Performing Masculinities: Stereotypes and representations of the male body in contemporary South Africa.

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Signed by candidate Date: 28-09-2018

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Abstract

In this account of my practise as research into the crisis of masculinity among black males in South Africa, I am concerned with how men oppress and terrorize women and retard the recovery of South Africa from apartheid through crime, violence and transgressive actions. Following Sirkin (1984) in this paper I term this behaviour 'hypermasculine' and attribute it to the unfathomable violence inflicted on the black male body and psyche during apartheid while Danieli, (2007) and Goodman's (2013) 'transgenerational trauma' accounts for why the condition persists. Butler's idea of gender as a 'performance' theoretically grounds the hypermasculine body as a 'mask' behind which lies either a true and better male self or 'shadow'– *Seriti* – or no self at all. Following this premise, I give an account of the creative process and performance of two PaR pieces (*Seriti* and *Metsi*) in which I unpack both the process and performances in which my own black male body was the medium for the research. I sketch my objectives of physically inhabiting the hypermasculine 'performative' stereotypes familiar to me from childhood township memories as well as in township theatre in order to define and 'know' them. Through exercises in weight, tempo and repetition I hoped to re-inscribe the misshapen figure of the black male. I discuss how working with an older black actor in *Seriti* yielded valuable insights into cultural male hierarchies, while the enactment of hypermasculinity took its toll necessitating mediation through traditional ritual. I recount how, with the need for healing now evoked in my body, and with an obsession in the shape of water, (*Metsi*) in the second research project I allowed the memory of the positive feminine presences in my past to inflect the male body with a different weight and shape in a disruption of the familiar and a glimpse of the potential of a new shape or self.

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Introduction

In South Africa men are in crisis and this has had consequences of devastating proportions for women. We have among the highest rape statistics in the world, one of the highest murder rates as well as prison and gang violence. Similarly, our femicide rates are among the highest in Africa and our black male inmate population is overwhelming[1]. For a long-time feminists have been calling for these issues to be placed on the national agenda but little has been heard from the predominantly male leadership of the country. Even with the rise of movements like #Patriarchymustfall driven by black feminists on campuses across the country, and the existence of Women's Day (9th of August) which is celebrated annually in editorials and rallies across the country, not a lot changes year after year.

Helen Moffet points to the "inevitable clash between South Africa's heritage of overlapping patriarchies (colonial, apartheid, Calvinist, missionary, traditional African) and the post-apartheid, democratic, rights-based Constitution which guarantees political equality for all groups, including women" (Moffet, 2008:10 in Stopford, 2013:31). Moffet notes Pumla Dineo Gqola's comment that "by touting equality for women at the same time as refusing to critique patriarchy the liberation movement made a tactical and ideological error for which South African women are now paying dearly" (Moffett, 2008: 112). Langa (2012) observes that the formation of political parties like the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) were organized to reclaim the dignity of men and women who were rendered powerless by the apartheid laws. Post-apartheid and two decades into democracy, the political structures are still predominantly run by men.

Some progress has been made; for example, the South African constitution requires that women become part of the National Assembly and be given fair representation in most institutions of political power. And yet the statistics for violence against women do not

[1] The South African police service released crime statistics for 2017/ 2018 stating that shockingly, murder rate increased from 34.1 per 100,000 people to 35.8. In 2017/18, an average of 56 people were murdered every day. A total of 2,930 women were murdered in South Africa. This means that the femicide rate was 15.2 murders per 100,000 women. On average, 379 robberies with aggravating circumstances were recorded each day. *This report was written by Africa Check, a non-partisan fact-checking organisation. (17th September 2018 07:26. GMT)*

diminish:

> It is nothing less than gender civil war. Just one week of glancing at newspaper headlines reveals that sexual violence in particular is out of control, with higher levels of rape of women and children than anywhere else in the globe not at war or embroiled in open civil conflict ….at least one in three South African women can expect to be raped in her lifetime; and one in four will be beaten by her domestic partner (Moffet, 2008:10 in Stopford, 2013:32)

Addressing the issue of the silencing and violation of women, Nthabiseng Motsemme (2002) urges us to engage with issues of race in South Africa. She says:

> Race remains an existential dilemma in the sociopolitical landscape of the 'new' South Africa. The collapse of the meta-narrative of apartheid has called historically and politically defined identities into crisis, while simultaneously opening spaces for new identities to be negotiated and created. However, as South Africans grapple with the horrors of apartheid and its effects on present subjectivities and sociopolitical contexts, the question of which voices will dominate, and how these will be remembered and integrated into the emerging national landscape, must be confronted. (Motsemme, 2002:648)

Moffet agrees that race complicates discussions about male abuse of women:

> …Everyone assumes that any effort to discuss rape is a short jump to condemning the barbarism of black men. In a society battling to shake off the legacy of institutionalised racism, it still seems a bridge too far to acknowledge that apartheid and its ills (such as the migrant labour system) 'emasculated' black men, left them 'impotent' and experiencing a 'crisis of masculinity'. (Moffet, 2008:111)

Mindful of the effects of this history of oppression under apartheid Porter and Khumalo argue in the Sunday Independent (2012) for a sensitive approach to the problem:

> The roots of gender conditioning run deep and are embedded in the minds and behaviours of most men and women. The roles that both genders unconsciously subscribe to and their ideas of what it means to be male or female; masculine or feminine – how to behave; the pressures to present oneself as tough, or as submissive; how to relate to the other sex – are pervasive and entrenched. So, unless the problem of patriarchy is responded to with approaches that are inclusive and open; and seek to engage and explain rather than shame...men will not develop an understanding of the pain of women and the bitterness of their oppression. (2012:17 in Stopford, 2013:32)

This perfectly summarizes the conundrum around gender tensions and more than that, intimates towards the very large crisis for black male identities that have been damaged by

a history of apartheid and colonialism. It is a far-ranging problem and more meaningful interventions are needed. Moffet suggests that hope for the future lies in studies of masculinity – how it is "taught, learned, performed and unlearned" (Moffet, 2008:113 in Stopford, 2013:33).

The silencing and abuse of women are just some of the signs of the 'crisis of masculinity' that hover hidden in these feminist writers' comments. My study aims to foreground this black male figure and the crisis he embodies. I want to understand how and why this crisis came about, what it looks like, and then, to contribute to the re-shaping of the distorted figure of the black male. In addition to the very real social problem of mis-shaped masculinity, our local stages and television screens generate a proliferation of images and representations that mirror and amplify this negative reality. Diabolical, transgressive (male) action creates riveting drama and the violent, dysfunctional, gangster/tsotsi, drug taking, womanising, woman/child abusing, thieving/corrupt black male figure has become at best a dramatic trope and at worst a stereotype. While the scope of this study does not permit me to examine a causal relationship between real social conditions and representations in art and popular media, I recruit Ashraf Jamal's (2004 in Homann, 2009) coupling of the two when he writes "Our imagination is forged, shaped, honed, by the arts; be it a play, a film, a daily television drama, music or any other of the high and low art forms." Jamal continues:

> …because of its formal hybridity and its liminal impurity in relation to the other arts, each of which theatre absorbs in order to make itself, theatre is well placed to expose the contradictions which threaten a projected national unity, while, at the same time, providing a way forward. (Jamal, 2004:128 in Homann, 2009:2)

At the time of writing Jamal was concerned with the materialization of the 'rainbow nation', whereas I suggest that the focus has shifted to social and civil instability, unemployment and economic recession, with poverty, crime and violence against women as key concerns. As a black male heterosexual theatre maker, I am anxious about the role that my gender is playing in these (possibly) enmeshed realms of the real world and dramatic fiction in retarding the national project of recovery from apartheid and colonialism. My work is therefore an inquiry as to whether it is possible to disrupt the way black men see themselves, at least in art and the media, and how we can project ourselves into our worlds

differently, in ways that need to be explored and experimented with. With this aim in view I turn my attention to unpacking the trajectory of this dissertation.

Having announced a crisis of masculinity in South Africa, I have also pronounced an inability to prove cause and effect between reality and fictional images and representations of masculinity. I proceed, then, on the assumption that by drawing on personal and lived experience as a black male who grew up in townships and experienced the milieu in which masculinity (and by implication, identity) was aligned with violence and dominance, I am well positioned to attempt to inscribe and re-shape what that reality may look like in performance and in the research methods that I employ. Before that, I will drill down into the historical context, causes and nature of 'the masculine crisis' as well as define my terms for it as clearly as it is possible to do in such a contested field. I will follow this with an exposition of my methodology and in so doing refine a description of my research. An outline and motivation for my case studies follow, combined with a deeper account of my practice as a dance trained actor and theatre maker and how this practice translates as research. I will then embark on an account of the journey of my research, what it looked like, it's findings, as well as projections for the next phase, the final project, which will only be performed after this dissertation is submitted.

