional context; or take the form of biographies or reviews about choreographers and dancers; the analysis of term, concepts and philosophies related to practice; histories that trace changes in practice over time and so on. For Black choreographers and dancers the struggle to develop a choreographic discourse for their work in Britain has taken place mainly in the professional context in dialogues between the representatives of Black dancers and choreographers and funding bodies and support organisations. However there is little theorisation of their work in relation to their context of production. Major contributions in this area have been Christy Adair's *Dancing the Black Question: The Phoenix Dance Company Phenomenon* (2007) and Emily Claid's *Yes? No! Maybe...Seductive Ambiguity in Dance* (2006). Both books show that histories of dance and even practices of dance by Black choreographers in Britain cannot be conceived without addressing the institutional context through which the work emerges. The debate in Britain over the term Black dance is an important one for understanding how the choreographic discourse around the work of Black choreographers and dancers is developing. The use of the term 'Black' in cultural and artistic contexts became prominent in the 1980s.

4.3. The coming of black dance into the theatrical dance sector

Work by artists of African, Caribbean and Asian backgrounds began to be funded in Britain in the 1970s under the banner of ethnic arts or ethnic minority

arts.² The Minority Arts Advisory Service, for example, supported the establishment in 1977 of the MAAS Movers, the first funded Black-led dance company (Thorpe 1984, p.175). However, coming into the 1980s, these terms fell out of favour. The 1980s was a time of race riots and heightened political agitation and an active Black Arts Movement. 'Ethnic arts' and similar terms began to be seen as Eurocentric (Owusu 1988, p.2). Most vitriolic in the condemnation of the term was the cultural activist Kwesi Owusu whose description of 'ethnic minority arts' places it in a colonial discourse. He describes champions of ethnic minority arts as dividing tradition and modernity so that non-western forms inhabited the former and European forms, the latter (Owusu 1986 p. 64). He also describes the ethnic minority arts as ignoring the transnational dialogue that Black artists were having with counterparts in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and seeking to 'ghettoise them within the British nation-state' (Owusu 1988, p 2). By ignoring this dialogue, funders were in effect ignoring the discursive context of these artists' work.

'Black' for this and other reasons became the 'banner' under which people of colour - Asian, Caribbean, African – organised and resisted racism. This usage of the term was different to how it was used in America then or how it is used in Britain now, which is in reference to people of mainly African descent (Alexander 2002, p. 554).

² Most of this chapter has been published in *British Dance: Black Routes* edited by Christy Adair and Ramsay Burt in an article entitled *The construction of the Black dance/African peoples dance sector In Britain: issues arising for the conceptualization of related choreographic and dance practices in British Dance.*

Understandably black dance in the 1980s was used similarly as a political banner. In his book *Black Dance* (1984), Edward Thorpe uses the term 'black dance' to encompass a number of groupings: dance companies that were led by Black people, dancers who were Black but worked with predominately white companies, and dance productions which displayed dance forms from Africa or the diaspora or whose choreography drew on these forms. A section in this book provides historical information on British companies such as Adzido Pan-African dance ensemble, IRIE! Dance Theatre, Phoenix Dance Company and Union Dance Company as well as Black dancers who were dancing with mainstream companies such as Namron and Kenneth Tharp in London Contemporary Dance Theatre (Thorpe 1984, pp.169 -185). I would argue that Thorpe's book does not place its subjects in a choreographic discourse or history of dance but a history of Black achievement and pride. It contributes to a discourse formation that addresses issues around minority status (Pirker 2011, p. 18-19). Thorpe's book highlights the work of dance pioneers and companies who had made an impact in a cultural context from which Black people had been historically excluded. It also places value on dance productions where the forms and aesthetics of Africa and the Diaspora are displayed but which were often overlooked by critics.

If Thorpe's book had addressed issues of choreographic practice, it would have probably interrogated the fact that the Black-led dance companies that it featured emerged from different institutional contexts from each other and

produced work with different aspirations, as well as discussing the relationship between the term black dance and choreographic practice. Dance scholar Thomas DeFrantz, for example, finds Thorpe's book 'highly inadequate' as an example of dance research or theory, and essentialist in its theorising of black dance (DeFrantz 2002, p. 15). Neither is choreographic practice or the politics of theatrical production the focus of the other well-known book of the time, Lynne Fauley Emery's *Black Dance in the United States from 1619 to 1970* (1972). Thomas Defrantz, describes Emery's book as presenting a history of Black choreographers and dancers as victims of white oppression, located outside of mainstream America (DeFrantz 2002, p. 13). In short, though providing useful information, these books did not address the conceptual issues raised by the work of Black choreographers. They did contribute, however, to histories of Black presence, pride and achievement and the politics of minority status faced by Black dancers.

The Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) was formed to support a group of dance companies, which began to emerge in the 1970s, due to a growing interest in African and Caribbean dances. At the time, due to the strong pan-Africanist ethos of Black community organisations, the term African dance was often used as an umbrella term to encompass traditional Caribbean dance forms as well. Some of these companies, including three of the most popular ones, Ekomé, Lanzel and Delado, arose from community outreach programmes run by Steel 'n' Skin, another of the early recipients of Arts Council funding. Steel 'n' Skin was a dance and music outfit which organised community and

outreach programmes all over Britain. Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, mentioned in Thorpe's book, started as part of this movement. For the members of these companies, they were a platform for spiritual, cultural and political expression. They did not receive regional arts funding but were engaged by local councils for community relations and by schools for education projects. They were also involved in employment schemes. The 1980s was a period of social deprivation, and riots, which were led predominantly by disenfranchised Black men. The agendas of funders were therefore to boost job creation, urban regeneration, and improve race relations. The Manpower Services Commission was a prominent funder (Brown 2012).

Leaders of some of these dance companies began to canvass for an umbrella organisation to aid their professional development. They approached Bob Ramdhanie who was working at the CAVE Arts Centre in Birmingham. Ramdhanie, a pragmatic visionary with a track record of successful projects established the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) in response to their requests. Ramdhanie states that 'black dance' was used in the title of the trust because it was a political label that resonated with many black Britons. He, however, insists that trust's focus was on the development of a practice that used African and Caribbean dance forms in the British professional context (Ramdhanie 2005, p.256).

4.4. The Significance of the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT)

Bob Ramdhanie states that one of the achievements of BDDT was that, through its artistic programmes, it established the African dance sector in Britain (Ramdhanie 2005, p. 263). Also significant is its method of doing so. The organisation translated the ideals of a dance movement, which began in the spirit of cultural and political activism, into the subsidized professional dance sector. Cultural translation is 'the performative negotiation of differences between identity constructions.' It is a fraught process, which necessitates compromise between the old and the new environments (Rossner and Italiano 2012, p. 12). Translation is not only a language based activity but can involve the movement of institutions, processes, practices and policies from one context to another (Balme 2012, p. 104). As an institution, BDDT used available structures to create a space within the professional subsidized dance sector for a dance movement that evolved in the context of community activism. BDDT also created a platform and visibility for dance as a practice which had a low profile in the Black Arts movement. In the key books such as *The Struggle for Black Arts in Britain* (Owusu 1986) and *Storms of the Heart: An Anthology of Black Arts and Culture* (Owusu 1988), dance does not appear as a discreet art form. Significantly the trust was a client of the Arts Council and is cited in *Towards Cultural Diversity* as assisting in founding the Trust as part of its ethnic minority arts Action plan which ran between 1986 and 1988 (ACGB 1989, unnumbered.) By forming an organisation, BDDT was aiming to support the professional development of the dance companies it supported.

BDDT redefined African dance as a British practice based on 'a global view of the African' drawing on research into African dance and music, Garveyism and Rastafarianism through facilitating dialogue between international dance practitioners and local practitioners involved in community development (Ramdhanie 2005, p. 257). The dance companies under the umbrella of BDDT wished to move from the display of traditional African dances and Caribbean dances to the creation of dance theatre. The Trust organised summer schools, which provided training by dance artists from Africa, and the Caribbean, conducted an annual awards ceremony for choreographers, and published a newsletter. A variety of experiments around the production of dance theatre took place. Ramdhanie wrote dance dramas about Black British life and choreographers such as Derrick Anderson and Barry Montcrieffe were invited to choreograph to Jimmy Cliff's 'Many Rivers to Cross' which was then in the repertoire of the National Dance Theatre of Jamaica (Personal communication with Bob Ramdhanie 29/05/15). According to Ramdhanie, tensions between the Trust and the Arts Council began to build as the number of black dancers trained in modern dance techniques in British institutions began to increase . He, however, says that there was no open conversation as to how the various practices associated with Black dance could co-exist (Ramdhanie 2005, p. 266).

As a client of the Arts Council, an independent assessor, Anne Millman, was commissioned to write a report on the organisation. The result was entitled 'African People's dance: The state of the Art in 1987'. The report defines African Peoples' Dance as relating 'specifically to the work of African and Afro-

Caribbean dance companies to the techniques, skills, music and traditions of their work' (Millman 1987, p.1). The report consulted about twenty companies and looked at issues such as the possibility of developing a joint or corporate profile for the companies, and their relationships with venues and audiences (ibid., pp. 1-2). A poll conducted by the assessor also found that companies associated with BDDT were, at the time, more popular with audience members interviewed than Ballet and Contemporary dance companies (Millman ., pp.4-5). The assessor recommended that the organisation forged closer links with bodies such as the Independent Theatre Council, marketed itself more within mainstream British dance and cited the lack of sensible funding levels as the overriding factor for the underdevelopment of African Peoples dance as an art. The assessor concluded that African Peoples dance potentially had as much to offer dance in Britain as classical ballet and contemporary dance (ibid., pp. 6-7). In 1990 however, BDDT closed down after the Arts Council withdrew its funding. African Peoples Dance was uniquely British. It posited the performance of African and Caribbean dance as a practice of spiritual empowerment engaged with the exploration of British experience in a context of transnational cultural exchange.

4.5.The defining reports: *Advancing Black Dancing* (1993) and *What is Black Dance in Britain?* (1993)

After the closure of BDDT, the Arts Council of England commissioned the writing of a report, which became *Advancing Black Dancing* (Bryan 1993a). The

foreword of the report suggests that the Arts Council wished to gather the field of Black dance around a common focus. The foreword, written by the Arts Council Dance officer at the time states that BDDT had contributed significantly to the development of Black dance in Britain, but, since dance in all its forms had 'grown and diversified' over the years, a new organization with a new focus was needed. It explained that *Advancing Black Dancing* was meant to serve as a discussion document, a 'starting point for continuing debate' for those interested in the development of Black dance. The foreword also announced that a meeting for practitioners to air their views was being planned for later in the year (Bryan 1993a, p.3).

In the summary and recommendations section of *Advancing Black Dancing*, the writer David Bryan states that the wishes of most people consulted was for a strategic organisation to replace BDDT which could lead on the development of an infrastructure for Black dance. BDDT had been a 'service agency', which offered guidance and provision to individual dance companies (Bryan 1993a., p.4). The report envisaged that the goals of the new organisation would be to cater for 'all Black people in dance regardless of form' (Bryan 1993a p.5). It would also serve as a resource for other dance institutions, providing training and education for dancers, support to venues and the touring of dance companies (Bryan 1993a p.6).

A section of the report provides an overview of existing definitions of Black dance taken from regional reports, published interviews and the opinions of

consulted practitioners (ibid., pp. 10-13). The survey of definitions ends with the consultant's 'working definition' of Black dance:

Black dance must continue to cherish, represent, reflect and advance the cultural heritage and aspirations of various black communities. To have Black dance without Black music would be a travesty and therefore disengagement with the kernel of African culture. For Black dance in Britain to advance it must be allowed to establish its distinct identity. Part of this identity will involve the continued interpretation of Black experiences and cultures as they evolve. Consequently the development of African traditional and African modernity has to be advanced by Black dancers, Black choreographers and Black companies

(ibid., p.12).

The section on definition ends with a note that some of those consulted were of the opinion that the Arts Council was interfering in the artistic decisions of various dance companies by acting as 'Artistic director supremo' (ibid.). The report provided an outline for an organisation commenting on management structure and a draft three-year programme, which included the development of an African, and Caribbean dance course, summer school and awards event. The draft programme built on the activities offered by BDDT including a focus on academic training in African and Caribbean dance forms. It additionally proposed a range of forums for practitioners for training including dance teacher training and discussion forums to support the development of initiatives such as companies and dance schools and engaging 'influential bodies related to dance.' It also proposed the production of educational material and resources (ibid., pp. 32-44).

In March 1993 the meeting that was promised in the foreword of *Advancing Black Dancing* took place at the Nottingham Playhouse. The event was a national forum and called *What is Black Dance in Britain?* Ahead of the

meeting, a list of questions was sent out by the Arts Council to those who were invited. These questions appear on page three of the meeting's report:

- What does it mean to be a Black dancer in Britain in the 1990s?
- Does Britain have to look to North America for a contemporary Black Dance voice?
- How does dance from the Africa of villages relate to the experience of people born in urban Britain?
- Does a contemporary Black British dance threaten traditional culture?
- Can the diversity of Black dance forms inform and enrich each other?
- Who should define Black dance? (Parthasarathi 1993, p.3)

On the day of the meeting two position papers were presented - one by Peter Badejo, the choreographer and artistic director of the contemporary African dance company, Badejo Arts, and the other by Shreela Ghosh the director of the South Asian support organisation ADiTi. Both papers were entitled *What is Black Dance in Britain?* and appear in the appendices of the meeting's report, *What is Black Dance in Britain?: A Meeting for Practitioners, Nottingham Playhouse, Monday 8 March 1993*. They address in part the questions that were circulated ahead of the meeting as well as issues in the report *Advancing Black Dancing*.

Both papers, by Ghosh and Badejo, express a concern that *Advancing Black Dancing* seemed to focus more on equal opportunities than cultural or artistic practice. Their anxiety is understandable since they both considered a key objective of a support organisation for ethnic minorities to be the provision of training in dance forms and techniques, as these were not available in mainstream dance schools. A focus on equal opportunities could shift the focus to job creation or community development. Shreela Ghosh pointed out that

'Black dance was different from Black people who danced.' She felt the concerns of the latter could be addressed by equal opportunities agendas and it was up to mainstream organisations to monitor equal opportunities. She said her organisation ADiTi, was 'not working on behalf of people of Asian origin who dance Graham technique or ballet'. She lists the debates taking place in her constituency as classical vs. contemporary, tradition vs. innovation, new training methodologies vs. traditional teaching, or whether the colour of a dancer's skin equated with authenticity as non-Asian dancers were also interested in Indian forms of dance. Similarly Badejo, in his paper, advocates the importance of African and Caribbean dance forms to Britain, commenting on issues to do with training, education, touring and audience development. Both papers reveal that the focus of their writers was on the development of infrastructure to sustain the practice of these South Asian and African and Caribbean forms in Britain.

It is evident that the two respondents held different subject positions within the discourse of art dance. Ghosh could stake a claim in the British discourse of art dance due to the fact that the South Asian dance sector was already built around dance forms that had been conferred with classical status and had been adapted to theatrical viewing several decades before in the Asian Sub-continent. The existence of codified techniques meant that the practices of the South Asian dance sector could not simply be described as representations of people groups, or ethnicities. They could be described as being able to exist separately from their community of origin and have a value beyond the representation of ethnicity and could be adopted as 'art' by anyone regardless

of colour. Badejo on the other hand, had a more difficult task as he was arguing for a sector whose theatrical dance work centred on the application of staging and compositional methods to traditional and social dance forms. This made it more difficult to separate the issues around artistic practice from those of Equal opportunities or social inclusion when it came to the funding of projects.

Badejo sought to overcome this by arguing against the use of the term black dance as an artistic category saying it had a meaning for black dancers in America but not in Britain where it could easily be manipulated by funders – the breadth of the term black dance meant that it could be made to mean everything and nothing. He states:

This is one of the main things that caused the downfall of BDDT. Initially Black dance was taken to mean every possible shade of non-white dance. Not surprisingly this proved impossible to handle. So Black dance was defined... or redefined... as African and Caribbean dance. This alienated all those others who had thought themselves included – but it provided a convenient label for funders to use, so that they could say – ‘Yes, we support Black dance’.
(Parthasarathi 1993, unnumbered³)

Badejo’s argument was that the term allowed funding bodies to avoid a commitment to any particular artistic practice or range of dance forms. If they supported black people, they were supporting black dance. Badejo also expressed caution over David Bryan’s recommendation in the report of ADiTi as a model of good practice for black dancers interested in African and Caribbean

³ Only the main body of the report, *What is Black Dance in Britain?: A meeting for Practitioners, Nottingham Playhouse, Monday 8 March 1993*, is numbered. The appendices where the full text of the papers by Shreela Ghosh and Peter Badejo appear to have no page numbers.

dances. He felt that the South Asian dance sector, with its codified Classical techniques which had been reworked to suit theatrical production, had a different set of challenges when it came to gaining institutional support than those using Africa and Caribbean dance forms. As a replacement for the term Black dance, Badejo's suggests African Peoples dance forms. He describes it as an umbrella term, which could encompass any number of discreet dance forms, or techniques that come from Africa and the African Diaspora. Dance forms such as Bata and Reggae were codified in relation to specific music genres and could be approached as dance techniques and considered as the basis of creative practice for the black dancers. The report of the event states that those who attended the meeting supported the use of the term African Peoples dance equivocally ((Parthasarathi 1993, unnumbered).

Not much comment on infrastructure is relayed in the report on the national *What is Black Dance in Britain?* meeting in Nottingham. More attention was paid to this topic at the regional *What is Black Dance in Britain?* meeting which took place on 21st of August 1993 at The Nia Centre in Manchester organised in collaboration with the Blackie, a venue in Liverpool. The Northwest arts board and the Arts Council were the funders of the regional meeting. The speakers at this meeting were the choreographers Elroy Josephs and Peter Badejo, who had spoken at the National event in Nottingham along with Shreela Ghosh. The report of this meeting states that those present were sceptical that an umbrella organisation structured as suggested by the writer of *Advancing Black Dancing* would be easy to manage. It would be required to co-ordinate the requirements

of dance companies and individuals who practiced African and Caribbean dance by using traditional forms' with those who were interested in these forms as the basis for contemporary choreography. Those present felt these two groups of artists' needed different kinds of infrastructural support. Participants also called for the new organisation to be a membership organisation with regional branches rather than a corporation without a membership (Schumann, Kuyateh and Harpe 1993, pp.7-8). This comment on infrastructure shows that dance companies associated with Black dance wanted an infrastructure which facilitated the way different dance artists worked with African and Caribbean dance forms. *Advancing Black Dancing* had proven that the forms were important to most Black dancers. They, however, worked with them in different ways. The desire expressed at the regional meeting was for infrastructure which supported the way existing companies worked. These desires, due to the way the debate was framed, did not impact on the national conversation (it took place after it). The framing of the debate, even though it was supposed to be about infrastructure, disconnected it from issues concerning the organisation of practice.

4.6. The framing of Black dance

Framing refers to the process within communication practice, which organizes meaning and promotes a particular interpretation of events. This might be through what values are linked to the subject of communication when it is discussed, or to the context in which the subject is introduced (Chong and

Druckman 2007, p. 104-106). Teun A. Van Dijk, a discourse theoretician, describes how a dominant group can influence the less dominant group by exercising 'social power', using 'text and talk' to control the 'cognitive conditions' that will effect their 'desires, wishes, plans and beliefs' (Van Dijk 1989, pp. 20-21), or by controlling the type and amount of information that is made available to the less dominant group which will impact on the way that the group makes decisions or takes action. He insists, however, that the analysis of power in social interactions needs to include the analysis of 'counter power' by the less powerful groups, which results in 'historical challenge or change' (Van Dijk 1989, pp. 20-21). A group can achieve dominance because they have access to resources or have charge over the channels of communication for that particular interaction. In other words, a dominant group can frame a communication event.

The Arts Council, though the dominant organisation in charge of resources and the channels of communication, shared responsibilities with Black dance advocates and consultants in organising the debate. Statements in the foreword of *Advancing Black Dancing* suggest that the decision to have a debate about Black dance came out of discussions with the consultant. In the foreword, the Dance Officer at time thanks David Bryan for 'highlighting the issues for Black dance, of which the definition of Black dance is one'. The Arts Council nevertheless framed the debate by setting the parameters for the definition of Black dance and conditions for the debate. The nature of the framing caused the respondents to decontextualize and universalise the terms, Black dance and African Peoples dance. Decontextualisation, according to feminist scholar

Beverley Thiele, 'is the practice in theorising of abstracting from real people, real activities and events in order to make generalisations about "Man", "society" and so on'. She explains that decontextualisation and universalization are linked. A feature of the latter is that it obscures the relationship between 'the part' and 'the whole' (Thiele 1986, pp. 35-36). The brief given by the Arts Council was that the definition had to be inclusive for all types of black dancers. It also linked the decision about the definition of black to the development of infrastructure, and a possible replacement for BDDT. Additionally, the questions circulated ahead of *What is Black Dance in Britain?* meeting in Nottingham implied that a choice between traditional dance practice and contemporary dance practice could aid the development of infrastructure. These were the conditions of the debate. None of the information distributed to the invitees linked the debate to wider developments in the Arts in Britain. A look at wider arts contexts reveals that the way the debate was framed obscured the relationship of the debate to issues around cultural policy and funding and, as such, gave the impression that 'the right' definition of Black dance was of more importance as to how infrastructure was developed than it actually was.

4.7. Discussions in the wider dance sector: *Towards Cultural Diversity (1989)* and *Stepping Forward (1989)*.

Two important reports were published in 1989. *Towards Cultural Diversity* and *Stepping Forward: Some Suggestions for the Development of Dance in*

England during the 1990s. The first signals a rethinking of the landscape of British Arts in general and the latter, that of dance specifically.

The publication of the report *Towards Cultural Diversity* by the Arts Council in 1989 arrived at the end of a major change and signalled new ones to come. The report followed the closing down of The Greater London Council (GLC) by Margret Thatcher in 1986. The GLC, one of the largest funders of black arts organisations was considered too costly by the Conservative government. The Arts Council's Ethnic Minorities Arts Plan was launched in the year the GLC closed. After its closure some of its services were distributed to 'government appointed bodies' (Wood 2002, p. 130). *Towards Cultural Diversity* was an assessment of its Ethnic minority Arts Action Plan. Its conclusion was that 'ethnic minority arts' should be abandoned in favour of 'Cultural Diversity'. In the section of the report called 'The Road Travelled', the concept of 'ethnic minority arts' is described as problematic as it was based on the premise that 'this art was community based and that its community was an appendix to the national culture'.⁴ It proposed that organisations that provided assistance for the work of artists of ethnic minority background should 'construct solutions in support specific to the nature and requirement of the art forms' and it pointed out that there were 'no universal solutions'.

In her article *The Representation of Identities in the British Arts*, Katarzyna Kociolkek describes *Towards Cultural Diversity* as signalling the 'repositioning

⁴ The report, *Towards Cultural Diversity* has no page numbers.

of Black Arts within British Arts'. She says the report implies that British culture no longer had a 'core' into which other cultures could be absorbed. The solution proffered was the development of a 'new superstructure of cultural practice', which would set the 'cultural achievements' of different groupings side by side. Kociolkek saw the demands during the 1980s for more black organisations and black representatives as a means of fulfilling this strategy (2013, p.497).

During the same period, the late 1980s, the subsidized dance sector was experiencing economic challenges so the Arts Council commissioned a report to look into a new way of managing it. The result was the report *Stepping Forward: Some suggestions for the development of dance in England during the 1990s* written by Graham Devlin. The report was to propose a viable infrastructure for the sustenance of all forms of dance as well as the implementation of equal opportunities policies (Devlin 1989 pp. 1-2). The report recommended the establishment of Regional Dance Agencies (which later were called NDAs – National Dance Agencies) and suggested a focus on these building-based projects as opposed to dance companies. These agencies would serve as the 'home' for dance in the local area. It would provide spaces for performers to make dance and give workshops. They could also be used by amateurs (community dance artists) working with young people and recreational dancers. It recommended that agencies specialise in non-western dance forms. (Devlin 1989, p. 39). The Arts Council consequently adopted this model. The network of organisations, which subsequently evolved to support

the subsidized professional dance sector, is now described as the British dance ecology (Siddall 2001, pp. v-ix)

The strategy proposed by *Stepping Forward* to support the work of Black dancers was based on the report written by Anne Millman, *African Peoples' Dance: The State of the Art in 1987*. Devlin equates the term black dance with African Peoples Dance and uses the latter term throughout his report. He sees the issue of racism facing black dancers as intertwined with the funding of African and Caribbean dance companies. Presumably he is advocating that both issues had to be addressed in tandem. Like Millman, he states that African Peoples dance was very popular at the time. To avoid marginalisation he advocates that African Peoples dance be nurtured by Regional dance agencies like other dance practices and that perhaps one Regional agency should be dedicated to this field. He also suggests the possibility of creating a network of practitioners involved in African Peoples dance that would advise venue managers and funders and to provide further support for BDDT (Devlin 1989 pp. 79-83). He recommends the establishment of flagship companies 'for different styles of work' stating that 'certainly one must represent the field of African People's Dance' and suggested Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble take this role (ibid., p. 13). He envisaged that small local dance companies working in a similar aesthetic would feed the flagship company.

If the matters discussed in *Towards Cultural Diversity* and *Stepping Forward* had been provided as the context for or, at least, as related to the debate about

Black dance at the national meeting, a different type of debate might of ensued. The questions circulated ahead of the national What is Black Dance in Britain? meeting implied, however, that there were only issues of artistic and cultural practice at stake. As it was, decisions taken in the wider dance sector had already shaped the infrastructure for Black dance professionals. David Bryan, for example, reports in *Advancing Black Dancing* that he found Regional Arts Boards reluctant to engage with the idea of a new Black dance organisation even though they valued BDDT when it existed. Bryan speculates that this was because Regional Arts Boards (RABs) were looking to NDAs to be ‘the sole, or all embracing, channel for dance development.’ The RABs therefore did not want to commit their funds to a new Black organisation if they were to support an NDA in their locality (ACGB 1993, p. 38). Additionally with the closure of BDDT, many of the small dance companies it had supported had closed and some dancers from these companies joined Adzido Pan-African dance ensemble, which was now a flagship company (Patten and Palmer, 2014). In 1992, Adzido became a regularly funded company after being funded on a yearly basis up until that time (Selwood 1995,p. 21). The infrastructure for Black dance had already been reconfigured. This situation gives the impression that the debate was more about gathering a group of representatives for ‘Black dance’ to engage with decisions already made than to address issues of infrastructure.

4.8. The construction of the Black dance/African Peoples’ Dance sector

I cite this process of debate and publication as bringing the Black dance/African Peoples dance sector into being. It was not the stated aim of the exercise but nevertheless an outcome. The process brought together Black dance artists from different theatrical dance traditions to discuss a topic about resources and infrastructure, and created a group of representatives. In this sense, the sector is constructionist, which is one of the two ways sectors in the cultural and creative industries are described. Justin O'Connor explains that:

Approaches to the cultural and/or creative industries tend to take two forms. One identifies a set of institutions and practices (a "sector" or an "industry") that demands our attention in some way, often against a background of their previously marginal position. A second takes a more "constructionist" perspective, highlighting an active process whereby an object is created or assembled by or through policy discourse(s). (Connor 2011, p.25)

The publication in 1993 of two reports, *Advancing Black Dancing* and *What is Black Dance in Britain?* can be said to mark the creation of this sector through discussion, consultation and debate around issues of Equal opportunities, social inclusion and the funding of dance and racial representation. The two reports stated the views of 'the sector' anonymously but listed the consulted artists and administrators in the Appendices. Unlike other reports on Black dance, such as the ones quoted by David Bryan, two of the 1993 reports were pitched at the national scale and therefore had a greater impact on the field. Furthermore soon after the meeting *What is Black Dance in Britain?* two of the most prominent advocates in the process, David Bryan and Peter Badejo, both set up projects with the aim of supporting the work of dancers and choreographers in this field. David Bryan established *Nubian Steps* a choreographic platform that ran for two years, and Peter Badejo established the

summer school *Bami Jo* that ran for thirteen years from 1993. Initiatives of this type were promised in the report of *What is Black Dance in Britain?* in Nottingham. They could be seen as extending the conversation started by *Advancing Black Dancing* and as activities of the sector that was established through it.

Besides making the advocates visible and thereby increasing the possibility of programmes, the debate also brought to the surface some of the aspirations in the sector. This increased the possibility of different types of partnerships being formed with the wider dance sector. The process also raised awareness that a broad spectrum of dance forms and practices were associated with the sector. However, though this new visibility of the sector had some benefits, the manner by which it was constructed and the framing the term black dance was detrimental. These actions generated a discourse which had little potential for developing a discourse that was useful to dance professionals or a choreographic discourse around the activity of dance making and the politics of performance and spectatorship.

The conditions surrounding the national *What is Black Dance in Britain?* meeting in Nottingham meant that David Bryan and Peter Badejo had to define Black dance or any replacement terms in the broadest sense possible. In order to do this they provided hypothetical definitions – not based on how dance companies worked but how they would have to work so that the envisaged support organisation could fulfil its remit. Bryan defined Black dance in relation

to the evolution of dance as part of the cultures of migrant Black communities. His insistence that Black dance in Britain should uphold 'cultural heritage' and 'acknowledge the additional influences' on the dance of Black communities would have been disturbing for a choreographer like Peter Badejo as the definition could be interpreted as meaning that supporting Black people through the use of dance was the same as supporting dance by Black people. Bryan's definition did not relate to a history of practice. Not every dance form that evolves within Black communities finds a way into theatrical practice, only those championed by choreographers or dance teachers. Even when theatrical dance by a Black choreographer engages or overlaps with traditional or social dance practices, it requires its own infrastructure for it to survive as theatrical practice. Badejo responded by proposing African Peoples' Dance forms as an umbrella term for discrete African and Diaspora dance forms. This, however, was a proposition. It was not the way dance was taught in Britain. The definition provided in the report written by Anne Millman in 1987 described the way that African and Caribbean dance was actually transmitted in Britain, mainly through dance companies. However, Badejo could not speak of African and Caribbean dance companies and be considered inclusive. He therefore proposed that African Peoples Dance forms be seen as if they were a collection of dance techniques which those interested in staging traditional dances, and others interested in drawing on them for contemporary choreography, could benefit from. As both definitions did not relate to actual practice they have not helped generate a choreographic discourse.

The suggestions about infrastructure given at the regional *What is Black Dance in Britain?* meeting in Manchester reflected the way dance practitioners actually worked. A structure of that kind would have eventually facilitated a choreographic discourse as practitioners would have interacted on the basis of the way they worked and would have developed a language accordingly. As it was the debate created a polarized sector. In BDDT the terms co-existed. BDDT posited Black dance as a description of dance as performative of Black presence and African Peoples' Dance as a description of dance practice. The framing of the debate however insisted that Black dance be interpreted as a practice. Badejo's reaction to this was to reject the term as irrelevant to British based dancers because under the circumstances the term had been co-opted into an administrative discourse where it merged with politics of Equal opportunities. Similarly David Bryan rejected the term African Peoples' Dance. In an article that appeared in the spring edition of *Animated* in 1993, Bryan states 'African Peoples' Dance does not advance Black dance, it confuses cultural, spiritual and political affinity with the needs of the Black presence in Britain' and that being of the Afro-centric school of thought African Peoples' Dance had 'a regrettable tendency to ignore the contributions made by the Caribbean' (Bryan 1993 p. 1). The relationship that existed between Black dance and African Peoples dance that existed at the time of BDDT shifted during the debate. African Peoples' Dance took on connotations of representing tradition and stasis and Black dance as contemporary and evolving, a representation, which confuses the relationship between 'the part' and 'the whole'.

