

## 'Performing the Riots'

The body as a site of political action  
& the 5Rhythms™  
as a tool for transformation



(Image of rioters in Brixton, South London 2011)

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I, Anna Gayle, hereby declare that there is no unacknowledged collusion in this dissertation and no plagiarism.

# INTRODUCTION

“When we speak of dance and politics, we speak of the power of dance to make and unmake identities.” (Franko 2006: 7)

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I will be exploring meanings of the August 2011 UK riots, looking at the physical action that occurred, and the political significance of those actions (with specific focus on the bodies performing them). I will discuss the events leading up to the rioting and the issues raised in relation to these events. I will then explore some of the major discourses surrounding the riots and the possible symbolic meanings of these events. I will use statistics taken from a report conducted by the London School of Economics and the Guardian newspaper in order to gain a clearer picture of those involved in the events. With this information I will define a ‘majority group’<sup>1</sup> of participants within a relevant socio-political framework. By looking at the identities of that group, I will begin to deconstruct behaviours and actions, exploring theories as to how these groups have been identified, understood, ‘othered’ and removed from a discourse of worthiness in relation to hegemonic discourses and ‘characteristics’ that are deemed acceptable and ‘proper’, or not.

In my second chapter, I will identify my use of the term ‘performance’ within the context of these events and the identities and behaviours of those performing actions within them. I will then move on to explore ideas around the social construction of identities, looking specifically at theories of gender, race and ethnicity, post-colonial theories of ‘otherness’ and ideas of abject bodies, as a way to situate and more clearly define the group highlighted in Chapter 1. I will look at the way that ‘urban youth’ have been ‘othered’ in our society and the discourses of difference that support and accept ideas of superior and inferior ways of ‘being’ in the world. This will move towards the individual subject, the relationship between mind and body and the subjugation of the physical in favour of the rational - these arguments will be positioned in relation to decisions that have been made about groups, communities or individuals that challenge our cultures dominant hegemonic position<sup>2</sup>, (Said 1978; Mouffe 1979; Bocoock 1986; Thomas 2009; Butler, Laclau, Zizek 2000) moving from the ‘otherness’ of ‘groups’ to the ‘otherness’ of the body.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this dissertation I will refer to the group identified by the LSE and Guardian report as the majority of those performing the riots. I will also refer to them as the “majority group”, “urban youth” the “performing group” and “my chosen client group” at different points throughout this dissertation

<sup>2</sup> I am referring here to the authority of western society’s dominant ideologies, the supremacy and control of that perspective and its interpretation of individuals and groups of cultural, social and ethnic ‘difference’.

In my third chapter I will be looking at two specific forms of 'improvised dance' and how they effect and benefit individuals in their personal and 'social lives'. I will approach these as powerful and conscious means to (re-) engage and transform bodies, emotions, social narratives and identities, in a discourse of meaning, self-reflection, deconstruction, new understanding and therefore new experience of oneself in the world. From this position, I will consider 'the dance'<sup>3</sup> as a tool for 'participation', 'engagement' and 'transformation'<sup>4</sup>. (Appendix A)

I will explore the documentary "*Rize*" by David LaChapelle<sup>5</sup>, making links with the August 2011 UK Riots, the 'majority group' that were identified and the issues that have been raised in relation to their 'actions'. I will use "*Rize*" as an example and an accessible way into the practice of the 5Rhythms, by highlighting the participants' experiences of the transformative power of catharsis and community within this dance form, linking it to African ritual, religious and ecstatic dance practices<sup>6</sup>. I will use the discussion of the ecstatic and participatory experience to relate it to that of the 5Rhythms™<sup>7</sup>. I will make reference to own personal experience and practice of the 5Rhythms (Appendix B), alongside my desire to teach and apply this work as an intervention with the 'groups' I have identified in Chapter 1. I will reference the teaching of Gabrielle Roth (the founder of 5Rhythms), Emma Leech (who has used the work with the groups I am interested in) and I will reference the academic research of Andrea Juhan (member of Gabrielle's core faculty) in her study of a group of the dance, linking it back to the 'young people' in "*Rize*" and to the 'young

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<sup>3</sup> When speaking of the 'the dance', I am addressing the form in a very general way – this is due to the landscape of dance theory being so vast. When exploring specific case studies or specific forms I will address them by name.

<sup>4</sup> I will explore the difficulties in choosing 'transformation' as part of my terminology and my specific reasons for doing so, looking at transformation from within a framework of phenomenological, heuristic and humanistic theories. I will justify and explain my use of this terminology in Appendix A. I am not entering into a detailed discussion of these theories within the body of my dissertation due to the limited word count. However, I am acknowledging that they have greatly supported my understanding and confirmed my own philosophical position within this exploration.