The Crisis of Masculinity

In understanding the crisis of masculinity, I focus on several strands of thought: the impact that South Africa's history of colonisation and oppression has had on the black male body and psyche, as well as the notion of 'transgenerational trauma', in which ways of being, both in the psychic and physical sense, are passed from generation to generation. For it is not only imbricating traditions of patriarchy that perpetuate mis-shaped masculinity but the fact that colonialism and apartheid were violent and brutal in the legislated removal of all human rights and particularly in administering oppression through control of the labour and exploitation of the black male body. Naomi Klein (2007) explains that:

> Apartheid was, among other things, an economic system that used racism to enforce a highly lucrative arrangement: a small white elite could amass enormous profit from South African

> mines, farms and factories because a large black majority was prevented from owning land and forced to provide its labour for less than its worth. A black man was beaten and imprisoned when he dared to rebel and men were recruited from the 'homelands' to work in the mines of the greater Johannesburg and Kimberley. (Klein, 2007:196)

As resistance to apartheid grew stronger in the 70's and 80's of the last century, more and more laws and legislation were enacted that permitted direct abuse and torture on the black male body. This included human rights violations such as detention without trial, torture, and house raids in the early hours of the morning and intensive border controls. I propose along with Moffet and Motsemme that black men were emasculated and in turn took their anger out on their families - and then other black families. The men, who hurt others, are themselves hurt. Chris N. van der Merwe and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela propose in their monograph: "These re-enactments manifest in acts of revenge, anger, and sometimes as violence against the self, and may seem unrelated and disconnected from the original trauma" (Van der Merwe et.al, 2007:25). This takes me directly to my second point, the notion of transgenerational trauma.

In theories of transgenerational trauma it is believed that the consequences of a major trauma of one generation can be transmitted to the children of the next generation through memory, behavioural habits, rituals, customs and belief systems. It is suggested that the child can experience the 'transmitted' trauma even though he was not present for the traumatic event experienced by the parent. Rachel, D. Goodman (2013) further explains "transgenerational trauma has emerged as a framework for understanding trauma across generations. Although expressed in oral and written histories across cultures for many generations, the study within the field of counselling and psychology is still nascent" (Danieli, 2007 in Goodman, 2013:388). I am particularly interested in what transgenerational theory could mean for the inheritance of physical behaviours in black men. I believe that the transmission of physically manifested trauma, from father to son for example, plays a significant role in the perpetuation of the crisis in masculine behaviours and in the 'performance' of hypermasculinity. However, the term 'hypermasculinity', along with the palimpsest of causal conditions for the crisis in masculinity, must be painted with clear definitions. For instance the word 'patriarchy' used by Porter and Khumalo in my introduction is commonly employed as an umbrella term for a male dominated system of oppression:

> Patriarchy's representations dominate the Familial-social, ideological, political system in which men- by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labour-determine what part women shall or shall not play. (Whitehead, 2002:86)

For example, in some cultural beliefs, the patriarchal society assumes that males will occupy a higher position than women will. This is evident in Xhosa cultural practices in which, "the Xhosa tradition of initiating young males believes that "ubudoda" (manhood) is very important for young men's identity formation" (Gqola, 2007, Kometsi, 2004, Mgqolozana, 2009). This suggests that at some point the same practice tends to overlook women who are constantly subjugated to lesser positions of power than their male counterparts. Patriarchy describes a system, whereas I am exploring the extreme behaviour and by extrapolation, the identity of the subject that enforces the system and at the same time could be a victim of it. Masculinity and more specifically the term 'hypermasculinity' seem to capture the ways of behaving and being in the world that are under scrutiny here. The current concern in gender and feminist politics with the essentialism of the binary terms of 'masculine' and 'feminine' is relevant as it is exactly this essentialism that is embedded in the notion of hypermasculinity.

Hypermasculinity is the extreme demonstration of masculine behaviour that is being called out by black radical feminists when 'checking' men for their aggressive behaviour. It appears that 'hypermasculinity' rather than 'masculinities' encapsulates the crisis that I am attempting to define. The term has a scientific and psychological origin. In an article by Ankita Siddhanta and SK Singh (2015) on the sexual behaviour of poor youth in Mumbai, we are told that Donald L. Mosher and Mark Sirkin conducted the first studies of hypermasculinity (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984 in Siddhanta & Singh, 2015:1). With Mosher and Sirkin's help, Siddhanta and Singh attempt to provide a definition:

> Hypermasculinity is an extreme form of masculine gender ideology, often comprised of a cluster of beliefs that includes toughness, violence, dangerousness, and calloused attitudes toward women and sex. According to Dennehy et al. Hypermasculinity exhibits emotional self-control as a sign of toughness as well as composure and impassiveness in times of great stress or emotion and hypermasculine pattern leads to competition, rather than connection between persons. (Siddhanta & Singh 2015:1)

It is interesting that the writers here call it an ideology as if it is a way of being that is perpetuated through belief, culture or custom. Of course, patriarchy would need to be upheld by such a belief system but that it should incipiently lead to extreme and violent behaviour does not necessarily follow. With regards to causes of hypermasculinity Siddhanta and Singh suggest: "the most accepted" theory stems from hormonal irregularities (i.e. higher levels of prenatal testosterone).

> The effects of prenatal androgens can be seen on levels of sexual orientation and masculinity. Many studies claim that low levels of prenatal androgens can lead to male homosexuality while the opposite is true for those who exhibit hypermasculinized tendencies, often having a higher likelihood of committing crime, and having aggressive attitudes. High testosterone levels can also be linked to a lack of empathy and moral judgments, which could lead to the hypermasculinized tendencies identified by Mosher & Sirkin. (Siddhanta & Singh. 2015:2)

This biological explanation for hypermasculinity excludes social conditions as a contributing factor although care is taken to appear broadly embracing of integral and contingent conditions[2]. Here, social and cultural contingencies are noted but not explored. However, contemporary young men globally may be constellated by their:

> …exposure to TV commercials or magazine advertisements showing man often having hypermasculinity as a virtue. As Vokey et al. pointed out, the widespread depiction of hypermasculinity in men's magazine advertisements may be detrimental to both men and society at large. Currently, many men (especially those who are relatively younger, less educated, and less affluent) are exposed to advertisements showing that being a man means being tough, dangerous, violent, and callous toward women and sex. (Siddhanta & Singh. 2015:2)

The proof that magazine images may encourage hypermasculinity is tenuously supported here but perhaps it does point towards what many suspect to be true: that images impact on identity formation of young people. Hypermasculinity becomes a prototype that fills a major gap where fathers and male leaders are absent or when present are locked into the hypermasculine modality, providing the only imprint in the real world on which young men

[2] Accumulated research evidence reveals that the concept and construct of masculinity or hypermasculinity is evolving, multifaceted and dynamic and its various ideas are constructed under differing social, economic and cultural contexts. In India, caste, class and linguistic ethnicity have tremendous influence on how men construct their masculinities and define what is a 'real man' or what is expected of them. (Siddhanta & Singh.2015:2)

may fashion themselves as people with agency. As Siddhanta and Singh write by way of context:

> In south Asia, including India, young men grow up in a male-dominated society with very low sex education and with limited contact with females in the post-pubertal period. Under these circumstances, masculinity is often characterized by male sexual dominance, unequal gender attitudes and behaviours, frequent use of harassment or teasing of young women by men, and lack of sexual knowledge. Men's practices in the society and the structural factors that sanction, encourage and shape those practices of masculinity and sometimes hypermasculinity needs to be explored since in due course they have influence on youth behaviour. (Siddhanta & Singh. 2015:2)

Here Siddhanta and Singh point not to an absence of men but an absence of women in young men's lives, a factor that may be relevant to conditions in South African townships. The issue of which parent parents the child and in what conditions is relevant to my research because I was raised in townships by a family of powerful women and this personal history I found significantly inflected my research. But one way or another, the social conditions and historical contexts underpinning hypermasculine behaviour are the ones that go forward with me in this study. Poor, unparented youth appear most vulnerable to hypermasculinity.