BDDT did not raise funds for all types of Black dancers and then deceptively support only African and Caribbean dance companies. It had been established in response to the needs of a specific group of dance companies led mainly by dancers of Caribbean heritage. Furthermore African Peoples' Dance, before it was co-opted by the debate, referred to the work of dance companies working with the specific theatrical genres of dance display and dance theatre which were Afro-centric in the main because it was that ideology which fuelled the practice. BDDT did not pretend to represent all Black British people. The decontextualisation and universalization of the debate erased the history of how dance by Black people had evolved within British institutional contexts, and encouraged generalised definitions of dance practice without mention of the socio-cultural context out of which dance companies had emerged, nor the theatrical genres they had adopted. Various discourses merged in the debate. 'Black' as aesthetic marker, 'Black' as political banner, 'Black' in the discourse of Equal opportunities were rolled into one. The advocates involved all made good points but were at times speaking about different things as if in different conversations.

The Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector at the time of its construction seemed to exist as a subject position which Black advocates could take if they wished to comment on discussion about dance going on at national level.

Emilyn Claid describes the 'all-consuming umbrella title of Black dance' as creating a situation in which 'white institutional power was able to instigate a policy of divide and rule among the different genres, whereby the practitioners

of different cultural forms competed for visibility and funding' (Claid 2006, p. 107). The championing of African Peoples' Dance was to counteract this act of 'othering'.

4.9. African Peoples' Dance as a counter-discourse

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin identify Richard Terdimann as the inventor of the term 'counter-discourse' which they say has been adopted by postcolonial theorists as a means of describing 'symbolic resistance' towards the ability of colonial discourses to overlook or undermine subversion (Terdimann 1985 cited in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2007, p.50) I describe African Peoples' Dance and similar terms as a counter discourse because they were championed to subvert a particular framing of Black dance. Advocates in debates use it in an effort to safeguard certain interests and values and avoid them being rendered invisible by the conflated discourse surrounding Black dance.

As a counter-discourse, African Peoples' Dance and similar terms have been used flexibly. In the three reports mentioned published in 1987, 1993 and 2000 it is defined differently each time, with however a consistent purpose. This was to gain institutional support for dance on the basis of artistic interests rather than race. Badejo redefined the term African Peoples' Dance as an umbrella term that could encompass any number of discreet dance forms that exist in Africa and the African Diaspora. This was to prevent 'race' or 'the Black

community' becoming the lens through which people looked at the work of Black-led dance companies.

In a bid to further this same agenda, another definition of African Peoples' Dance forms was offered in 2000. It appeared in the report called *Time for Change: A framework for the Development of African People's Dance Forms* which was commissioned by the Arts Council of England and written by Hermin MacIntosh, Lorraine Yates and Claudette McDonald. This report states that a single organisation to support African Peoples' Dance and Black dancers was not what was needed. The Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) had been founded in 1995 but it was an artist-led initiative and did not have the strategic mandate that was envisaged in *Advancing Black Dancing*. The writers argue, instead, for a framework to aid the collaboration of different institutions within the British dance ecology for the development of dance practices associated with Black dance and African Peoples dance. In presenting this strategy, the writers return to the term African Peoples' Dance forms as coined by Peter Badejo. However they redefine the term for their purposes. Rather than posit the African and Caribbean dance forms as the equivalent of dance techniques, they shift the focus to methods of choreography that use these forms. They posit the term not as an umbrella term for African and Caribbean traditional and social dance forms and techniques but as an umbrella term for dance and choreographic practices that draw on African and Caribbean forms. They define African Peoples' Dance as 'that which draws its main influence, sensitivities, means of expression and technical base from the cultural heritage of Africa and the peoples of Africa living in the Diaspora'.

They describe the African Peoples Dance sector as comprising four categories of dance practice - Traditional African and Caribbean, Contemporary African, New Black British aesthetic, and Black people in dance. They describe each category as being dynamic and innovative. They give the label 'Black people in dance' to Black dancers who work in a non-African or Caribbean influenced aesthetic. And they describe this group as outside of the scope of the report.

MacIntosh, Yates and McDonald, in devising their definition of African Peoples' Dance, focus on how the dance profession had organised itself at the time, which was mainly around choreographers and freelance teachers. Beside those who were teaching repertoire pieces of neo-traditional African dance and Caribbean dances, choreographers developed their own movement vocabularies based on their training and their research. Furthermore, by mentioning 'Black people in dance' as a category that had needs to be addressed but whose work was outside the scope of the study, the writers are beginning to separate art form issues from those of Equal opportunities, anti-racism and anti-discrimination agendas. It also insisted that nothing would change unless funds were made available to support infrastructure (MacIntosh, Yates, & McDonald 2000, pp. 54-55). With *Time for Change*, the search for an organisation that could support the totality of Black dance/African Peoples' Dance seems to have ended and no report addressing this topic has since been published.

Though the definition of McIntosh, Yates and McDonald reflected what individual dancers and dance companies were doing it was not used by dance artists. The framing of Black dance in the debates in 1993 situated this discussion about the work of Black choreographers at a national level and in an administrative context, where it revolved around the allocation of resources. It lost its currency with dance artists. In a recent interview with three Black contemporary dancers that appears in the Spring 2011 edition of *Animated: the Community Dance Magazine*, Kweku Aacht asked if they saw themselves as representing African Peoples' Dance. Whilst the three current choreographers' answers showed that the term African Peoples' Dance did not resonate with them, they all showed an interest in African dance forms. Tony Adigun answered 'I don't really get the term "African People's Dance" but the methods and structure of traditional African dance is in the passion I try to instil into my dancers'. Freddie Opoku-Addaie answered 'African Peoples Dance?' I guess it makes me think of the folk traditions. Certainly what I received from my grandparents was a ritualistic form for self-expression, they certainly don't see it as "African Peoples Dance"'. Alessandra Seutin responds 'I love African dance, there's that relationship to hip-hop. The BAM! Sheer passion! Give it! Dance!' (Aacht 2011, p.19). This demonstrates that African Peoples Dance, as a term, had lost its artistic currency within this administrative discourse.

Commenting on aesthetic matters in the South Asian dance sector in Britain, Gregory Sporton describes similar problems with choreographic discourse. Quoting Yasmin Alibai-Brown, he argues that Arts policy is linked 'not to style or

the ends of practice' but to creating a 'visible community' (Alibai-Brown 2001 cited in Sporton 2004, p.86). Concerning discussion documents, he writes:

Nearly every Arts Council policy document for the past ten years dealing with cultural diversity discusses questions like 'What is Black Dance?' argues that there is probably no such thing, that taxonomy or support needs to be based on form and quality, and then goes on to create a policy for a wide variety of unnamed dance forms from specific geographical areas (Bryan 1993a; Arts Council 1996; Arts Council 1998; Siddall 2001). It is the absence of distinctions between types and purposes that artists in particular have clearly found exasperating (Jeyasingh 1990; Parthasarathi 1993; Bryan 1993a). Additionally, arts policy and artistic practice are constantly on the move. (Sporton 2004, p. 86)

Sporton's opinion is that this is the result of 'a single-issue view of arts funding' which merges 'social inclusion, economic hardship, creative expression and immigration' (ibid.) to ensure that the work of the choreographer using non-western forms is spoken about in these terms. He also describes, after Bhikhu Parekh, hybrid works as being accorded the role of promoting a pre-configured 'national story' of British immigration experiences (Parekh 2000 cited in Sporton 2004, p.87).

The lens of Ethnic arts is ineffective when trying to understand the difference between the two Nigerian contemporary African dance choreographers Peter Badejo and Bode Lawal. To understand the difference you would have to understand Badejo's background in African dance-drama and the development of the bata-bade technique from the bata dance form, and Lawal's application of Euro-American postmodern compositional methods to African dances. This categorisation will not provide any insight into the differences and similarities between Jackie Guy and Beverley Glean who are two contemporary dance artists who draw on Caribbean dance forms. These four choreographers were

all working in 1990s Britain. They were attracted to different forms, and were examining different ideas of modernity and devising different choreographic practices. The framing of the 'national story' cannot produce a choreographic discourse, and limits the value of choreography by Black dance artists to its ability to represent a racial group.

Whilst race is a concern for choreographers, I would argue that how they express this concern is subjective. How a choreographer's work addresses issues of race or identity politics can only be appreciated through the contemplation of their choreographic works. Therefore, discussions of dance form, technique, generic and creative process are integral to understanding dance practices by Black choreographers. Cultural citizenship, from this point of view, is expressed through the means used to create the staged performance or hybrid dance vocabulary. Cultural translation hones in on the values being expressed or translated through the production of dance, which can often be experienced through how and what forms are being merged or what theatrical or choreographic conventions are being used.

While this debate was going on throughout the 1990s, choreographers and dancers continued to make and tour dance productions. Magazines such as *Dance Theatre Journal*, *Hotfoot*, *Animated* and *Dance UK* from time to time published interviews, stories, and reviews of performances. These texts show that dance histories in this sector are better conceived as a web of various performances rather than a linear trajectory.

4.10. The Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector up until 2005

Referring to visual arts in Britain, Jean Fisher says that ethnic minority arts and cultural diversity merged into one and as such cultural policy changed very little for visual artists of non-western heritage when cultural diversity replaced ethnic minority arts. Both terms simply were used by programmes to label artists as British nationals and make them visible in projects rather than instigate initiatives, in which institutions engaged with their work (Fisher 2010 p.62-63). The situation seems to be the same for dance. Although the term 'Black dance' as used for example by Edward Thorpe, is not theorised in relation to choreographic practice, I would argue that it is not the term itself that has created the debate around infrastructure. The term was not used by dance artists to describe their creative or cultural processes. As demonstrated by the report on the regional *What is Black Dance in Britain?* meeting, dance artists and companies would prefer to design the infrastructure to suit the way they work, in terms of their choreographic approach to using African and Diaspora dance forms. What caused the debates was that there was no real conversation between the funders and the sector. The development of a language with which to describe creative process and aesthetics was hampered by this process for much of the work associated with Black choreographers. The consultation process confused the language used by practitioners, in short stunted the discourse that was evolving. The consultation process did not impact on Hip-hop theatre, which had a wider discourse, beyond the generated by British

institutions. This account of the Black dance/African Peoples dance sector suggests that a choreographic discourse would have developed if appropriate infrastructure which allowed dance artists with similar points of view to work together in the manner suggested at the regional meeting of *What is Black Dance in Britain?*

The discourse and counter-discourse of Black dance and African Peoples' Dance, which began in the 1990s, is effectively an argument over a way of narrating the choreographic and dance histories of Black dancers. The establishment of BDDT brought a grassroots dance movement into the British Arts funding discourse. However it was perceived as being irrelevant to the development of British dance by funders when the dance ecology in Britain began to change. It however was a modern dance movement albeit one that placed value on the heritage and tradition. The debate in 1993 promoted a point of view that Black dance was a cultural expression which considers, on the one hand, traditional forms of dance as representative of lands of origin for migrant groups and, on the other, fusions between traditional and social dance forms and western dance techniques as an expression of integration into Britain. Unwittingly, this framing of Black dance, which Sporton refers to, as the 'national story' of British immigration, constitutes a return to 'ethnic Arts'. When Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble closed in 2005, the monies that were allocated to it was given to two support organisations, two dance companies which produced contemporary African and three companies led by practitioners with backgrounds in Hip-hop. 'Contemporary African dance' and Hip-hop

became prominent in the theatrical dance sector. The discourse of Ethnic Minority arts cannot explain why these two artistic expressions emerged at this time as it was not a critical discourse.

4.11. Conclusion

In this chapter I explored 1985 to 2005 as an episteme in which the discourse generated by the use of ethnic minority arts as a category by funders and programmes served as 'a regime of truth' to use Foucault phrase. I offered a story of the construction of the Black dance/African People's dance sector, which demonstrates that definitions are not simply about labels and terms but about the discourses they inhabit. Due to legacies of slavery, colonialism, and migration, terms such as 'Black', 'African', and 'ethnic' appear in a variety of discourses and might signify different histories of ideas, agendas, and aspirations in each one. In multicultural societies, there needs to be sensitivity to this, or inclusion is actually hampered as little space is provided for participants to think about their work in relation to their environment.

Constructionists' perspectives enable the analysis of how the work of Black choreographers intersects with British cultural policy, funding agendas, and theatrical practice. No doubt this is not the only way choreography of this type can be examined. This perspective, however, will provide insights into the historical evolution of choreography that draws on African and Diaspora forms in Britain as a multicultural society. With the closure of Adzido Pan-African

dance ensemble in 2005 a new discourse began to emerge as Hip-hop and contemporary African dance became prominent.

Chapter 5

Black choreographers in Britain:

The challenge of generating a critical discourse

1985 to 2005

5.1 Introduction:

In this chapter, I look at the generation of critical discourse by practitioners working in different spaces in the British dance ecology between the years 1985 to 2005. I discuss the efforts made to generate a critical discourse by dance artists in general and those associated with the Black Dance/African Peoples Dance sector in particular. I also discuss how and why two theatrical practices associated with this sector gained ascendance at the end of this period, which is marked by the closure of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble. They are Hip-hop theatre and choreography and Contemporary African dance

as mentioned in chapter 4. I am being sensitive to time space in doing this, following the propositions I have put forward in the choreosteme. In chapter 3, I state that when looking into issues of cultural politics in theatrical dance delineating the time space of the dance activity or practice is important. I describe time space in terms of the set of social relations or institutional arrangements in which the relevant activities take place. These social relations change as those who carry them out make decisions about their activities and the activities evolve. As discussed in chapter 3, different activities may take place in the same historical period in different time spaces, as if in parallel (Claid 2006, p. 100). It follows then that critical discourses will differ from one time space to another. There might be power struggles over meaning within a time space or between times-spaces and a dominant discourse in one time space might almost erase the discourse sustaining the practices of another group of dance artists in a different time space working with mainly other institutions and audiences.

5.2. Post-GLC: Economic imperatives and the dominant discourse in contemporary dance

Paul DiMaggio, a cultural industries theorist describes artistic genres or arts classifications as being defined by artistic features or themes as well as the way by which they are organized socially and how their producers or makers gain institutional support or attract consumers. He writes:

Socially constructed organizing principles (that) imbue artworks with significance beyond their thematic content and are, in turn, responsive to

structurally generated demand for cultural information and affiliation....artistic classifications must be continually enacted in art worlds if they are to persist, each dimension contains a cognitive and an organizational component (DiMaggio 2012, p. 128)

In other words genres of art are tied to the political economy. They are however reduced not to it. This means economic imperatives as well as the changing values the producers and consumers of an art form have an impact on whether an art form continues to evolve or dies out or becomes more popular. It also means however that economics is not the only thing that influences the way a genre evolves. Practitioners can find ways to adapt the way they practice a genre in order to make sense of changing circumstances.

The closure of the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1986 had a direct impact on dance as a profession in Britain. It caused administrators and managers to look for funds from different contexts and reconfigure their work within new sets of social and institutional arrangements and new time spaces, and this shifted the artistic direction of contemporary dance in Britain. The GLC ran a touring circuit for ethnic minority artists and also supported London based festivals. Its closure therefore affected both Ethnic Minority Arts and Mainstream arts organisations. The impact of its closure was different for dance artists of different races. As discussed in chapter 4, the closure of GLC ultimately led to the construction of the Black Dance/African Peoples Dance sector.

The Dance Umbrella festival felt the impact of the GLC's closure because the GLC was one of its funders. Although the Dance Umbrella was already a client of the Arts Council, it needed further funds to fill the gap left by the GLC. After

its closure the programming of the Dance Umbrella changed. From 1985 there were noticeably more European companies, especially French companies on the programme. According to Bonnie Rowell, it is likely that the internationalism of the Dance Umbrella programme was due to artistic and economic interests. Whilst some observers said French companies were being programmed by the festival because they received greater funding than the British companies and therefore could afford to travel to England to perform, Val Bourne the festival's artistic director denied that funding had been the deciding factor for programming. There was also an increase of well-funded American companies (Rowell 2000, p. 60). The impact of this on British dance writes Rowell, was that British performers entered into an 'aesthetic dialogue' with the foreign companies they were sharing their stages with. At the time British dancers were exploring experimental practices and improvisation. However European theatrical dance practices were based on set choreography. With time British companies began to incorporate elements of experimental dance into set choreography. For example Siobhan Davies and DV8 incorporated contact improvisation into to a European-influenced theatrical style. By 1988 critics saw Dance Umbrella as a platform for presenting 'ambitious work' by experienced artists. The outcome of this was that by 1998 Dance Umbrella, as noted by dance critic Jann Parry, no longer featured dancers like Kristie Simson and Julyen Hamilton who presented improvised performances (Rowell 2000, p.66). Venues such as Chisenhale dance space began to be used to show works-in-progress whilst finished work was shown at the festival. In this manner, the Dance Umbrella administrators influenced the nature of the creative context in

which British theatrical dance companies had to develop their aesthetics. The context was influenced by what was going on internationally. British dance artists however succeeded in retaining a British signature whilst moving into an international realm of performance.

The change in focus of the Dance Umbrella festival also impacted Black dancers but in a different way. With the closure of the GLC both the Arts Council and organisations like the Dance Umbrella had to think about what it meant to engage artists who worked with non-western forms in artistic terms. According to Bonnie Rowell, Dance Umbrella was challenged to programme work by Black and Asian choreographers (Rowell 2000, p. 70). The response of the festival was to look outward. In 1987, the festival responded by producing a programme called *Parallels in Black*, a programme of work, which included six African American choreographers - Ishmael Houston-Jones, Bebe Miller, Blondell Cummings, Fred Holland, Ralph Lemon, and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. It was put together in conjunction with the Place Theatre as part of The Place Theatre's 'Spring Loaded' season (Rowell 2000, p. 70). Rowell states Dance Umbrella was committed 'to innovative and experimental' dance and this left out most Black artists in Britain who preferred to explore heritage and that funders contributed to this situation because they preferred to support those committed to exploring heritage. *Parallels in Black* was programmed to challenge funders and 'to provoke debate toward the issue of what young British choreographers are to do if their interests were to lie within their present cultural situation, rather than exclusively with in their cultural heritage' (Rowell 2000, p. 70-71). In other

words, the Dance Umbrella held up the work of the African American choreographers as the example for British choreographers to follow. As part of *Parallels in Black*, the Dance Umbrella organised for British based dance companies to attend workshops led by the African-American choreographers. Jawole Willa Jo Zollar also created a piece of work for Union Dance Company (Rowell 2000 p.194).

Although Bonnie Rowell states that most black choreographers were committed to staging dance forms that represented their heritage, there were a number of contemporary dance companies led by black choreographers at the time - Union dance, IRIE! Dance theatre, Phoenix Dance Company that had been established in 1984 and 1985 who were clearly contemporary dance companies experimenting with the fusion of dance forms from African, Diaspora and western dance traditions. It seems however from this account that choreography created from using a fusion of forms was not considered innovative by the festival. The MAAS Movers, founded in 1977 had performed at the fringes of the Dance Umbrella festival since its inception in 1978 (Rowell 2000, p165). Nin Dance Company, which also included Greta Mendez performed in the festival in 1981 to commissioned music (Rowell 2000, p.171). This company had produced a physical theatre piece about domestic violence before DV8 ventured into this area. Although not stated explicitly in any documents, the statement made by the festival when they launched *Parallels in Black* programme suggests that festival administrators did not consider the work of black choreographers who were creating contemporary dance vocabularies

which drew on a mixture of social and traditional dance forms and Western techniques as being truly artistic. Neither MAAS Movers or Nin Dance Company were featured as part of Dance Umbrella's main programme. In hindsight, there was a number of discourses shaped this attitude towards the choreography of black British choreographers. For the British dance sector of the 1980s, the theatrical dance of ethnic minorities work was considered to be part of what Chris de Marigny describes as Britain's 'socio-political agenda for dance' which included the dance amateur movement and later the support of ethnic minority-led dance companies through local government authorities and 'government employment schemes' (1994, pp. 6-7). It is possible that the work of black choreographers experimenting with choreographic fusions were looked upon by mainstream organisations as producing work under the 'socio-political' banner rather than as doing experimental or artistic work. Furthermore, if mainstream organisations considered the work of black choreographers to be akin to community dance, their choreography would not be seen as artistic. It was still considered to be an exploration of heritage, which not considered to be an artistic expression. It would mean that the function of choreographic fusion was seen by mainstream organisations as a tool to encourage black communities to attend theatres and participate in cultural activities outside of their communities, in wider British culture. For black choreographers however choreographic fusion had personal and political meanings. They were not engaging with it simply to fulfil the dictates of cultural policy.

It also seems that for choreography to be considered to be art dance by the mainstream dance critics, the work of the choreographer had to in some way engage with a transnational Euro-American theatrical dance aesthetic or category. Rowell for example, considers the legacy of the *Parallels in Black* to be that it forged the path for the work of Black British choreographers to be presented at the festival. She cites Shobana Jeyasingh as evidence (Rowell 2000, p. 72). Jeyasingh's choreography was staged at the festival in the 1991 (Rowell 2000, p. 110). Jeyasingh's work however had nothing in common with the work of any black British choreographers at the time. Neither was Jeyasingh's work similar to any of the 'Parallels in Black' artists, if we are to go by the descriptions of their work offered by Elizabeth Zimmer in her preview for *Dance Theatre Journal* (Vol 5, no Spring 1987). If there was a similarity between Jeyasingh and the African-American artists it was that their choreographic approaches intersected in some way with a transnational Euro-American theatrical dance tradition. This intersection seems to be posited as an entry point to being considered innovative. Additionally, Jeyasingh may have been considered as representative of both black and Asian people because in the 1980s 'Black' was a term used to describe almost all people of colour in the Black arts movement and in British cultural policies. The fact that the work of one artist of ethnic minority background could be considered to mean all others were represented is a point of view that comes from discourses of Ethnic Minority Arts and the ideas it promoted as to how the integration and representation of Ethnic Minority people into British dance could be represented through dance. Jeyasingh's work was posited as representative of integration

by this discourse. *Parallels in Black*, was a successful, well-received programme and from reports, it was much needed and its legacy includes the starting a fruitful relationship between Bebe Miller and the Urban Bush Women and British audiences and practitioners. The way it was positioned in relation to work by black choreographers in Britain by the festival organisers however was problematic.

The Arts Council commissioned a report *Stepping Forward* (1986) written by Graham Devlin which marked the coming of other changes in the infrastructure for the dance profession in Britain which also affected the artistic practice and choreographic methods used in subsidized sector. The Arts Council commissioned the report in its search for solutions to supporting the dance sector in the face of reduced funds. Devlin suggested that the dance sector be built around a network of dance agencies in different regions of the country, which would serve as centres for dance in each region. The development of these agencies was to shape the independent sector. They would be the place where local dance artists could get support and run classes and from which youth companies could operate, and young companies and local artists could gain support (Devlin, 1986). The first six pilot National Dance Agencies were set up in 1990, in Birmingham, Leeds, Leicester, London, Newcastle and Swindon. They were established by the Arts Council, in collaboration with the Regional Arts Boards (Selwood 1995, p. 18). Devlin also suggested the funding of flagship dance companies. The Rambert dance company whose aesthetics could be described as a ballet influenced contemporary dance style continued

to be supported by the Arts Council at this time. Significantly, Adzido Pan-African dance ensemble in the 1992/93 financial year, was made one of the five dance companies to receive on-going funding from the Arts Council and London Arts (Dunlop et al, 1995, p. 21). Along with Kokuma dance company and Phoenix dance company, also black led companies, it was able to undertake year round tours. Attitudes towards flagship dance companies were varied. When London Contemporary Dance Theatre which was the flagship dance company for this sector, faced closure, Chris de Marigny then the editor of Dance Theatre Journal celebrated the fact that it might close and that contemporary dance would be supported by National Dance Agencies as opposed to relying on the leadership of a flagship company. He suggests the agency system would be more supportive of the independent dance sector (de Marigny 1994, p.32). London Contemporary Dance Theatre was finally defunded in 1994.

The dance ecology that evolved during the mid-1990s could be describe in term of scale: Dance Umbrella had became a major dance festival and there were the flagship companies which seem to consist of British dance companies that had an aesthetic that could be aligned with international trends. These were large scale. Then there was the independent dance sector, consisting of small-scale companies and individual freelance practitioners who worked mainly on a project-by-project basis. Most dance companies in the 1990s worked on a project-by-project basis. Jennifer Roche describes how project-by-project working conditions impacted the aesthetics of contemporary dance.

Choreographers began to work less with one dance technique but instead created dance vocabularies drawing on the dance experiences of their performers. Dancers also learnt to shift from one dance technique to another rapidly, not fully embodying any of the forms that they were exposed to. Roche lists the various names that emerged in scholarship describing the type of dancer this way of working was producing – ‘the entrepreneurial dancer’ (Bales and Nettl-Fiol, 2008), the ‘body eclectic’ (Davida, 1992), ‘hybrid bodies’ (Louppe, 1996), and the ‘hired body’ (Foster 1992). Some commentators saw this as positive and ‘democratic’, other mourned the loss of the aesthetics seen when choreographers worked with one dance technique like Cunningham or Graham (Roche 2015, pp. 8-9).

In the response to the needs of independent dancers, support organisations began to open up. Two of such organisations are Independent Dance (ID), which was established in 1990 to provide on-going classes to freelance and independent dancers and the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD), which was established in 1994. The generation of critical discourses and a language to describe artistic practice were of interest to both these organisations. As discussed in chapter 4, ADAD emerged to perform a completely different context to BDDT though there was the erroneous assumption circulating that the former was a more democratic version of the latter. During its first five or six years of its life, ADAD was also focused on supporting black dancers artists working independently.

The dance platform was seen by both aforementioned organisations as a means of developing critical discourse and supporting freelance dancers to create an audience for their work. In an interview in 1994, a leading figure in the independent dance field Gill Clarke, who was a director of the organisation, Independent Dance, otherwise known as ID. She argued for the importance of having platforms for dancers to share work based on their own dance vocabularies, which were devised from their training and dance experiences. She stated that one of the functions of the dance platform was that facilitated discussion and thereby developing a critical language for their work. She said that a critical language was a necessary for dancers who needed it to be able to communicate with funding bodies, collaborate with each other in the way required to sustain their chosen mode of operation and to promote their own work in general. Independent dancers in ID were not focused in trying to work or tour work at a middle scale or large-scale level. Clarke was quite critical of funders who posited performance in large-scale venues as the marker for success for dancers and choreographers. She argued that independent dancers who taught, performed and choreographed in various contexts were valuable in their own right but required more support. The discourse the organization generated served them appropriately for this purpose (DTJ 1994, p.54-55). Clarke linked the growth of critical discourse to the growth of this dance sector, which was not built around dance companies but rather networks of independent dance artists and artistic collectives. In 2007 ID published a document to mark their seventeenth anniversary. The document entitled, *Supporting, Stimulating, Sustaining Independent Dance* edited by Ian Bramley

showed that the organisation had succeeded in generating its own critical discourse and that it had consequently produced a historical legacy for the communities of practice involved in the sector whilst maintaining their position as part of contemporary dance field in general (Bramley 2007, p.4).

ADAD had a more complex remit. Black dancers who were workers in the independent dance sector also required a different kind of critical discourse. The organization not only meant to support black dancers as independent workers, but also develop a critical discourse that did not only serve them but the wider society. After the closure of BDDT, which was accused of having a narrow definition of black dance, ADAD sought to open its organization to all black dancers. Ironically, ADAD was not built around a dance genre unlike BDDT but race. It was only by billing itself as an organisation for all black dancers could say that it was inclusive of all dances forms and practices used by black dancers. ADAD used its newsletter and dance platform, amongst other things as mechanism to generate critical discourses to support the work of dance artists. It was a challenge to find names to describe the kinds of work that black dancers were producing. Choreographers and dancers were not simply displaying dance forms in the way they had learnt them. The terms 'Caribbean', 'African' or 'Hip-hop,' did not indicate the intentionality of the choreography, their approaches or ideology or any of the ideas, which informed the making of their work. They did not indicate which audiences their work was targeted too. At times the artistic approach of the choreographer was a better indicator of what audience would like the work than a description of the dance forms that

they used in the work. Though dancers were passionate about using particular styles of dance in their work, they still interrogated form and technique, explored themes and told stories. Some choreographers saw their artistic practice being the exploration of the technical basis of traditional or social dance forms, deconstructing them and reconfiguring them, others focused on the fusion of forms and what that communicated. The dance platforms organised by ADAD created a forum, which brought some of these issues about definition to the fore.

5.3. Artistic questions raised by dance platforms for black dancers: 1994 to 2005

According to June Gamble, the first co-ordinator of ADAD, the core activity of the organization when it was established in 1994 was its dance platform. It organized the first dance platform for black dancers. Some of the membership felt that this act would 'ghettoize' black dancers but Gamble reports that the existence of a platform for black dancers encouraged those who would not apply to a mainstream platforms like Resolution! at the Place to present their choreographic ideas to the public (Gamble 2004, p. 5). The dancers who participated also enjoyed focused promotion. The first platform in 1995 was well received. The platform led to further opportunity for a number of choreographers. Joey Thomas for example one of the performers at first platform received two commissions by Dance 4 and artBlacklive. The platforms by 1998 had become 'a celebration of diversity'. Performances created for the

platform could be in any type of dance form or could be cross art form. The 1998 platform included a work-in-progress by Khadijatou Doyneh Fraser *Chain Melody* which was a fusion of street dance, African and modern dance technique to a drum and bass track, a contemporary African dance solo by Alison Ray called *Changing faces*, A jazz fusion duet choreographed by Kwesi Carl Johnson and a contemporary dance piece called *2WO* which included poetry and video projection and another contemporary piece dance by Sharon Donaldson and Stephen Derrick. ADAD platforms were also staged in the regions, not just in London.

One of the aims of the administrators, June Gamble, followed by Deborah Baddoo was enabling the emergence of what they called a New Black dance aesthetic. Looking back at the platform in 2004, June Gamble felt this aesthetic was recognizable in the work of Robert Hylton, Irvan Lewis, Maria Ryan and Robert Hylton (Gamble 2004, p.5). Considering the dance artists mentioned here it is unlikely Gamble was New black dance aesthetic was a reference to a particular style of work but rather a particular way of working, which involved a fusion of forms or the use of western choreographic methods in conjunction with social dance forms. In the meantime other dance platforms some with the same and some with different focuses were established. The vision of the platform called *Nubian Steps* was to raise the level of critical discussion about black dance and to contribute to the development of a New Black Aesthetic. It was produced by David Bryan, cultural activist, social entrepreneur and consultant, known for writing the report *Advancing Black Dancing* (1993). Being politically

minded, and having a track record of successful community arts and development projects, he set up Nubian Steps after the meetings of 1993. He saw a gap in the infrastructure to support black dance and decided to do something practical to fill it. The first platform was in 1996. After selecting the dancers he told them to make the dance whilst he produced the event. It sold out (2002, p.4). Because he was not from the dance world, he employed Sheron Wray and Jedda Donnelly to support the selection process. He recruited a strong administrative team and programmed the event at the South Bank Centre after negotiations with Alistair Spalding who was at that time working at the venue (Bryan 2013, p. 82-83). Bryan's feelings however were mixed despite the success of the event. Whilst he was pleased with the exposure it gave the dancers, he was disappointed because the work lacked politics. He wrote:

There is a void of politics in the dance world and I don't understand why it is. I am not deeply engaged in the dance world to understand what takes place in the training? So for me I am particularly angry that choreographers don't come with a debate about 'What does Stephen Lawrence mean in terms of dance to the black community?....Now if dance is purely about good movement of slender bodies and wonderful aesthetics then that's fine. But is not why we came into the business of producing *Nubian Steps*' (Bryan 2002,p. 3)

For the dancers however the production of choreography, which came from their experimentation with different dance forms or used dance forms such as jazz, which was shunned, by the arts world, was a political act.