<sup>5</sup> I chose "*Rize*" as an example due to its accessibility to the groups I am most interested in as well as its similarities in experience to the 5 rhythms. I later found out that Emma Leech (5Rhythms teacher) has used it to introduce the wildness and catharsis of the dance to a group of participants in Feltham young offenders institute.

<sup>6</sup> Here, I acknowledge the links with ritual practice, which I will reference later in this dissertation but I will not move much further into this area, due to the vastness of the dance practices within it and restriction of word count.

<sup>7</sup> The 5Rhythms is a trademarked body of work, however, for the purpose of clarity and ease for the reader, I will not use the trademark symbol again throughout this dissertation.

people' defined as the 'majority' in Chapter 1 – considering always, the application of the dance as an intervention with that group.

I will conclude by tracing my journey through this dissertation, discussing how this research has served me in clarifying my intentions and supporting my ideas of working with socially disengaged young people, in consideration of the theories explored throughout.

# CHAPTER 1

## POLITICAL PERFORMANCE OR JUST 'PURE CRIMINALITY?'

“Savagery is a possibility within us all. Some of us have [just] been lucky enough not to have to call upon it for survival; others, exhausted from failure, can justify resorting to it.” (Batmanghelidjh 2011)

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On Aug 4<sup>th</sup> 2011, Mark Duggan (a 29 year old black male from Tottenham, North London) was killed by police officers in a dubious incident that provoked uproar in his local community and across the country. (Appendix C)

A few days later and without explanation as to the sequence of events that lead to his death, Mark Duggan's body was identified by his family - later the same day, family members, friends and members of the local community congregated outside Tottenham police station requesting more information about his death. A peaceful protest outside the station soon turned into violent clashes with police, when a 16 year old girl approaching the police line was physically attacked by officers for throwing stones – this attack was reported to be another trigger to the major disturbance that occurred shortly after.

Rioting in the Tottenham area began that night, cars were burned and banks and shops broken into and looted – the rioting in the area carried on through the night - the following day spreading to Ealing, Brixton, Hackney, Clapham Junction, Camden and across London and other British cities where it continued for 4 four days and nights.

We were bombarded by images of these events - you couldn't open a paper or look on the internet without being flooded by interpretations and opinions, representations and discussions of this 'performance' and what it might be showing and telling us. What were the causes and reasons behind it? Was it political? What were the 'participants' in this 'spectacle' performing? And what can we read of these events about these people and their actions? Justification and reasons were many - new government policies and increased spending cuts in youth services are at cause - the increasing wealth gap between the middle and working (or under) classes is to blame. Lack of education and opportunity for individuals coming from certain

backgrounds is at fault. Injustice and racial inequality in the handling and representation of the black and ethnic minority communities producing resentment and anger at stop and search policies and the abuse of power by the police. Increasing capitalist obsession in our culture, more focus on money and materialism and more awareness of lack and injustice for those who are living in poverty and deprivation. Corruption within the government and financial and policing institutions supporting the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer – all these comments were part of the discussion and were considered motivating factors at the root cause of these actions.

So what exactly were the actions? One particular image that stuck in my mind was of a group of 'youths' who had broken into Ladrokes bookmakers in Clapham Junction. Footage taken from the CCTV camera showed them jumping onto the counters and tearing the screens from the walls. Throwing them to the ground, where they jumped and smashed the screens. They weren't stealing – there was a very different of action happening here, and it was dynamic, emotional, destructive, aggressive and physical. I was fascinated by the expression I witnessed in the riots – the body's engagement in the events and the display of emotion that powered these actions were palpable. "It just looked like adrenalin, like their blood was pumping so much. Their eyes were lit up, they were just so in the moment, it was just a buzz." (Luke 2012) For me, observing this physicality began to stimulate ideas of ways to engage these 'bodies' and channel the emotion behind these movements. For me, the body was speaking volumes here and the expression was one of bodies. Like the image used on the cover of this dissertation (which struck me as a powerful representation of what I perceived and "understood" of the events) the participants were expressing through movement what could be harnessed and expressed with the same emotion through dance.<sup>8</sup>

Many claimed that the riots were the expression of gangs of mindless criminals – with no political intent of awareness – just a callous and carefree attitude, to their lives and their own communities. There were so many voices and differing opinions coming from the MP's, the youth and social sectors, the middles classes and the young people who were involved - a diverse audience, reading the events and

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<sup>8</sup> I wanted to introduce my ideas here and explain the perspective from which I perceived the events. I will extend this discussion of improvised dance as a means of engaging bodies with regards to these ideas in Chapter 3.

actions with very different perspectives and levels of understanding. What I saw was an explosion, a collective catharsis and a physical frenzy. A rebellion of that which has been repressed and demonized by the ideology of the 'dominant classes' and a physical expression and performance of identity that came with it.