Some researchers warn us explicitly against the use of the term hypermasculine. Torbenfeldt Bengtsson (2015) suggests in his writings "Hypermasculinity is often discussed in relation to criminality as an intensification of hegemonic understandings of what constitutes a real man" (Bengtsson, 2015:410). This claim is supported by a paper which 'debunks the myths' about hypermasculinity (Abu-Hazeem, 2017). In research that interrogates 'the disproportionate engagement in crime and violent behaviours' of black men in the Southside of Chicago, Aliyah Abu-Hazeem suggests that narratives of hypermasculinity contribute to "the pervasive perception of Black men as savage hoodlums who are undeserving of success outcomes. The concept of hypermasculinity asserts that Black men have a biological, innate disposition to incite harm" (Abu-Hazeem, 2017:4). The young men who he interviews are always already marked by the terms of hypermasculinity through the media, police profiling and institutional racism. In the interviews with them he discovers that there is a war 'enacted against' them by entrenched 'racist structures and institutions' and that 'the men's efforts to combat it is circumscribed by the racialized pigeonhole of the label 'hypermasculine'. He argues that 'multifactorial and contingent

nature of criminality' needs to be illuminated in an effort to remove the barriers to achievement and success for black men in poor areas. This starts with acknowledging:

> ...that Black men's disproportionate engagement in gun violence and crime is out of necessity and not desire. The hypotheses that ground this argument are threefold: The labelling process associated with hypermasculinity is racialized and predisposes Black men to a life of crime and failure, Hypermasculinity, as a rationale, is inherently flawed because it does not include a discussion of Black men's social context as contributory to their engagement in gun violence and crime, and Combatting the war on Black men requires a city-wide restructuring of how finances and other resources are allocated, along with adaptations to public, penal, and education policies. (Abu-Hazeem, 2017:5)

I find Abu-Hazeem's study useful for beginning to unthink the stereotype of the hypermasculine black male figure under scrutiny. His call for an undoing of the terms of the label provokes a revision of the language used in all aspects of the conversation. He also points to institutionalized racism, which is paralleled in the lived experiences of black people in South Africa. During apartheid every aspect of black lives was policed with legislation that permitted physical force. This was systematically executed with the passing of The Land Act (1913), The Group Areas Act (1950), The Immorality Act (1950), The Bantu Education Act (1953), and The Influx control Act (1964). (There are many other acts that were implemented that I have not mentioned here).

Resistance to this systematic and mounting oppression grew and the result was a rise in 'militarized masculinities' that influenced the rites of passage of black men. Malose Langa (2012) gives an account of life in the years from the 70's, through the 80's and 90's in his report on becoming a man, correlating the history of apartheid with the construction of masculinity in its militarized form (Langa, 2012:78). For example, in 1961 the ANC changed its policy from peaceful negotiations to 'armed struggle' and formed the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) military wing. In 1976 the student uprisings erupted in townships across South Africa against Bantu education and self-defence units (SDU) in the 70s and 80s were formed by the youth to act against the assault by the government police and military forces. Other researchers like Buhle Zuma (2009) assert: "the education struggle, to a large extent, placed the youth (who may have been at school, university or not receiving education at the time) at the forefront of the forefront of the struggle" (Zuma, 2009:24). Through these movements a large number of young people fled the country into exile to receive military training, schooling and tertiary education to return later after liberation with little

experience of 'normal', civil and family life to anchor them back into society.

The South African Defence Force (SADF) stepped up military conscription for white men from nine months to 18 months to intensify search and destroy missions across Southern African states where ANC and PAC camps were located. This meant large numbers of white men were called up for border duty (1984/1986). Unrest flared up again in 1984 with strikes and the UDF mass action campaign to render the country ungovernable. A state of emergency was declared several times, (1985/1986) which permitted the SADF to move into the townships and commit unwarranted arrests: "The pervasiveness of state violence infiltrated both the public and private spheres of black people's lives physically, emotionally and psychologically on a daily basis" (Zuma, 2009:35) Street committees made up of youths no longer going to school, under the motto: "liberation first, education later', roamed the townships burning beer halls, schools, municipal buildings, setting up vigilante courts, burning the homes of suspected impimpi's (informants) and forcing people to turn back at barricades during strikes.

Not only did black people suffer the shame and humiliation of 350 years of colonialism and oppression, but liberty came with significant sacrifices to our humanity as well. Thus, a legacy of self-doubt and a self-imposed blanket of shame and shameful acts gave birth to emasculated men nationwide. Steve Biko, in his book *I Write What I Like* states: "No wonder the African child learns to hate his heritage in his days at school. So negative is the image presented to him that he tends to find solace only in close identification with the white society" (Biko, 1977:32). Apartheid stripped the black child of his identity, heritage and legacy. Thus, I propose that behind the performance of masculinity as militarized, physical and violently powerful is an erased identity. Far from being powerful, a hypermasculine show of strength by black men is a show of vulnerability. The relationship between hypermasculinity and the concept of lack of self, or lack of identity, is relevant to my first case study *Seriti*, which will be introduced shortly. In conclusion my terms for the crisis of masculinities is located in hypermasculinity while acknowledging the contingent spectrum of its use.

I have assembled reasons and conditions for the emergence of hypermasculinity grounded in the notion of psychic trauma due to socio-political forces and pressures that lead to aggressive, violent behaviour which contributes to increasing levels of crime and especially against black bodies. Even though Apartheid is ostensibly behind us the effects

are transmitted from father to son, an idea contained within theories of transgenerational trauma. Within the broad canvas of this palimpsest of masculine crises, the damaged and distorted figure of the black male figure has been foregrounded. I will now discuss the methodology of this research, which includes a personal path into a conversation that helps my process of investigating the representation of negative male gendered stereotypes, and the possibilities of redressing them through performed research.

Methodology

Three forces cohere to shape my approach to this research: a fascination with gestural and embodied meaning; stereotyped male behaviour in the real world of South Africa and a strong tradition of stereotypes in South African black theatre with an emphasis on the body; and the 'performative' nature of gender and how different genders represent themselves in society and then again, how theatre mirrors society in performing these stereotypes on stage.

In the past, my concern with gender representation resulted in collaborating with Mamela Nyamza[3] in a performance piece titled *Vies-a-Vies.* This work was presented at the annual Baxter Dance Festival (2010). The physical installation/performance explored how women living through the social changes of post-apartheid South Africa have often had to assume the double role of patriarch and matriarch when fathers are absent from the household due to migration to cities in search of work opportunities. Now that contemporary South African black men are going through an important transition, our society is inquiring on how we can transcend the false dominance of patriarchy and infuse the black man with pride. Furthermore, how to heal the black man's body from transgenerational trauma, shamed, emasculated, debased identities and reclaim their humanity. Therefore, my primary tool in this venture is my own black male body and my training and experience as a dancer.

[3] Mamela Nyamza Is a dancer, teacher, choreographer, and activist in South Africa. Nyamza has performed nationally and internationally and has choreographed autobiographical, political, and social pieces both on her own and in collaboration with other artists. She draws inspiration from her daily life and her identity as a young, black woman. In 2018 Nyamza was appointed as the new head of Dance Umbrella and with its new home at the State theatre in Pretoria.

I was trained extensively in classical ballet, contemporary and other forms of dance at the Johannesburg Dance Foundation and Jazzart Contemporary Dance Theatre in Cape Town between 1997 and 2013. As a result, I am constantly fascinated with physical 'gestural' movements as part of my artistic professional inquiry. William McGregor (2001) explains 'gesture' as:

> …The visible bodily actions - especially of the hands and arms, but also of the face and head that humans use expressively in face-to-face interactions, accompanying speech, including narrative speech acts. Gestures are co-produced with, and are co-expressive with, speech; they serve as partners with speaking in communicative performance, strategically deployed in the construction and conveyance of meaning. (McGregor, 2001:1)

Prior to my professional training as a dancer, I performed as an actor at both community and professional level. In this period, I became aware of the township theatre stereotypes that began early in the 20th century when a surge of rural migration to the cities occurred with black men looking for work. David Coplan (1985), David Kerr (1995) and Robert Kavanagh (1985) have documented how the syncretic music typologies of Marabi, Mbube, Mbaqanga, Kwela and Smanje Manje were formed with corresponding rural dances to entertain the new urban labour force. Musicians performed music sets, skits and satiric sketches. On average, this style of township vaudeville included:

> Acrobatic dancing, dancing instrumentalists and comic skits accompany well-choreographed song and dance routines by the 'featured' vocal group. Costumes and comic themes are often symbolic of meaningful social realities, satirizing elite Africans for their 'over-westernized' and 'over-educated' snobbery as well as poking fun at archetypal; township characters. (Anonymous in Kerr, 1995:215)

This practice[4] climaxed some decades later in the 70's and 80's in the musical theatre of township entrepreneur and director/creator Gibson Kente, whose success was based on these stock features:

> The formula is a simple township tale, featuring the agreeably caricatured stock types of the townships. There is the shebeen queen, the tsotsis, the brutal but ridiculous policeman, priests who take bribes and preach nonsense, the traditional Zulu boy with pierced lobes to swell the scene. (Kavanagh on Kente's *Sikalo*, 1976:40 in Kerr: 2017:217)

[4] A sophisticated example of this was Esau Mtetwa's 'Lucky Stars', who performed in Zulu and were very popular during the 1930's (Kerr, D. 1995:215)

Later, in the sophisticated stock characters of *Woza Albert*, Mbongeni Ngema, Barney Simon and Percy Mtwa created meticulously observed physical characterisations combined with clowns' noses to denote white characters, while performing multiple characters. Some are stereotypes of hypermasculinity and some are portrayed with tenderness and delicacy. With the humanity of the characters always in view, *Woza Albert* expanded and contributed to the stereotyped tradition in black urban theatre with a focus on the gestural as a core component of performance.