For the second platform Bryan decided tried to stimulate the exploration of themes by asking for written ideas from the ideas as part of the selection process but he was disappointed with the outcomes (Bryan 2002, p. 4). The

second platform eventually went ahead in 1997 again to full houses. He introduced a question and answer session so the audience and choreographers could talk to each other. Nubian Steps was a platform for artists with experience; most had performed with touring companies or ran their own outfits (Bryan 2013, p. 85). Although Nubian Steps always sold out, it proved very expensive and labour intensive. Bryan and his team produced a last one in 2001. For many dance artists during the period *Nubian Steps* was in existence, the exploration of form in choreography, itself was political. It was the exploration of identity and subjectivity through dance, which drove their work and Nubian Steps, gave them the opportunity to do it. David Bryan, coming from more of a drama background did not recognise the exploration of form as political and he was disappointed in the dancers' lack of politics. This discrepancy draws attention to the fact that the ethnic minority arts discourse created little space for black practitioners to develop a critical discourse around different artistic genres or practices. The arts sectors for black people were organised around 'race' so that mainstream organisations could demonstrate that they were including ethnic minorities in their projects. They were not organised to enable ethnic minorities to develop practices from their cultural repertoire and so participate in the professional sector proactively.

Many of the platforms established at the time tried to draw attention to issues of aesthetics by focusing on the diversity of forms under the banner of black dance. The Hip dance festival is one example of this. It ran in 2001 and 2002 at The Place theatre in London. The strapline for the festival in 2001 was 'black

dance takes a new root' was produced by Brenda Edwards. Edwards, a former ballerina and a pioneer in that field, had the goal of presenting the diversity of black dance without 'compromising the integrity of each form.' Edward's vision birthed 'Twelvetimesone', a night of 12 solos, which was the centrepiece of the festival (Edwards 2002, p. 10). Each soloist performed a different style or genre of dance. On the festival's publicity leaflet the artists were listed along side their style or genre rather than the title of their piece in keeping with Edwards agenda draw attention to the diversity of forms and dance styles to be found under the umbrella of black dance: Diane Alison-Mitchell (Caribbean dance. Choreographed by Jackie Guy), Greta Mendez (Live Art), Melanie Teall (Contemporary. Choreographed by Chris Tudor), Sheron Wray (Fusion Improvisation), Jane Sekonya (Street Fusion. Choreographed by Robert Hylton), Brenda Edwards (Contemporary), Paul Henry (Jazz), Benji Reid (Physical Theatre), Andile Sotiya (Contemporary African) Curtis James (Contemporary), Alan Miller (Urban Caribbean). The festival was one of the first, to give a platform to contemporary dance artists emerging out of Africa and Europe, launched by the France-sponsored inter-African dance competition. Julie Dossavi and Salia and Seydou with Dramane Diabate performed and gave workshops alongside British artists Colin Poole and Paul Henry and the eight-woman artistic collective MPD (Music, Poetry, Dance). The festival gave audiences and dancers in particular a great boost. It gave the many well-known teachers and performers the opportunity to present work (Mitchell 2015, Paradigmz 2015). Another platform, which was established to allow for the showcasing of the diversity of black dance, was *The Black Dance Festival*

produced by Vicky Spooner, which ran for two years. Badejo Arts organized a dance platform called Tilewa specifically for Contemporary African dance, which ran for two years. The first was in 1999. Tilewa was organized to promote the development of contemporary African dance in Britain.

The choreography that was presented at these platforms was described in one of two ways as seen in the publicity. For example during the Hip festival each choreographers/dancers that appeared in the publicity appeared with a description of the kind of work they were showing at the Hip Festival. We find those who works were described in term of their culture origins of the forms they used such as 'Caribbean dance' and there were others whose work was described by the ethos of the genre they used such as 'live art' or 'contemporary dance'. Since much of the work if not all the work presented these platforms were produced through a fusion of techniques or the fusion of a dance form with western choreographic devices, the question remains how did a choreographer or programmer decide whether a piece of choreography should be categorized in one way or the other? However it there is no record of a debate about this so it might mean that the choice of label by the performer or the choreographer and represented the perspective or lens through which he or she wanted the public to look at their work. The celebration of the diversity of practices and forms that were being produced under the banner of black dance at these platforms show that there were several performance trajectories in the Black dance/African Peoples Dance sector few of which have ever been looked

at in-depth by programmers or academics but which the dance community felt required more attention.

5.4. The Anomalous Context of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble

There was also a struggle during this period to develop a critical discourse around the work of Flagship Company for the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector, the Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble. This proved difficult because the context of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble was anomalous.

An anomalous category in communication theory is one, which draws features from two categories, which are considered to be binary opposites. The anomalous categories are at times created deliberately to arbitrate situations, which needed to be controlled (Fiske 1990, p. 118). Theatrical dance in a western societies developed with the emergence of 'professional performance forms,' to use a description put forward by Jane Desmond (1997, p.43).

Companies such as Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble which used social dance or traditional dance forms in a theatrical context are often considered to be existing with in an 'in-between space'. My argument however is that context for Adzido was anomalous not because its productions drew on non-theatrical dance forms but for other reasons. There was a history of theatrical dance that used social dance and traditional dance forms through which it could be understood. There were examples of such companies from Africa, the Caribbean and America and most importantly there was a history of this practice in Britain. Adzido was anomalous because very little attention was

given to this historical context by its funders and so no language or projects were developed that explored this history. It seems that it was funded to occupy a liminal position. My point of view is that the context of the company was anomalous because there was no discursive context for the work it presented was generated. It therefore seems to have been a theatrical tool for social inclusion and race relation agendas. Graham Devlin recognised that Adzido would only make artistic sense if it had a dance context in Britain to which it was linked. It is likely that the aesthetics of the company would have changed over time if it was positioned in relation to other companies. Furthermore, dance critics and writers would have been part of the process of evolution and decision-making. Since Adzido was first funded in Britain to further social inclusion agendas, when it switched to being an Arts Council client to tour the middle to large scale, its meaning in this new context needed to be elucidated.

There had been attempts in the 1980s to develop a critique for African and Caribbean dance by writers at the *New Dance* magazine. Being part of the new dance movement and outside the mainstream themselves, the writers of this magazine were curious about the work of black choreographers and the African Peoples Dance movement. Ramsay Burt, a writer with the *New Dance* magazine, however writes in 1986 that even after a number of years of engaging with black dancers they were yet to have produced an 'informed critique' on the work of African and Caribbean dance companies. He therefore asked Derrick Anderson, the artistic director of Kokuma at the time, for an

interview. The conversation was about form. Burt told him that dance artists from the new dance movement who admired the 'released' movement of African and Caribbean dance expressed surprise that Caribbean dance companies were exploring choreographic fusion with ballet and Graham technique. Anderson's reply was that whilst there was a danger of producing second-rate work, a skilled artistic director would produce an integration rather than a fusion of techniques. They both agreed that criticism across racial groups would be constructive. This investigation ended with the closure of the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) and the *New Dance Magazine* itself.

The importance of a discursive context for a representational practice was not lost on Maggie Semple who was the head of Education at the Arts Council at the time. She says she was prompted to interview staff at Adzido after reading a review which described Adzido's performance of *Siye Goli*. The review described the production as a display of grinning dancers performing with the 'kind of energy that would have an average aerobic class begging for mercy after ten minutes' (Semple 1992. p. 21). In the article entitled *African dance and Adzido* (1992) Semple discusses her thoughts on how Adzido had evolved as a dance company since it started in 1984 and how its discursive context could be developed. One of Semple's questions to George Dzikunu the artistic director of the company and Hillary Carty the general manager was if the company was dedicated to preserving 'classical African dance form'. Dzikunu answered that Adzido was still at the point of 'introducing and establishing the form' in Britain and his agenda was not about the preservation of 'classical forms. Carty's

answer was more detailed. She said that touring classical ballet companies in contemporary society was not considered strange. She made the point that Adzido was committed to a style of work which was about the presentation of classical forms. She added however that this did not mean the company was not interested in developing artistically. She took felt the term 'preservation' however was not appropriate, pointing out that the company's stakeholders had 'noticed how the company's work had evolved over the last five years in terms of its 'dramatic, mime, staging and choreographic context'.

That Adzido had developed artistically over the last few years was a point that Semple acknowledged, hence her desire to interview the artistic director and manager of the company. She writes that *Siye Goli* was artistically superior to, *In the village of Africa* (1986). She was aware however that this development was lost on critics. Whilst the emphasis of *In the village of Africa* was on 'high energy,' and interactive moments between the dancers, *Siye Goli* was crafted with the audience in mind, displaying intricacy and variety. Semple also spoke about *In the Village of Africa* leaving her feeling 'voyeuristic' and expressed satisfaction that this was not the case with *Siye Goli*. Semple's observations revealed that the company was developing aesthetically and deliberately so. The company did not only want to fulfil a 'social role' and play to only black audiences. Semple pointed out that the company's ambition to 'pursue excellence was laudable' but that its ability to 'redefine British dance' was linked to maintenance of its connections to its source. Semple's discussion with Dzikunu and Carty shows that is there was an idea about the directionality of

aesthetic development – it considered to be a move away from one aesthetic towards another. This however was not discussed in depth. It seems however from remarks made by Carty and Semple's that there was a desire for Adzido to create a more audience orientated mode of choreography with more focus on the dancers making visual designs in space with movement as opposed focusing on the visceral communication between them. It is not a change in dance form that was being discussed by what ideas or concepts were being communicated through the dance forms.

Semple suggested a discursive context for Adzido needed to be developed by bring together dancers, critics and audiences. She ends her article with some pertinent questions: 'How can critics reflect more appropriately the changes in African dance so that reviews are placed with in a broader conceptual framework? How do critics keep pace with audience development? To her mind the solution was for practitioners in the field of African dance to create a forum for critics to develop an eye and a vocabulary to engage with work. She said she felt that this initiative would not be considered necessary by critics unless it came from practitioners in the field. She did not think Adzido should lead this critical forum she felt that another organisation in the dance sector should lead the way. A forum to discuss dance repertoire like that of Adzido's never established before the closure of the organisation in 2005.

One serious omission from the narrative for Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble was a discussion about the origins of the kind of performances that it gave. The National Theatre Movement in Ghana, which started in the 1960s not

long after Ghanaian independence. At the time under the leadership of Professors J.H Nketia and Professor A.M Opoku who were commissioned by the country's president, the national dance company was established (Adinku 1990, p. 5-6). Since the 1960s, there was the development of choreographic methods for staging traditional dance, which once had been arranged for stage was called neo-traditional and by the 1970s, dance theatre was becoming popular which placed dances in the context of a story, borrowing ideas from the structure of a playtext (Nii-Yartey 2009, p. 263-265). A forum that focused on the theatrical skills employed by the company would have helped develop a critical discourse for the African Peoples dance movement considering developments already taking place in companies like Danse De L'Afrique with Bob Ramdhanie and 'H'Patten as discussed in chapter 4. After ADAD opened, 'H' Patten and Judith Palmer, both former dancers with Adzido Pan African dance ensemble made some efforts in the mid 1990s to raise funds to share their knowledge of the Pan-Essent-Move festival, which was an international dance festival that took place in South African and included choreographic exchange. Palmer and Patten were UK delegates. Their idea was to consolidate knowledge and share learning by sharing their experience with UK based dance artists. They were however not able to do this as they were not granted funding. A focus on theatrical conventions and choreographic skills could have been a starting point for training and educational and professional development initiatives. Due to a lack of focus on the skills involved in creating productions with African and Caribbean forms, African Peoples dance merged in with the rest of the independent dance sector where it was seen to represent

the past. In reality it was a modern practice whose raison d'être was to place value on tradition and heritage (Palmer and Patten 2014).

5.5. Generating critical discourse: Four interventions

Between 1985 and 2005, a number of organisations and individuals sought to generate a discourse through which to articulate the artistic interests and values of black choreographers and also to find organising centres for the narratives about their work. Below are four of these: Ancient Futures, an international programme of black contemporary dance produced by IRIE! Dance theatre, Bami Jo summer school produced by Badejo Arts, the Black Choreographic Initiative (BCI) produced by Vivian Freakley and the dance writings of Thea Barnes.

5.5a. Ancient Futures

Ancient Futures was a programme organised by Beverley Glean, the founder of IRIE! dance theatre in 1996. It was billed as an international season of 'contemporary black dance' featuring L'Acadco from Jamaica and Forces of Nature from the USA alongside IRIE! She hoped the season would demonstrate that culturally diverse choreography was characteristic of dance of the African diaspora and strengthen the context for companies like her own. Writing in the

foreword of the season's brochure, Hilary Carty, then dance officer at the Arts Council of England, described the event as taking place at a 'critical time' for Black dance in Britain, which was striving to establish its identity at home and abroad.

5.5b. Bami Jo:

The Bami Jo summer school issues about the importance of dance form to choreography, the codification of African dances, and the development of technique were topics of discussion. Bami Jo was started in 1993 under the directorship of Peter Badejo, the artistic director and choreographer of Badejo Arts. Bami Jo filled the gap created for a summer school when the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) closed. Bami Jo ran most years, from 1993 to 2005. Badejo, a thinker and practitioner was vocal in his belief that for contemporary African dance to be a meaningful choreographic practice, its deconstructions or experiments should reveal knowledge of traditional African dance forms. He described contemporary African dance that showed little knowledge of traditional Africa dances as simply being western dance techniques with embellishments. His intervention was to promote the idea of 'dance technique' and posit the African or Caribbean dance form as being the technical resources form dance practitioners. Most summer schools featured international dance artists and musicians and evolved into a provider of intensive weekend and one-week courses for professional and semi-professional freelance dancers.

The tutors that taught at the summer school included both teachers of neo-traditional dance and as well as contemporary dance. The contemporary dance artists he invited were those whose techniques or choreographic practices drew technical foundations or movement principles from traditional forms or investigated specific features of discrete African or Diaspora dances such as L'Antoinette Stines, Were Were Liking and Zab Mougbonou and Flora Theaine. From 1997, the summer school was begun to include a seminar with the invited teachers investigating a theme that related to issues surrounding cultural translation or change. Badejo was interested in the development of new and hybrid forms and links between dance forms from Africa and diaspora. Six out of the nine seminars that took place before the summer school ended in 2005 were on topics that related to dance forms, technique and codification. The 1996 edition explored the differences and similarities between African and Afro-Cuban dance. The teachers that year were Patrick Acogny, Homero Gonzalez and Ian Parmell. The 1999 seminar had the title: Choreography: Art or scientific arrangement and featured Zab Mougbonou. In 2000, the seminar looked at the overview of African dance techniques. The title of the 2001 seminar was: Is codification necessary for the continuity of African dance? and in 2003 it was; The Bata dance tradition. Badejo's own dance technique Batabade is based on the Bata dance tradition. The technique is based on selected Bata dance steps and motifs in conjunction with their stipulated drum patterns and signals.

5.5c. The Black Choreographic Initiative (BCI):

The Black Choreographic Initiative (BCI) was a groundbreaking project devised and coordinated by Vivian Freakley. The project created encouraged participating choreographers to develop a shared intellectual context for the practices they were developing as part of the initiative, which situated their practices in the world of work with its cultural politics and demanded them to take responsibility for a personal approach to their choreography. It was the result of a partnership between East Midlands, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside Arts. Additional support was provided by the Gulbenkian Foundation and three National Dance Agencies: DanceXchange, the Yorkshire Dance Centre and Dance 4. The aim of the project was to provide professional development for eight choreographers who were working in different regions of England. The eight dance artists on the programme were established artists with a recognizable profile and level of influence. The project began with a Development Need Analysis weekend in which during which the artists reflected on personal and career goals. The organizers provided no definition of black dance. The artists were simply brought together because they were black. However the topic was made available for discussion at part of the project. Some participants disliked the term and other terms such as African dance. Others were comfortable with these terms and did not mind being associated with them. Through discussion and debate they arrived at six statements, which served their framework of consensus and in doing so they developed a discourse in which to situate their own practices (Freakley 1998). The statements were

- 1: Where traditional dances are part of a sense of cultural identity they must be preserved - the essence of them must be preserved - but cultural identity might be tribal and divisive^[1]_[SEP]
- 2: There is an 'African heritage industry' in Africa and in European countries which sees traditional African dances as promoting tourism - this has grown out of a tradition of 'packaging' African people's dance for Europeans - for example, state visits
- 3: There is a 'white' approach which says you must preserve your heritage and which does not recognize the ability of African people to preserve and change and grow^[1]_[SEP]
- 4: There can be an unwillingness to accept that black people can be as diverse, as innovative and as challenging as white people^[1]_[SEP]
- 5: If you are reconstructing you are not choreographing
- 6: If your work is honest and truthful the essentials of identity and community are in the dance you make. (Freakley, 1998)

These statements framed the choreographers' practices in an institutional context, acknowledged cultural politics, stereotyping, artistic standards and the personal responsibility and integrity. It therefore let dancer develop their own philosophical and artistic methodology with an awareness of the constraints and that possibility of being misunderstood.

Over the course of three years the choreographers took part in intensives and practical workshops with tutors from different parts of Africa and the diaspora including Senegal, New York and Jamaica as well as British choreographers such as Emlyn Claid. This way they were exposed to a variety of forms of dance and ways of making work as well as participating in seminars, sharings, hothouses and mentoring programmes. The dance artists were from different paths in dance, which related to their interests and career directions, which ranged from working in community dance to running a dance company and developing a choreographic. The BCI considered one of its achievements as

being that the choreographers who took part are set out on 'individual journeys' which were directed 'towards artistic honesty and clear artistic identity' (Freakley 1998).

5.5d. Dance writing of Thea Nerissa Barnes:

Thea Barnes is a dance researcher and writer who moved to Britain after an illustrious career dancing with the Martha Graham Dance Company and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. She began to write reviews and articles regarding British dancers and choreographers whose work had been categorised through heritage or dance making as African Peoples' Dance or black dance; politicized terms in the British context that Barnes felt had little relation to the practitioner nor the work they were doing. Barnes' effort was to change perceptions of these dancers and their choreographies. She describes her strategy for writing in this way:

My strategy is to demonstrate their ineffectualness by not using them⁵; by illustrating, articulating, characterising dance practice not categorising dance practice. The artefact is what I choose to describe and in so doing delineate the practice of individuals not groups of people. In describing the individual as an individual, you discover the intricacies of dance making in the place and time of its occurrence. This will provide an honest and deferential accounting of how the dance is lived and performed (Barnes, 2015).

She contributed to the ADAD newsletter and Dance Theatre Journal amongst others. When Barnes moved to Britain in the 1990s, her published articles were the only reviews most choreographers ever received. Barnes felt the term black dance in Britain had been co-opted by funding bodies and was not useful for

⁵ Here Barnes is referring to terms such as black dance and African Peoples Dance.

practitioners. Her written on dance highlighted both issues of choreography and of form that were being made invisible by the way the sector was organised.

5.6 Achieving 'Scale': Hip-hop theatrical practices and Contemporary African Dance

Under the umbrellas of black dance and African Peoples Dance From the early 2000s there was an increase of interest from venues in Hip-hop and Contemporary African dance. Choreographers working in both these genres were able due to belonging to a context of theatrical performance that existed internationally. It is possibly for this reason when Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble closed that the companies that were poised to replace it belong to these genres.

5.6a. Hip-hop theatre and choreography

A main starting point for the development of Hip-hop as a theatrical dance practice in Britain is Jonzi D's performance of *Lyrical Fearta* at The Place in 1994 which caught the attention of critics. In America Rennie Harris dance company Puremovement, established in 1992 did the same (Prickett 2013, p. 176). Jonzi D's production was the first Hip-hop production to be programmed in venues associated with art dance. In 2000 Sadler's Wells programmed the *Illness* an evening of Hip-hop theatre produced by Benji Reid. It included performances by Jonzi D, Benji Reid and Robert Hylton. According to Hylton,

the evening programme provided to programmers and audiences that there was there was a number of theatrical dance choreographers working in Hip-hop (Hylton, 2013). Breakin' Convention started in 2004. The production was a collaboration between Jonzi D with Alistair Spalding now at Sadler's Wells. Both Boy Blue and Onibudo's own company Impact dance performed at the first one alongside pioneers such as the Electric Boogaloos and Tommy the Clown and international artists such as Frank II Louise (Onibudo, 2014). The festival reinvigorated the Hip-hop community in Britain and gave audiences at Sadler's Wells the opportunity to mingle with performers (Prickett 2013, p. 180)

One of the reasons for Hip-hop theatre's popularity is it is a part of popular culture in London. Furthermore, practitioners who are part of this culture have been part of developing infrastructure of the theatrical practice that is based on it. Hakeem Onibudo for example created a platform in south London crews in 1996 with out funding from the Arts Council. Onibudo started his dance company, Impact dance, in 1995 as a dance class at Dance Work, a popular dance studio in London where independent dance teachers give classes targeted at recreational and professional dancers. He created staged performances using members of his class and his fellow club dancers His first performances were at London venues the Willesden Apollo. It was in 1996, after becoming tired of waiting for opportunities to perform he set up a performance evening at Willesden Library for his company and some invited acts. The event went well so he approached the Spitz a venue in East London opposite the Spitalfields market to run a regular event. The night at the Spitz,

which took place about four times a year, featured music and comedy as well as dance. Onibudo created work for his company to perform here but also invited young London-based dance crews. Though these crews were not professional in that they were established for social reasons rather than for the purpose of earning a living, they were full of passionate dancers and were highly competitive. It evolved into a significant part of London's dance infrastructure and a conduit for young Hip-hop dancers. Some of the outfits and individuals that featured at the Spitz were Chantelle 'N' Chantelle (C &C), Size 9, Ruff Stuff where Kenrick 'H20' started out, Bird Gang, D7, Marlon from Flawless and GWI. In Victoria 'Vicki' Igbokwe, Onibudo found a right hand person who supported the artistic direction of the event amongst other things. She later went on to launch her own company Uchenna dance. Some established artists supported the event - Jonzi D performed at one of the platforms whilst Paradigmz and other artists were in the audience. According to Onibudo the performances at the Spitz became increasingly creative. A watershed moment was 2002 with the entrance of Boy Blue. Boy Blue he says took choreography to 'another level' (Onibudo, 2015). Practitioners of Hip hop dance and music who are part of the Hip-hop culture and who also work in theatrical performance are in a position that they are able to influence the meaning and narrative development of Hip-hop as a theatrical dance form. It practitioners have not need to rely on the promotion of black dance or African peoples dance to gain audiences and recognition.

5.6b. Contemporary African dance.

Contemporary African dance in Britain intersected with a number of transnational dance movements from between Africa and Europe which made it part of an transnational practice. Practitioners of contemporary African dance had backgrounds in National dance companies in Africa, dance drama theatre companies, modern African dance which emerged from African universities and from Europe, mainly France. Peter Badejo played a very important role in developing a space for contemporary African dance in Britain.⁶ He trained as a performer in 1960s and 1970s Peter Badejo was part of pioneering art and theatre projects led by Wole Soyinka and Peggy Harper at the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University). Modern dance and dance drama in Nigeria emerged from collaborations between practitioners from universities and original performance contexts. As a young performer touring Europe he caught the eye of the late Robin Howard and was invited to train at the London Contemporary Dance School. He spent a year there before returning to work in Nigeria on unfinished projects. He was involved in experiments creating modes of narration and storytelling, verbal and non-verbal, and choreographic and theatrical conventions that melded with the performance of dance. He also studied at the University of Ghana, Legon where a productive National Arts Movement was unfolding and taught at Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria, where he researched into Borri dance of the Hausa people. By 1977 he was considered an accomplished artist and was assigned the role of choreographer for Nigeria's entry, *Langbodo*, for FESTAC 77 – the Second World Black and

⁶ The information in this section comes from personal communication with Peter Badejo (2001).

African Festival of Arts and Culture. It is unsurprising then that Peter Badejo's reputation in Britain began some time before he took up residence in the country. He led a company to perform as part of the LIFT festival in London in the 1980s. During the 1980s he accepted invitations to teach, choreograph and work as a consultant from a number of organizations. He finally opened his own company Badejo Arts in Britain in 1990.

From the 1990s there have been practitioners who have described themselves as producing Modern African dance or contemporary African dance that were working outside the dance theatre format. Germaine Acogny, known as the mother of Modern African dance taught some master class sessions at the Laban centre of Dance in 1992. She had developed a technique, which used Graham technique and Ballet as a framework into which she placed motifs from African dances (de Marigny 1992, p. 4-7). Gradually a number of Contemporary African dance companies began to emerge in Britain and at the same time some mainstream venues began to programme international companies who performed in this genre. Though all the work was small scale, there was an international interest in the work and critical debate about its emergence.

As an advocate Peter Badejo is most known for his seminal paper 'What is Black Dance in Britain?' which he wrote and presented in 1993 at an event of the same title organized by the Arts Council in Britain. In it he argued that the training of 'African dance' should be built on specific dance forms and spoke about the importance of dance to Black communities in Britain beyond

entertainment and western notions of art. Though funding and educational institutions did not support this proposition directly, his intelligence and passion was recognized and not long after this presentation he received support from the Arts Council to run an annual summer school, which he called, 'Bami Jo'. The summer school however has left a lasting legacy beyond workshops that took place. It opened the eyes of dancers to the possibilities of dance as an artistic and social practice. It contributed to developing an international network for dance practitioners enabling them to develop contacts for further research and career development. A number of practitioners in England developed relationships with choreographers such as Georges Momboye and Zab Mougougou after making contact with them at Bami Jo. Due to changes in the funding system, the summer school ended in 2005, at the same time as Adzido Pan African dance ensemble. Badejo was one of the judges for the first Pan-African Choreographic competition, which took place in Mozambique in the late 1990s and he promoted the young contemporary African dance artists in Britain by hosting the Tilewa dance platform. Brenda Edwards programmed contemporary dancers from Africa as part of the Hip festival in the early 2000s.

Four practitioners who made an impact in Contemporary African dance are Bode Lawal, Francis Angol, Gail Parmel and Bawren Tavaziva. Lawal was known for his choreographies, which were deconstructions of African dance, Yoruba mainly. Angol worked with Bode Lawal and then with Peter Badejo as an assistant director before launching his own company Movement Angol in the early 2000s. His piece *Moments of Movement* presented a range of trio, duets

and group pieces using a dance vocabulary he had created from drawing on the lyricism of several African and Caribbean forms. Gail Parmel and her husband and collaborator Ian Parmel started ACE dance and music in 2000. They had both worked for Badejo Arts and Kokuma Dance Company. Gail Parmel was also trained at the Northern school of dance and had a reputation of being an astonishing performer. Their company African Cultural Exchange was based the idea of collaboration with choreographers who are interested in African dance forms. It was a way of working, which proved popular. One of their first collaborations was with Koffi Koko and another with Vincent Mantsoe. Tavaziva moved to England from Zimbabwe after performing for a number of years with the Zimbabwean company Tambuka. The artistic director of Tambuka was the British choreographer Neville Campbell who moved to Africa after working with Phoenix Dance Company. He created the company's identity –drawing his Graham dance training and African dance forms. After freelancing for a number of companies, including *Sakoba* run by Bode Lawal and *Jazzexchange* run by Sheron Wray, Tavaziva set up his own company Tavaziva dance. When Adzido was defunded in 2005, Tavaziva dance company though new had an aesthetic impressed funders and he became one of the recipients of regular funding after the closure of Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble along with ACE dance and music. Contemporary African dance in Britain from the 1990s to 2005 was largely a choreographic practice which focused on the development of dance vocabularies from forms of dance from Africa, Diaspora and Euro-American origin which a focus of highlighting unique features of African forms. Each

choreographer differed in terms of the concepts, movement principles and cultural repertoire they emphasised in their work.

In 2004 a festival called Africalia took place in Belgium, which programmed about eleven companies from Africa. They were of a generation of performers who gained international recognition through the France sponsored dance competition. This event attracted programmers from around Europe, including those from Britain. The following year there was a programme organised in America called Movement (R) evolution Africa that featured some of these companies and also organised a short tour for them. In Britain the Barbican theatre programmed in 2005 and 2006 a festival called *Moving Africa*, which showed the work of dance companies who featured in Africalia exposing British audiences to contemporary dance from the continent and connecting British practitioners with the international context for this practice.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter investigates the impact the political economy had on the development of dance aesthetically in Britain and how large-scale organisations like Dance Umbrella and the organisations in the independent sector engaged in cultural politics as a way of negotiating these changes so that they maintained dance practices that were still meaningful to them. I look at the challenges facing the Black Dance/African Peoples Dance in generating a critical discourse which a crucial tool in sustaining a professional practice and I

look at some of the strategies that dance artists and administrators they employed towards this end. The narrative above shows one reason that the sector found it difficult to generate a critical discourse was due to dominant discourses, seem to assign the work of black choreographers a socio-political function, which implied there was little artistic concepts to investigate in their work. However dance artists described their work either by the cultural origins of the forms they used in their choreography or by an artistic category such as live art. This meant that dance artists saw there work as part of different trajectories of performance and indeed as a web of practices, related but different.

It seems it was up to the independent sector to generate its own critical discourse. It seems this was difficult for the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector possibly due to the lack of educational institutions offering courses that used these forms of dance at the time and who therefore could contribute to the generation of a critical discourse. Having said that there were a number of interventions by organisations and individuals to raise the level of critical discourse in the sector, which were successful though small scale. The emergence of Hip-hop and Contemporary African dance as dominant genres with in the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector in 2005 after the closure of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, was mostly likely due to the fact that these genres were part of international dance trajectories. Hip-hop theatre started in America and Hip-hop is part of a global youth culture and although contemporary African dance is a very category, there is a critical discourse

about it and it is clearly a theatrical genre with a number of practitioners in very
continent engaged with its politics and aesthetics.

Chapter 6

Five Independent Dance Artists and narratives of their practice between 1995 and 2005: Hopal Romans, Sheba Montserrat, Ukachi Akalawu, Diane Alison-Mitchell and Paradigmz

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents narratives of 5 dance artists. They are Hopal Romans, Sheba Montserrat, Ukachi Akalawu, Diane Alison-Mitchell and Paradigmz. They were all working as dance artists in London during the years 1994 and 2005. Whereas most dance history only looks at choreographers and choreography this chapter includes dancers working in less scrutinised areas of the dance profession. I am looking at these dance artists through the theoretical basis of the choreosteme which is social constructionism. The Africanist dance practices discussed in this chapter are defined here as constitutive of British culture, meaning they use aesthetics, forms and music of African and Diaspora forms as well as ideas and symbols and movement from other representational systems to produce dance that is meaningful in Britain. As I will show questions about 'Black dance' came up for each of these practitioners. The chapter is therefore concerned with how these dance artists were able to access the discourses around dance during this period. The dominant discourse that positioned the value of Africanist dance practices in Britain as a reflection of social integration to a certain extent erased its intellectual context. The practices of these dance artists were however transmitters of artistic and cultural value, technical skills and different ways of viewing the body and the world. Each of these dance artists engaged in research to develop their performance or teaching practices.

They were not simply handed down to them. Additionally, their work intersects or exists as part of different trajectories or traditions of performance or dance-making which calls for us to engage with the politics of hybridity. In writing this chapter, I am interested in understanding the praxis of each dance artist's practice. As discussed in chapter 3, Paulo Freire describes praxis as the 'transformation of the world through reflection and action' (2000, p.125). My aim in bringing these together is to discuss the possibilities of developing histories of dance practice and histories of trajectories of practice in the independent dance sector.

I use the word 'I' in this chapter as I have drawn reflexively on my experience as dance practitioner in Britain as part of this research process. Narrative inquiry, which is the method I used in generating the narratives presented in this chapter stipulates that the narratives produced through inquiry draw on both the researcher's and the narrator's experiences. The researcher inquiry might access information through casual conversation, interviewing or autobiography. They then construct the narratives putting shape to the information they have gathered. The reason why narratives are considered to be an important means of presenting research is because they are organised to place a particular value on the human activity and happenings. The researcher might use their own background knowledge to pin point themes and topics and events in the experience of the interviewee or narrator, which might be otherwise overlooked. I drew on my experience of being a dance practitioner to choose the dance artists that I interviewed. I choose dance artists whose practice had supported

the growth of the Black dance/African Peoples dance sector through the developing personal dance practices to my mind were valuable to the growth of the dance sector. I also chose them on the basis of their long careers and because they were practicing dance artists between 1994 and 2005. They were therefore in a position to comment on the debates around the term 'Black dance' and reflect as to whether or not these debates were important to them at the time. I also asked them how they engaged, or not, with opportunities or support on offer by organisations to support black dance artists.