I witnessed a physical and symbolic attack on a constructed identity that supports limitation and the societal structures that have created and continually enforce it. I also witnessed a society that refuses to acknowledge, and doesn't really care to understand that these actions existed as part of our collective experience - whether we watched them from the comfort of homes in areas that were untouched by the pandemonium, or on our own burning streets. Whether the action was conscious or not, these actions were relevant to us all. As became the slogan for the riots and discontent of last summer, "If the young are not initiated into the villiage, they will burn it down just to feel its warmth". (McVeigh 2011)

This was an outcry from the edges of our society, an act of self-destruction - young people attacking their own communities, and their own future prospects, fully aware of the consequences but so engaged in the moment, in the hysteria and in the freedom and physical power of their own agency. There was the embodiment of a narrative – a narrative of the marginilised, the excluded, those with nothing – no opportunities and no voice, and no one that understands their language anyway. There was also the expression of a cultural memory (Counsell and Mock 2009) - a 'community' experience of racism, injustice and oppression and a socio-economic position that seems to breed rage and resentment. Interestingly, the riots erupted not far from the site of the Broadwater Farm Riots of 1985, which were 'triggered' by another suspicious incident of an afro-caribbean woman (Cynthia Jarrett) who 'died' in police custody – this all infused and added to existing feelings of injustice in within 'communities' full of resentment and rage towards a system the governs and polices over them.

With support from various funding bodies, research was conducted as an attempt to provide a thorough and 'full-scale study of the riots'. The main intention of this project was to produce 'high-quality social research', to inform and affect both public and political debate.



This report brings together the outcome of the first phase of the study, focusing in a way that has not previously been possible on the nature, motivations, attitudes and experiences of those who rioted across London and in Birmingham, Manchester, Salford, Nottingham and Liverpool. (Rusbridger and Rees 2011: 2)

*'Reading the Riots'* was a collaborative effort between the Guardian Newspaper and The LSE's (London School of Economics) Social Policy Department - one that produced interesting demographic results, which are most relevant within this discussion.

There is little doubt that poverty and joblessness scar large areas of Britain and that the vicious public spending cuts will vastly exacerbate the problem. Tottenham... is among London's poorest boroughs, with 54 applicants chasing every registered job vacancy. Britain is less equal, in wages, wealth and life chances, than at any time for a century. A map of the London riots matches almost exactly the map of the most deprived areas in London... (Malik 2001)

Of the young people interviewed for this project, four fifths of them were male, 80% were 'non-white', 60% were between the ages of 10 and 20 and... "59% came from the most deprived 20% of areas in the UK... 64% came from the poorest fifth of areas... (Rusbridger and Rees 2011: 5) This begins to paint a very clear picture of the demographic of those involved (within the context of this report and throughout my discussion), their collective 'identity' and the pockets of society to which they belong. The majority of those interviewed as part of the report were young, black (or of ethnic minority), and of lower working class status<sup>9</sup>. Surely this is a political statement in itself – one that raises some interesting questions when attempting to further decipher symbolic meanings with regards to 'their performance'.

A personal friend (and journalist on the project) Ben Ferguson - had the task of conducting extensive confidential interviews with the young people - all of whom had been directly involved in the rioting. Some he visited in prison but most he met in their 'communities', on their 'street's and 'estates' (in some of the cities most dangerous and deprived areas), in order "...to understand exactly who had been involved in the riots and what their motivations were." (Rusbridger and Rees 2011: 3) - to discuss their thoughts on the events that occurred, and what they perceived might be the possible meanings behind them. Of the countless young people he

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<sup>9</sup> The group defined within the LSE and Guardian report as the majority will be the group I will be referring to throughout this dissertation – they are also the 'group' I am most interested in with regards to the application and practice of my chosen dance methodology.

interviewed, there was a common thread to their narrative and perspective on the events and the reasons behind them. "Like many others 'he' has come to believe a mysterious "authority" are doing nothing to help and "they" are the cause of his unfortunate situation." (Ferguson 2011)