Also as a young actor I became intrigued with how different genders 'perform' themselves through the use of their bodies in the world and again, on stage. The idea of 'performing an identity' in gender theory relates to real life and not stage and media representations (although of course sometimes they overlap). For my purposes the distinction is important as the notion of a 'performed' masculinity suggests that it is not an organic or inherent identity or way of being in the world, but a 'front', 'mask' or 'construct' imposed by society, which obscures something else, some more authentic 'self'; or perhaps it signals the absence of an authentic self which I have suggested earlier has been obliterated by oppression and transgenerational trauma.

This thought intersects with the notion of 'Seriti,' a term I grew up with and is commonly referenced by the Southern Sotho community as one of two things: a shadow, or the pride of a human being. In the research piece of that name, I asked myself: is hypermasculinity 'performance' mimicry, denoting a man without a shadow, or a true self? My hunch was to start my research by exploring with my own body the 'performativity' of the hypermasculine stereotypes lodged in my memory from real life and some of which are still in circulation today. In doing this I would need to find out what the hypermasculine shape, weight, and sound felt like before disrupting it or 'un-performing' it. This became the focus of *Seriti*. In retrospect I realize that I would have essentially been performing a 'performance'.

My processes therefore employ autoethnography theory as a methodology. Sally Denshire explains, "autoethnography is an alternative method and form of writing" (Denshire, in Neville-Jan, 2003:89). Drusilla Modjeska (2006) adds that the normal academic approach is one:

> … falling somewhere between anthropology and literary studies. Some social science researchers have an interpretive literary style that uses highly specialised vocabulary, that efface the personal and flatten the voice, that avoid indifference to dominant theories and methodologies of social sciences'. Autoethnography on the other hand, seeks to achieve a reflection of a personal identity, experience and 'voice' with the findings located clearly in the transparent positionality of the researcher/writer. The advantage of this is that the reader is "in the know" with the writer and as a consequence, the hierarchy of knowledge transference is democratized. (Modjeska in Denshire. 2013:1)

It was my ultimate intention that through interrogating and reflecting on social narratives drawn from personal memory and observed lived experiences, I could explore ways of disrupting representational stereotypes of black masculinities through (PaR) practice as research - PaR methods - where practice feeds into theory, which in turn feeds into practice, in a cyclical manner.

In my workshopping process for *Seriti* I employed Jazzart's chair-based techniques, some of which are borrowed from Alexander technique, to free the body of restrictions and learned behaviours. The focus here was to try to locate tensions from the past and exorcise them. These exercises include not only working with understanding the body in space but also capture how the body carries weight in space. I believe that it is weight, which influences how we exist in spaces, and makes us different from the next person. For example, there's a different representation in how an older black man carries his weight when he sits and how a younger male sit. In exploring this weight we could also identify tension in both bodies of a father and son.

In addition I deployed Anne Bogart's *Viewpoints* (Bogart, 2005) to explore gesture, embodiment and the specific stereotypes explored in *Seriti*. These exercises included working with silence as a powerful tool for expression because silence gains meaning when it is intentional and aesthetically placed. Furthermore, Lulamile (my working partner) and I experimented with different tempos constructing a physical language of gestures that had a clear beginning and end. Repetition was very important to the work because we needed to understand where emotions sat in our bodies, so we would repeat them several times to make sure we grasped the emotions and to understand exactly their different impulses and how to repeat them through performance.

With these techniques I focused on exploring the common traits and behaviours associated with violent outbursts in black males, the need for domination and hyper visible masculine body language that is often associated with machismo or ubujita, "Tsotsi,

amagintsa" or gangster glorified mannerisms. I specifically invited Lulamile to participate in this embodied research with me as I suspected his mature age and experience as a black man would yield interesting outputs with regards to the 'performance' of black masculinities particularly in relation to me as a younger man. The insights gained from this collaboration involved the hierarchies that exist, and the power struggles that play out between black male generations. For instance, I have observed that when amagintsa are gathered in the same space there is not a lot of talking but more focus in communicating through silence. This form of silence plays itself out as a brand of complicity in the maintenance of the hierarchies and power play amongst these men. So, my approach to the problem of the negative reality and representation of the black male body is located specifically in my personal history and my perception of that history. And the medium that I use to research is my own black male body. This powerfully inflects how I explore the trauma I suggest resides behind the 'performance' of the mis-shaped masculinities under investigation.

Having completed *Seriti* in which we gave a graphic depiction of what the hypermasculine black body looks like in stereotypical form from the outside, in the next research piece *Metsi* I turned my attention to childhood memories that I believe carried the impact of growing up in a township community. I focused on wounds, scars, and the hurt that we feel as black men, but never speak about. This shift was important to me because I realised that through exploring feminine gestures inspired by memories of the women in my family, the male body carries weight differently and exhibits its presence in space differently.

This may sound like an obvious statement but in terms of my research it began to give me clues as to how to disrupt the cycle of internal trauma and external role-play enforced on the male by society as a 'performance'. This time it was less of a 'performance of a performance' and more a case of intuitively allowing my body through instinct and memory to shift, to find new un-experienced shapes and gestures while doing domestic chores, actions that women (traditionally) do in the home[5]. It was a physical embodiment

[5] I acknowledge the traditional 'feminine' does not find favour with black feminists and LGBTQ activists and academics as it reinforces 'binaries' and excludes the existence of the range of genders and non -genders in between. But I am consciously deploying the extreme binary opposites to dilute, disrupt or shift the internal quality of the extreme male experience.

that discovered and then embraced the 'traditional feminine' gestural dynamic to dilute the hypermasculine body. My terms for 'traditional feminine' expanded while researching, into associations with the feminine presences in my life as 'healing'. Here again repetition, weight, tempo were strongly inflected by the task I, the solo researcher, chose to perform; I also employed the performance of ritual. I began to understand that the focus of this phase of research had become about healing the hypermasculine black male.

1st Case Study (Medium Project): *Seriti*

Liz Walker argues that: "Orthodox notions of masculinity are being challenged and new versions of masculinity emerging in their place. Some men are seeking to be part of a new social order while others are defensively clinging to more familiar routines" (2005:225). Per Liz Walker, there is clearly a possibility that there is the in-between space to be explored on how the representation of the black body can be challenged. Judith Butler gives an illuminating view on how normalised behaviour perpetuates stereotypes which in turn materializes and manifest certain conducts. Therefore, we can begin to understand that the body is not shaped by a norm, but in some sense animated by a normalised social practice, or cur-toured by a norm (Butler, 1993 in Osborne & Segal, 1993:111).

For *Seriti* I wanted to focus my exploration on how the body is animated through 'normalised' township hypermasculine behaviour. Claudia Welz (2014) likens the performance of the hypermasculine to the wearing of a mask:

> The mask has rather been appropriated to such an extent that one's whole body appears through it. Moreover, the mask is not only transforming oneself in re-shaping one's mimics and gestures but also in changing one's demeanour and comportment. (Welz, 2014:117)

I wanted to find what lay behind the mask, to investigate the self-meaning of the Southern Sotho metaphoric 'Seriti' – 'Pride of a human being or spirit'.