I devised a list of questions, which requested them to reflect on their own practice and the cultural politics in the sector. Lastly I reflected on the narratives and selected information in relation to the theme I have chosen to write about. I decided to focus on only one aspect of each dance artists' careers – their career as teachers or as dancers – even though they had all worked in both capacities. Each of the dance artists mentioned has had or still has a portfolio career and some of them have qualifications in more than area of the profession. I chose an area where I knew they had carried out a significant amount of creative inquiry or study as part of pursuing their career, which does not mean they did not do this in other areas. The narratives are divided into two parts. The first part focuses on their background, training and work experiences, and the second part on their practice as a dancer or teacher and how they developed it. Like many dance artists, they devised their own performing, choreographing and teaching practices from experiences they have gained from performing with companies who used African and diaspora forms and through

research trips and self-directed projects. Some undertook these endeavours along side their training or after their training at dance institutions where they learnt conventional Euro-American dance techniques or styles. I first discuss some initiatives which supported developing the voice of the independent dance sector for black dancers during the years 1994 and 2005.

6.2. Generating narratives of practice in the Black dance/African Peoples dance sector: 1994 to 2005

The provision of forums for dance artists to talk about their work and their perspectives has been posited as requirement for the sector since the publication of *Advancing Black Dancing* in 1993. David Bryan states, in the recommendations section (1.11), that the respondents asked recurrently for a forum to 'share experiences and expertise'. There was a need for narratives and experiences of practitioners to guide the development of initiatives for the development of the sector. Discussion about contemporary issues informed the setting up of the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) in 1994. Artists cited 'feelings of being marginalised', 'powerlessness', 'things not changing' (McCluskey 2004, p. 4). This led to the establishment of the first dance platform specifically for black dancers as discussed in chapter 5. The development of artists' networks have historically been considered important for developing a professional context in which artists work. This however can be considered difficult for black artists as the network events might end up ghettoising them further. For this reason, Sue Harrison argues in *Giving*

Practitioners a Voice that Black arts needed to be incorporated into the mainstream (Harrison 1995, p. 24). Another problem that arises where black artists are isolated is that participants raise too many issues whenever a forum is organised for them to air their views. ADAD faced this problem during its fifth birthday celebration at the South Bank due to the range of issues that members wished to discuss. *Reflections on the way forward for Black dance* is an article written by Tatilta Moffat in 1998 in the ADAD newsletter about the voice box event ADAD organised as part of the organisation's 5th anniversary. The topic for discussion was 'Careers in Black Dance'. Moffat writes that the discussion touched on issues ranging from the lack of funding for Black companies to the lack of training for black dancers and expressed frustration that no topic was discussed sufficiently. She advocates that the organisation needed to plan discussion events with a narrower focus and she suggests year long seminars to tackle pertinent topics, networking events, workshops and a survey (1998, page not given). Tatilta Moffat wrote this article with good reason. The lack of critical discourse did not only stifle artistic appreciation but also strategic planning or the designing of effective developmental initiatives (Adewole 2004, p. 12-13).

With Dance UK's support ADAD in 2003 began to re-position itself in the dance ecology. State of Emergency was now producing platforms and no longer had a steering committee so the organisation took on the role of developing the sector through strategic initiatives and events. As part of its consultation with the sector ADAD produced six events: a meeting with academics at John St York

University, An Afro-Peruvian event showcasing performance, an evening of performance at the Battersea arts centre featuring Irvn Lewis and Francis Angol, a research project developing infrastructure for training practitioners using African and Caribbean dance forms (ADAD 2016, p. 27). One of the events was a seminar day called *Facts and Frictions* day at the South Bank, which has a seminar on 'African dance in Contemporary Britain' in the morning and a panel on 'British hip-hop' in the afternoon (Anon 2003, p 3). During this period ADAD started offering the Trailblazers Fellowships to practitioners working with African and Diaspora forms. It was the brainchild of Jeanette Siddall who felt the development of a group of leaders and advocates would benefit the dance sector. ADAD Heritage project began to be developed in 2003. Its aim was to document the work of dance artists and dance companies from the 1930s to the 1990s (Adewole 2004, p.7).

6.3. Hopal Romans

Hopal Romans trained as a dancer in the 1980s. She performed in Britain and America and is well known for her dancing with Union Dance Company. She was involved in Music Education with the charity Youth Music from 1999-2000. She is also a qualified arts manager. ⁷

Background: Hopal started dancing at about seven in P.E classes in primary school and then started taking classes in Graham technique when she was

⁷ All quotations from Hopal Romans are from Romans 2013.

secondary school at about the age of 11. This is when she calls her dance journey began. Veronica Jobbins was one of her first dance teachers at Sydenham Girls School. The dance department at the school that time was vibrant. With Jobbins's encouragement she auditioned and was got on a programme of specialist dance classes in Graham technique at London Contemporary Dance School, taught by Gaye Andrews. It was an exciting time with many developments going on at the school. She used to sneak in and watch Robert Cohen teach and Kenneth Tharp dance. She took a certificate in Dance Theatre at the Laban centre for Dance, and danced with their postgraduate company, Transitions. After graduating in 1985, Extemporary Dance Company offered her a one-year BP dance apprenticeship. Previous recipients of this award were Jonathan Smart and Sharon Watson. Hopal had met Sharon Watson at the National Festival of Youth Dance when she was younger. Extemporary Dance Company was a good experience and she worked with diverse choreographers such as Katy Duck, Richard Alston and Viola Farber. She then went to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Centre in New York where among other approaches, she trained in Horton technique. Ailey began his career dancing with Lester Horton's company in Los Angeles. She started with the independent programme and then the school offered her a scholarship to stay on and she was in America for about 3 years and danced with a number of companies. From 1992 to 1996, Hopal Romans danced and taught for Union Dance Company, which was founded by Corinne Bougaard in the early 1980s. In Britain she is mostly remembered as a dancer for work at Union Dance Company. She appreciated Bougaard's philosophy about culture,

which was to tear down the barriers between cultures. Bougaard was very open to working with new choreographers exploring different points of view. One of Union's most memorable pieces is *A Knot Annulled*, choreographed by Doug Elkin. Hopal had mentioned him to Corrine Bougaard as a choreographer to watch. Elkin's fitted into Corrine Bougaard's multiculturalist approach. He is part Chinese, a contemporary dancing Martial artist and B-boy. After Bill T. Jones made a similar comment to Bougaard, she contacted him. Elkin's was then invited to make a piece for the company. Hopal gave this anecdote in the interview to show how at home she was with Union. It was a place she said she could grow.

Hopal says she was aware of the debates around the definition of Black dance in the 1990s. She said many black dancers trained in modern technique were worried by the expectations that the term created. They felt it suggested that you were a performer of African dance or that your work would be able to represent the black experience. Being pigeonholed was a real fear for some dance artists. The black dancers in Union for example were trained in Cunningham, Jazz and Graham, some in martial arts, some in African styles and they wished to work with their range of skills. Going to the United States had a positive impact on Hopal. She says 'It gave me a lot of confidence. I no longer feared being judged for not looking a particular way. I felt I had the right to audition'. For Hopal it was not training to be a Graham dancer or a Horton dancer that was the point of training. It was how these techniques prepared you for a lot of other possibilities. Even when she was training at the Ailey

school, she performed with a number of companies, something she says a lot of dancers did. She says some went into New Dance, others into Commercial dance. She loved experimenting so she tried different types of dance styles and approaches. As much as she loved Horton and Graham, she also tried release technique. She explained that the draw of the United States for British dancers at the time was that the training was tough and challenging. Furthermore British aesthetics did not embrace the contributions of black dancers. When you looked to the United States you knew that anything was possible creatively. As a country of immigrants, the United States seemed more open to aesthetic possibilities. There were many examples of amazing black dancers who were American. The scene gave you something to aspire to, something to be creative for. She found going to the Alvin Ailey School a great experience. At the school you meet lots of dancers from the Caribbean and there were various ideas being discussed and tried out. It was very assuring.

Hopal as a dance teacher: In 1998 she undertook a research trip to Cuba with the support of a Lisa Ullman Travelling Scholarship. Her mother loved music and was a fan of Duke Ellington and there were a lot of Cuban influences in her family. When she was still dancing with Union, Corrine Bougaard had invited Eduardo Rivero-Walker to make some work for her company. The company performed the piece alongside others including *British Jungle* dances during its tour to Latin America and Cuba. The company was well received and with surprise. Audiences told them that they had not expected to see a British company that was racially diverse. Going to Cuba and seeing how the dance

infrastructure worked there, performing with the company in dance festival and seeing part of the island, Hopal wanted to go back there and study dance. She also had personal reasons for choosing Cuba as a research location. Her family from Jamaica had ties to Cuba. Both her father and grandfather travelled there and she could recognise the influences of Cuba in Jamaica. In Cuba she studied with Rivero-Walker. The late Janet King also put her in touch with a number of dance companies so she also trained with Danze Libre, in Guantanamo. The modern dance techniques in Cuba were infused with the rhythms and aesthetics of the social dance forms. She said that Rivero-Walker's modern dance technique would in England be seen as simply stylized modern dance but she felt it was deeper than that. She went to Cuba for the cultural connections it had with her Caribbean background. Dance as she experienced it there also connected with her love for Horton technique. Horton she says did not want to create 'Horton dancers' but dancers who could go out and explore. It was this quality she enjoyed in Union dance. As a dancer teacher she sees the body as a choreographic tool. While she is working with a set of technical dance exercises she sees them as a tool to expand the dance student's world. Horton she says is visually beautiful but more important, it is somatic whilst being technically challenging. It roots you. When you ground yourself, Hopal says, you gain the facility to branch out. Her roots are what enable her to be so diverse.

6.4. Sheba Montserrat

Sheba Montserrat is a dancer, dance teacher, poet, stand up comedian and 'edutainer' and live show producer. I decided to interview Sheba Montserrat as she is one of the few teachers of Caribbean dance in Britain. She has adapted her approach to teach different groups of people. She presently produces a monthly comedy night in Tottenham in London. ⁸

Background: Sheba says she was always a great dancer, always the one in the middle dancing at family gatherings. In her teens she would be the one amongst her friends entering dance competitions. In those days she frequented clubs like Crackers, a Soho Soul Club which was open on Friday afternoons and Global Village, which is now Heavens. She always wanted to be a professional dancer but could not quite find away in. It seemed to be an elite profession.

She left London and went to live in Berlin when she was 19 years old. The day after her 21st birthday she found a studio where she took her first formal dance class, it was a jazz dance class, after which she decided to pursue a career in dance. She enjoyed the experience of being in a formal dance environment and tuning into her body and finding out what she had to offer. She met a teacher in Berlin called Mark Headley. He was originally from Barbados and taught Caribbean dance. She was the only one who could execute the essence of the routines he taught and was sometimes used to demonstrate his movement to the class. Many participants did not take his class seriously seeing it more as a recreational outlet rather than dance training.

⁸ All quotations from Montserrat are from Montserrat 2013.

It was when she returned to London and IRIE! Dance theatre performed at the commonwealth institute that she thought 'This matters. This is an art form. I have something to offer'. Up until that point she felt she had no identity as a dancer. She was not a jazz dancer and not a contemporary dancer and although she had taken a lot of ballet classes because she loved the form, she was not going to be a ballet dancer. At first she thought she would give up dance on her return to London but IRIE! reignited her interest. This was in 1992.

As soon as The IRIE! Dance Diploma in African and Caribbean dance was established Sheba applied. She was given a bursary, which she appreciated very much. She says she found it affirming that the company invested in her future. Although she already had plenty of experience performing and learning Caribbean dances before the course, the Diploma in African and Caribbean dance solidified and contextualised all she knew. It was a life changing experience. It gave her an identity as a dancer....and beyond! Before the IRIE! course she felt that she was just someone who danced rather than a dancer. Caribbean dance became her artistic identity. She says that she can perform African dances but does not experience the freedom felt when performing Caribbean dances. The course placed value on Caribbean and African dance in western society and placed the dances in their historical contexts highlighting how and why these dance traditions mattered. Paulette Ryan, Ann Marie Reid, Maureen Hibbert and Masashi Fujimoto, were the other dancers who along with

Sheba made history in becoming the first students in Europe to be academically accredited in African and Caribbean dance.

Sheba was aware of the debates about Black dance and attended some talks. She said she always came out understanding less than when she went in. Jackie Guy said at one event that it was about blacks in Dance and that stayed with her, due to the view points and experiences different people express through their work, It made sense. Jackie Guy was the African and Caribbean dance course co-ordinator. Studying with Jackie Guy gave Sheba a firm technical basis in Caribbean dances. For Sheba, technique is about training the body to move efficiently and developing the dancer to tune into the body. Without technique, she says the dancer 'throws' movement and energy away. However, what she was hungry for was training and training was an even clearer concept than technique. She described the Black dance/African Peoples dance sector in the mid 1990s as a network of dancers who were eager learners and who had respect for elders in the profession who had paved a way. They had a hunger for the knowledge around their chosen specialism. She felt the hunger for training and knowledge was fuelled in part by the superficiality of commercial urban culture, which threatened to dominate or posit itself as the epitome of black expression.

Sheba as a dance teacher: Sheba later took a 1-year Diploma course in Community dance at the Laban Centre and was also fortunate to receive a bursary. She also completed a certificated course in dance fitness with

incorporated Laban analysis which was a very useful tool for breaking down, categorising and explaining movement. This was particularly useful for teaching creative dance. She then went on to Lecture in dance at the City and Islington College. She also ran her own independent classes in Hackney and North London.

She ran two types of classes. The classes she calls her Caribbean dance class, are those through which she sees herself as transmitting cultural history, values and knowledge and the second she describes as dance fitness classes which uses dance as a vehicle to fitness and self awareness. Her passion is in community dance. One of her Caribbean dance classes was for mature women. She made it cross generational so that women could attend with their daughters. Some of the women would find it difficult to use recreational Caribbean dance vocabulary in a formal setting. They already danced from the spirit, in this manner. Her goal was to direct and encourage them to connect spirit, mind and body and translate their natural feeling for Caribbean music into its art form. They gained a lot from learning a piece of set choreography. She also teaches dance fitness classes catering to London's vast array of diverse communities and ethnic groups including, Turkish, Bengali and Somalian women in an all-female space, supporting them in exploring movement and building confidence through their physical wellbeing. These are tremendous ongoing experiences through which she learnt the power of conscious movement to change lives.

Sheba sees Caribbean dance as being intrinsically therapeutic. She says that when you wine (a full rotation of the pelvis), you actually 'unwind'. She also contemplates the role dance and music played in enabling Caribbean people to survive enslavement. In Africa and the Caribbean you don't give up dance, because dance never gives you up! It's always there for upliftment and support. She says her understanding of how dance and music are integral to survival (especially from a Caribbean standpoint) and promotes life and spirituality informs her way of teaching.

6.5. Ukachi Akalawu

Ukachi Akalawu trained as a dancer at Laban Centre for Dance. She toured worldwide with west-end show *Stomp!*. Through self-directed research she developed a dance class based mainly on the Sabar dance form from Senegal. Her approach differs from many neo-traditional dance classes in that it is not based on a repertoire piece which has been arranged for staged performance. Her class instead explores the technique of the Sabar form in a pan-Africanist context. She is a qualified Arts manager and teacher and presently teaches in the compulsory education sector. ⁹

⁹ All quotations from Akalawu are from Akalawu 2014.

Background: Ukachi Akalawu graduated with BA (Hons) in Dance Theatre from Laban in 1994. Before she went to train at Laban she was aware of the Jazz dance scene. In the 1980s as a teenager, one of the things that developed her interest in jazz were musical films, which displayed 'show jazz' routines, choreographed and performed by musical giants such as Bob Fosse, Matt Mattox and Gene Kelly. She also became aware of Alvin Ailey American dance theatre and the Dance Theatre of Harlem around this time. One of the first dance companies she saw which used jazz moves with in their fusion of styles was the Union dance company led by Corrine Bougaard. Hopal Romans, a dancer with Union Dance Company at the time, inspired her to pursue dance as a career. She says that Doug Elkin's piece *Motivate the Era* – which saw Michael Joseph, locking and popping to Bach was amazing at time. Before going to Laban, Akalawu studied for a one-year course in musical theatre and also took classes in jazz and tap. The focus at Laban was on ballet, Graham and release and nothing else. Akalawu says if you asked a question about anything else you were shut down or ignored and at that age she did not have the confidence to push for the questions to be answered. However she felt that there was something missing and she did not know what the questions were. She describes herself as being focussed at Laban but having the need for more. She says a lot of the students wanted something more. They went to Dance Attic in Putney to take a jazz dance class once a week. 'We needed to dance to upbeat music and learn about isolation'. She said at the time at Laban when you were training you were not allowed to do open classes so they did the jazz class on the quiet. She was taking classes in Street Jazz with Dennis

Wonder, Modern Jazz with Deirdre Lovell at Danceworks, and Ivor Meggido at Jubilee Hall sports centre in Covent Garden.

Soon after graduation, Akalawu attended the international festival Africa '95 and met Jackie Semela from the Soweto Dance Theatre, South Africa. Part of the Africa '95 included workshops with artists from Soweto Dance Theatre as well as UK artists such as 'H'Patten. From the festival emerged an opportunity to go to South Africa with a programme that was being advertised at the time called Step Africa. Akalawu and a group of colleagues raised enough money to travel to South Africa to participate in Step Africa. Whilst there, she taught workshops and also attended workshops in Johannesburg. Also on the programme was a group from an African American fraternity called Alpha 5 from Howard University. Akalawu describes *Step Africa* as a life changing experience in terms of the artists she met, the opportunity to exchange ideas and to have a positive impact upon children and young people from the townships.

Akalawu also worked in the commercial sector. Whilst performing as commercial dancer on a T.V show called Badass T.V she meet Carolene Hinds, who was artistic director of the Jiving Lindy Hoppers. Hinds invited Akalawu to audition for the company. Akalawu was accepted and subsequently went on tour across Britain with them. Akalawu also choreographed a piece for the Resolution! dance platform at The Place in which Paradigmz danced. She continued being involved in African dance in London. She attended the 1997 Bami Jo summer school organised by Badejo Arts at Kingsway College in Holborn which brought together a group of supreme teachers: Flora Theine,

Zab Maboungou, Demba Barry and Nii Tagoe. Akalawu also performed with Ritual Theatre Arts, Ariya Opera, Badejo Arts, and Movement Angol – all companies that drew on African dance forms. She then went on tour with *Stomp!*

Akalawu was not aware of the debates around Black dance in 1993. She was in university at the time. However she was asking herself questions along those lines. Being on a dance training programme where each dance technique had its own identity, the term 'Black dance' was confusing. 'I remember doing my dissertation and doing it on dance criticism and coming across that term "Black dance". I really did not understand it. I asked myself if that was what I was doing. It is only as you grow older, more politicised, and have more experience to draw from, that you can come to understand these terms, why such terms exists, and whether you want to actually be defined by them'. The questions did not stop her from dancing. Jazz dance had a clear identity. There was a loose network of practitioners who attended similar events related to African and Diaspora dance rather than a community of practice. Peter Badejo was a magnet for those interested in African dance styles. Akalawu was not really bothered about debates about technique until she began to study African dance. At first she did not understand the 'nuts and bolts' of the forms she was learning. However, after doing classes over a period of time she began to access the techniques within the dances at a deeper level and wanted to learn more. She took to travelling to France to take classes, as there was little African dance in London that was being taught on a consistent basis. The lack of an

infrastructure for learning African dance consistently as a serious practice concerned her.

Attending the Dancing at the Crossroads conference at the Southbank Centre in 2002 also piqued her interest in learning dances in relation to specific trajectories of practice. A memorable moment was when Bob Ramdhanie and the late Terry Monaghan launched into a debate that brought the conference to a stand still. Ramdhanie insisted that Ghanaian dance companies had made the most impact on the development of Black dance in Britain, whilst Monaghan cited Mama Lou Parks and African American jazz dancers. The debate transported Akalawu into a history of dance in Britain that she had not heard of before and which went beyond the mundane discussion over whether Black dance was dance by black people or dance forms from black communities. She found it reassuring to see and hear people at the conference who had questions that were similar to her own about the history of these dance forms in Britain and who valued these dance forms. The debate proved the importance of the topic at hand. It was great to witness the passion with which these two scholars Ramdhanie and Monaghan discussed their research and defended their points of view. Akalawu's response to the issues posed by the dance context was to research the art of dance rather than theory. She applied for grants from the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) and the Lisa Ullmann Trust and was able to go to Senegal and Gambia and take classes with local dance artists. She also visited L'Ecole des Sables – then run by Germaine Acogny - to get a sense of what was possible in terms of an institution where African dance forms were the focus.

Ukachi Akalawu as a dance teacher: Amongst other things Ukachi is a dance researcher and teacher. She was motivated to create a class, which took a 'safe, structured and intelligent approach to teaching African dance forms and aesthetics in a western institutional context'. She wanted to create a method in which the dancer could, over time, increase their level of skill in dancing African forms. There were few classes of that type in London in the early 2000s. She calls her approach Afro-Xplo. 'I did not want to call it African dance, she says, 'as that is a bit of a minefield in terms of capacity. Xplo stood for exploration. Afro-Xplo is placed in the canon of 'African dance'. It is African dance exploration. I am exploring movements from the umbrella of African dance and I encourage my students to do that. However there are times when I call it 'African dance' too, partly for ease of understanding and partly as what I am doing clearly draws strongly from the West African cultural aesthetic'. Akalawu also took a fitness teaching course to increase her understanding of anatomy and physiology. She wanted to understand the mechanics of the movement and also be able to communicate this to her students. Her class was 'pan-African dance' structured in the format of a conventional contemporary dance class. She also incorporated traditional jazz steps into the class as there was a clear link between the forms she enjoyed investigating and playing with. Over time, the Sabar component in the class increased which she began to study for her own professional development.

Whilst she was on tour in France with the show Stomp!, she attended the George Momboye Centre in Paris whenever she had a day off. She took every class she could. She found that the classes in Paris were full of people whose understanding seemed to surpass anything she'd seen in classes in London. Live drumming and a sense of community was standard. 'Stomp had sharpened my taste for live music. It sharpened my musical understanding and it was like that with the Jiving Lindy Hoppers. It was about listening and responding, going deeper. This directly connected with my studies of African dance forms. Everything came together'.

Ukachi began focussing on the Sabar dance form after taking Sabar classes at Bami Jo summer school one year. It was a moment that Ukachi says she said to herself 'I have found it'. She ascribes this to the way that this teacher taught the dance. She had taken classes in Sabar before in Paris but could not grasp it. She could see where the phrases of movement began and ended. Although she loved the Djembe drum, she found the percussion from Sabar more complex. She liked the challenge Sabar gave her both aurally and physically and she wanted to find out more. Ukachi undertook a number of research trips between 2001 and 2008. Besides six years of classes in Paris, she studied with a number of companies in Senegal, Pape Sy Fall from Compagnie 5eme Dimension, Michel Doudou Ndione from Takku Ligguey, Adele Badji from Compagnie Niaba, and also in Gambia with the Faux-Lions. She applied and was awarded a Trailblazer fellowship and a Lisa Ullman travelling scholarship, which supported some of this work. Due to these experiences, the Sabar

component in her class increased and she became interested in learning and teaching in relation to a single dance tradition. Ukachi is well known having taught in professional, community and school contexts for several years. She has been able to create a class that prepares the body and in safe way to practice Sabar. Her class consists of a structured warm-up, centre work and travelling exercises. The warm-up prepares the body for the high impact movements in the long sequences of movement. Her final goal is to create a methodology, which can be used as a way that both dancers and teachers could translate other specific dance forms into a format appropriate for studio-based teaching.

6.6. Diane Alison-Mitchell

Diane Alison-Mitchell performed for a number of dance companies which based their choreography on African and/or Caribbean forms. I considered her to be versatile dancer within this field. I decided to interview her because her training as a dancer was self-directed and informed by research. After her career as a dancer she trained as movement director at the Central School for Speech and Drama and now is established in this field with credits on shows at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), Almeida Theatre, Royal and Derngate, Bush Theatre and Young Vic.¹⁰

¹⁰ All quotations from Mitchell are from Mitchell 2015.

Background: Diane Alison-Mitchell is originally from Birmingham. She was involved in performance from a young age. She took part in school plays and was always very physical. At school she did hockey, rounders, and was in athletic teams and trained for the 75m hurdles at Birchfield Harriers. As a teenager she got involved through a music teacher in the Queensway Steel Band and performed at different events playing soprano pan in the Midlands. She came across Kokuma when she was about 14 or 15 because they rehearsed in the same building as Queensway Steel Band. She could hear the drums and had an affinity with the music and dance. She would sometimes watch the company rehearse through a crack in the door.

She did not have a concept of dance as a theatrical practice when at 18 she left England and went to live in Paris for 4 years. She started out as an Au pair and ended up as an account assistant in an advertising agency. During this period she saw an advert for a dance class and went to go and see. She turned up at Ecole de Danse de Bastille and met dancer and teacher Jean Fortuné de Souza from Benin. She later also met Congolese choreographer, dancer and teacher Lolita Babindamana . She trained over 2 years with both teachers learning African dance forms from Senegal, Gambia, Guinea , Benin, and Congo and danced with de Souza's Aidohèudo Dance Troupe. She also travelled with de Souza for intensive training for 2 months in Cotonou in Benin.

She returned to England after having performed in France and went to the University of Sussex in Brighton to study social anthropology and development

studies. During this time she performed with Mashango African Dance Company under Risenga Makondo which was supported by South East Arts, and toured with the company on its show *Ekaya*. Mashango focussed on dance practices from South African –including toyi toyi, gumboots, Zulu Indlamu dance. With Mashango, Diane worked with Peter Badejo, who choreographed a solo for her in *Ekaya*, and the South African Dance Company Manyanani from Cape Town and with ‘H’ Patten.

After graduating, she moved to London and worked in the Dance Department of Arts Council of England. Diane had a wide view of the dance ecology at the time, right across the whole contemporary dance sector. She regularly met with independent dance artists and emerging dance companies. She also administered the dance funding programmes at the time. ‘I struggled with the huge difference between the level of funds available and the amount that artists and companies were applying for, and I witnessed colleagues in the industry miss out on funding year on year’. She also supported consultations and research that the Arts Council commissioned into the African People’s Dance sector (as it was then known). So she was acutely aware of the issues facing the sector – (in)visibility, funding, recognition, validation, lack of knowledge among reviewers, definition and labels, and noticed how little was being said about the actual dance practice itself. It was perhaps no surprise that she left the Arts Council to manage companies such as Kwesi Johnson’s Kompany Malachi , Joumana Mourad’s Ijad Dance Company and did administrative work for Step Afrika! UK whilst working professionally as a dancer. In 2007 she felt

she had come to the end of her journey as a professional dancer and decided to study Movement Direction at the Central School of Speech and Drama. It was an opportunity to begin to start to answer the burning questions about African and Caribbean dance practices and as part of her research she investigated the aesthetics and techniques of African dance to utilise in her work training actor's bodies. She read books by Hilary Carty, Brenda Dixon Gottschild, Kariamu Welsh Asante, and Zab Moubongou. But there was still not enough information on different African dances. 'African dances are not all about pounding the floor; there were other ways the body could be grounded – there are dances that have strong verticality or place the centre higher than the pelvis'. Her research now forms part of her movement direction practice and she recently wrote a chapter in the book *Shakespeare, Race and Performance* edited by Delia Jarrett-Macauley about how she used this body knowledge to create the physical life of the RSC's *Julius Caesar* in 2012.

Diane Alison-Mitchell as a Dancer: During her time at the Arts Council, Diane continued to perform widely and expanded her training further into Caribbean forms. She travelled to Cuba training in Afro-Cuban dance at the Centro Africano Fernando Ortiz in Santiago de Cuba. She performed with Meta Meta, an Afro Cuban jazz group led by Barak Schmool. With Meta Meta she was trained by and duetted with Cuban dancer and choreographer Rodolfo Hechavarria Fournier, and performed choreographies by Norman 'Rubba' Stephenson. On leaving the Arts Council after 3 years in 1999, she toured with Sakoba Dance Theatre. It was dancing with this company that made her feel

she had attained a professional status as a dancer through having devised her own training over a number of years and a number of teachers in key locations around the world. She immersed herself into deeper training by going to study at the Jamaica School of Dance in Kingston, Jamaica as part of an Arts Council International Fellow award, and at Moving into Dance in Johannesburg, South Africa as part of a Lisa Ullmann Travel Scholarship.

After sustaining a knee injury, she began to make solo work, She met Brenda Edwards who gave her the opportunity to develop a solo for the Hip Festival and worked with Jackie Guy to create her first solo, *Know di I*. She describes the experience of participating in the Hip Festival as being part of a family. She says Brenda Edwards gave her a platform to express her voice and identity artistically. Diane's second solo was choreographed by Chris Walker from The National Dance Theatre of Jamaica, which she performed in the UK and abroad. She also danced a duet with Cuban dancer Guillermo 'El Iyawo' Davis. She applied for a Trailblazer Fellowship and was successful, and spent part of the fellowship working with the South African choreographer Vincent Mantsoe. She later performed for Francis Angol's Movement Angol, the Dance Movement and London Diaspora Dance Theatre. She danced for Jackie Guy on a number of occasions, and performed in the last tour of Adzido, in work created by Gregory Maqoma and Zenzi Mbuli. She described never quite feeling like she was a part of the independent dance sector but feeling that there was certainly a community of dancers. She describes Jackie Guy and Namron as a role models who had the ability to bring dancers together, and taking their classes

or doing performances for them always felt like a coming together of shared practice and knowledge. 'It was always difficult to reconcile that there was no formal technical training for the dance I was passionate about and on which my career was based, so it was great to see IRIE! taking up the mantle to position African and Caribbean dance on the dance curriculum'.

6.7. Paradigmz

Paradigmz is dancer and teacher. He is known for his versatility having danced for contemporary and African and Caribbean dance companies and performing pieces based on both traditional and urban dance forms. He gained his breadth of skill through social dancing, taking a three year degree programme, through research and from seeking to work with specific companies. He holds an MA arts management qualification from City University. He was the founder of the London Diaspora Dance Theatre, which he ran from 2002 to 2009.¹¹

Background: In 1993, Paradigmz was pursuing a B.A Honours degree in Contemporary Dance at Bretton Hall, before that institution closed down. He started dancing as a teenager. He was not a member of any crews. He just went to parties and clubs. Originally he wanted to be an actor, but he meet a teacher from Central School of Speech and Drama and she opened his eyes to the what he could do with movement and he decided to go into dance whilst he was young and maybe go into acting at a later stage. Raw, is how he describes

¹¹ All quotations from Paradigmz are from Paradigmz 2014.

himself when he got into university – a street dancer, who had never stepped into a dance studio or taken classes in jazz or ballet. He was one of the last people to get a fully funded education he says. He was the only black person and the only male on his course and found it amusing – being from South London and attending university in a leafy town in the north of England. Though Paradigmz trained in formal education as a dancer, he sees his 'groundation' (foundation) as being in 'the street'. For him getting grounding in the clubs and in the community was significant. He describes his 'street education' coming from hanging out with regular guys who were dancing in the jazz-fusion scene. He was going to Sheffield and Newcastle and battling in the clubs, attending the all-dayers and weekend-enders. The scene was strong and thriving. He would see Robert Hylton at the jams, even the guys from RJC. The jazz-fusion dance continues to influence dance today says Paradigmz. In House dance you see a lot of Jazz-fusion steps but with a different 'bounce'. Jazz fusion gave Paradigmz a way into other dance styles – some of Kuduro, a Côte d'Ivoire dance style, and Chicago foot work, even some of the Pansula moves – have some similarities to Jazz fusion. He says he sees when you look at a video of Irvan Lewis you see similarities between newer dancers and what he was dancing in the 1980s. He said watching *Gang of Five*, a piece that Aletta Colins choreographed for Phoenix Dance Company made him want to go into contemporary dance.

He describes his time at Bretton Hall as amazing. Wayne McGregor was an artist in residence and Janet Smith and Dancers was in residence for a time.