The main findings of the report echoed this statement, highlighting feelings of frustration, anger, and deep resentment with regards to unfair treatment of individuals (mainly members' of lower working class ethnic/black communities). Positioned alongside (and often discussed in relationship to this) was the huge increase in police stop and search activity, which provoked feelings of shame, and powerlessness by young people, some of whom reported to being stopped and searched (often aggressively and sometimes violently), up to 4 or 5 times in a day - 85% of those interviewed were of the opinion that this was a huge contributing factor. Young people felt violated, harassed, racially discriminated against and unfairly targeted by police. Previous community clashes with police and subsequent rioting in specific areas of London (Brixton and Broadwater Green in Tottenham particularly) seemed to further give emphasis to these issues and add more fuel to a history of strained and fractured community relations, violence, conflict and injustice between the police and certain communities. (Rusbridger and Rees 2011) "We're a community that doesn't expect justice", says one of the characters in the Tricycle's verbatim piece, 'the Riots'<sup>10</sup>. (Slovo 2011)

Many of the young rioters put their involvement down to opportunism - a chance to get hold of 'free stuff' and luxury items that they and their families could not afford otherwise. "I wouldn't say [it was] greed, I'd say it was more like hunger. Not belly rumbling hunger, more like pockets rumbling." (Karl 2012) It was a chance to make some money (by selling on stolen goods), a chance to take advantage of the 'slackness' and 'suspension' of social rules and conventions - to challenge their usual social, economic and political position – a chance to take some of their power back (whether consciously or unconsciously) from the oppressive institutions who govern and control individual and communities and their social positions within our society (Our Crime 2012).

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<sup>10</sup> This was a piece of verbatim theatre about the events that took place over August 2011 - taken from real testimonies of the riots and offering perspectives from various positions of society.

Other strong motivating factors were linked to increases in tuition fees, closure and major cuts across the youth services (including the Connexions advisory service) and scrapping of education maintenance allowance. Many spoke of their own perceptions of social and economic injustice as well as collective anger and reactions towards the police shooting and murder of Mark Duggan. “When I saw the initial video from North London after Mark Duggan’s murder... emotions were definitely swayed. There was something about going against the police. I’ve been a victim of police brutality, so I could relate to it and it made me angry.” (Karl 2012)

So much focus was placed on the looting, rioting and destruction being enacted in local communities, that many seemed to overlook the fact that local gang opposition was also ‘suspended’ throughout the 4-day period. Infamous postcode rival gangs came together for these few days, to stand on the same side, to represent the same gang, the same tribe, the same message and the same political statement, the same action. “It was a weird sense of harmony. No problems – it was a united front.” (Karl 2012) But what was that statement? What was the action? How was it embodied and what does it symbolize for the ‘groups’ that were involved and for our society as a whole?

One thing was for sure - there was a break in the system (and it’s rules) for that period of time, and this encouraged a transgression of other rules and codes that many of the young people living in the city’s poorest housing estates and most deprived and dangerous areas have come to know as the norm and have very much been defined by (and deeply resent).

Intentions were visceral but unintelligible. Many have argued they were witnessing thuggery and criminality for the sheer fun of it - action without any political reasoning or deeper meaning. (Slovo 2011) Yet these terms themselves highlight specific groups and the resulting behaviour and attitudes of definite cultural factors, including unemployment, lack of education, huge levels of illiteracy and inability to live and operate within societies expectation and requirements – factors that clearly contribute and I daresay ‘create’ criminal displays of this nature, and are therefore hugely political. (Batmanghelidjh 2011)

The polarisation between the claim that ‘the riots are a response to unemployment and wasted lives’ and the insistence that ‘the violence constitutes mere criminality’ makes little sense. There is clearly more

to the riots than simple random hooliganism. But that does not mean that the riots, as many have claimed, are protests against disenfranchisement, social exclusion and wasted lives. In fact, it's precisely because of disenfranchisement, social exclusion and wasted lives that these are not 'protests' in any way, but a mixture of incoherent rage, gang thuggery and teenage mayhem. Disengaged not just from the political process... but also from a sense of the community or the collective, there is a generation with no focus for their anger and resentment and no reason to fear or feel responsible for the consequences of their actions. (Malik 2011)

It is this set of complex and paradoxical variables that I am considering in this dissertation and in my further research and suggestions. Clearly there is much more than hooliganism at play here, and that is what I will be going on to discuss in Chapter 2 by exploring the social constructions of the identities being performed. In Chapter 3 I will look at physical dance forms that other communities (with similar issues and representations) have found to channel and transform these negative feelings, creating a self-reflexive dialogue, deconstructing identities and forging new understandings, and renewed personal and collective identities.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PERFORMING ELEMENTS: CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS, SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED

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#### What is performance?