The performance of *Seriti* was a bricolage of personal observations, images, sounds both live and recorded, and textures through music, props and objects all representative of my childhood township memories. Movement ranging from realistic to hyper-expanded performances of hypermasculinity, as well as silences, dance, realistic dialogue, ritualistic

gestural actions, mixed with fantastical disruptions of the world of the hypermasculine. There was the presence of women in surprising forms such as a recorded female voice interrogating the misogyny of hypermasculinity. Another example of this kind of duality was the image of my own tall black male body encased in a cascading white wedding gown greeting the audience from the red stoep in the first scene and later, after the performance of various hypermasculine stock township characters, the return of the tall masculine figure in a white wedding dress to serve the patriarchal figure in the form of Lulamile. Both performers shared stories about their experiences of manhood and the harsh realities they live in with one actor on stage and at times both bodies visible to the audience.

For this scenario I needed to create a recognizable township environment. The Playroom (at Hiddingh campus) provided this. I drew inspiration from my observations of Cape Town townships such as Langa, Gugulethu and Khayelitsha in the attempt to reimagine lived experiences, memories and a sensory recall of places that I grew up in as well as the narratives that still connect me to that landscape. The Playroom has a red stoep attached to it, resembling both urban and rural South African homes that I have lived in. I was intrigued by the idea that The Playroom itself is situated in a predominantly 'white setting' and its architecture has a strong 'English/Dutch' colonial 'feel' to it. The interior walls are painted white with wooden floors and burglar bars on the windows. The space has a cold feeling that also reminded me of Pollsmore Maximum Security Prison, where the majority of black males are incarcerated mostly for minor offences. It is a prison where those who are too impoverished to afford bail are kept for months or years as they await trial. The idea of a prison highlights how the system uses fear to entrap the freedom of a black male body, let alone his humanity. This space gave me the sense that I could explore ideas on how Western systems play a part in uprooting tensions that a black male body carries in its day-to-day life in contemporary South Africa. Furthermore, the idea of prison expanded on the idea that hypermasculinity itself can become a prison for a black man. In many ways the effects of apartheid live on in the fate of the black male body.

I used a minimalistic set comprised of a metal zinc bath filled with soaked dirty clothes and a box of cheap washing powder, a stack of metal plates, cups, two benches, two chairs and a small table represented the house interior. But this furniture interior could also be transformed into an outside space. Two leather belts hanging on opposite windows were used to depict the history of corporal punishment and a pile of All-Star converse sneakers

were stacked in the centre of the stage. Its common knowledge in the township that when you wear All Star sneakers you are seen as 'cool', it does not matter if you are poor or have money.

As a backdrop I placed up stage, a wire fence to further evoke a sense of entrapment. Two benches added another layer to symbolise sleeping quarters in the male only hostels where migrant labourers negotiate living spaces that have no privacy. Generations of black men have had to live in the hostels for accommodation just to be close to employment in the cities such as Johannesburg and other metropoles. Noor Nieftergodien (2017) in a *Journal Life in South Africa's Hostels Carceral Spaces and Places of Refuge* explains how the idea of hostels came into existence in South African urban areas. Nieftergodien states:

> Migrant hostels were salient features of capitalist development in South Africa since the discovery of minerals in the late nineteenth century. They were cornerstones of the migrant labour system and influx control, which were premised on the segregationist principle that Africans could only be temporary sojourners in (white) urban areas when their labour was required. (Nieftergodien, 2017:427)

Utilizing this scenario in one of our scenes, two men struggle to sleep because they are tormented by not knowing how they will survive the next day or feed their families. One man is stressed by the thought that if he doesn't find work his wife will leave him while the younger black male wants to marry the woman of his dreams, but he's concerned about how he will pay for her lobola[6]. This scene speaks to economic inequalities, dispossession and the burdens carried by black men economically and in terms of the inability to deliver on the expectations of their cultural demands. In total the design of *Seriti* created a non-private, over crowded, dehumanizing living space with the audience members becoming the voyeurs into someone's private world.

It was important for me to create an environment that is familiar to me and other black people who share the same nostalgic memories of a township filled with joyous sounds during the summer: a constant cacophony of a music genre that is recognizable to almost any black person that has grown up in the townships during the 70's, 80's and contemporary South Africa. It is the norm that in the township you will find people playing music while sitting on their red stoep, which is also a common feature. Therefore, there is a

[6] Lobola is the term used in South African marriage bridal contracts as an offering to the bride's family before he can marry.

distinctive sonic narrative arch between the 1980's and contemporary South Africa, which I consciously employed to bridge the gaps in music genres between the past and the present. It is my opinion that music plays a large role in how society categorizes people's personalities; stereotypes are classified according to the music genre they listen to. To create this soundscape during the performance I played what I coin typical 'South African Soul Sunday' inclusive of kwaito music tracks such as 'Before and Vura' from Sjava[7]. His music genre can be traced back to Mbaqanga and Smanje Manje, sounds akin to what we know today as contemporary music. The combination of this soundscape with a pre-recorded female voiceover suggested new performative possibilities in a powerful and seductive narrative that brought a different conversation about stereotypes from the township narrated through a female perspective.

These observed perspectives foregrounded the effects of hypermasculine behaviour on the daily lives of women and men. Ntombi Makhutshi's[8] voice talked about the different stereotypes of black men that she has observed in the different townships of Cape Town and gave her own thoughts on the performative body of black males. In one recording Makhutshi makes a clear distinction between the performative stereotypes of men from Khayelitsha and those from Gugulethu. The guys from Khayelitsha living in poor informal settlements appear to be more hyper visible and associated with gangster stock types and embodied transgressive behaviour. While guys from Gugulethu living in a middle-class urban township are considered to be 'Ama-Grootman', dominant in stature and fashionable in their hyper visible sense of being in the world. Both of these stereotypes still exude extreme hypermasculine performative body that can be identified differently.

In retrospect I observe that the *Seriti* project drilled down instinctively into the wounded place in the male psyche that I have always suspected is there. I learnt that I had to find ways of assuaging that pain by healing, through performing traditional rituals. Although the second case study *Metsi* focuses more on this objective, it became necessary in our process in *Seriti*, to use a ritualistic approach to distance ourselves from the work, hence Lulamile and I employed South African traditional ritual practices to create a sense of

[7] "Sjava" Jabulani Hadebe is a South African singer, songwriter and award-winning recording artist from Johannesburg, South Africa.

[8] Ntombi Makhutshi is an award-winning actress and voice over artist. She is pursuing her MA degree in theatre and performance at the University of Cape Town 2018

separate realities, i.e. that of the spiritual and that of the material world. I incorporated traditional rituals to summon the spiritual realm to facilitate the healing from the embodied trauma that we would re-enact and re-inhabit through the performance. The ritualistic elements in the piece were also meant to cleanse the space and the violent acts that our characters represented in the work and that we embodied. The ritual was performed by Lulamile during the first encounter between the two performers: Lulamile had to anchor the four corner points in the room by throwing salt, while also walking in a circle. At the same time in a soft voice, he would speak to the ancestors asking for protection and guidance throughout the duration of the performance.

Thus we discovered in our research, one way of beginning to deconstruct the performative nature of hypermasculinity. This had not been planned; it became a necessity for our survival as performers. At the same time, the performance became inflected with a duality shared between the performativity and theatricality of the stereotypical masculine tropes and a gentler, healing male presence in body and voice. The performers wearing Sangoma jewellery further enhanced this. Southern African traditional spiritual jewellery is commonly identifiable to the African population; thus, this choice helped us to signal to an audience the separation of the self and the performative nature of the hypermasculine characters we were embodying. It provided clarity that through rituals we were summoning the spirit world to help us tell the narrative through our bodies and locate the work in an African spiritual realm.

The stock township hypermasculine characters we chose to 'perform' were the key motifs of the bricolage: a good for nothing man, thief, lazy, a man who fathers children with many wives but never looks after them, terrorist/villain, unemployed, violent, uneducated and a drunk. Some of the characters we chose to enact were labourers living in hostels, amagintsa or a tsotsi, young males that are often tasked to do chores for Ama-Grootman and a 'cheese boy' who represents the working middle class male in that community who often gets victimised because of his privilege.

The damage to the 'Positive shadow' of the internal self of the black man is abstract but the marks left on the body of both the victim and perpetrator of hypermasculine violence are real. This was ever present in the rehearsal room between Lulamile as an older black man and myself. It was impossible to ignore our lived experiences and not absorb them into the piece. In one of the segments, Lulamile spoke about having had to leave his

family behind and travel to Namibia, to work as a herd boy for close to no pay. This predisposed him to the thievery he eventually engaged in in order to make extra cash for his family. Additionally, I believed that my personal memories helped in exploring the notion of *Seriti*, how our shadows in their negative form affect us or are affected by society. I narrate here one of my personal experiences to illustrate what I mean by distorted, shadow less, hypermasculine violence and behaviour that I intuited was a mask for extraordinary vulnerability. This narrative became the centre point in the performance of *Seriti* and completes the arch of the project.