Later Janet Smith joined the faculty. He says he was also fortunate to have a chance to work with RJC whilst he was studying. RJC had a piece called *Shared Testimony*, which they toured in 1994/1995. In every city they toured they had a section in which they incorporated a performance by a youth group. But in Leeds they had an audition. He cannot remember how he heard about it. There was rivalry between Northern School and Bretton Hall in those days and it was likely the audition notice was circulated at the Northern School. 'We always used to say that Northern School churned out the dancers and Bretton hall churned out the choreographers', he said. Paradigmz said he somehow got to hear about the audition through hanging out in Chapeltown where he used to go as a South Londoner to get 'a piece of culture'. This was the part of Leeds where most of the black communities were. So he turned up did the audition and got in and combined his studies with rehearsing for this performance at the Yorkshire Playhouse. That, he says, was his first experience of a professional company and a black company. It was this experience that sparked his interest in 'Black dance' particularly as a theatrical experience. He wrote his final year dissertation on RJC and Phoenix. It was 1996 and there was a lot of discussion about Phoenix and how it was changing. Women were just being introduced to the company. It was exciting and controversial. The women brought a whole new energy and aesthetics to the company. He also did a piece with Irvn Lewis who was in Leeds working on a piece.

Paradigmz had heard about some of the debates about Black dance but thought they were laughable. He knew there was an economic and political

context to the debate, which people did not seem to see. At Bretton Hall however there were debates and lectures. Christy Adair was on the faculty and as she was interested in the work of choreographers of African and Caribbean descent she included examples of their work in her lessons. He found the way his classmates would interpret the work to be derogatory and as he was the only black student in his class he would intervene in some of the conversations and explain why the choreographers had expressed his or her ideas the way he or she did. When he graduated he found the politics around Black dance disempowering. How black performers were described and labelled in publicity and in discussions was very confusing. Henri Oguike was called a black artist doing 'white work'. Kokuma was being described an African dance company when it was a Caribbean dance company. There was no written material or policies around naming so the feeling he had was that all forms could be lumped together under banners like African dance. There were so many disparate ideas about black dance that the debates could not be resolved.

The Hip festival produced and curated by Brenda Edwards was a great experience he said. He performed a solo to music by Elephant Man, a piece of Jamaica Dance Hall interspersed with Baroque music. Costumed as an English Noble man he performed a comedic dance intercutting between dance and ballet. The piece got mixed reviews. He however was satisfied with it. The irony was lost on some of the audience. ADAD helped him develop as a choreographer with a trailblazer fellowship. He also worked on a project with Emilyn Claid, Nigel Charnock and Vena Ramphal and Mavin Khoo. It was a

creative project, which allowed him to explore movement ideas for two weeks. He also had a grant of studio space at Chisenhale Dance Space where he explored technical fusion developing technical exercises which combined dance hall, contemporary, Jazz and ballet, looking at intersection – which he described as black British. ‘That is how I see my career. I have started to tell people I want to retire from performing on stage. It is quite a pivotal time for me to let that all go. There is no reason why you can’t do them all’.

Paradigmz as a dancer: Paradigmz became a versatile dancer, ‘When you are black and male there are opportunities to work if you are prepared to be open and diversify your skillset. Some say, Jack of all trades and master of none but I see it as rather as being a master of dance’. As a performer he was keen that each job was a learning experience. In the first year, he did two major auditions. He auditioned for Kokuma Dance Company. The audition comprised of a class and a workshop in which you were taught a piece of repertoire. He loved the class - it was a Caribbean dance class. However the repertory piece taught by Patrick Acogny was African based. He found this incongruent. It was probably two years after Jackie Guy had left the company. And he was unsure he wanted to work for the company. He felt this split in the identity of Kokuma was result of the confusion about Black dance and how it affected decision-making by funding bodies and organisers. His second audition was for Sakoba Dance Company founded by Bode Lawal. It was an African dance company – based mainly on Nigerian dances. He loved Bode’s particular way of moving: ‘I found it enthralling. So as mad and crazy as Bode was, I decided to do a season with

him and I so enjoyed to that season that I did another one back to back. That was me 1996 to 1998'. Lawal had great impact on Paradigmz. Through him he learnt dances from Nigeria. Lawal was focussed on Nigerian dances and never explored dances from other African countries in the work he created. 'Lawal's method of teaching was hands on. He would place his hands on your body at the point the movement should initiate and ask you to watch observe in the mirror'. It was a method that enabled him as a dancer to articulate movement clearly.

He also worked on a duet with Kwesi Johnson, which he says re-ignited his jazz-fusion, and was in a piece choreographed by Ukachi Akalawu, which was presented at the Resolution! Dance platform – which combined Jazz, Contemporary dance and African dance movement. After Sakoba he performed with Bullies Ballerinas on a piece which was a fusion of African dance movement and Lindy hop. Through this he got to work with Norman 'Rubba' Stephenson and Judith Palmer who he describes as awesome teachers who could break movement down. They were extremely patient and could 'teach from the ground up', referring to their ability to explain to dancers how to connect to the floor through their feet whilst dancing. These experiences made the term 'Black dance' even more problematic for him because all these forms of dance had their own names and were distinct even though there were similarities between them. Performing with Jonzi D in Aeroplane man was for him, a return to Hip Hop. Around this time he auditioned for the Lion King, a West End production produced by Disney. Garth Fagan the choreographer was

one of the judges at the audition. It was for the first ever cast. The choreographer gave Paradigmz the choice of dancing for the Lion King or for his own company, the Garth Fagan Dance Company. He chose the latter. He was given a post as an apprentice. He found working with the company difficult. It was structured in a similar way as a ballet company, and he had worked as a freelancer for about six projects based companies and found the system rigid. He stayed for the whole season but left immediately it finished. He, however, had achieved a goal of working for an American company. He had been intrigued as to why American companies were technically stronger than British companies. Phoenix was the dance company that inspired him to want to dance at a high technical level as well as teachers such as Namron, Bill Louthier and Stuart Thomas.

In 1999 he made an important trip with Jackie Guy to Jamaica. He said he wanted to find out about the dance culture that represented him as a human being. He found out from Jackie that his mother was born in St Thomas in Jamaica which was a stronghold for the Kumina dance, and his father was from St. Elizabeth, which was close to the Jamaican Maroon compound. After a lengthy discussion with Guy, he decided it was time for Paradigmz to visit. He initially went at a time when Jackie Guy was working on a piece of choreography in Jamaica at the time. He then went back to Jamaica in 2001. In 2002, he founded and ran the project-based company, London Diaspora Dance Theatre. He closed the company due to a lack of funding in 2009. Paradigmz's

versatility as dancer came from his research, values and engagement with inspiring teachers. His dancing reflects his journey.

6.8. Dance history as histories of praxis

The aforementioned dance artists: Hopal Romans, Sheba Montserrat, Ukachi Akalawu, Diane Alison-Mitchell and Paradigmz contributed to creating an artistic and cultural context which has been meaningful to certain London populations in the 1990s and beyond. Many peoples' experience of dance comes through professionals who teach and perform in community and educational settings. Due to their engagement with social and traditional forms of dance amongst other dance styles they contributed to a cultural context which was both social and artistic. Performance studies scholar, Judith Hamera recognises how the social and the aesthetic go together. She writes:

Aesthetics is inherently social. The formal properties and presumptions intrinsic to the production and consumption of works of art are communicative currency circulating between producers and consumers, binding them together in material and highly situated interpretive communities, serving as bases for exchange in the public and private conversations that constitute art's relational, political and affective lives. (Hamera 2006, p. 47)

The concept of Identity as it relates their practice can be read in multiple ways. Their work could be said to reflect their identity, but also their work has an identity in its own right. Their practices are also objects of knowledge devised to meet the demands and standards of a professional context or audience.

These narratives suggest that histories are needed that includes the role of institutional support, map the input of dance research and place value on the dance artist's research in Britain and abroad. Furthermore they suggest we look at how dancers translate the concepts around which dance is taught. These concepts include technique, choreography and quality of performance. This could be described as cultural translation, which is 'the performative negotiation of differences between identity constructions'. It is a fraught process, which necessitates a compromise between the old and the new environments (Rossner and Italiano 2012, p. 12). Translation is not only a language based activity but can involve the movement of institutions, processes, practices and policies from one context to another (Balme 2012, p. 104). These practices, therefore, play a role in the formation of 'social and political life' and are not simply reflections of culture. They play a part in creating culture (1996, p. 44)

Theorising Africanist dance practices in terms of praxis shows them as being involved within a politics of representation as opposed to with the relations of representation. Stuart Hall describes the latter as focusing on the activities or practices that the black subject, to use Hall's words, does to promote his or her own value in society such as producing positive images to counter racial stereotypes (1996, p.443). The politics of representation on the other hand is about the formulation of practices by the black subject that will have emancipatory possibilities, which do more than address race. The practitioner involved engages with difference. Through their activities or practices, they invest meaning or use the language or ideas that are not considered to be part

of their practice. Through practice he or she will engage with the 'codes', which makes representation in the chosen context possible. 'Enunciation,' Hall argues is always produced within 'codes', which have 'a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time'. The black cultural producer by engaging with these 'codes' is engaging with difference, with ideas that might not originally be part of his or her practice.

For Stuart Hall the politics of representation destabilises the dominance of colonial discourses. He writes:

What is involved is the splitting of the notion of ethnicity between, on the one hand, the dominant notion, which connects it to nation and 'race', and on the other hand what I think is the beginning of a positive conception of the ethnicity of the margins, of the periphery. That is to say, a recognition that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position as 'ethnic artists' or film-makers. We are all, in that sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are. But this is also a recognition that this is not an ethnicity which is doomed to survive, as Englishness was, only by marginalising, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities. This precisely is the politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity (Hall 1996, p. 448)

This conception of ethnicity insists that we all speak from specific, historical and cultural positions. It implies that theatrical dance should be considered to be a web of dance practices. Dance practices are best seen as being in dialogue with each other, borrowing concepts and ideas to make meanings within different representational systems. Due to power differentials and historical circumstances names and labels are confusing. Nevertheless, a politics of

representation puts paid to the idea that 'contemporary dance', 'modern dance,' or 'postmodern dance' is white. It puts paid to the notion that white is universal. It also suggests that the concept of 'African dance' or 'Black dance' can be 'contemporary' or 'modern'. It implies that researchers and writers have to approach dance styles, practices, genres, traditions and movements by researchers or writers contextually and understand them on their terms.

6.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I narrated aspects of the careers of five dance artists who have contributed to developing a context for Africanist dance practice in London. In narrating their stories, I place value on their praxis and show that it is integral to their work. Using the choreosteme as a basis I interrogate the idea of the independent dance sector and what it would mean to develop histories of the dance practices of those who have worked in this sector. My argument is that Africanist theatrical dance practices have to be defined in terms of an engagement with African and Diaspora dance traditions or culture rather than the presentation of handed down forms. Africanist practice is a dialogue with cultural repertoire from African and the Diaspora not a replication of it. Though their practice is self-directed, it circulates cultural values, which creates communities in various ways. The development of a dance practice was meaningful to each dance artist in personal and professional ways. Their work offers the means for others to participate in their personal and vocational projects. I argue that it is more important to generate a narrative of practices for

Africanist theatrical dance than to look for labels and names to replace terms such as 'African dance' or 'Caribbean Dance'. New labels might emerge as the narrative bring to light areas of consensus. I also argue, building on Hall's theories of the politics of representation, that the acknowledgement of the nature of Africanist theatrical dance implies that histories of theatrical dance should be conceived as a web of changing configurations, rather than as a linear line of progress.

Chapter 7

Choreographic fusion at the limits of postmodernism and The choreographic praxis of Sheron Wray and Robert Hylton

7.1. Introduction

The label choreographic fusion is used in the subsidized dance sector in Britain to describe choreography, which draws on dance forms and techniques from different cultural origins (Barnes 2000, p. 28). For the purposes of sentence structure, I shall at times use the term 'fusion choreography' to indicate the same concept. From the mid-1990s there was an increase of choreographers

most of who, trained in dance in British academic and dance institutions on three –year dance programmes and yet created choreographies with a mixture of dance forms and techniques which drew on forms learnt outside these programmes. Some drew on dance forms they had learnt from the club scene, others drew on neo-traditional dances from Africa and the Caribbean and others learnt African American social dances. The context in which choreographic fusion was considered to be an artistic process is contemporary dance. There is little critical discourse about the concept of choreographic fusion in contemporary dance discourse although a significant numbers of dancers and choreographer make choreographic work in this way. If given analytical attention the concept of choreographic fusion could support our thinking about their work. There was during the period under investigation, 1994 to 2005, several discussions, which signaled struggles by dance practitioners and advocates to make the term work for the dance sector that used it. Their concern was to produce ‘a system of representation’, which could provide them with a conceptual map to discuss artistic process, develop strategic plans to support the practice and generate critical dialogue and appreciation of the work (Hall 1997, p.18). One could argue that only a few of the dancers who emerged in the 1990s went on to run companies. However many of them produced works for dance platforms, taught the dance vocabularies they had devised in schools and in the community and set the foundations for academic work and professional practice that is gradually being produced today.

My aim in this chapter, is to look at the particular power struggles around the use of this term and what was at stake for those engaged in using it. I also look at the early careers and the work of two well-known choreographers, Sheron Wray and Robert Hylton, whose work could be described as theatrical practices that draw on Jazz and Hip-hop respectively, but also could be thought of as choreographic fusion. I discuss the insights I gained by looking at the work of these two choreographers through its lens. I follow Stuart Hall in approaching this historical project as one of theorizing as opposed to producing theory. Hall, as well as other cultural studies theorists, encourage a form of critical inquiry which focuses on a particular matter in a specific context and historical moment for the purpose of gaining insight rather than arriving at a final conclusion on the matter. Lastly I discuss the period of investigation, 1994 to 2005 in order to see what could be learnt about fusion choreography from this era.

The choreosteme outlines that theatrical dance needs a discourse in order to produce objects of knowledge that are viable. I argue that choreographic fusion hardly appears in the critical discourse of contemporary dance in the 1990s because critics were engaged with the because the prevailing discursive formation which was about postmodern dance. Stuart Hall following Michel Foucault states that a discursive formation will be produced when people located in various 'institutional sites' share a distinctive way of communicating, verbally and in writing, about a particular object of knowledge (Hall 2013, p. 29). Discourse at once provides power and restricts. A discourse enables people engaged in a practice to develop a language to communicate about it, organize

and sustain it. However, ideas that do not fit into a discourse are erased or overlooked, as was the case with choreographic fusion.

7.2. Discourses of postmodernism and Dance Criticism - 1994 to 2005

The time space for this narrative on choreographic fusion is that of dance criticism and developmental initiatives in the subsidized dance sector. In this field the discourse between 1994 and 2005 was around the idea of postmodernism. These were the spaces in which dance practitioners and artists associated with the black dance/African Peoples Dance sector, used the concept of choreographic fusion. They required it to do a work of representation for sector. It was needed to provide the conceptual basis for their communications and strategies. Their time was spent, amongst other things, generating discourse about choreographic fusion, about how to develop it and promote it. The concept of postmodernism dominated the thinking of practitioners in most artistic spheres as it was intertwined with the economic situation of the era. Fredric Jameson in his famous essay *Postmodern, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* links postmodernism to 'transnational capitalism' (Jameson 1993, p.64). Capitalism according to Jameson, forced grant-making bodies and commercial institutions together, which in turn forced different arts worlds to collaborate. It encouraged novelty and trendiness in the arts and produced new cultural forms (Jameson 1993, p.65-66). Robert Hewison writes that postmodernism began to be used in Britain from the 1970s, following the disintegration of industry, the rise of Thatcherism, and its culture of

Enterprise (1995 p. 218-219). For Hewison, the Postmodern was more of a social condition, which forced a break with modernism rather than an artistic approach that departed from it (Hewison 1995 p. 221). Indeed, postmodernism affected all types of art even those that would not aesthetically be considered postmodern. Building on Donald Horne's ideas, Hewison goes on to describe how both the elitist and the popular became commoditized and organized 'from above' during this era of enterprise, into an instrument of the hegemony called 'public culture' (Hewison 1995 p. 304-305). There were varied views of postmodern art. Some critics felt the cross-fertilization between art and commerce was negative. Roy Strong for example in his narrative history of the arts in Britain laments the loss of 'dignity and restraint' of 'elitist organizations' such as the Victoria and Albert Museum as they adopted various marketing tactics which dumbed down the intellectual history of art to attract consumers. He ends his book on the history of arts in Britain hoping that those in the arts would realize that art was not a factory producing cultural products or 'a means whereby to manipulate the minds of a gullible populace with bread and circuses' (2000 p. 685). Lambert Zuidvaart, describes postmodernism as 'a cultural shift from the priority of freedom, form and futurity to emphases on construction, context and contingency' as a result of economic crisis. He felt postmodernism's impact on the arts could be a positive one. Quoting Harvey, he describes postmodern art forms as serving as a means of enabling people to adjust to 'time space compression.' Whilst admitting that there was much disagreement amongst commentators as to whether or not this was positive, he argued that the

separation of the arts from tradition and ideas of progress made the arts more democratic and available for people to enjoy (Zuidervaart 2000, p. 34).

The end of the narrative of progress in the field of dance criticism due to Postmodern thought created an openness because writers focused on the cross-fertilization between different genres, art forms and contexts as opposed to focusing on whether a dance production fitted into a specific category or not. According to Robert Hewison, Cultural Studies became the destination for scholars looking for a link between theory and contemporary art practice within the complexity of a postmodern field (Hewison 1995 p.226). This was definitely the case in Dance as discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis which highlights how dance scholars turned to cultural studies, performance studies, and sociology to find ways of looking at dance practices and productions contextually. This also happened in dance criticism as one can see in articles published in *Dance Theatre Journal (DTJ)*. The magazine covered a broad range of dance practices providing context and, at times, history. It did not focus on forms that belonged to one theatrical tradition or time line. Its contributors included academics, dance journalists, choreographers and other dance practitioners such as administrators and managers working within funding or support organizations in Britain. There were articles on choreographers of Asian and African and Caribbean background through arguably, an insufficient number. *DTJ* also covered how contemporary dance was developing in other parts of Europe and other parts of the northern hemisphere such as America, Canada and New Zealand. There are articles on dance festivals, dance platforms, interviews with

individual artists and advocates who discussed politics, provided historical information on dances, dance productions, dance forms, techniques and approaches, work related issues as well as creative processes, aesthetics and seminal works. Though the magazine engaged with a wide range of dance practices from different contexts and did not focus on dance that belonged to a single narrative, the magazine still approached dance seriously rather than superficially.

The de-centralization of the historical narrative of Euro-American theatrical dance meant by the 1990s dance writers were developing new forms of criticism. *DTJ* gave room over the years for a number of articles and interviews on the subject of dance criticism itself. These articles show that whilst producing dance criticism for any form of dance was challenging practice, they also show that producing dance criticism for black dancers had a specific set of challenges. From looking at these articles it seems a general concern amongst dance writers was how to create a context for discussing a dance practice in the short space of an article. Articles on Dance criticism ranged from discussions on the theoretical foundations of criticism to interviews with individual dance writers who shared their methodologies and points of view. Each writer suggested a different way of contextualising contemporary dance for the purpose of criticism. Janet Adshead-Lansdale in 'Dance and critical debate: towards a community of dance intellectuals' focuses on theoretical concerns (Adshead-Lansdale 1995/96, pp. 22 – 24, 33). She expresses concern about the interdisciplinary turn in dance criticism. She felt dance was under pressure from postmodern

schools of thought, which insisted the boundaries between disciplines be blurred. She complained that too many inappropriate theories were being taken from other subjects and being applied to dance writing. *Rehabilitating dance criticism* by Diana Theodores is a report on the Acts of Criticism event held at the Institute for Choreography and Dance in Ireland in November 2001.

Theodores' report gives the sense that dance critics had an important and urgent job to do as Ireland had a precarious contemporary dance history. The premise of the event proposed that dancers and dance critics should work together to develop a new critical context (Theodores 2001, pp. 36-39). The event brought makers and critics together to discuss how the registers of the press, of university scholarship and of the dance artists intersected (p. 36).

Theodores blames the postmodernist belief in the 'death of the author' for the lack of 'critical consensus' amongst dance writers. She felt the generation of meaningful narratives was important and argued that this should be produced 'collaboratively' by people engaged in dance working from different institutional sites.

It was easier for critics to develop new forms of criticism for theatrical dance from a Euro-American tradition because there was a history of progress to question. Dance criticism. It was more difficult for dance writers to develop forms of dance criticism for the work of black choreographers who worked in ways that had not been documented historically. The latter do not have a critical context to deconstruct or question. Ian Bramley's interview with Dance critic Judith Mackrell, who mainly writes on theatrical dance of a Euro-American

tradition, focused on her sense of personal responsibility and development as a critic and how this had affected her taste. She shared her thoughts about the work of established choreographers like Merce Cunningham (Bramley, 2000, p. 39). Mackrell could foreground her personal experience because the historical context, which defined the practice of theatrical dance in a Euro-American tradition and, most importantly, explained how and why theatrical dance changes over time was already established. Indeed Judith Mackrell had authored an article in 1990 on the postmodern tradition in theatrical dance, looking at examples in Europe and America from the 1970s to the 1990s. In that piece she states that the enduring characteristic of postmodern dance was that the choreographer took the stance that anything could be used as dance technique – Tai-chi, Ballet or Contact improvisation (Mackrell 1990, p.56).

According to the African American scholar, Brenda Dixon Gottschild dance critics looking at the work of black choreographers need to investigate cultural context and not place an emphasis on their personal response. She made these remarks during her participation in the seminar *Critical Distance/Cultural Context: Critics on Criticism* in 1999. This event inspired two articles in *DTJ*. Thea Nerissa Barnes, the organiser of the event, interviewed Professor Gottschild and also shared her own reflections on the topic. She was impressed with Gottschild's method of evaluating a work by its own 'aesthetic parameters' and including other viewers opinions in her writing (Barnes 1999, p.34, 37). Philippa Newis, a writer for ADiTi, came away from the event with pondering upon Gottschild's 'ambitious challenge' to dance critics to use the dance review

as a bridge between the performance and readers rather than as a 'judgemental full stop'. Gottschild proposed that the writer research the cultural context of the piece as well as assess their own assumptions when writing a dance review (Newis 1999, p.38-39). Gottschild's proposition to dance critics, who wanted to write about theatrical dance using non-western forms, was that they at once review the dance work and provide a cultural context.

The choreographers who received the most in-depth analysis in *DTJ* were those whose works could be described as a departure from the formality of modernism. This is what can be seen in articles in *DTJ*, which focus on choreographers who are considered to be postmodern. In an article called *Learning to Live with Loss*, the writer Anne Sacks looks at dance artists performing at Dance Umbrella in 1999 and describes them as finding new forms of postmodernist expression whilst lamenting the loss of the tried and tested methods of modernity. She commends Mark Morris, Bill T. Jones, Lea Anderson, Nigel Charnock but thinks that Siobhan Davies did not go far enough in this new direction (Sacks 2000, pp. 16-19). In the article *Under the influence*, Keith Watson looks at the genealogies of new choreographers (Watson 2002, pp. 32-35). He describes Lloyd Newson, Lea Anderson and Mark Murphy as the role models for the 'new generation of dance makers' and he celebrates three upcoming companies – Jasmin Vardimon dance company, Protein dance and Ersatz as being linked by 'a philosophical spirit rather than any notion a shared technique'. He says this is what makes them stand apart from their peers. For Watson the majority of contemporary dance still adhered to the 'Graham/Cunningham legacy' and had not 'escaped the stranglehold of craft

and technique' for its own sake (Watson 2002, page 32.). These critics described postmodern dance in terms of how it differed from modern dance. This buttresses the point that a sense of history is needed for dance criticism even in postmodern times.

Other critics described postmodern dance in terms of how it reflected cultural theories of postmodernism. Martin Hargreaves in his profile on Lea Anderson (Hargreaves 2002 p. 16-19 vol and no not given) describes her work as postmodern due to its playfulness, refusal of tradition, the way it interrogated 'iconographies of gender' and blurred the boundaries between high art and popular culture (Hargreaves 2002, p.17). Sherrill Dodd explores Lea Anderson's use of imagery in her choreography for her companies the Cholmondeleys and the Featherstonehaughs, especially *Go Las Vegas* (1995) and *Car* (1995). Dodd describes her choreography as signalling the 'death of the author' by the way it incorporated images depicting different lifestyles and demonstrated the way 'images' pervade our day to day lives (Dodd 1995/96, pp 31-33). The examples given suggest that choreographers whose work could be related to an established theatrical dance history or artistic tradition or who were at the helm of large companies, and therefore part and parcel of contemporary cultural politics, were the subjects of dance criticism. In other words, dance criticism of any depth still required the input of dance history. The kind of histories that were useful for dance criticism were histories that looked at issues of practice – the training of dancers, choreographic devices, the choreographer's philosophy,

ideological perspectives that appear through choreography, innovation or cultural or artistic genealogy.

There seems to be only three articles on individual black dancers or choreographers during this period in *Dance Theatre Journal*: Jonzi D, Henri Ogunike and Bode Lawal. However, there are other types of articles. There are reviews of dance platforms such as ADAD's 1999 choreographic platform. Hilary Carty, Peter Badejo and Brenda Dixon Gottschild's voices are featured discussing issues to do with development of the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector. There are also reviews of some dance companies, though pieces, and reports of events. People and issues associated with the Black dance/African Peoples dance sector feature in the magazine. There is a sense, from looking at the articles, that hybridity in form and genre was an increasing feature in the work of black choreographers but there is no critical exposition given in the journal about this. It seems that it was not considered critically significant. This left the work of those associated with the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector outside the discussions about change, innovation and contemporary politics.

The Black arts movement in Britain, which was dominated by visual artists and filmmakers, began developing a discourse around their work from the 1980s. Cultural studies provided a theoretical framework, which underpinned the way they theorized 'cultural activism'. It also inspired new directions in the visual arts (Mercer 1994, p.13). Although a number of theorists were skeptical about the

relevance of postmodernism critique for the black arts movement, they engaged with it strategically. In an interview with Lawrence Grossberg, Stuart Hall, for example, argues that the 'fragmentation' and 'diversity' associated with postmodernism was a continuation of modernity (Grossberg 1986, p.51). Hall also describes postmodernist 'fragmentation' as having been a long-time feature in the cultures of 'subaltern groups.' For him postmodernism simply opened the eyes of western critics to his reality as a modern subject. (Hall in McRobbie 1994, p. 27-28). Paul Gilroy expresses a similar sentiment saying he felt postmodernism was best thought of as a 'heuristic device'. He felt it was potentially a dangerous ideology, which substituted the struggle over imagery for the struggle for agency (Gilroy 2000, p. 314-315). Despite this skepticism toward postmodernism the black arts movement was able to generate a critical discourse about the work because that they found ways to engage with the discourse coming from various institutional sites about their work which was dominated by ideas about postmodernism. The black dance/African Peoples Dance sector however did not include theorists who wrote about the work of choreographers and dancers who were associated with it in these terms.

7.3. A narrative of practice: The rise and halt of Choreographic fusion - 1994 to 2005

The idea of choreographic fusion did not emerge in the 1990s. In the 1970s and 1980s, experiments with choreographic fusion took place in choreographer-led companies these included IRIE! Dance Theatre, Union Dance, and Phoenix

Dance Company. Furthermore, there were a number of African American companies, such as the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and the Dance Theatre of Harlem which had an impact on theatrical dance in Britain and also produced dance in this manner and. However, in the 1990s the concept of choreographic fusion grew. This was a result of a burgeoning independent dance sector with more dancers creating choreographies that drew on hip-hop, African and Caribbean dances and Jazz in comparison to the past. The Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD), established in 1994, supported the emergence of choreographers through its dance platform. Although some artists whose work could be described as neo-traditional dance or dance drama performed at this platform, much of the work produce for it was choreographic fusion. Dancers could apply to the organization for bursaries, and if successful, they would be expected to produce a piece of work to present as part of the ADAD platform. The organization supported the careers of artists such as Maria Ryan, Irvn Lewis, Bawren Tavaziva and Robert Hylton. Other festivals and dance platforms, which supported dancers and choreographers' careers in a similar way followed. They included The Mission produced by Deborah Baddoo, The Hip festival by Brenda Edwards and the Black Dance Festival by Vicky Spooner (Gamble 2004, p. 5). From the establishment of ADAD, efforts were made by administrators involved with ADAD, June Gamble and Deborah Baddoo, to develop a critical language for the work of black dance artists whose choreographies drew on a mixture of forms. The establishment of Black Dance Focus Weekends, communication days and seminars to accompany dance platforms were some of the ways in

which they sought to do this. An article, which was written for *DTJ*, by Thea Nerissa Barnes about choreographic fusion was from her position as chair of the discussion panel that was part of the Black Dance Focus Weekend in October 1999. It was entitled 'The Individual Aesthetic of the African Diaspora'. A dance writer committed to developing a critical discourse for work by black choreographers, Barnes tackled the term 'choreographic fusion'. The panelists included Kwesi Johnson, Gail Parmel, Michael Joseph, Vik Sivalingham and Sheron Wray. Her article, , considers the diversity of work on show at the event and relates this diversity to the training and experiences of the choreographers and dancers who took part in the panel discussion. Their experiences included dance in a familial and social dance contexts, their training on higher education programmes and field research. Barnes summation was that these dancers had been relegated to a 'marginalized ethnic enclave' by the discourse of contemporary dance at the time (Barnes 1999, p. 24-25). Barnes points out that the choreographers' work destabilized 'hierarchical dance practices' by drawing on the British dance canon horizontally. She concludes that fusion (as in choreographic fusion) was 'not a noun but more of a verb' which indicated the method a choreographer choose or devised for the generation of a dance vocabulary from a mixture of forms. She ends her reflections by stating that it was important for the development of the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector to recognize the contribution these choreographers were making to dance (Barnes 1999, p. 28). She argues that the choreographers featured on the platform should not be considered to be 'jacks of all trades and masters of none.' For Barnes, the value of their work lay in the choreographic

methodologies that the choreographers used as well as their cultural heritage. Barnes, was in this article, making a case for a critical discourse that positioned choreographic fusion as a practice motivated by a creative inquiry into Africanist dance aesthetics.

Dance practitioners supporting choreographic development were not the only ones interested in the development of a critical discourse for the work of black dancers. Dance administrators and consultants were also looking for a critical discourse, which answered questions around definitions, which would support them in developing a strategy for organizational development in the sector. The next major report commissioned by the Arts Council of England after *What is Black Dance in Britain?* was called *Time for Change: A Framework for the Development of African People's Dance Forms (2000)* and for this reason addressed the issue of definition once again. *Time for change* argued that a single organization was not the answer to the sector's lack of infrastructure and that what was required was input from the whole dance ecology. The report therefore proposed a framework and promoted this to the dance field. *Time for Change* re-interpreted the term African Peoples' Dance to include various categories of choreographic fusion. The report organized the work of the sector and their practitioners into 'four levels of practice and practitioners in the UK'. These four levels were described as, 1, the heritage culture of Africa and the Caribbean, 2, African Contemporary dance, 3, a new vocabulary that was a synergy of the experiences of Black dancers and choreographers and the work of Black people in dance, and 4, those who worked in an Europeanist aesthetic

(McIntosh et al 2000, pp. 15-16). In doing this the writers of the report could be described as doing a work of 'representation' creating a 'conceptual map' in the hope that it would contribute to a common language that would join the black dance/African Peoples Dance sector to others and make similarities more apparent. It is possible that the writers felt that whilst the wider dance sector might not be in a position to support with dancers with training in African and Caribbean forms they were, nevertheless in a position to support a methodology of dance production or method of choreographic practice.

An opportunity to reflect on the development of infrastructure for the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector arose in 2004. A seminar series called *Serious About Dance? Let's Talk* organized by Pawlet Warner at the Peepul Centre in Leicester that year brought a number of dance practitioners together to discuss issues around cultural diversity. The series produced a publication by the same name. Delia Barker, the Dance officer for the Arts Council of England at the time, presented a paper entitled, *Beyond Time for Change – African Peoples' Dance Development since 2000* (2004). It appears in this publication because it was originally one of the seminar presentations at the Peepul Centre. Barker She describes initiatives that had taken place to support the development of infrastructure since the publication of *Time for Change* which included international fellowships for Black dancers, and the Decibel Showcases which took place in 2003 and 2004 and aimed to raise the profile of black dancers. She gave a list of six issues that still remained unresolved. Four of this list related to issues of aesthetics and practice, which showed a lack of

critical discourse, was still affecting the development of infrastructure for the sector. (Barker 2004, p. 158 -159) Her paper suggests that the attempts to address these issues of critical discourse in past years had not had sufficient effect and this in turn had hampered the development of infrastructure.

This quest for critical discourse during this period was not limited to those associated with black dance. Gill Clarke, for example, a leading figure in the independent dance field, in an interview with Sarah Rubridge in 1994, argued the importance of organising platforms for dancers to share work based on their own dance vocabularies, devised from their training and dance experiences. She states that one of the functions of the dance platform was the facilitation of discussion, which helped develop a critical language for the dancers' practices. She says that a critical language was necessary for dancers who needed to be able to be able to communicate with funding bodies and to promote their own work (Rubridge 1994, p.54-55). Clarke linked the growth of critical discourse to the growth of this dance sector, which was not built around dance companies but rather around networks of independent dance artists and collectives. For this grouping, critical discourse enabled the participants to communicate and collaborate in the way required to sustain their chosen mode of operation and communicate their needs to audiences and funders. The example of this sector highlights an important point about initiatives to generate critical discourse. The purpose of the discourse and the kind of organisations that need to be involved in the generation of the discourse had to be identified. Independent Dance generated their own discourse and it has consequently produced a historical

legacy for the communities of practice involved whilst acknowledging their position as part of contemporary dance in general (Bramley 2007, p.4).

Considering the lack of critical interest in the work of black choreographers, it is unsurprising that some choreographers became disillusioned with the term 'choreographic fusion.' Bode Lawal, the artistic director of SAKOBA dance company in his interview with Thea Barnes in 2005 expresses his point of view. After his returning from a sabbatical in the United States, Thea Barnes interviewed Lawal and wrote an article called *Aseju: Bode Lawal's Post Modern African Dance*. Lawal had just reviewed his company's artistic policy and had decided to describe his work henceforth as 'postmodern African dance'. Lawal tells her

"I've gone beyond calling SAKOBA African contemporary which to most people means "fusion", we don't do that any more... I will not forget my tradition, which is African Nigerian technique; but what I'm doing with African Nigerian technique is taking it with me and trying to make it look more clean and polished for what is happening today without losing the source or root of what is happening' (Barnes 2005, p.25)

Barnes' commentary on Lawal's position is that his adherence to postmodernism was as much about British cultural politics and the lack of critical attention paid to Africanist dance as it was about technique. Although Lawal was committed to innovation, his need to distance himself from terms such as 'Fusion' and 'African contemporary' was due to the lack of critical attention he experienced and his belief that the term 'postmodern' would attract interest from critics (Barnes 2005, p.25).

In the same article which featured Bode Lawal, Thea Nerissa Barnes discusses an important change taking place in the Black dance/African Peoples Dance sector. In 2005, Adzido Pan-African dance ensemble was defunded. Two support organizations, The Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) and State of Emergency (SoE) and six dance companies were funded in its stead. All the companies funded could be described and as producers of fusion choreography: Robert Hylton's Urban Classicism, Kompany Malachi, Benji Reid, Jonzi D, ACE Dance and Music, and Tavaziva Dance company. Barnes expressed fears that these dance companies, allocated funds previously awarded to the forementioned ensemble, would face the same struggle for recognition as their predecessors.

The history I have presented above of the attempts by dance practitioners to develop an artistic discourse for choreographic fusion show that they have not been as effective as they could have been. I argue that this was because discussions have remained within the context of professional dance. It demonstrates that discourse is not only about the production of texts concerning an object of knowledge but the linking of knowledge to practice. Although the Arts Council funded showcases, fellowships, and events, greater impact for the sector's discourse would have been made if they had funded a project that engaged the academia (rather than individual academics) in the development for critical discourse for work associated with the black dance/African Peoples dance sector which would have produced discussions about the practice in relation to on-going discourses.

Though postmodernism has been heralded as the end of a narrative of progress, this did not mean the end of logical exposition. Angela McRobbie reminds us that the 'superficiality' of the postmodern, where surfaces of different cultural forms were drawn together does not amount to a descent into 'meaninglessness or valuelessness in culture' (McRobbie 1994, p.4). In dance criticism commentators still approached postmodernism in relation to a history of practice even if it was to say the work they were commenting on was a departure from it. There was a rationale behind Bode Lawal's decision to embrace the label of postmodernism. Debates about postmodernism took place across different sectors and institutions in society and unless one was part of this discussion, for or against, or one would be made invisible. For a discourse to be powerful, it needs to take place between several sites in society with participants able to converse due to the shared knowledge of similar concepts.

7.4. Theorising Choreographic fusion

Choreographic fusion could be described as a postmodern dance genre. Thea Barnes describes Choreographic fusion as a choreographic device. I would agree but it however is also used as an umbrella term because it is a type of device used by choreographers who work with various forms of dance. A choreographic fusion could be created from African dance forms, Caribbean

dance forms, Jazz dance forms or others or a mixture these and could be used to describe all of these. It could be described as a postmodern genre. Not because all the choreographic practices associated with it are postmodern but because of it exudes 'double consciousness'. The term is has emerge out of a historical struggle to find the language to categorise practices which emerge from the intersection of cultural and artistic practices. It is borne out of time space compression. It is postmodern because it is the creation of the postmodern condition not necessarily because due to the aesthetics of the work – such as those Martin Hargreaves ascribed to the work of Lea Anderson. Due to the lack of infrastructure, the 'dance platform', was at time the only mechanism and outlet for emerging choreographers and mid career artists trying out new ways of creating. The dance platform created the space for discourse but not enough space. It was a place of compressed social relations and suppressed discussions. The socio-cultural context needed to appreciate the work being performed at dance platforms was barely articulated. The label 'choreographic fusion' however has a socio-cultural context. It does have roots. Its origins are in the British subsidized dance sector.

The discourse of postmodernism in dance in the mid-1990s to mid-2000s overlooked the social changes taking place in theatrical dance as a profession. The use of dance by local authorities as a way of improving race relations and social inclusion in communities has changed the way people have come into theatrical dance as a profession and how theatrical dance is perceived as a social and artistic practice by large numbers of the population. Many dancers,

especially black dancers, were coming into professional dance from a wider variety of backgrounds than previously. Many black dancers considered their family experiences of dancing and their social or club dancing as part of their dance training. With the establishment of the National Dance Agencies in the 1990s, the context for theatrical dance continued to change due to their outreach programmes and mixed bills which placed popular dance groups next to 'high art' dance companies. If, however, theatrical dance is approached as a social practice, its evolution should not be considered solely in terms of the changes of the aesthetics of the dance productions seen on stages but also in terms of the changes that take place in how it is organized. This will include how it is funded, the way people work in it as a profession, and how it is sustained through discourse generated in workplaces, the media and educational institutions. Community dance and outreach projects organized by dance agencies peddled a view that contemporary dance was open to all cultural influences and points of view. This view, however, does not appear to be circulated in discourses of dance as an art. These dance sectors were also involved in transforming theatrical dance as a social practice and consequently the tastes people have for dance as an artistic practice.

Even though some of the choreographers explained their work as simply an expression of their cultural background I would argue that their personal narratives are only part of the expressions they create. They are expressing their ideas through genres, be these social, traditional or academic, which have a social, cultural and historical currency. They also use dance forms and

dance techniques, methods of dance making and draw on imagery and discourses, which are socially defined and constructed. Their choreographies, therefore, were constructing meanings beyond their own personal narratives though instigated by their intentions. For this reason, their work is part of a cultural and artistic history.

7.5. Choreographic Praxis of Sheron Wray and Robert Hylton

Sheron Wray and Robert Hylton are two choreographers who approached choreography with a clear intentionality and with not many role models to follow. They created their work through a commitment to their vision. Their professional journeys and their work reveal a choreographic praxis. The theatrical dance for Wray and Hylton provided a space, amongst other things, for them to contemplate on the experience of dancing in society (as opposed to socially). They did not only create dance from various dance forms and dance techniques but also various systems of representation and discourses involved in the act of dancing. The meaning produced by Wray's choreography was not solely constructed through the ideas of Jazz dance and music but also through challenging the dominant discourse about Jazz dance and music not being art and therefore inferior to contemporary dance. Hylton's work is not only about hip-hop but the view of the dancing body he has formulated through being a hip-hop dancer.

As I noted in chapter three, the idea of praxis was introduced into postcolonial contexts through the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire who, in the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, theorises the concept as 'a transformation of the world' through 'reflection and action'. Freire is critical of what he describes as the 'banking concept of education' in which students are simply treated as 'receptacles' of information and knowledge and the activities they are encouraged to carry out are those that will reproduce the system in which they have been taught (Freire 2000, p. 83). The 'banking concept of education', in other words, sets the colonizer or former colonizer's view of the world as the standard to which the student must attain and therefore turns the student's attention away from analyzing and reflecting on his or her environment and circumstances and from seeking solutions which are suitable or appropriate for their problems and aspirations. He proposed a view of education which is dialogical, which encourages the student to focus on problem-solving and encourages 'critical intervention in reality' (2000, p. 81). In this chapter I am looking at Sheron Wray's and Robert Hylton's critical intervention into British theatrical dance. I interviewed the choreographers for biographical information and to gain a better understanding of their 'intentionality' or what they wished to achieve as choreographers.

As the performances I am describing and discussion here are past. My aim here is not to try and describe them in detail but provide a document of how the vision of their choreographers shows through their work. I have also written about their early careers to give a record of their opportunities, and choices,

which demonstrate how their work is an expression of their agency and engagement with society. To write the descriptions of the performances below, I relied on video recordings made available by the choreographers. I adapted Patrice Pavis' 'Tools of Analysis Questionnaire' to give me a systematic way of watching the dances. I did not only focus on the movements that made up the choreographers but on the whole production. Pavis' Questionnaire is devised first and foremost for analyzing live performance. Therefore some of the information he suggests the viewer analyses cannot be captured from a video recording, at least in full, and some questions are not relevant. His broad categories, under which there are several bullet points, are paraphrased as follows: The characteristics of mis-en-scene; Sceneography; Lighting System; Actor's performance (in this case dancers); Rhythm of the performance; Plot; Text in the performance (if any); the spectators (i.e. their reactions); and any information that cannot be put into signs. His categories also include two other points: 'How to record the performance' and 'Final assessment'. Under these heading the reviewer of the performance is to discuss any problems that have not been covered by the questionnaire (Pavis 2006 pp. 37-40). My aim in describing the performances is to articulate how they exist as part of British theatrical dance history and how they engaged with artistic and social context of the time. In 7.4a I discuss Wray's work and in 7.4b I discuss Hylton's.

7.4a. Sheron Wray – Jazz Dance as Art Dance as Contemporary Dance

In the 1990s, contemporary dance was the field where dance was considered to

be an art. It was in this field that Sheron Wray wished to explore her interest in Jazz dance and music. Jazz however was and still is often considered to be a dance for popular entertainment. This meant it was not given critical attention by cultural commentators. She grew up in the East Midlands where she had her first dance experiences which had a great impact on her. At the age of fourteen she started to frequent 'All dayers' – which were all day dance clubs which started around 2pm and ended at about 11pm. Some of the clubs had a Jazz room, a dedicated room which played jazz music. She says she was a bit too young really to go to the clubs but it was a safe space and no one seemed to notice her age. There was a good DJ and on Sunday there were sometimes dance acts from the USA. This is where Sheron says she captured the passion for improvisation. The dancing here was full of spirit. She learnt the movement vocabulary from the floor and came along and joined in with what every one was doing. About the same time, at the age of fourteen, Sheron became involved with the National Youth Theatre Company. She visited to Harehills school where dancing was an activity which was taken very seriously. It was here she had her first taste of choreography. She was also introduced to the techniques of modern dance choreographers – Graham, Cunningham, Horton. She met other black young people in dance such as Louise Katerega, Paul Libard and Denzel Bailey and became aware that there was a college route to a dance profession. She took the ISTD dance syllabus in Ballet, Tap and Modern but became particularly interested in American Tap. With a local theatre company, she devised a version of *Romeo and Juliet* and the production was staged at the Edinburgh festival. She found it a very exciting and creative

process. Due to these experiences she decided to train as a dancer and left for London.

In London she trained she took classes at the London Studio but decided to change to the London Contemporary Dance School (LCDS). She was very interested in Jazz but did not want to go into a career in commercial dance or musical theatre as she enjoyed the creative aspects of contemporary dance. She therefore made a conscious choice to train as a contemporary dancer as she was aware that the training of a dancer shaped their career path. There were no jazz companies at the time in which you could work within the art dance field. Jazz companies worked in the commercial sector. However, two teachers that she meet at the London Studio continued to be inspirations for her work. One was Jackie Mitchell and the other Michele Scott. Both were jazz teachers. She says they opened her ears to the music as they used the music in their classes and transmitted to her a respect for the technique. Scott continued investigating jazz and went on to study anthropology and continued to be an influence on her development as an artist. After training at LCDS Sheron went on to perform with the company – London Contemporary Dance Theatre and worked with them as a teacher and workshop leader from 1988 to 1994. LCDT was repertory company that had a history of employing black dancers such as Bill Louthier, Namron, Cathy Dennis and Brenda Edwards and she describes it as a ‘nurturing’ environment where skill rather than race determined what roles you got to dance. She toured with the company until it closed in 1994.

During this time at LCDT Sheron established her JazzXchange. She says that the group started as a collective through it was at her instigation. She called up about eleven other trained dancers who had a love for jazz dance and music and who were not fully engaged in work and they began meeting on weekends. The first performance of the collective was in 1992. They shared choreographic responsibilities in creating a piece and also then invited Michelle Scott to choreograph for them. She describes herself as one of many dancers at the time, along with Melanie Joseph, Lorraine Le Blanc, Suzette Rocca, Alison Desbois, Leon Moris, Jones and Denzil Bailey and Bonnie Oddie, who trained in modern dance but was also well trained jazz dancers. In 1994, she was invited by Christopher Bruce to join Rambert where she worked as a soloist and company dance teacher whilst running JazzXchange alongside. She describes Bruce's choreography as a joy to dance and though Rambert was more restrained in atmosphere than LCDT due to its ballet background, she gained a lot from the environment. She however left the company after being asked to dance a role in black face for 'Cruel Garden', which was choreographed by Christopher Bruce. She describes the decision to leave after this request as a 'deeply personal one' and Bruce remains one of her favorite choreographers. The request for her to dance in black face however made her aware of the political issues involved in dancing and she decided to find a different path. Gradually due to circumstances, with dancers finding paid employment and taking on other responsibilities, JazzXchange began to rely on her drive for its sustenance and it became more about her work. She eventually took over the

reins of the organization and it became her company. After she left Rambert in 1998 she embarked on a trip to Cuba. She was impressed by Cuba's dance culture where folkloric dances could be learnt in academic institutions alongside conventional professional forms like modern dance techniques and Ballet.

Sheron's early experiences dancing Jazz socially, participating in Youth dance projects as well as her formal training and performance experience developed her into a dancer with a wide range of technical experience. She was particularly interested in exploring jazz in an artistic context where she would have the opportunity to explore its components. She was particularly interested in the Mattock-Cole lexicon. What interested her about this lexicon was the range of influences upon which it is built. She did not consider it the definitive jazz technique but an expression of what a journey into jazz could produce. Furthermore, she wished to re-unite the stage performance of jazz with live music. Her belief is that tradition is important because it enables you to get involved in a dance and move with it. Jazz is a form she says that is constantly moving. Tradition allows you to develop contemporary iterations. She began researching strategies, which could be used to create a form of performance with jazz. Due to the influential people on her board, Sheron says she had the opportunity to undertake more artistic research than many of her peers who had to focus more on gaining paid work and as such working in community and commercial contexts. An important point in this creative journey was her residency at the Royal Opera House in 2000. She said this opportunity was facilitated through Michael Kersa (Sheron 2013). She said unfortunately she could not follow up plans on this project as Kersa left. She experienced the

frustration of not being able to follow through on her ideas. As a way of dealing with this frustration she embarked on Masters degree programme which gave her the space to develop an approach to improvisation from her dance experiences (Sheron 2013). Wray's M.A thesis, completed in 2002 provides an in-depth discussion of her company as it was situated in Britain in the early 2000s and her ideas of jazz dance as an artform. Her thesis attempts at creating an artistic discourse for jazz in the artistic sphere. She cites *Corps de Jazz*, a dance company established in 1982 and closed in 1987 as one of the first jazz companies in Britain to work in an art dance context. She also discussed the impact of jazz as an artistic practice on postmodern dance, and the importance of improvisation to creativity and the use of music (Wray 2002, p. 4-8). Barnes's review of JazzXchanges's 10th anniversary celebration which took place at the Robin Howard Dance Theatre, at The Place on April 15 and 16, 2003 is a testimony to how Wray vision translates through her performance. Barnes comments how Wray uses jazz as a strategy for encompassing a blend of dance and performance traditions and the efficacy of this approach depicting the dynamic and complex relationship between the self and the cultural context in which one lives.

***Bare hands, Broad Feet* (1998) by Sheron Wray**

To describe *Bare hands, Broad Feet* I have watched a video taping of the performance. It was probably created using two or three cameras as the recording consisted of wide angle shoots which covered the whole stage from the front, shoots from side and at time close up shoots of dancers from low

angles. The editing served to convey the sense of flow and the rhythm of the piece. One special effect was introduced at the editing stage. At points the dancers appeared in black and white in the style of a photo negative for a few seconds. Other than this there were no effects used by the editor to manipulate movement for example to slow or speed up the dancing. The recording was of a performance of the piece at the Royal Festival Hall, on the Ball Room floor. The performance was part of the Royal Festival Hall's Ballroom Blitz. There were two performances billed for the day, one at 1pm and another 6.30pm. Sheron Wray says that her interest in contemporary dance was to bring Jazz into the discourse of dance as an art form. As described from her residency at the Royal Festival Hall, this was her focus in creating this piece.

The Ballroom at the Royal Festival Hall is a large round circular space, on the ground floor of the building. It however is sunken so that it is positioned below the bar area that is in front of it so that spectators can look over a barrier onto the floor. For the performance however there were chairs positioned on the floor in a semi-circle. Julian Joseph the jazz pianist and his band were up-stage right and centre¹². Joseph's large piano was positioned in the forefront of the ensemble showing he was the leader but also because he required sight of the dancers. The dancers had command of the rest of the stage¹³. The scene seems to fuse a jazz and dance concert. From the amount of space accorded the dancers it is clear that dance is the focus of the performance. However as

¹² The band consisted of Orlando Le Fleming, Mark Mondesir, Adam Salkeld and Julian Joseph.

¹³ The dancers consisted of Bawren Tavaziva, Stacey Dove, Suzie Davies, Tiia Ourila, Ellen Kane and Sheron Wray.

the visibility of the musicians and the fact that they are not simply playing the role of accompanists but interact with them at points in the performance denotes that they are not simply providing original music as backdrop. Their performances are integral to the production as well as their music. The choreography is very mobile in the use of the stage with dancers crossing and there are few moments where they are all at once dancing in unison in front of the band, walling them off from the spectator's view. The Ballroom floor seems therefore to be an appropriate place for the performance to take place with the audience at eye level with the work. It is not possible to work out the lighting scheme from the video recording and the relationship between the dancers and the band.

The five dancers are dressed in simple costumes with clean lines, following the shape of the body, some in blue and some in purple, consisting of trouser and a tunic and jazz shoes. Gender roles are not accentuated by the costume. The dancers used no props and if they are wearing make-up it is natural rather than theatrical. The color and the cut of costume, the lack of set, calls the attention to the movement of the body and how and what that communicates. The movement language has the angularity, low center of gravity as points as seen in certain jazz stances and a flexible torso associated with jazz and yet with a linearity in the extensions of the limbs and the projection of the torso into space associated with the conventional modern dance movements. It is full-bodied movement, extending up into space ending with held moments of stillness and journeys to the floor to lying down, rising to crouched positions. The

choreography could be described as abstract. However there is a narrative that plays out in the organization of the dancers and their interaction with the musicians. The choreography presents them as a group, inhabiting the same space with the same focus yet expressing individuality. Although there are solos and duets, as well as group sections the overall feel is that of an ensemble. The rhythm of the piece is like waves in the sea, rising in crests and fall, extending the lyricism of Joseph's piano playing. It has an élan, which is often associated with dances based on modern dance techniques.

The piece unfolds through several sections comprise of group dancing in unison, formations in lines facing each other and that pass through it each other, floor sequences from which dancers take turns to rise, perform a solo, and return. The dancing in a circle took place to a section of virtuoso piano playing that had conjured up the tumbling cascade of a waterfall and which incited applause from the audience when it came to its conclusion. Another section was de-centred performance of duets which including lifts and turns, taking place at different times and travelling through space in such a way that it was carved up asymmetrically. Another section consisted of dancers dancing together on stage each to a different line in the music, making the polyrhythms in the piece visible – which again evoked applause. At one point one of the guitarists entered the dance area and the dancers begin to improvise to his playing one after the other before he returned to join the band – this section too evoked applause. The interaction by the guitarist is one commonly seen between a drummer and a dancer. The final section of the piece saw the

dancers coming together as a group performing a movement, which comprised of bending forward to make a scooping motion with the hand. It was a movement that, though lyric had echoes of traditional African dances, in terms of its shape and syncopation. Slowly the dancers came together as a mass in front of the musicians and, dancing this movement, travelled to the front of the stage. Reaching the apron they opened up into two lines and walked to either side of the stage, arms open wide signaling to the musicians to come forward and bow.

Wray's interest in bringing jazz into the contemporary dance discourse of dance as art emerged in this piece in various interesting ways. The *mis en scene* which alluded both to a jazz café and a dance concert was very effective. Even from watching the video the focus it elicited from the audience was evidently strong. The choreography encouraged applause to both the dancing and the musicianship and unlike at conventional dance performances the applause took place at ends of some of the sections as well as the final bow. The hybridity of the piece elicited a different mode of attention from the spectators than is usually the case with contemporary dance. Her choreography crafted the kinetic energy of jazz so that it was made visible. One way she did this was by transposing the syncopation we associate with jazz released through the use of low centre of gravity and isolated body parts, into an impetus to extend limbs, travel and change the overall shape of the dancing body. As a result, the dancing bodies produced a controlled *élan* rather than the visceral attitude of jazz. As such the strategies of jazz dance was performed for us as opposed to

its steps and motifs and the music was projected as an aural environment in which both musician and dancer performed. This was not music visualization as jazz dance is not only about landing on the beat but also coasting through it.

There exists therefore a double consciousness in *Bare hands and Broad feet* –it at once questions the idea of art touted by modern dance in its separation from society and also the idea of theatrical jazz which posit this form as solely entertainment. The introduction of overt Africanist performance strategies such as when dancers improvised to the playing of the solo guitarist, the ‘alone together’ group dancing to the polyrhythm of the music and the use of the circle had the effect of re-routing theatrical jazz as performance category. The idea of re-routing occurs in Postcolonial studies as an act of ‘resistance and liberation’ A central preoccupation of postcolonial studies is to enter into disciplines not normally associated with postcolonial research – in this case the Euro-American concept of dance as art. It seeks to test its limits by introducing into it through techniques of defamiliarisation. In this case what emerges through the defamiliarisation is the artistry of jazz dance. Whilst Sheron Wray’s work could be considered British contemporary dance, following on from companies like Richard Alston’s and Siobhan Davies, it also belongs to a loose constellation of transnational artists who have used jazz as their medium of artistic expression within arts world such as Diane McIntyre.

7.5b. Robert Hylton – Choreographies of an Afrofuturist’s Dancing Body

At the roots of Robert Hylton’s approach to choreography is improvisation – the ability of his body, schooled in the disciplines to be able to move through different dance styles, through different types of music, in and through environments, and characters and landscapes. He is interested in how changes in the way people live change their bodies. For him, people are creatures of migration. He considers the desire to find out what is beyond one’s environment as being inscribed on the human body. He likes movement and travel with the quest for a better future. He cites Afrika Bambaataa and Sun Ra as musical artists who were exploring these ideas. Both these musicians are known as Afrofuturists along with others such as George Clinton, Bernie Worrell, and Lee “Scratch” Perry. Afrofuturism is a term invented by Mark Dery in 1994 whilst participating in a series of discussions which acknowledge that whilst there was a lack of black writers in science fiction, there was the sci-fi imagery, futurist themes and technological innovation’ in the music of the African diaspora (Lewis 2008, p. 139).

Scholars such as George Lewis see the cultural significance of Afrofuturism in how it introduces ideas to the general public. He quotes, another scholar, George Lipsitz as stating “Afro-sonic modernity has been where the liberal citizen subject meets cyborg, where technology intersects with art, where commerce and culture collide, and where memories of ancestors pervade contacts with strangers.” Hylton considers the information he receives through

music seriously. It is not only the political ideas that come through the lyrics that are important but the community that music fosters, the kind of social space it creates, the agency the performer can achieve through dancing. Hylton's development as a dancer and choreographer is informed by the power of music. His relation to music also informs the way he structures his choreographies and explores themes.

Dance improvisation, for Hylton, is approach to absorbing and reconfiguring new experiences and 'articulating' fresh perspectives utilising tried and tested methodologies of movement. It is also an approach to taking up new positions and relationships in a cultural space. At the crux of improvisation is rhythm. For Hylton, improvisation is about the ability to remain yourself and yet able to evolve, and rhythm is about stability and mutability. Hylton began to develop his skills in improvisation dancing as part of the club scene in Newcastle in 1982. He sees this as his foundational training in dance. He considers the knowledge he gain on the club scene providing him with the means of absorbing his training in modern dance techniques at the Northern School of Dance in Leeds. He is reluctant to think of himself as drawing from western and non-western dance forms in a deliberate way and prefers to let his body make sense of various forms of dance he has learnt in relation to music. Hylton describes his dancing body in terms of it absorbing additional knowledge for learning further techniques. He says 'by 1993 my ballet, contemporary were established. My street jazz was already there.' He conceptualises his dance training as being the expansion of the vocabulary and capacity of a physicality he had gained as

a social dancer rather than the learning of different dance styles. Exploring improvisation skills gained through dancing hip-hop has been one of the focuses of his choreographic career. He developed different ways of applying these skills in the creation of solo work and group pieces. He describes himself as a 'dance junkie' and the skill of improvisation as the tool that enables him to draw on all these dance experience in relation to music.

Music he says, provides him a narrative, a cultural and a political context. He often creates the music or soundscape for his solos first and then improvises to the environment he has made. Improvising to music or spoken word is a way of working that appeals to Hylton. He recalls taking Bill Crosby records he found in Johannesburg back to his collaborator Billy Biznizz. Biznizz' scratched over the records and made a soundtrack for one of his solos. The soundtrack that emerged he described as 'scratch beat story'. He says 'It was layered enough for me to make a 20-minute piece. I structured an improvisation, which had a variety of highs and lows and different textures and fields that could challenge me' (Hylton 2013). He says he also works with music the way that a DJ works in a club using music to set an atmosphere that will allow you to go in different directions. He would from this create a sound track made up of samples of different music for the performance. 'If there is complexity and rhythm you have different directions to go in', he says (Hylton 2016). The idea is not to be a slave to the beat. He seems to suggest the idea is to play with the beat. He spends a lot of time understanding the music and how it can frame action. 'For a piece performed in Israel I used drum percussion and four types of hip-hop music,

and improvised. The commentators said they found the work to be intelligent' he says (Hylton 2016). He reflects that that would not be how the work would be termed in Britain. Dancing in a specific way to a specific rhythm is a methodology Hylton describes as 'African' – something he has gained through music and dance that has African origins.

Hylton says he is interested in the body's dancing history and how dancers interact with others. Depending on the piece he is creating, he likes to place break-dancers who are modern dance trained with those who have not and watch the interaction. Narratives appeal to him and he improvises between the rhythm and the spoken work and the right gestures appear once one is animated and connected to the story. He describes hip-hop as having a lot of characters. Each character he says is described as a style. He says 'I can go from being a puppet to being a scarecrow. It is part of the dance forms. There is an animated use of facial expression and clowning around within this form of dance. There is an idea of character dancing in Ballet which comes from a different lineage and its not the same idea. He says it is possible to string hip-hop steps together and create a hip-hop routine but that will be the product – called 'hiphop' rather than a dance that expresses the culture that it comes from which includes the groove and improvisation and knowing how to two step. Hylton's choreography requires the onlooker to follow how the movement relates to the imagery and the sound of the piece and draw on their knowledge of the hip-hop culture, in order to formulate an interpretation.

There was a strong hip-hop scene in the 1980s in Newcastle. Hylton was about sixteen when he really took to dancing. He met the boys, which made the group Bamboozle in about 1987. He described dance and the dance scene as expanding your inner landscape. He says it was being all about hope for a better future. The music was varied – James Brown and funk, hip-hop, cross-over, North South, jazz. Fashion was also very important. They would go dancing at clubs about three times a week. For a club night you went prepared with two or three pairs of shoes and t-shirts. He said with clubbing you develop different personas, for which you dressed in different ways. He says ‘ I am a jazzboy, a soul boy and Hiphop boy’ (Hylton 2016). They would go to three or four different clubs a week dressed differently for each one, dancing with different crews and being playful. He describes himself and his friends as being very competitive with each other and everyone else. They practiced before they went out to dance and they considered it stupid to enter the circle on the club floor with out first having practiced and perfected your moves. The ethics of the competitive dance floor was do not enter the circle before you are ready. He says:

‘Do the work. The crowd was not slow in telling you if you were not delivering a certain understand of the dance. So it took a lot of practicing and observing. There were strategies of battling which you had to practice as well. If you were not battling you could be in the corner dancing with a friend and exchanging moves, just jamming. There was no limit to dancing if the music was good. There were other rooms where you could dance which would play so you could jam and two-step all night’.

(Hylton 2016)

There were also the ‘all-dayers’ where you could go and dance when it was still light outside. On the Club dance scene, he met dancers from Phoenix Dance

Company and companies like IDJ which his peer group looked up to because these were social dancers who had developed performance careers in different contexts. He noticed Benji Reid, who had come from a club background, went to Northern School (North School of Contemporary Dance) and Gary Benjamin who was at Northern School was coming to the clubs. Dance City, the national dance agency in Newcastle, invited Bamboozle, the crew to which Hylton belonged, to perform at events and they were offered studio space to rehearse. They did performances with the Royal Ballet, Royal Theatre, Dance Umbrella, London Contemporary Dance School and with Rambert Dance Company. He was with Bamboozle until 1990. He was advised by Val Bourne, who direct the Dance Umbrella Festival to train formally so he auditioned at the Northern School. He got a full grant and a bursary from Dance Umbrella and he started at the school in 1991. In the late 1990s the dance scene changed due to the recreational drug ecstasy and it lost its appeal.

One of the first performances Robert Hylton created at the school was a solo to Scott Heron's performance poem *This Revolution will not be Televised*. He describes his time at North School as the period in which his political awareness grew and this awareness came through music. He was listening to Public Enemy through which he was introduced to the politics of Malcom X. He also created work to the poetry of Amri Baraka. At Northern school he was getting feedback on his skills of improvisation. He began to improvise drawing playfully on hip-hop and modern dance techniques. When he left Northern School, Hylton says he had no big goals – he simply wanted to get a job and pay the

rent. He, however, auditioned and got a job as an apprentice with Phoenix for nine months. At this point the company comprised of the second generation of Phoenix dancers, which included Steve, Louie and Ricky Holder. And then the women joined the company. Pam Johnson, Sharon and Dawn Donaldson who he found to be incredible, physically and mentally strong. There were no excuses you had to prepare. Whilst at Phoenix Robert says Thea Barnes created a solo on him and he worked on a duet with Sharon Donaldson. He says he has rarely seen dancers like that again. He says with Phoenix his sense of professionalism grew and his approach to improvisation became more strategic. Hylton feels that his generation being the second generation of born in Britain had a greater sense of freedom than their parents, many of whom had migrated from the Caribbean. They were also listening to revolutionary music like Bob Marley. There was a pride in the music. He feels it is why his generation of dancers pushed so hard. Early Phoenix's work drew a lot from Reggae. The *Gang of Five* created for Phoenix by Alletta Collins had a massive impact on those of them that who saw it.