In the summer of 2016 I took a public taxi from the Cape Town city centre station to Philippi, a township about three kilometres away from Cape Town International airport. En route from Cape Town station on the 30-minute trip I decided to shut my eyes a bit and rest. Ten minutes into the trip, the passenger sitting behind me shook my shoulder and asked me in IsiXhosa if I knew where I was going. I politely answered in English that I was alright and aware of where I was going and still had some time before my drop off point. To my surprise, he suddenly got angry and told me that I should not speak to him in English, but rather in IsiXhosa. I said that I had replied in English because I am not very fluent in IsiXhosa.

I am not sure how my response in English offended him but suddenly he reacted in an angry outburst and started swearing at me and then took out a knife and stabbed me in my left shoulder. The knife got stuck in my shoulder, so he tried to pull it out, but he was unable to. In my shock and realisation that blood was splashing everywhere, I looked around the taxi to see if anybody witnessed what had just happened. I made eye contact with an older lady sitting in the back seat who was laughing hard as if she took pleasure from the violence. This made me realise that as a society, we have become so desensitized to a point that any harmful act to another body doesn't shake us anymore.

With that sense of disappointment I pleaded with the taxi driver to take me to the nearest hospital and his response was without compassion. He said that his priority was to drop the other passengers first and only afterwards would he consider taking me to the hospital. At that moment I realized that there was a sense of pride in my assailant because he had proven that he was stronger than me. It is possible that his act of violence granted him so much power that the older woman had laughed with nervousness rather than admonishing him. It is also possible that the taxi driver did not wish to challenge my assailant's status.

On reflection, at least two motives could have instigated the attack. The first is the politics of language, and closely related to that is the politics of belonging. In the multilingual context of South Africa, competence in non-indigenous languages, particularly English, can at times be understood as a marker of social class and mobility. It is possible that when I replied to my attacker in English and he found himself unable to answer he assumed I wanted to mock him. By physically attacking me the assailant sought to conquer the shame he may have been experiencing. The second possible motive, which is related to the first, is the fact that language here was read as a marker of belonging. My incompetence in isiXhosa marked me out as an outsider, and possibly a foreigner, and as such this attack and the reaction of fellow passengers might have had xenophobic sentiments.

The lesson learnt from this experience is how much resentment towards the English language black people have in South Africa and how they feel it has shamed them and taken away their pride. Claudia Welz (2014) defines shame as "that which is so precious and frail that it can be shattered when exposed to the gazes of others" (Welz, C. 118:2014). Following the first motive we could say my attacker's violent reaction came from a social vulnerability, that he felt undermined and was displeased with the idea that perhaps by speaking English I implied that I was better than him. I cannot be sure what my attacker was thinking when that knife entered my flesh, but I do know that my body will always have a scar that reminds me of that day. As Bester notes: "The marked body is not a physical "site", a place, but also a visualized "sight", a space - a space of the discursive re-enactment of violence" (Bester, 2002:168). Thus, it is that both perpetrator and victim of hypermasculine behaviour are caught in a chain of cause and effect. Violent outbursts in black males still prevail, and are closely associated with alcohol and drug abuse, unemployment and employability, music or glorified contemporary culture.

In Seriti, I understood that some of these expressions are fuelled by the need for an outcry and an urgency to shed the embedded transgenerational trauma that is inherited, And, I propose, much of it is due to Post-traumatic stress which in a clinical sense refers "to a feeling of a foreshortened future, exaggerated starts, outbursts of anger, and the difficulty of staying awake or falling asleep. Hyper-vigilant symptoms and all these descriptions fall under the definition of post-traumatic stress" (Suliman & Stein, 2012:2). The black male in the township is forever on the alert, always in danger, never at rest. And so the dysfunctional behaviour is recycled over and over. In *Seriti* we represented this on going dynamic between

the two male figures in the form of ridiculing, inflicting physical bodily harm by hitting each with belts and stabbing, and a constant sense between the two male figures of vigilance and danger about overstepping an invisible line. I believe from feedback that the sense of danger and discomfort in the performance was palpable and apparently it was very hard to watch.

The combination of old and young male energies in the rehearsal room were fruitful in that the process between us organically re-enacted black male hierarchical dynamics between generations. Lulamile was concerned about whether some of the images and scenes were illuminating hypermasculinity and were relevant enough to the concept. His challenge was: "Yes we have created these moments and images of violence, but do they really translate to the task of questioning hyper-masculinities?" (Lulamile, Nikani, 2017). My response to his questions was simple: that I'm not sure if the images and moments we had created spoke to theoretical performative inquiries on masculinities and that I was not intent on finding a solution in representation but rather in exploring, in 'sitting' inside the memories, images and embodiment of hypermasculinity to see what emerges.

Perhaps the focus or response to the question should be in the realisation that the thesis question in Seriti itself is based on the idea of practice as research (PaR) - to keep inquiring how these stereotypes are represented and can be disrupted. For example, there's a way that a Pantsula (a person that evokes street culture) walks down the streets in his new *Chuck Taylor*'s[9] and the way he wears his 'Panama' hat in the township. He is aware that everybody is aware of what kind of a man he is; he has a quick and fast tempo on his feet while the upper body twists and turns in a swagger, exuding signals that he is not to be messed with. It is a performance of bravado and not surprising that this street style evolved into a sophisticated and intricate dance form. And there's Ama-Grootman; these are the big guys who wear the latest fashion in the township, the money spenders, and are all about flashy cars, parties and women. Their weight in mobility is more grounded and the tempo of their gestural 'life' is executed with consideration, and ease. Ama-Grootman exudes power through his weight, communicates slowly and is very sure of his worth and status. Nobody must rush him. He is his own man. Whereas Mr Pantusla's quick and light legwork says he can win a knife fight or run away at the drop of a hat, Ama-Grootman will stand his ground. He believes in his own power. Generally Pantsula stereotypes can be associated

[9] (Chuck Taylor All-Stars or Converse All Stars is a model of casual shoe manufactured by the Converse company. The sneaker was initially developed as a basketball shoe in the early 20th century).

with youthful mannerisms while Ama-Grootman are more mature and older.

Both these hyper visible men have authority in the township and have claim to the territory. In our conversations during rehearsals Lulamile and I began to echo the fight for territory. We argued about the projection of his voice for the stereotype he was exploring. I said that his voice is too low for the character, but he defended his performance by claiming that he had a deep voice that carried, that transported vibrations in the room and even suggested that the rehearsal space acoustics were enough to carry a crispy clear sound.

I realized then that he was affirming his sense of age, power and authority that he assumes over the other male body in the space solely based on the township rules and the understanding of hierarchy amongst black men and women[10]. It might also be noted that in African culture, an older male carries his authority in his command of language. It became apparent to me that he was using language as a means of control and dominance to claim his authority. I was also not sure whether as collaborators in the devising process the director-performer relationship between us became blurred. I realized that in this conversation we began re-enacting the very same hypermasculine behaviour that we were trying to disrupt. I noticed that somehow these learned normalised township behaviours played out reflexively in us without being conscious that they exist in our bodies.

This is what then became the focus in workshopping *Seriti*: recalling and re-inhabiting the very real body and space of violence to see what lies inside it, to examine what it is made of, and to confront my own fear of it, knowledge of it, and memories of past narratives, sounds, sights, and dynamics that haunt and taunt the male psyche. I was hoping that this project would open conversations about ways that the re-enactment of violence and the impact of traumatic memories that manifest and shape the male stereotype can be imaged and re-imagined, and thus that *Seriti* will begin to reveal its true self. However, whereas the latter was partially achieved it was in the following case study that a path towards the healed and true male-self began to reveal itself.

[10] In the Nguni tradition women are not allowed to consume some parts of a sheep, goat or cow. The sheep's head became a symbol to highlight the inherent hyper masculine or patriarchal entitlement and its claim of power over the opposite gender.

2nd Case Study (Solo project): *Metsi (Water)*

I was brought up by a community of women without the presence of men and I realized in my research that this has had a profound influence on my responses to the problem of hypermasculine society and the study of masculinities points to the idea that masculinity is associated with the physical strength that the male body exudes, and I have found that this lack of, or non-showcasing of physical strength is where the shift can begin to happen with the intervention of the feminine spirit and body. Thus in the solo project of *Metsi*, I looked at how women living in households without the presence of a male body often had to and still assume the double role of patriarch and matriarch. Motsemme's inquiry on silenced narratives of women underscored my conceptual process in *Metsi* with her investigation into the dislocation of family structures. Women became dependent on wages received from their "exiled" men and became single parents. They often had to take on domestic or farm labour and lost their democratic right to exercise their freedom of choice in society.