After graduation, he performed in dance projects produced by Sharon (Donaldson) Watson and he then went to work for Jeanette Brooks for two years in Berkshire who at the time was running a company called the Dance Movement. He also performed for Sheron Wray and danced at the first of the two Black Dance Festivals produced by Vicky Spooner. In 1999 he started Urban Classicism, his company, with his first solo, which was called *Struggle in Black Music 2*. He called his company Urban Classicism. A seminal moment for

Robert Hylton was in 2000 when he and Jonzi D were invited to perform by Benji Reid as part of an evening of performance at the Lillian Baylis theatre at Sadler's Wells. The evening was called 'The Illness'. The significance of the event for Hylton was that it marked the emergence of a hip-hop theatre scene in Britain. Prior to that both Benji Reid and Jonzi D performed separately. Jonzi D had been successful with Lyrikal Feartha which he started in 1995. 'The Illness, however, demonstrated that there were more than individual practitioners working in hip-hop on stage in Britain, and showed it to be a growing phenomenon and not a just the interest of disparate individuals. In the 2000 Hylton applied for a mentorship scheme at The Place and got a place on the scheme. With June Gamble, he learnt how to raise funds and fill in applications, strategize and plan. He would 12 hours at the computer and then go into the studio. From 2001 he started creating group pieces and worked with four other male dancers. When he did this, his peers were young enough to take risks they would hold off other work to ensure they were available to tour. They did about seven national tours. The work was varied. Performances included jazz pieces, abstract work, and physical theatre work. He then went on to tour internationally with a trio, which complimented his solo work well. Their tour comprised of 27 flights and included Mozambique and Indonesia. Presently he sees Urban Classicism as an approach, which undergirds some of his work, one which is about the experimenting with form. He now spends an equal amount of time performing classic hip-hop vocabulary.

The idea behind calling his company 'Urban Classicism', was exploring that he was exploring both classical hip-hop forms and working with classical dance and hip-hop forms. The concept, he said, was too large and created too many expectations. As he grew as a choreographer, his ideas about the concept began to change but he found it difficult to evolve because his artistic identity had already been imprinted in the minds of decision makers. From 2003 to 2005 he rose quickly but, with that, his work became less about dance and more about politics. He says that is was a difficult task. In reflection he was creating a company and developing the context for work, which hardly existed. He also undertook the task of training some b-boys to work with in a theatrical context which can be difficult for dancers not used to rehearsal and set choreography and lacking a mind set geared for stage performance which is different from performance in a social setting. He said he realised that he needed structure but this was not something that the Arts Council was willing to provide. When he became regularly funded in 2005, there was not the necessary support structure. He says the emerging artist is cultural collateral – a demonstration of the success of consultants and programmers rather than being an artist to be nurtured. The focus felt the focus was not on developing an artist but on producing an emerging artist. His aesthetic interests led him to use dancers of different backgrounds in some pieces of work, which was not to the liking of certain producers. He recalls putting forward a trio to perform at the British dance edition. The producer however did not want the trio because she did not like the dance style of one of the B-boys, Frank Wilson who is a very strong dancer but not formally trained like the other two. Hylton had deliberately

used him alongside two other dancers who had formal modern dance training for the purposes of contrast. It was the aesthetic he wanted. He however said he bowed to pressure and put forward his solo instead, which was not ready. He knew the producer wanted to present work, which she felt would impress certain venues. He, however, felt he was not happy with the outcome and felt he should have insisted on presenting the trio and arguing for the nature of the work he was doing. He says it is important to know what you are seeking to articulate through your work and make informed choices about what you select to focus on rather than try to work to a producer's gaze.

Landscapes (2001) by Robert Hylton

Known for his solo work, Robert Hylton's *Landscapes* is one of his first group pieces. I chose to analyze this piece of work for this reason. His solos are structured improvisations and I was interested to see what his work would convey in the form of set choreography. He developed *Landscapes* between 2000 and 2001 with support from the Arts Council of England. The piece was created for three dancers and a DJ. The description I give is of a performance I watched on video made available to me by the choreographer. It was performed in the Purcell Room at the Royal Festival Hall. The performance was filmed on one camera set at a wide angle. It is unedited. The choreographer, however, composed the piece to be watch from the front. Situated upstage left is a DJ in front of a table, playing a turntable. On the white cyclorama was a slow moving projection of images of a grey, semi-abstract cityscape. The three dancers

perform in front of these visuals¹⁴. Little was lost of the performance from it being filmed from the front. The wide angle meant however that the facial expressions of the dancers could not be seen and I was therefore unsure whether facial expression was important to the aesthetic of the dance. The full version of the piece is 20 minutes long and this was also the length of the video.

The colors grey and white dominate the production. The dancers are costumed in white and grey baggy, below the knee shorts, loose T-shirts, long socks and trainers. The female dancer is as such by her her hairstyle which is in two bunches, otherwise the clothing worn by the dancers could be described as unisex street wear in the style of sports clothing, the kind of clothing often worn by b-boys and b-girls. There was sterility to the setting. It is almost clinical. The lighting is bright and the stage was almost awash. The DJ's corner is only slightly darker than the rest of the stage. Grey, black, muted images move slowly across the white back wall. The music, which the DJ is mixing, was key to the development of the piece. At beginning of the piece it could be described as a soundscape of discordant, electronic noises, as the piece evolves the sound become more musical and by the end it has a definite, funky danceable beat. The three dancers begin the performance on stage in their own space. They stand in neutral positions, two facing forward and one side ways. When the dancers begin to dance, their movement is fluid. As , they are performing to this soundscape the rhythm they produce is not a result of making their dancing

¹⁴ Music: Billy Biznizz, Visuals: AllofUs, Performers: Frank Wilson, Katie Pearson, Nathi McNube

to music but from the timing of their sequencing of body parts. Their movement is pared down and subtle and without the individual stylistic expression and flourish with which is present in performances in club or battle settings. Most phrases of movement were punctuated with stillness, with the dancer standing in neutral for a moment or two before deciding to move again. The soundscape, the projection, the pared down aesthetic of dancing, the white clothing and clutter free set gave the piece a futuristic, dystopian feel.

At the start and at various point all through the piece, the dancers each explored their own kinespheres and pathways through space. The female dancer in a couched position travelled the stage hopping, and then stopped sharply, standing up. All three dancers performed this way, taking distinct, mainly linear pathways from upstage to down stage and across the stage, only dancing in unison for short period when they found they were next to each other. Stripped of music, the focus was on the way the dancers manipulated their energy through their bodies and the styles they produced – in hip-hop terminology a style is akin to a characterization – whether that be puppet-like, cartoonish or robotic. The lack of music and momentary stillness also had the effect of making the rhythm visible as it forced the eyes to follow pulses as they journeyed through the bodies rather than notice them as they connected to the beat. Over the course of the piece, the interactions between the dancers increased. They began to make physical contact. This accumulated into them leaning against each other, supporting each other's head and doing handstands in duets and as a trio. As the music became fuller, they took more risks,

journeying apart and coming back more often. A short time before the end, the DJ came from behind the table and joined the dance. It finished in a formation, which they held for a moment. They then walked forward to the apron to bow to the sound of applause.

Robert Hylton's interest in how the dancing body can convey ideas is evident in this piece. He does not change the technique of the hip-hop dance forms, he uses or fuse them with other forms instead as he introduced methods of performance which create an estrangement or defamiliarisation to the dance form. Defamiliarisation is an artistic process which represents the common as strange in order to cause those familiar with the object being represented to look at it again. A common narrative about hip-hop is that it emerged from the ghettos in the 1970s as a social dance and culture amongst disfranchised black and Latino youths during Reaganism. The dance gave these people a means of transcending their environments and hope for a future (DeFrantz 2004).

Landscapes could be interpreted as re-telling of this narrative in the lives of the three characters but instead of loud music and energetic dancing, it displays speed and momentum against the background of a dilapidated estate. It presents three people in a recognizable dystopia and spectators are comforted with the strength, control, doggedness and focus required to produce conviviality in such an environment. Hylton uses the genre of contemporary dance as means of representing the dance form to those who know it. This piece is not about the fusion of different dance techniques but the fusion of culture of hip-hop with choreographic structures and devices from contemporary

dance. Those who do not know Hip-hop as a culture might follow the narrative whilst missing the cultural references.

Hylton is one of the first British club dancers, to successfully develop a career as a theatrical dance choreographer. He contributed to re-shaping theatrical dance practice and discourse to accommodate hip-hop in its own terms. Pieces like Landscapes position the proscenium stage as an extension of the social sphere; the theatre is but a space to interrogate ideas produced in popular culture. Works like Landscapes began to demand for a discourse about the theatrical performance as social practice – and consequently the redefining dance as art as a practice in which the ideas and philosophies of popular culture are interrogated and investigated for the purposes of dialogues in wider society.

7.6. Conclusion

In this paper I looked at the position of choreographic fusion in the dance criticism between 1994 to 2005. It is a term mainly used by those associated with the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector so that even though the dance artists whose work could be describe as choreographic fusion were contemporary dance artists, they existed in a silo in terms of critical discourse. I look at the interest in postmodernism in dance criticism of the 1990s to mid 2000s to show that even though it was a more inclusive way of looking at dance did not alert critics to what was of importance to black dance practitioners. I

traced ways dance advocates tried to use the term to generate a critical discourse. These were not very effective because they did not produce a 'discursive formation' or engage with the discursive formation that was postmodernism. I argue it is necessary to involve the academia in the generation of critical discourse citing the example of black visual artists in the 1980s and 1990s and how through cultural studies they engaged with ideas of postmodernism. Lastly I discuss the career paths of Sheron Wray and Robert Hylton to explore how their theatrical practice is developed through their social as well as educational experiences and how this created a context in which they forged their choreographic practice. I also look at the ideas they explore through their work.

Chapter 8:

Ethnic Minority Arts, Hybridity and the Choreography of Beverley Glean

8.1. Introduction

Beverley Glean established IRIE! Dance Theatre, also known simply as IRIE!, in 1985. She describes it as an African and Caribbean dance company. I could write about IRIE! from different perspectives; each perspective would require a different theoretical underpinning (Berger et al., 2010, pp. xii). I could, for example, investigate work of IRIE! as a cultural product of Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1994, p. 38) looking at how the company engages with the 'history and memory' of the Caribbean within a transnational context (Diouf and Nwankwo 2010, pp.1). Using the choreosteme as a guide however, I am interested in interrogating the company as part of British theatrical dance history and the meaning of its work in multicultural society (Hall 2013, pp.45-46). I look at how interpretations of policies to do with ethnic minority art informed audiences and

critics perception of the company. My interest is examining the politics of representation around the dance style of the company when it was established in 1985 up until 1993. At the time IRIE! was established the term ethnic minority arts was used by arts administrators in reference to dance companies which produced cultural or artistic work which reflected the backgrounds of migrant communities or British people of dual heritage. This term shaped the way these companies were perceived by dance writers. The response to IRIE! was interesting as the work of the company defied the established method of categorising the work of dance companies run by people who were described as ethnic minorities.

8.2. Multiculturalism and the Discourse of Ethnic Minority Arts in British Theatrical Dance.

Using the approach I have devised called the choreosteme, I start by discussing the socio-political context for ethnic minority arts as a term and then examine the politics of representation surrounding it, which impacted on the perception of IRIE! Dance theatre and dance companies like it. 'Ethnic minority arts' as a category evolved as part of the Multiculturalist policies in Britain. Tariq Modood describes Multiculturalism a concept that has emerged from ideologies of 'contemporary democratic politics'. From the 1980s the philosophy became more prevalent in European governance due to the influence of Social Theory and Cultural studies where scholars were investigating the idea of 'difference' (Modood 2013, p.19). According to Jim McGuigan the role of cultural policy in

multicultural countries such as Britain is generally to create a cohesive society and promote interracial and ethnic relations and shape the conditions of cultural citizenship. Cultural policy, though not coordinated from one site, guides the interactions between groups of people in the 'state, market and civil/communicative' spheres in society and maps out the 'cultural field' and creates positions for 'agents' and 'subjects' (MacGuigan 2013, p. 35). Ethnic minority arts were, therefore, a category that enabled administrators and managers in the 'civil/communicative' spheres to promote good race relations between groups and fulfil multiculturalist agendas within their field of influence. It, therefore, was not an artistic category but an administrative category for a particular group of artistic or cultural products. Using the framework of the choreosteme, I could describe the social relations between grant-making organisations and other government and non-government institutions interested in cultural policy and artistic organisations and those who support them, as constructing the time-space of narratives about Ethnic minority arts in Britain.

Peter Brooker, building Jordan and Weedon argues that 'ethnic Arts' as produced by Multiculturalist policies is a 'ghettoizing' category. It is based on the premise that ethnic groups have 'forms of artistic practice and production' which are peculiar to them. The structures set up by organisations seeking to fulfil multiculturalist policies would, in fact, divide the practitioners of ethnic arts off from other so as to measure the impact of the policy. In effect, the dominant culture and its artistic practices would remain unchanged (Brooker 1999, p. 145). The quote describes a situation in which Multiculturalist policies overlook

the overlap in practices between ethnic minority groups and those of the majority culture. Alison points out that Cultural identities are formed through complex patterns of difference and alliance (Donnell 2002, pp. xiv-xv). In other words, the artistic work of people classed as ethnic minorities have both similarities and differences with mainstream culture. The non-recognition of this overlap by those designing initiatives, which were supposed to promote social inclusion, meant they led to the ghettoization of the ethnic minority artists instead, and the continuation of dominance by administrative discourses. Looking at the situation in dance in Britain this seems to have been the case with multicultural policy. Most of the funding for work of dance companies of non-western background was for performances. Reports such as *Advancing Black Dancing* (1993) suggested that a Higher Education curriculum was needed by the sector. Projects that would develop the context of the work did not seem to be catered for by these initiatives. This created a situation in which that for a number of decades there have been no analytical frameworks that addressed the work of black dancers in Britain (Burt and Adair 2017, p.3).

The term ethnic minority arts became prominent in the Arts in Britain in the 1970s. At this time, migrant communities organised cultural and artistic experiences for their immediate consumption and have had very little to do with mainstream venues or the British funding system. The publication of the seminal report by Naseem Khan, *The Arts Britain Ignores* (1976) signalled a change. The Arts Council of Great Britain, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Commission jointly funded this report for Racial Equality (CRE). In this

report, Khan argues against the lack of government funding for what she described as ethnic minority arts groups on the basis that if Britain was to progress as a multi-cultural society, such groups required more support than was being offered (Khan 1976, p.11). The report instigated the setting up of the Minorities' Arts Advisory Service (MAAS) in 1976, which was led by Khan and did groundbreaking work. It gave ethnic minority artists opportunities to network, publicise their events and receives supported the development of projects. It also supported the launch of the first black dance company to receive funds – the MAAS Movers (Khan 1976, p.v). Ethnic minority arts produced a discourse, which had the positive outcome of enabling a range of art forms to be funded and presented on local, regional and national platforms. However, discourses, give social power as well as place constraints and restraints on its subjects (Hall 2013, p. 34). With time the constraints of Ethnic minority arts began to be felt. The fact that it was an administrative category began to militate against the artistic interests of artists who fell under its remit.

Paul DiMaggio describes administrative categories or 'classifications' as those created by the state, and public grant-giving organisations. The features and priorities of these categories he says do not necessarily reflect the priorities of the makers or other professionals involved in the production of art forms they collectivise. He says that the problem of such classifications is that due to their use in bureaucratic circumstances they are slow to adapt to the conditions that affect artists and furthermore, they are categories that are designed for the benefit of administrators who need to prove that they have achieved their

targets (2012, p. 145). As discussed in Chapter 3, DiMaggio describes three types of the artistic categories - the ritual, the commercial and the professional. A ritual definition comes from the makers or producers of an artistic product. A commercial definition is one formulated by the sellers of the artistic product while a professional definition comes from promoters of the product. At times, artists or makers take this role take the role of promoters and administrators and define a product in accordance to their priorities. Debates usually arise when other categories dominate the ritual category in discourse. However, practices such as 'Ballet' escape this kind of domination. 'Ballet' as a term falls into ritual, professional, commercial and administrative categories (2012, p. 141-142). Artistic forms, which were categorised as ethnic minority arts by funding bodies, generally had their ritual definitions erased by official discourses when the artists producing them moved into the professional art world in Britain.

According to cultural activist Kwesi Owusu, makes the point in his book, *The Struggle for Black arts*, that Ethnic Arts and Ethnic minorities arts and other terms such as multi-ethnic arts, multi-cultural arts have the same impact on artists (1986, p.50). In this book, he describes Ethnic minority arts as spawning notions of 'tradition' and 'modern' that are rooted in a 'bourgeois sociology' which posited modernity and Europeanization as one and the same (Owusu 1986, p.64). The artistic practices of artists of non-western backgrounds were assigned to one category of the other by the implementers of these policies, and each category had a pre-ordained function. For some venue programmers, according to Tony Graves, the reason for presenting traditional art forms was to

attract diaspora communities to their venues. This he says blocked any creative programming ideas, which could for example place African percussion alongside classical music (Graves 2005, p. 154 -155). Owusu felt that Ethnic minority arts gave funders the justification in trying to cultivate a particular kind of 'modern' expression by urging black artists to make their work more 'relevant' by incorporating European forms and styles rather than exploring the relevance of their own aesthetics for contemporary practice" (pp.65). It seems the idea of 'modern' was meant to represent the integration of black people into Britain. Bhikhu Parekh, for example, describes hybrid works as being accorded the role of promoting a pre-configured 'national story' of British immigration experiences by those delivering policy (Parekh 2000 cited in Sporton 2004, p.87). From this perspective, the more 'European-looking' the work produced, the more integrated into Britain was the community being represented. Embedded in multiculturalist discourses, Ethnic Minorities Arts positioned cultural intermediaries as agents of social change, not the black dance artists. It was what use the programmer or commission could put the art to rather than how dance artist made work or what they produced that was important. Their art became proof that the dominant institutions had engaged with their communities. This expectation from institutional sites engage with Black dance artists meant that their artistic goals were not the focus.

Kwesi Owusu, not arguing against hybridization in artistic practice of black artists but over who had the power to give meaning to the hybrid practice – who decided what was traditional and what was modern and who decided what

type of hybrid practice should be made. Owusu, himself, was involved with black-led multi-media groups who produced hybrid work. He described this work as a proponent of 'Orature'. Orature according to Owusu was a philosophical perspective on the role and nature of art in a society based on Africanist ideology and Marxist/Socialist thinking, which were the ideals of the community groups, which produced these multi-media performances. Ethnic minority arts would simply classify the work of these multi-media groups as being traditional because they did not organise their work to suit a particular Europeanist format (Owusu 1986, p. 59). Ethnic minority arts as a category was designed as a means of making the participation and integration of minority group visible through the simplistic means of literal visual representation. An example given by Lola Clinton's shows the difficulty those Ethnic minority arts as a discourse to account for the intersection between cultures and discourses. In her experience, 'Ethnic minority arts' in the mind of many administrators was associated with 'inner city degeneration' and as such, black people. This caused them to overlooked other ethnicities in their communities. Furthermore, she argues that many Ethnic Minority groups wanted to be part of 'mainstream networks'. However, the organisers of 'mainstream networks' could not see the benefit of allowing Black artists and other artists of different ethnic backgrounds into their networks. The issue of race blinded them from recognising that they had any shared artistic concerns or practices with these groups (Clinton 1993, pp. 9-10). Ethnic minority arts discourse was blamed for shaping the perceptions of the mainstream organisation in such a way that Ethnic Minorities were excluded from full participation. By the end of the 1980s however, funders

and artists alike were questioning the efficacy of Ethnic minority arts as a funding category. In 1989 the Arts Council published a report *Towards Cultural Diversity*, which outlined the outcomes of its assessment of its own Ethnic Arts Plan for the years 1986 to 1988. One of its conclusions was the concept of ethnic minority arts was flawed because it suggested that ethnic minority arts are 'community-based' and 'an appendix to national culture' (The Arts Council 1989, pp. 3). The description 'community-based' possibly implies that artists' work suited only the tastes of their own communities and could not achieve universalism in the manner that Euro-American theatrical dance has done.

Advancing Black Dancing, which was commissioned by the Arts Council in 1993, reports similar experiences by dance artists. Venues measured the success of a black company by the number of black people the company was able to attract to the theatre (not white people). Companies experienced a lack of support from venues to build audiences and reviews routinely described the work of dance companies as 'energetic and colourful' not engaging with any ideas in work, only their representation of a diasporic community (1993, p. 15). Black dance artists also expressed the desire to be a feature in educational curriculum at secondary school and university level (1993, p. 17) and to run consistent training programmes from professional dancers (1993, p. 19). Ironically a major reason why black people established dance companies was to engage institutions and impact society. Theatrical dance feeds into higher education curriculum, is of interest to professionals working in the media,

cultural policy, tourism, inner city regeneration and social development and is a culturally influential activity. The notion of Ethnic minority arts therefore, became increasingly stifling for black dance artists and others from a non-western background as it facilitated the emergence of dance artists and companies into professional contexts but did not facilitate their full involvement as people who produced art, which impacted society. The discourse enabled and constrained. In the section below, I will look at how the discourse supported the emergence of Beverley Glean the founder of IRIE! as a choreographer as an artistic leader but constrained her company's image as an artistic organisation. Because policies involving Ethnic minority arts seemed to focus so little on processes and structures and focused mainly on products and outcomes, no language developed or framework amongst those engaged with these policies that related to ideas behind the work of choreographers like Glean which would be of use to critics. I also discuss an interpretation that could be given to Glean's work if her intentionality as a choreographer and the context in which she created her work are taken into consideration.

8.3. IRIE! Dance theatre: 1985 to 1993

Beverley Glean graduated from the Laban Centre for dance in 1980¹⁵. Before studying dance formally she taught community dance classes, encouraged by her teacher, which were a mix of her social dance experience, which included reggae and soul. After graduation Glean was keen to marry her academic

¹⁵ Aspect of this chapter has been published as 'Caribbean Dance, British perspectives and the choreography of Beverley Glean' in *Choreography and Corporeality: Relay in Motion* (2016) edited by Thomas F. DeFrantz and Philipa Rothfield, published by Palgrave.

dance training with her knowledge of Caribbean dance but she found there was little opportunity to perform in a style that reflected her background as a British person of Caribbean heritage. Attending a summer school in Jamaica, affirmed to her the viability of a dance theatre based on the Caribbean and African dance forms. She gained employment in 1982 as a Dance Animateur at The Albany Theatre in Deptford (Bain 2007, pp.59-60). It was from this base she launched IRIE! dance theatre in 1985. The 1980s was a time of protest against police brutality and unemployment for black communities. Britain experienced major riots led by disenfranchised black youth. There was the growth a black arts sector in response to this which was made up of artists Asian, African and Caribbean heritage, many who emerged as representatives of their communities (Donnell, 2002, Xiii). Alongside self-organized initiatives by black artists, there were those supported by mainstream organisations. Caribbean Focus was one of these. Launched in 1986 by the Commonwealth Institute in London Caribbean Focus, which celebrated the heritage of Caribbean communities, based in the UK. The programme went nationwide with various organisations running projects and lasted about a year. It was during this year that Glean says her company was fully established. The emergence of black leaders was a positive outcome of multiculturalist policies and initiatives of the era.

Beverley Glean made a decision early in her career not to mimic the aesthetic of mainstream dance theatre or conventional abstract choreography but to allow her interest in the communicative abilities of dance to guide her. Looking for a

choreographic language, which reflected the British Caribbean experience she sought out dancers like herself, with an experience of the Caribbean and African dance forms, and with an academic and technical training in dance. She decided to 'craft' her performances with an awareness of other audiences but evaluate her performances first and foremost by the response of black audiences. It was important for Glean to establish a link between her experience of social dancing and academic training with dance in the Caribbean. This she did this not only through training and research in Jamaica but also by inviting Jackie Guy, a former principal dancer of the National dance theatre of Jamaica, to choreograph a piece for the company. The outcome was *Danse Caribbean* (1986), a panoply of Caribbean dance styles such as Quadrille, Burru, Tambo, Juba, mento, presented with an emphasis on how these dances depict male-female relationships. The piece *Danse Caribbean*, Glean says represented the roots of the IRIE! movement language.

With the establishment of the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) in 1986 by Bob Ramdhanie and his collaborators, the many small Caribbean-led African dance companies that began to be formed from the 19970s became visible to the establishment. BDDT was able to raise funds to run summer schools which brought African and Caribbean choreographers and dancers to Britain to share their skills. Within this dance movement was undergirded by a strong pan-Africanist ethos, which saw the Caribbean regarding its links with Africa. As a result, Caribbean dances and African dances were seen as part of a continuum and practitioners and leaders of African dance companies might include

Caribbean dances in their repertoire. Their productions took the form of neo-traditional dance display and dance theatre (Ramdhanie 2007, p. 52). Glean celebrated this perspective and as such as some pieces in her choreochronicle which explore technically, the relationship between African and Caribbean dances. Reggae provided a space where Black British youths especially, of Caribbean background could experiment and create forms that reflected their identity. An outcome of this was Lovers Rock - a 'reggae soul hybrid'. Popular music also served as a 'soundtrack to the rebellion of the era with lyrics infused with 'radical Garveyism' and Rastafarian thought. According to Kwesi Owusu, the young people of the 1980s unlike their parents considered Britain their home and had no option but to kick against institutionalised racism (Owusu 2000, p.9). Additionally, white youth movements such as the Mods and Punks who also felt disenfranchised appropriated Reggae dance and music (Marks 1990, p. 112). The accumulative effect was that the aesthetics of Reggae were recognisable and meaningful to several audiences. Reggae formed a key part of Glean's dance vocabulary. Glean also collaborated with artists working in other forms. She commissioned music, choreographed to the poetry of the renowned poet Louise Bennett and collaborated with dub poets such as Jean Binta Breeze.

In 1987/88 she produced a series of short pieces to popular music by Bob Marley, Grand Master Flash and Thomas Mapfumo. The last of these pieces 'Hints of Afrikah' is an expression of her pan-Africanist ethos. She describes as including

'All the influences with which IRIE! works. A compilation of African, Caribbean and European movements, accompanied with west African

Ju-Ju and Fuji music, dresses with African prints and beading, to make up a celebration of our Afrikan-ness' (IRIE! dance theatre 2012, ChoreoChronicle 1985-1994)

After Hints of Afrikah, Glean created her first evening length work, *Orfeo in a Night Town* – a Caribbean dance theatre production set to steel-pan, reggae and ska music. The story of the production was adapted from Greek mythology by Edgar White. It toured nationally between 1988 and 89. Other pieces toured by the company between 1985 and 1993 include: *Cease 'n' Settle* (1989/90) a piece which explored 'street characters' and their physicalities, *Let Reggae Touch Your Soul* (1990/91) choreography by Beverley Glean and Prince Morgan, *The Black Spirit* (1992/93) choreographed to African percussion by Peter Badejo.

8.4. Contextualising the cultural hybridity of IRIE!

This section of Glean's choreoChronicle listed above reveals her interest in exploring gesture, lifestyle, physicality, symbolism and continuity. Her engagement with community and heritage in the process of making her work was not from the same perspective as the British community dance movement though not incompatible with it. Her interests in Pan-Africanism, British Caribbean cultures, and choreographic fusion meant she explored dance forms and cultural repertoire from the Caribbean, Africa and Europe in a way that interrogated discourses of modernity and reflected her thoughts of how modernity could be navigated. Glean's description of her company as 'African and Caribbean' was not simply about the presentation of dances from these

geographical spaces but about the modern discourses which linked them across space and time, the relevance of tradition in modern times and the significance that had for black people in Britain. Dance historian Ramsay Burt makes a pertinent statement about the relationship between modernity and dance. Citing Raymond Williams and Janet Wolff, he relates the expression of Modernity in dance to the disorienting nature of life in metropolitan cities. Modernity he says creates 'new space and new experiences of time' to which choreographers respond either in celebration or to redress imbalance (Burt 1994, pp. 24). Theatrical dance for African and Caribbean communities in Britain in the 1980s was often used in this way. Dance became a place for absorbing, improvising, rehearsing, imagining and producing new ways of being.

Glean developed her craft through training in Higher education, community dance practice, research in the Caribbean and in Africa, and involvement in the African Peoples' dance and Black arts movements in Britain. She used theatrical frameworks such as dance theatre and the dance suit as a format for choreographic explorations of 'cultural essences', continuity and mixture. She straddled choreographic registers from modern dance, African and Caribbean dance theatre, neo-traditional dance display. Stuart Hall described Black visual artists as breaking the 'symbolic', 'material' and 'physical' limits – 'within which the notion of art and aesthetic practices have been organised'. He called for definitions of art, which recognised 'the proliferation of sites and places in which the modern artistic impulse is taking place', as opposed to simply defining art by

the media the artist was using (2001, p. 13). I find Hall's statement useful for understanding dance artists like Glean. It is necessary to take into account the discursive and institutional sites in which she made her work not simply the dance forms she used but the structuring of the dance forms and the theatrical and choreographic conventions she selected.

The documented discussion around the work of black choreographers from the 1980s and 1990s tends to be in relation to debates around the categories and terms produced by funding bodies rather than the artists' personal or professional background. The discourse produced by these categories still inform how black choreographers appear within British dance history. The debate over the terms Ethnic arts or Ethnic minority arts, sometimes used interchangeably, sheds light on how the work of Glean has been described. A look at mentions of IRIE! in dance books and the dance press between 1988 and 1990 shows how this discourse impacted on the perception of IRIE! as a dance company. IRIE!'s work was particularly troubling because it was producing a contemporary dance expression but one which took most of its artistic references, philosophically and aesthetically from transnational artistic and cultural movements of the diaspora which were invisible to dance writers of the time. Her work did not sit easily in either the 'traditional' or 'modern' format that Ethnic minority arts produced.

8.5 Viewing IRIE! through the discourses of Ethnic Minority Arts

Jann Parry's article, which appeared in *The Observer* newspaper in 1988 entitled Black arts, grey areas, expresses her frustration with the policies of the Greater London Arts Council (GLA) an important funder at the time. Their inclusion of IRIE! in their black dance category is used by her as an example of the organisation's lack of coherent cultural policies. One hand the term 'Black dance' was being used by the GLA in reference to dance productions by Asian, Africa and Caribbean dancers suggesting that funds allocated to the black dance category would go to dancers who were black. On the other hand, black dancers whose choreography was based on western modern dance techniques were being excluded by the GLA from their black dance provision which suggested that 'Black dance' referred to productions that consisted of traditional dances from Africa, Asian or the Caribbean. Parry wonders why the GLA included IRIE! in their Black dance category since they had excluded Phoenix Dance Company which also produced contemporary dance. She implies that main difference between IRIE! and Phoenix was that IRIE! set their choreography was to Caribbean music (24 Jan 1988). She also points out that whilst Phoenix was not accepted as Black dance by the GLA it did come under that heading at the Arts Council. Parry is not reprimanding IRIE! for using western dance techniques but rather the GLA for not pursuing a consistent policy to facilitate the development of black British dance – what was the aim of supporting black dance? What values should be ascribed to its aesthetics? Her complaint about the categorization of IRIE! is that it was a contemporary dance company being confused as traditional due to the music it used. Parry does express her opinion however as to the direction she felt the GLA should go. She

argues that precedence should be given to choreographers who were developing new dance vocabularies as opposed to those ' harking back to the traditional dance forms of other cultures.' She considered these companies as resisting integration. Parry was unaware that 'the West Indian Londoners performing Ghanaian ceremonial dances' were part of a transnational cultural movement, which was of contemporary relevance to the black arts movement of the time. National dance companies which staged traditional forms began in the 1950s in Africa (Nii-Yartey 2009,p.261). This kind of staged dance theatre also existed in the Caribbean in the repertoire of companies such as the National Dance Theatre of Jamaica. West Indian Londoners were engaging in cultural exchange the same way the founders of British ballet companies had and Robin Howard when he saw the work of Martha Graham and became an advocate of her dance form and set up an institution for it. It was a different expression of modernity. Her opinion tallies with the idea of the traditional and the modern and the relevance accorded to artistic work so designated, which Kwesi Owusu decried.