It is interesting how this research showed how societies' construct of gender and the perception of masculinity changes or affects the construction and perception of women/femininity. This form of 'normalised livelihood' became the cornerstone of the narratives of black women living in urban South African townships. Essentially, I ended up exploring childhood memories of growing up with my aunt, grandmother and mother. While my initial impulse was to honour the memory of the invisible but powerful women in my life, on reflection I see that my association with those female figures was that of a spirit of healing. I am attracted to the positive healing body and spirit of the 'feminine'.

As part of the MA coursework and research as practice, professor Mark Fleishman, the course convenor, tasked me with devising a one-person show in response to a personal obsession that emerges from my own biography, with the methodological approach based on an object; which could be described as a 'personal power object'. It had to be an object which has great meaning for me personally, and which contains within it something fundamental about who I am. This 'personal power object' was to be a starting point for the development of my performance piece and I was to improvise around it and write about it descriptively at first and then in more abstract ways. In other words, I needed to find a

central image for what I want to express which is connected to, or emerges from, the 'personal power object' and which creates a metaphor.

My object of obsession was water. As far as I can remember, my childhood memories are filled with stories about the impact that water has had on both my childhood and my adult life. Thus, I began by exploring my biographical narrative based on Metsi (water) in three parts. The first part or segment was a story about my aunt who lost her husband in exile and was troubled by the unexplained flooding of her house every night. The second part or narrative was about my grandmother who raised me in the early years of my childhood and her obsession with cleaning the front red stoep of her house. The third story was about my mother and the birth of my fourth sister who was born a premature baby and consequently stayed in an incubator for about three months at the hospital - and the memory of her arrival at home.

I started my creative process by collecting objects or props that I felt spoke to these narratives. These objects included: a burner two plate stove, a large metallic bath, dinner plates, fork and knives, cooking pots, a steaming pot and a blanket, cooking oil, canned Lucky starfish and pap from home.

The idea was for me to able to cook throughout and feed at least one member of the audience at the end of the show[11]. I then sourced video images of pouring rain, a running goat and the image of blood dripping. I wanted to project these visuals on a large screen during the three segments of these narrative parts to heighten the aesthetics of the performance and the world I was creating. A five by nine-meter white cyclorama covered the entire backdrop of the theatre performance space.

In the first segment, the narrative centred on my aunt who had lost her husband and I presented the notion of loss, cleansing and mourning. After her loss, my mother and I would constantly visit my aunt and spend the entire day with her at her house in order to comfort her during this painful time. We would have dinner with her in the evening and just before we went home, would make sure that all is well, and she can rest throughout the

[11] I had been cooking the fish from the beginning of the show, I dished up pap and the fish on one plate and asked a man from the audience to join me on stage. I gently asked him to sit down on the chair while I fed him food. The feeding process felt strange to me because it was intimate and yet at the same time uncomfortable. The reason for feeding another man was to evoke the idea of how as a society we are constantly feeding each other false embodied mannerisms. And perhaps I also wanted to provoke the idea of how men feed each other false narratives of what it means to be a man.

night. Things became strange when one morning, we came to the house and there was water pouring from underneath the kitchen door. My mother had the spare keys to the house, so she opened the door and as we entered the house we realised that the kitchen tap was closed, and the sink was dry, but the floor was filled with water. As we moved into the lounge we saw that the couches were dripping, and the entire room was filled with water ankle high. The taps in the bathroom were also closed and just like the kitchen - the sink and bath were dry. As we opened her bedroom we found her sleeping and although the carpeted floor was also filled with water, the bed where she slept was dry.

My mother woke her up and asked her if she knew what had happened to the house. She looked as surprised as we were and could not understand the flooding of the house. We spent the whole day helping her clean up the entire house. By the time we had finished it was evening. So, we prepared dinner and ate together, after which we said our goodbyes and went home, with the promise that we will come back in the morning to check up on her. The following day we went back to her house and we encountered the same problem and still, she could not remember how the house got flooded. Now, these phenomena occurred for the entire week and we could not solve the mystery. She died that weekend. Till this day my family has never been able to explain or make sense of how the house was constantly flooded.

I focused on exploring this narrative in the light of cleansing as a ritual; it is commonly known in the South African black culture that steaming is the best way to cleanse oneself of negative energies that might be surrounding one's 'aura'. Hence, I incorporated this ritual as a form of ridding myself of this binding memory and to celebrate the spirit of my aunt in a respectful manner and this meant laying her spirit to rest. In this scene, I also included the rainfall playing on the screen behind me as a symbolic image that sought to portray flooding as cleansing. We believe in my family that rain is a symbol of new beginnings and blessings, and that we have a very strong connection with water and refer to ourselves as "aba Ndawo", children who are born of water. I believe that water is life and secondly water is used in many spiritual practices as a form of healing.

In performing the ritual, I used the physical movement that would embody the ritual itself. This ritual for me came as a form of a prayer that I performed in shamanistic or Sangoma intensive, undulating physical movements. It included the reveal of a wet body covered under a blanket that symbolises a body that had been poured with water. In this

scene I wanted to portray a wounded male body that is in search of healing. That being said, in this process I acknowledged that our bodies still remember the past and only through time and accepting our wounds we are able to heal. In this segment I realised that I could not embody my aunt's mannerisms but rather her memory served as a source for healing.

The second segment was about my fascination with the symbolism of the red stoep in township houses and what that memory meant to me. I still wonder how most black families in the townships have such adoration for, or feel the need to, paint their porches red. I have always seen the red stoep not just as a colour that gave a household a sense of pride and dignity but also as a way that most black families used this colouring to remember or pay homage to the loved ones that they have lost over the years. What I saw when I looked at these stoeps was blood spilling and I was in awe of how these families felt the need to preserve this nostalgic memory. My grandmother always said when there was a death in the family or challenging times, "Mtwanam kuzo lunga" simply meaning that things will be okay one day. Then she would wake up every morning to go and clean the stoep and this act became a ritual for her that I have never been able to shake off.

Therefore, this segment was based on my grandmother's relationship with the stoep and her will to stay positive even when things were hard. This narrative was expressed through physicalized dance, chorographical movements, to interpret her need to keep things together even though there was misery. The choreographed movements were lyrical and circular in motion, suggestive of a polishing motion. Hence the dance movements were performed with such gentleness and tenderness suggesting that we always need to treat our pain carefully and dress our wounds with care. While this entire scene was unfolding, the cyclorama played the video of a goat that is running towards what seems like infinity. This for me evoked a metaphor of how we as men never stop running from our past in life and are not willing to confront our misshapen existence. We are all in search of something, or the need to overcome our own misfortunes. Even though we don't know what it is we are driven by a need for a better life or a sense of being seen as a person in the world.

The third segment focused on the memory that I experienced as a child living with my mother and her ability to let go of negative transgressive acts and not to hold on to traumatic events. In this scene, I performed the following monologue in a realistic style of performance:

It was one Sunday morning in Alexandra Township just about 20 minutes north from

the city of Johannesburg. My mother had just given birth to my fourth sister and there was a sense of warmth and joy in the house. That morning my mother woke up and just like my grandmother had done, she took the broom and swept her red stoep, followed by a proper mopping with a bucket of water and then the application of red polish on the stoep. After the polish had dried she immediately brushed the polish off to make it 'super' shiny. Having completed this ritual, she went on to wash my sister's cloth baby nappies that she had soaked in water the night before.

Now, my mother was particular about her laundry, it had to be very clean or nothing at all. This meant that the washing of these nappies was a process that required serious attention. They had to be rinsed of the baby's stool or urine and then washed by hand in water filled with washing powder, transferred into another bucket to rinse and then into the last bucket that contained fabric softener. Last, was the joy that she had on her face while hanging the nappies on the washing line just in front of her shining red stoep. She then came into the house to prepare Sunday lunch; Sundays have always been special for my family because this is the day that we relax and spend time together. There was a lovely energy in the air; our neighbours were playing music, kids laughing and playing in the yards, taxis hooting for passengers as usual and the best part was the smell of various foods.