The idea of 'tradition' and 'modern' proffered by Ethnic minority arts discourses also informs Edward Thorpe's evaluation of IRIE! in his book *Black Dance* (1989). After providing a brief overview of Beverley Glean's career up until that point, Edward Thorpe writes of her company in his book

'While IRIE! pursues a policy of integration, the fact that it draws almost exclusively upon Caribbean themes for its repertoire has meant, in practice, that its dancers are Black, and its future may be seen as a Black dance company promoting the Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage from its London base' (pp. 179).

The 'policy of integration' that Thorpe says IRIE! pursues presumably is a reference to the company's mixture of European movements with Caribbean and African movements although he does not describe the choreography. In terms of Ethnic minority arts discourses, this would signal the company was producing 'modern' dance and representing integration of immigrant people and culture into Britain. He implies however that her 'integrated' choreography is at odds with her thematic choices which was the exploration of African and Caribbean cultures. These themes would limit her to working with Black dancers. There is a suggestion here that integration would lead to IRIE! being able to engage white dancers and that this was possibly the goal of integration. The implication here is that there is Glean's choreography which is a choreographic fusion (a mixture of western and non-western movement) should be used to explore universal themes or themes that transcend race. He then compares IRIE! with Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble. He writes; 'By contrast, Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, as its name implies is based on the many forms of tribal dance emanating from the African continent'. Thorpe implies that Adzido unlike IRIE! was offering a coherent representation of tradition in their productions, their themes were about Africa and they presented black dancing bodies performing 'tribal dances'. The instrumentalism of Ethnic minority arts multicultural discourse seems to guide Thorpe's evaluation of the company.

Whilst Jann Parry's article looks at Black dance in relation to the social development, Ann Nugent's article *The blurring of Boundaries* (1990) looks at

Black dance in the context of touring dance companies. She discusses the black companies performing at the time and reflects on the rise of black dance in Britain from the mid-1980s. She implies that the term 'Black dance' does not help her very much in understanding the aesthetics of the dance companies she is viewing and mulls over publicity for a way to describe the three British companies appearing in the 'Dance for the joy of it' festival at Sadler's Wells. She outlines a scheme for the companies: the modern, popular and traditional or of the future, present and past. She describes Phoenix as given to 'experiment and development', IRIE! as 'presenting Afro-Caribbean frameworks' that are 'filled with dances that are blend of traditional, popular and modern, even at times containing a hint of ballet' and Adzido as 'focusing on origins'. In conclusion, she seems unsatisfied with her schema. She is perceptive and thoughtfully points out that there must be more to be said.

Nugent's thoughtful comments demonstrate the dilemma of engaging in dance criticism without a historical timeline to refer to. Western theatrical dance criticism has developed in relation to a timeline of theatrical dance development. Dances are considered as traditional, classical, modern, experiment, contemporary, of which are temporal markers and reference particular periods of time within Western theatrical dance history. There is not one to refer to here that would suit the black dance companies. Nugent sends her the article by saying none of the companies – Adzido, IRIE! or Phoenix described themselves as 'pure' and all of them presented work which was dialogic, refereeing simultaneously through different technical and aesthetic choices to the past,

present and future. She was aware that IRIE! that like Phoenix the company was given to experimentation. However aesthetically IRIE! was not modernist in the same way as Phoenix. Nugent seems to imply that 'Afro-Caribbean framework' of IRIE!'s choreography blunted its experimental edge. She therefore, describes it as popular.

These three texts show how difficult it was to place the aesthetics of IRIE! and as it did not fit the templates offered by ethnic minority arts. Furthermore, the Euro-American theatrical dance timeline could not be used in certain cases to understand the work of black dance artists. As discussed in chapter 3, the work of black dance artists is best understood spatially. I quote Stuart Hall above describing Black visual artists as breaking the 'symbolic', 'material' and 'physical' limits – 'within which the notion of art and aesthetic practices have been organised' (2001, p. 13). Though Hall is talking about visual artists, the same happened with black dance artists through dealing with different professional parameters. A full exposition on this, however is outside the scope of this chapter. Ethnic minority arts was an inappropriate lens through which to understand the work of black choreographers. It conferred a literal and instrumentalist function on their work and drew attention away from the cultural and artistic context of dance companies and their working processes and what these might say about integration in Britain and race relations. In looking at Glean's work I am specifically interested in how she uses Reggae dance and music in her choreography. I turn to Thomas DeFrantz' for the concept of corporeal orature. Corporal orature provides a way of talking about the modes by which a black expressive dance social dance form communicates. I describe

two pieces: a group dance for six, Reggae ina ya jeggae, and a solo to the Bob Marley song Natural Mystic. Both were sections of an evening of performance called Let Reggae touch your soul (1990/91)

8.6. Reggae in the choreography of Beverley Glean

Beverley Glean describes herself as a choreographer who works with the 'essences' of Caribbean dance forms and not as an expert in Caribbean traditions. Essences for her are found in the way a dance builds and communicates and in its nuances or the stylistic elements such as gesture, attitude, gait and posture. She seeks to achieve 'authenticity' through studying the meanings, patterning and associations of a dance form and allowing these to direct the generation of creative movement material. Glean's choreographic approach stands out most clearly with her use of Reggae dance and music. With Reggae she makes statements by experimenting with the corporeal orature of the form. Corporeal orature is a term coined by Thomas DeFrantz, building on Eve Sedgwick, to describe the building blocks that make up the systems of communications found in black expressive cultures (2004, pp. 67-68). Referring specifically to Hip-hop, DeFrantz describes how a dancer's performance is 'simultaneously kinetic and theoretical' and can, therefore, make utterances such as 'I dare you' and is understood by insiders engaging with him or her in the surrounding circle. DeFrantz also discusses how communication takes place through the relationship of movement and music and through the way dance forms resonate with everyday behaviour. Though

DeFrantz and Owusu use the term orature differently, they both allude in their formulations to act of 'call and response' – which after DeFrantz I describe as a theory of 'black expressive culture' that guides dialogic inquiry within an artistic and cultural practice. I therefore, extend corporeal orature to include the particular physicality or body attitude of Reggae dance and the relationship to music produced by the performance of dance steps in that attitude, to music. I look how the features of reggae interact with other features in the creation of phrases of choreography. Beverley Glean makes statements in these pieces by shifting, disrupting and realigning components of Reggae movement and music.

Reggae ina ya jeggae is a group piece was made for three males and three female dancers. What is left of the choreography is a video of a rehearsal with the dancers dressed in tracksuits and leotards. For stage, Glean told me they dressed to reflect the various dance styles they performed. There was no set, and the atmosphere of the piece was created through lighting. Glean describes the pieces as 'a journey through music' and explains the soundtrack mimics the way a DJ would switch between tracks in a club setting. The structure of the piece is drawn from conventional dance theatre framework, which one would see in a production from a national dance company, often used to display a range of dances. Glean however, disrupts this framework several times but restores balance returning to the conventional framework but again with a twist.

In the piece Glean explores the relationship between the urban and the traditional cultures of the Caribbean. The soundtrack consists of Ska, Mento,

Rocksteady as well as the recorded percussion of traditional dances such as the Kumina, Dinikimi and Quadrille. It is not a journey through linear time; from past to present neither does it represent musically a linear movement from rural areas to the city or of migration from the Caribbean to Britain. Traditional and urban music is juxtaposed such that the piece intercuts between locations and temporalities but with a flow and style, which is only discernible if you have to know the forms and music being played. The piece starts with the six dancers entering the space in couples. They dance the Kumina to recorded percussion. A traditional dance performed during wake keeping, it is danced at a fast speed, with the dancers bending forward from the hip circling as they move forward. The opening establishes a sense of community, men and women performing their traditional roles. One could imagine them in a backyard or a village square surrounded by friends and family also dancing or watching. Glean however, inserts steps that she has devised into the piece, an insertion that would be lost on anyone who did not know the Kumina dance itself. The breaks in the dance are traditionally marked by a downward gesture but here, Glean at time, choreographs an upward gesture of the arms. The dancers exit and return again in couples to dance a Caribbean quadrille. To infuse the traditional dance with an urban energy the tempo of the quadrille is increased. In another section the group dances a Nyabingi sequence to dub music, as a ritual dance is usually performed to percussion.

Though the group of six from time to time split into couples, trios or perform duets before re-grouping. Reggae phrasing which ends on a downbeat is

marked by upward gestures. Arabesques and port de bras are inserted within sequences of traditional dance steps but in rhythmically logical places so that the flow of the performance is not disrupted. A solo dancer performing ballet steps appears three times in the pieces as a link between the sections, each time to a different sound accompaniment— a recording of poetry written by Louise Bennet, Nyabingi percussion and classical music. The piece is a comment on nature of continuity between place, time and generations – traditions are handed down but applied in reworked forms by the new generation. Disruptions may occur but the 'essences' are strong enough to keep the community together. Modernity for many black people in Britain with backgrounds in countries that were former British colonies, modernity includes living in different time-spaces, in between cultures, having family members with different upbringings, negotiating and reconciling different value systems.

This play with time and place also exists in the solo Glean choreographed to the song, Natural Mystic by Bob Marley. Originally it was created for a male dancer, Lincoln Alert who performed it in 1990. In 1998 a female dancer, Paulette Ryan, performed it again. It is Paulette Ryan's rendition that survives in recorded form. Ryan inherited Alert's piece with no changes. This is most obvious at the beginning of the piece when Ryan walks across the stage in a slow swagger, which has a masculine sensibility. Reggae music has rhythmic accent on the third beat, sometimes called the 'drop', which the dancer marks by lowering the body or with a downward gesture. As she walks she lets a knee bend on the drop. Her face is cool and unflustered – an expression she maintains

throughout. She dances deliberately, stepping emphatically on the beat which makes it all the more startling when she suddenly lunges, leaps and dances through a phrase of before dropping back into the beat and continuing on her unflustered way. Whilst the group piece uses a dance theatre framework, this piece draws on the modern dance compositional structure of motif and variation. However, Glean uses this Africanist dance aesthetic of 'high-low effect' formulate to the phrases (Gottschild, 1998). A phrase of cool movement is followed by phrase of explosive movement, an effect often seen in Reggae when danced in social contexts. Transitions between phrases in the pieces are at times marked with moments of stillness, where Ryan holds a shape. The shapes held at these moments have emerged organically out of the choreography derived from reggae steps but in stillness they look as if they are derived from modern dance technique. Glean's exploration of equivalencies - similar movements that appear in both Reggae and conventional modern dance sequences –disrupt the complacent viewing of the 'insider'.

The main site however, where Glean explores hybridity is in the physicality of the dancer. The challenge of the choreography is to maintain the groundedness, inner pulse and polyrhythms of Reggae yet expand and extend the body through space. Modern dance technique is present but as an underpinning to the Reggae vocabulary. It is a morphing of techniques rather than a merging or juxtaposition. Paulette Ryan executes the task admirably. Steps, which one would usually perform, on a small scale with an inward focus of personal enjoyment are performed by Ryan on a large scale with an outward

almost confrontational gaze, extending her limbs as one would in modern dance but with a flexed or loosely held foot. At times it is difficult to place the dance style of the piece and decide whether it is Europeanist or Africanist, to use Dixon Gottschild's terminology. The ambiguous physicality and highlighted movement 'equivalencies' suggest a different type of negotiation of time and place to what is seen in the group piece, one approached through an embodiment of double consciousness, and an awareness of parallel teleologies the straddling of corporeal codes.

8.7. Conclusion

In this paper I used the theoretical approaches in the choreosteme as a means of interrogating the discursive context around Glean's choreography. Glean's choreography offers insight into how social integration is experienced and lived whilst the templates of 'the traditional' and 'the modern' offered by ethnic minority arts provided simplistic, literal demonstrations of this experience. Exploring the political or philosophical undertones of hybridity can provide a way historicizing the work of choreographers who have been made invisible by dominant discourses in dance history or arts administration. This chapter covered only aspects of some of the years in the life of IRIE! Dance Theatre, from 1985 to 1993. The story of the company goes beyond these dates. The company produced and toured seventeen production between 1985 and 2004, under Beverley Glean's direction. In 2004 the company stopped touring and began the delivery of a foundation degree course. Along with Rosie Lehan,

Glean delivers to an inter-racial cohort of students a curriculum that focuses on choreographic fusion with training in African and Caribbean dance forms, Street dance and Modern dance techniques (IRIE! dance theatre 2012b). The company returned to staging dance theatre in 2015 to celebrate its 30th anniversary. Though Glean's choreography was largely overlooked by critics her work has made a valuable contribution to dance as a theatre art, and not just to the education sector. It opens our eyes to 'new spaces and experiences of modernity', to use Ramsay Burt's phrase. Her work also cautions us not to take any choreographic fusion for granted. The choreographer might be inserting his or her work into a known tradition such as modernism or postmodernism or not. The choreographer might instead be drawing us into an 'indeterminate' exploration of modernity (Gottschild 1998), a less visible but no less powerful imagining of the world.

Chapter 9:

Conclusion

9.1. Introduction

This thesis set out to devise a way of writing dance histories about theatrical dance produced in Britain, which stages or draws on African and Diaspora forms and which explored the relationship of this practice to its socio-cultural context. In other words, I was looking to find a way of writing about this practice as an evolving part of British culture though it draws on forms and aesthetics, which are from other parts of the world. I theorise theatrical dance, which draws on African and Diaspora form as Africanist theatrical dance or choreography. The perspective of culture I have adopted for this thesis is from cultural studies. In this discipline culture is seen as the sum of the systems of representation through which people organise their lives in a particular society. I, therefore, posited theatrical dance as one of these systems of representation existing as part of the 'subsidized dance sector.' I decided that a history of cultural politics as it relates to Africanist theatrical dance would fulfil the main aim of this thesis as Africanist theatrical dance was accepted for funding in this sector on the basis that Britain is a multicultural society. Although my focus was on artistic practice, I found that in this context it was inextricable from race due to the nature of the multiculturalist policies that supported the practices. As a social

practice which produces dance as art or dance for viewing it is constituted in and through this context. In this conclusion I discuss three outcomes from this research project: a theoretical approach to writing of dance histories of African theatrical dance, five micro-histories which investigate the organisation of the black dance/African Peoples Dance sector and the artistic practices of choreographers, dance teachers and dancers between the years 1985 and 2005, and insights into the implementation of multiculturalist policies during the period of historical study.

9.2. The choreosteme – a theoretical approach to the writing of histories of African theatrical dance

I decided to devise a framework, which would enable me to address conceptual gaps that were revealed by the literature review. The framework would provide me with a theoretical perspective on these two issues in relation to any topic about the discursive context around the work of black choreographers. The framework I have devised is the choreosteme. The two conceptual gaps were that it had not been theorised clearly how the practice of theatrical dance using social and traditional dance forms differed from that of social dancing. This omission needed to be addressed to make Africanist theatrical dance a clear object of inquiry. Secondly, work of black choreographers and dance practitioners in the British context has historically been categorised within administrative discourses as belonging to a different context to that of white choreographers. The literature review I presented in chapter 1 looked at the

type of dance histories that are written about theatrical dance by white choreographers and found that their work was researched historically in relation to specific institutional, professional and aesthetic contexts and that the intentionality and ideas of the choreographers were featured in these histories. Furthermore there are examples of analysis, which sought to track conceptual changes in the way theatrical dance is understood as a social practice and how its processes of production are evolving. Most narratives about the work of black choreographers mentioned these contexts – professional, aesthetic and economic – but do not analyse the work in relation to the context in which it is produced. If I wanted to write about the work of black choreographers as belonging to the same context as white choreographers it was necessary to foreground the time space or set of social and institutional relations which supported the production of theatrical dance by black choreographers. Chapter 2 and 3 are the chapters in which I devise this theoretical approach.

In chapter 2, through the presentation of a range of literature from critical dance studies, I delineate the theoretical underpinnings of the choreosteme.

Critical dance studies is a field of research which emerged in the 1980s when scholars in dance along with several other artistic disciplines such as film and media began to draw on cultural studies, particularly the work of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and other scholars who are at times are called 'Practice theorists.' This led dance historians to move away from narrative based histories to issue based histories in which they thought critically about the practice of dance within a particular context and time or in relation to

specific issues to do with a dance practice or set of practices. Cultural studies, being interdisciplinary, encouraged dance scholars to draw from a range of theories and concepts. They tackled the invisibility and superficial representation of dancers of colour or non-western background, and histories about their work slowly began to appear in dance studies. There are now some critical histories, which include Africanist theatrical dance, which have dealt with issues of representation. At first these were mainly from America but now there are examples about dance in Africa, the Caribbean and Britain.

I delineated the theoretical positions that have already been used within critical dance studies to look at choreography or stage presentations, which could be described as Africanist. From looking at this body of work, I recognised three things: critical dance studies has repositioned theatrical dance as not being separate from society but part of it. Scholars within critical dance studies have argued that choreographers draw on cultural signs and associations in order to create work which resonates with audiences. This repositioning was done through looking at theatrical dance as a discursive and signifying practice and ultimately as a social practice. I use examples from Brenda Dixon Gottschild, Norman Bryson and Jane Desmond to make this point. Secondly, I demonstrate through these histories how scholars have also repositioned Africanist theatrical dance as a social practice, which draws on or creates performative events with African and Diaspora forms or cultural repertoire. I demonstrate this through how scholars analyse issues of definition, discuss the creative practices of choreographers who run dance companies and use 'black performance theory'

to articulate the significance of Africanist theatrical performances. Thirdly I look at how revisionist histories, which are written by scholars, have returned to points in Euro-American theatrical dance history and pointed out where black choreographers have been omitted and inserted narratives about them into these histories. The concept of the 'dancing body' and/or an expanded notion of modernity characterise these histories. Critical dance studies as a body of work suggests that discourse is integral to understanding how theatrical dance is produced and sustained socially. I theorised African theatrical dance, therefore, as a practice that takes place in the time space of theatrical dance or the institutional sites, social relations and activities that have to do with dance productions and presentation. Due to the double consciousness embraced by Africanist theatrical dance productions, any production could be categorised or labelled in more than one way. However I describe them as Africanist when interrogating them in relation to which engage with discourses around Africanist dance aesthetics because this is one of the discourse that comes to the foreground when these type of productions are looked at as part of multicultural societies.

In chapter 3, I discuss the choreosteme. Based on findings from the previous chapter, I say the choreosteme posits theatrical dance that draws on African and Diaspora form as a social practice with which choreographers and dance artists create dance for viewing in various contexts (whether popular or high art) that draws on Africanist aesthetics or stages African and Diaspora forms. Choreographers use structures, devices, conventions and methodologies which

could come from a variety of sources and which enable them to produce dance performances that access the signifying power of the theatrical context. I posit African dance aesthetics as a counter discourse, which serves to create a space within discourses of Eurocentric universalism for indeterminate artistic works, which would otherwise be excluded from theatrical dance histories or those which subvert or expand established art categories such as modernism or postmodernism. I use the chronotope as a heuristic device, borrowed from literary studies but used in cultural studies as a way of framing narratives. The chronotope is used in literary studies as a way of delineating the features of a genre according to the time (events) that take place in the narrative and the space (social relations) which make up the world of the characters. The chronotope presents time and space as fused. In this way, any place unrelated to the interests or values of the characters is left out or skimmed over in the narrative. I consider the chronotope appropriate for this task because culture within cultural studies is defined as the sum of signifying practices that make up the lifestyles of people in a specific time and place. The study of culture is therefore considered to be a study of how 'meaning is produced in a variety of contexts' (Barker 2008, pp. 7-8). The chronotope, therefore, will support the researcher in selecting the appropriate time space in which the issue of representation they wish to interrogate has emerged. Furthermore, it provides a boundary around the kind of practices being studied. Left out of this 'time space' is the study of social dancing or traditional dancing which are not related to the theatrical practice being researched and this approach thereby avoids misrepresenting those practices whilst acknowledging them.

The choreosteme offers a number of steps to the writer, borrowed from narrative practices. The starting point for researching an issue of representation should be existing texts. This method of writing history is borrowed from postcolonial studies. It suggests the writer interrogates known histories for gaps and erasures and limitations. The next step is that the writer identifies the groups of people involved in issues of representation and their 'sphere of action'. This step should reveal the issues at stake for those involved. The aim of this step is to provide the context of the narrative that will be generated. In literary terms, this would be called creating the setting for the story. The third step offered by the choreosteme is that the writer develops a narrative which spans the period of time in which the issue of representation plays out in discourse in order to identify points or questions to research further. If these three steps are taken, the researcher should have enough material to decide what information needs to be generated through interviewing practitioners or if further research needs to be done or if there is a need to engage in theorising. I follow Stuart Hall's proposition that, in cultural studies, scholars should theorise rather than create theory. The first activity is about providing further insights about a situation and the latter is about providing a final verdict. The aim of the choreosteme is to produce micro-histories and build up a picture of dance history as a web of histories, which intersect at different points. The choreosteme is designed to research the politics of representation. This means that it can be used to look at any topic which involves the production of discourse. The analysis of chapter 2 revealed that through the

study of discourse in specific contexts, language-games and power struggles over meaning in dance can be looked at, as well as the issue of naming and describing artistic processes. These insights in these areas will give us a deeper understanding of the of 'Africanist dance aesthetics' as a discourse and concept and how African and Diaspora dance forms are used within theatrical practice.

9.3. Five micro – dance histories

In chapter 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 I use the choreosteme in guiding me to write five micro-histories about the work of black dancers in Britain. The framework proved useful in this task. The five histories span the years 1985 to 2005. I consider this era to be choreosteme. I mapped out this time frame from looking into the debate about the definition of black dance in Britain, which took place in 1993. This was an incident where the politics of representation in this sector was most evident. Researching this debate led me to look at why the closure of the Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) triggered this debate. This, in turn, led me to look at what was unique about the organisation. I gained insight into the role institutional structures play in the organisation of professional practices. They can at once define, facilitate and constrain them. I also found out that the closure of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble in 2005 changed the institutional structure for dance for Black people. I, therefore, made my period of investigating begin in 1985, which was the year of BDDT's first summer school

and end in 2005, which was the year of closure of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble.

Chapter 4 looks at how the manner in which the 'Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector' was constructed in 1993. It was constructed through the implementation of a policy that had far-reaching effects on the sector. In the construction of the sector, the administrators co-opted the term black dance suggesting new ways it could be interpreted so to make it an artistic definition, which would include the work of all black dancers. This blurred the boundaries of programmes about artistic practice with those about social inclusion. As a result turned 'black dance' turned into a topic of debate and division. In this chapter, I looked at the idea of Ethnic Minority Arts operated as a 'regime of truth' during this period with its discourses shaping the sector, answering my third research question. In Chapter 5 I look at the artistic interests and concerns of dance artists, which were overshadowed by the debates around the term 'Black dance'. I also show in the chapter that the work of black dancers was marginalised within Britain by dominant discourses and decisions of organisations such as Dance Umbrella. This chapter answers my fourth research question about the choreographic discourse produced during 1985 to 2005.

The history in chapter 5 provides an insight into how theatrical dance evolves when it is not organised around a cluster of 'professional performance forms' which have developed or have been devised mainly for theatrical presentation

such as Ballet, Graham technique and so on. Administrators who designed events and organised platforms for dancers had a great deal of power setting the ideas of choreographic exploration, as did those who ran dance companies as they had mission statements. The idea of dance technique and the development of a choreographic vision were two interests that practitioners explored in chapter 5. Practitioners felt the South Asian dance sector were better supported partly because their theatrical dance practice was built on 'professional forms' or dance techniques and as such their choreographic and artistic investigations were more legible to funders and therefore better respected. Another insight gained through the exploration of the cultural politics of the sector between 1985 and 2005 was that dancers and practitioners had specific artistic concerns which were beginning to be articulated in professional journals for example.

My next two chapters, 6 and 7 focus on a shorter period of time, 1994 to 2005. The Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector was nearly established and young choreographers and dancers coming into the profession were encountering different sets of circumstances to those which emerged in the 1980s. The independent dance sector was the destination for most dance artists. Though many had gain qualifications in dance institutions they wished to work with social and traditional dance forms from Africa and the diaspora. In chapter 6 I seek to answer the question: How did dance artists develop their identities as professionals in theatrical dance during this period outside formal educational setting which could validate the standard of their work? I look at the

role of ADAD in providing support for independent dance artists and other initiatives and discuss the careers of four dance artists: Paradigmz, Sheba Montserrat, Ukachi Akalawu and Diane Alison-Mitchell to find out how they decided how they were attained a professional status. In chapter 7 I investigate the area of dance criticism and look at the politics of representation in this area. I found that contemporary dance artists, whose work drew on African and Diaspora forms and aesthetics and whose work was described as choreographic fusion, were marginalised in discussions about choreography as the dominant discourse was about postmodernism. I argue that without institutional support to engage with this concept of postmodernism (not necessary accept it but participate in discussions) they could not be understood within that discursive formation. I look at the careers of Robert Hylton and Sheron Wray. My last chapter 8 returns to an earlier era, 1985 to 1993, to look at how the work of Beverley Glean was perceived by dance writers at a time that Ethnic Minority Arts, a concept from multicultural policy, provided the lens to look at work like her own. In both chapters 7 and 8, I used the choreosteme as a guide to find ways of describing the works of the choreographers I feature, to demonstrate the artistic and cultural significance of their work, which has previously been overlooked.

When chapter 5 is read in conjunction with chapter 6, 7 and 8 which are about individual dance artists, a picture of theatrical dance by black people in Britain emerges which suggests that evolution in this field of dance was driven more by an investigation into what the social space that is theatrical dance, offered.

Kwesi Owusu spoke about the possibilities of 'black art' offering 'new ways of seeing'. Ramsay Burt likewise writes about the theatrical space as offering possibilities of exploring new ways of being. This research project suggests that it is possible to write dance histories that are organised around this notion.

They will amount to a rhizomatic rather than a linear investigation of theatrical dance evolution, though trajectories of practice no doubt could be elucidated.

This approach to historical writing has been tested in this thesis and has proven viable. It can facilitate the writing of issue-based histories of theatrical dance that draws on African and Diaspora forms of dance or Africanist theatrical dance in Britain.

9.4. Multiculturalism and the debates around 'black dance' between 1985 and 2005

The choreosteme as a framework has through this project been proven to offer a theoretical approach to gain insight into historical questions that have to do with the issues of representation faced by black choreographers. This thesis has provided insights to the implementation of multiculturalist policies. I would argue that, in principle, multiculturalism is not problematic for the dance sector during the period of study but rather its mode of implementation. On the whole multiculturalism was not considered to be a discourse of modernity, which would recognise that social change was taking place for all parties involved, both the dance artists and the funding organisations and others in managing dance artists of non-western background. As discussed in chapter three,

historically, the 'mixture' of systems of representation has not been considered to be modern in dominant Eurocentric artistic discourses. Only the appearance and promotion of cultural or artistic 'rupture' is considered to signal modernity or the new. These are some of the ideas that shaped how administrators of funding organisations and mainstream bodies sought to include ethnic minorities in their programmes. Under the circumstances, multiculturalism operated as a colonial discourse. The discourse created consultants which could be used by leaders in mainstream organisations to garner information which they need to develop initiatives for social inclusion but the discourse made it unduly difficult for people of non-western background to develop initiatives themselves in such spaces as the discourse stunted the emergence of language that would facilitate self-organisation if it involved concepts that were not those provided by the mainstream practices. As Peter Brook stated, 'ethnic arts' as a category served to ghettoise artistic practices so called and leave the hegemonic discourses of art in place.

The historical narrative I have written in chapter 4 exemplifies this situation. As mentioned above during the construction of the Black dance/African Peoples' Dance sector, the administrators turned the term black dance into a topic of debate. They suggested alternative ways it could be interpreted turning it into a racialised artistic term so that it could function as an umbrella term for the artistic practices of all black dancers. Black dance, however, as a term came from a discourse about the achievement of black people and was not used to signify dance practices produced for the stage through the use of

creative processes. There were many companies at the time considered to be black dance, working in different artistic genres. The consultants could have focused on providing infrastructure for 'black people' thereby fulfilling their social inclusion remit without asking for a redefinition of the term black dance trying to make it an artistic term when in this context it was not. This would have allowed dancers to define their work by the genre or choreographic style to which it belonged.

One could argue that the conclusion stated here could only be made in hindsight. Whilst the details of this proposition could only be made in hindsight the findings prove that if the consultation process had been carried out with the will to engage black dancers as professionals it would have been less divisive. There needed to have been a proper dialogue between dancers and the commissioners of the report *Advancing Black Dancing* (1993). For example, the dancers who were involved in the regional meeting of 'What is Black Dance in Britain?' produced a report in response to the London meeting of the same title. Significantly they rejected the idea of a single organisation for black dancers. The report suggested that the infrastructure for black dance should be organised to support two broadly defined groups of practices: the first group being practices which focused on the staging or display of African and Diaspora forms in the formats of neo-traditional dance display or dance theatre and the second group being practices which drew inspiration or aesthetics or principles from these forms but focused on choreographic fusion using non-western forms or techniques or deconstruction or other forms of experimentation. If the Arts

Council had engaged with this document, they might have supported the dancers and dance practitioners involved in organising themselves into networks around these two groups of artistic practice. Over time it is likely that the dance artists and practitioners would have generated a language about the process of working with African and Diaspora dance in these two ways, within their separate networks. Consequently, they would have been in a better position to define themselves as artistic practitioners within the British professional system as they would have had a language to describe and conceptualise their creative processes in relation to the forms of dance they were committed to using. Due to the method of consultation about black dance, however, the discourse about the sector shifted away from a focus on the practice of the dance artists and how these practices were evolving. It shifted to focus instead on the debates between the Arts Council and dance practitioners, generated by 'discussion documents' and reports, produced by the Arts Council with consultants. In other words the discourse was about 'black dance' ended up not being a professional or artistic discourse but a discourse of 'otherness' which actually mitigated against social inclusion.

This thesis suggests that social inclusion initiatives that focus solely on making black people or other people of colour visible within mainstream or white dominated organisations or sectors are flawed. The focus should be on finding ways of enabling people of non-western background to participate in their chosen profession and including them in the discourse which enables professional practice. This would require initiatives that looked at the concepts

and systems around which a professional sector is organised and opening these up to change or expansion in such a way that new modes of working become visible and their conceptual basis is articulated. However, initiatives which could enable this to happen – such as in-depth discussion or research and the analysis and implementation of outcomes within specific institutions – were rarely funded or supported by mainstream organisations in the historical period investigated in this thesis.

9.5. The possibilities of the choreosteme

The choreosteme can be used to support the writing of in-depth dance histories of dance theatrical practice within multicultural societies. It can be used to explore the point of view of modernity of dance artists of a non-western background alongside those of majority groups, on an equal basis. It could also be used to write histories that explore intersections between different trajectories of performance. It can be used to make invisible artistic achievements visible and to expose inequalities and oppressive regimes. It is possible that the choreosteme could be developed further to look at issues of cultural policy and modernity more closely. It could be developed to support cultural and artistic research such as a method of writing about dance and live performance as well as choreographic methods. It could be used to map out trajectories and genealogies of practice, the influences of teachers,

choreographers and artistic directors in the field. It could be used in conjunction with ethnographic methods to write case studies of specific dance companies and organisations, and furthermore it could be used in conjunction with the 'black Atlantic' to look at issues of representation across time and space. This thesis has shown ways of understanding the work of black choreographers in Britain, during the period 1985-2005, explaining why this work was marginalised at the time and why it needs to be valued more highly today.

THE END.

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