Just as we were about to eat lunch we heard the voice of a man saying, "stop him, stop him". My mother instructed us all to stay in the house, so I ran and watched through the window to see what was happening outside. I saw a group of men chasing a man towards our house and they were all carrying machetes. The man tripped just before the porch of our house and just underneath the washing line. Within a few seconds, the other men had caught up with him and the next thing I saw was this man being hacked with machetes. Unexpectedly one of the men smashed him on the head and suddenly blood sprayed all over my sister's clean white nappies. All those men left him there for dead as if nothing happened. I can still remember that day as a clear sky, my mom had no choice but to burn the nappies after the police had left. Throughout this scene the image of dripping blood was projected onto the screen behind me, making the connection between the red stoep and the violent image that I associate with it.

In reflecting on *Metsi* as the performer I am in the view that the exploration might not have given the research its landmark. But the findings were helpful in pointing out the dislocation of family structures and the part these play in the performance of black

hypermasculinity. My aim was to immerse myself in the memory of growing up and being raised by these three women and to interrogate and embody their very emotional sense of loss while keeping their households together in the absence of their husbands. In this work I wanted to celebrate the resourcefulness, understanding, patience and empathy of hard-working women who continue to raise boys into men without the presence of a father figure in their homes.

The association of women with my object of obsession (water) and that other liquid of pain, blood, seems in retrospect to announce itself as a yearning for healing for the black male figure, healing from what has been witnessed, from continual post-traumatic stress and a life of hyper-danger and hyper responsiveness. Perhaps also, the way the female body carries itself and engages with being content with 'self' indicates true power. That hypermasculine men misunderstand this power is a tragedy because if we can learn from their caring mannerisms we too can connect with ourselves.

Conclusion

There has been extensive interest in literature focused on masculinities globally and this research points directly to the construction of gender systems within the socio-political framework. It is believed by most theorists that gender on its own, somehow becomes performative in shifting social relations. Researchers on gender studies make a correlation between construction of masculinities and the manifestation of identities through 'performances', often as a site of an interaction between colonial, traditional, patriarchal, feminist, religious and queer theories.

In exploring these narratives in *Seriti* and *Metsi* it was my intention to portray how the social environment, which we grow up or live in influences memory and how these circumstances inform how the young generations learn from older male generations. The socialized learning foundation phase is critical in how a child absorbs information and depends on how the child is taught by their elders in their communities. A black child growing up watching behaviours that are toxic is likely to re-enact the same behaviour, solely because he or she learns from a broken society, for instance, the violence that is

constantly perpetuated in their communities. These violent acts may present themselves in different forms, whether it be emotional violence, physical violence or psychological violence that influence how children see the world or react to situations vis-a-vis the intergenerational trauma they might have experienced. Theogene Niwenshuti states that "If a generation which lived through violence is not treated and cured, the trauma risks to be transmitted to the next generations. It's one of the crucial consequences of intergenerational trauma which, at long-term, might alienate the whole community and the whole society in general" (Niwenshuti, 2013:29). *Metsi* has helped me to find a way of processing past inherited traumatic memories and dynamics that troubled me at the beginning of my research.

The paper acknowledges that by exploring vulnerabilities of both men and women in re-shaping the physical embodiment of specific stereotypes, a better representation of self may become possible. Through inscribing with the body and reflecting on both finished projects through this writing, I suggest I was able to produce outcomes that have steered the research question closer to its core and effective in exploring embodied gender tensions that are carried in the black male body while in a confrontation with the effect of my own memories as a black male. In exploring embodied violence, the research helped in identifying that our bodies as black males carry past and current scars and through excavating our own memory on the violence that we have experienced we could begin to find a sense of healing. I believe that healing the black male body is highly important in our society, if we intend to unearth a different way of being in the world. It was not easy to embody some of the normalized but dangerous and disturbing violent stereotypical behaviours in the work.

Moving forward, in my view I need to retrieve the *Seriti* project, to interrogate and expand on those research findings. I sense a kind of progressive circular logic in this. Having experienced the trauma and healing offered in a revisiting of my past in *Metsi*, I feel fortified in my mission to return to the search for *Seriti,* for the better male self, for a shape of self or the sense of a positive shadow; a reflection of self-pride. For this final production, I will again insert my own body and that of Lulamile Nikani and possibly one other black male body into the space of exploration. My core focus here will be conceptualising how our own literal shadows move in the space and what shape they could take in an on-going effort to disrupt stereotypes and representations of hypermasculinity through performance.

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Images of *Seriti*

Figure 0-1 Owen Manamela-Mogane. Red stoep scene Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-2 Owen Manamela-Mogane. Red stoep scene Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-3 Owen Manamela-Mogane. Red stoep scene Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-4 Lulamile Bongo Nikani. Preparing ritual Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-5. Owen and Lulamile Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-6. Owen and Lulamile. Picture by Rob Keith

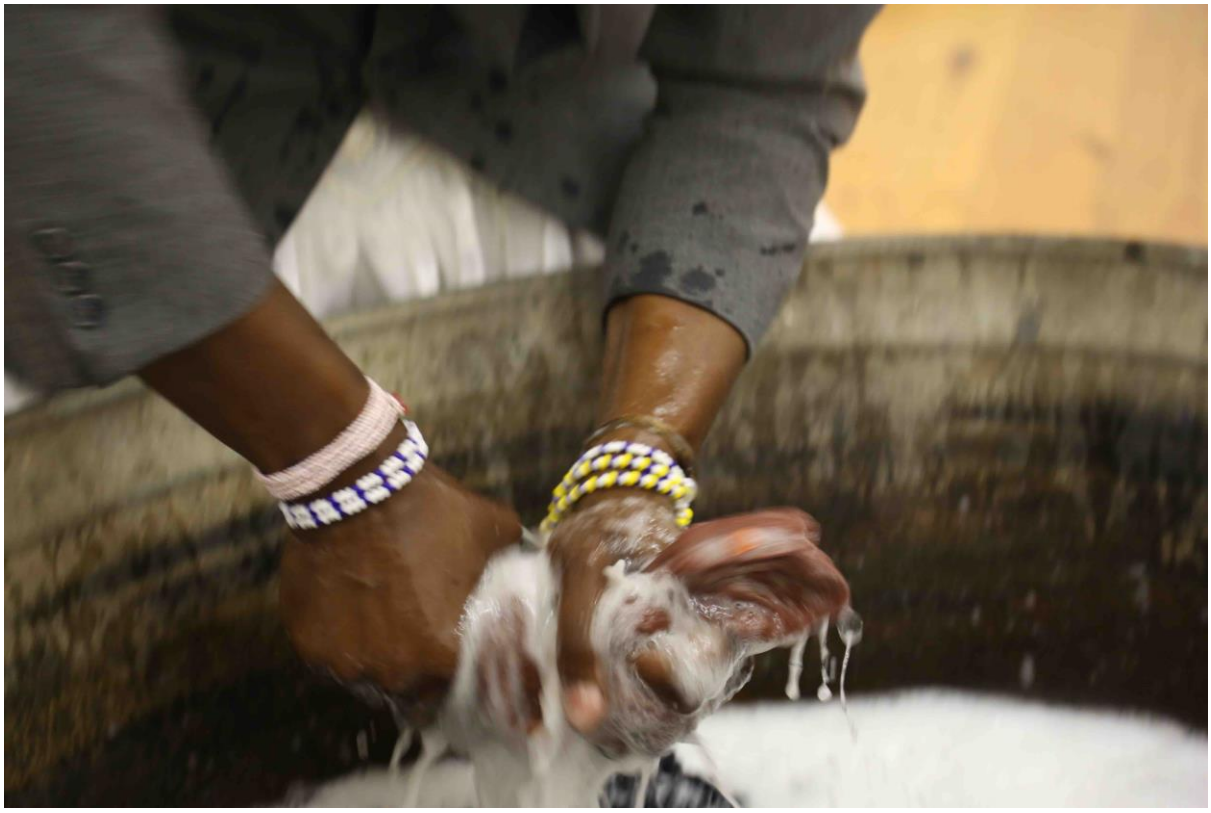

Figure 0-7 .Owen. washing scene Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-8. Lulamile and Owen. Dishes scene Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-9 .Lulamile bath scene Picture by Rob keith

Figure 0-10. Owen and Lulamile Hostel scene. Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-11. Figure 0-12. Owen and Lulamile. Hostel, sleeping scene Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-13. Figure 0-14. Owen and Lulamile. Amagintsa scene. Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-15. Owen Manamela-Mogane. Pantsula scene. Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-16. Pantsula depiction Picture by Rob

Figure 0-17. Owen and Lulamile. Prison scene. Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-18. Owen and Lulamile. Male on male violence scene Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-19 Owen Manamela-Mogane. Knife scene. Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-20. sheeps head scene. Picture by Rob Keith

Figure 0-21. Owen Manamela-Mogane. Tall figure in a wedding dress. Picture by Rob Keith