Performances are actions... behaviour is the “object of study”... the “repertory”, namely, what people do in the activity of their doing it... Performance must be construed as a “broad spectrum” or “continuum” of human actions ranging from ritual... the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactments of social... gender, race and class roles... The underlying notion is that any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance... (Schechner 2006:1-2)

My main interests here are in consideration of the following questions: What are the identities of the ‘majority group’ (defined in Chapter 1) and how are they constructed? If these characteristics are perceived, interpreted and ‘created’ socially (based on radical difference), and then compared, or assigned in relationship to Western society’s dominant ideology, then what exactly are we seeing a performance of and what does it tell us about our culture? What are the most valuable ways of reading these symbols (within the context of my area of specific interest) and ultimately, how can my chosen dance methodology be useful in the light of this knowledge and when working with these groups? In terms of the ‘performance’, of the ‘action’ itself, how much is unconscious expression of that which has been repressed and made socially unacceptable and how much is culturally remembered and re-performed by communities and individuals bound (to some extent) by the construction and obligation to perform these roles that are clearly part of their own history and apparent legacy? How can these movements be read and deconstructed within my chosen methodology? And how are the body, movement and dance therefore considered as political action?

When looking at performance outside the conventions of its usual artistic references, and within the field of performance studies, we come across theories of performance and performativity - of performance as an everyday occurrence. Here the term broadens beyond that of the performing arts, to include all aspects of everyday life, right down to our personal identities and behaviours. “The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behaviour

raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as performance". (Carlson in Schechner 2006: 31) The suggestion is that everything we do is a performance – that our identity is in fact socially ‘sanctioned’ and constructed – that many of our opinions, behaviours, actions, attitudes and thoughts about ourselves, the world and other people – those that we learnt within the everyday life environment of our family, culture and schooling, (and within the broader context of society itself) teach us to perform the roles ‘assigned’ to us.

From this idea we can begin to ‘unpick’ the actions and events we were witnessing in the riots (and the individuals performing them) and begin to explore how and why these identities have been constructed and what that means within the context of the riots. We can also begin to understand specific ‘groups’ and ‘communities’ and their physical and emotional resistance to these oppressive systems of social control. From this place we might open a dialogue that encourages individuals and communities to engage in their own exploration and deconstruction of these modes of control and categorisation. By engaging with these ideas we can begin to understand the actions we are witnessing in the riots as part of our shared experience and we can approach those performing their roles with more compassion and openness.

A performance is a dialectic of “flow”... in which the central meanings, values, and goals of a culture are seen “in action”, as they shape and explain behaviour. A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the uniqueness of particular cultures. We will know one another better by entering one another’s performances and learning their grammars and vocabularies. (Turner in Schechner 2006: 19)

Within the ‘performance of the riots’, I am interested in both the ‘performers’ and the ‘audience’, the signifiers and the signified – to explore the different ways the various actions have been interpreted by the dominant discourses surrounding these events and from which position these ‘understandings’ come. “It’s never just about the body that’s before you... You always have to understand bodies in relation to their larger social context and the politics that are being articulated through them.” (Browning in Canavan 2010: 82)

For the purpose of this ‘exploration’ I have defined a majority - ‘the performing (or majority) group’, and the bodies within that group, which are my main interest for this

dissertation. Within the context of this majority that have been defined as participants of the riots, I have deduced a clear demographic – the naming of which, creates a picture, a ‘set of characteristics’ and social identities of those involved, (pointing mostly to performances of race, gender and social class) and the behaviours that constitute or have been assigned to the individuals, groups, and communities that make up these demographics.

### **Construction of social identity**

Judith Butler’s theorisation on the construction of gender and sexuality (which can be applied to all aspects of identity) suggests that there is no essential ‘gender’ (or identity). Butler claims that all aspects of our identities are the result of our social interaction and relationship to dominant ideologies. She...

presents ‘essential’ identity as a fiction, conjured by the socially coded ‘actions’ of the body. Her evocative description of gender as contrived via a stylised ‘repetition of acts’ thus represents a thoroughgoing materialism, it rejects the very possibility of a metaphysical explanation of selfhood in favour of one grounded in the signifying power of the concrete body... acts, gestures and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments generally construed are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts, which constitute its reality. This also suggests that, if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse... In other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing... core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of... regulation... (Butler in Counsell and Wolf 2001: 72-73)

So... if the learned ‘actions’ of the body, (repeated and defined as identities) are ‘socially coded’, then these identities which are essentially meanings assigned to ‘bodies’ by other bodies, become the dominant ways in which individual ‘members’ and ‘groups’ become defined by the dominant group, making these ‘decisions’ exactly that... dominant. These meanings which in fact codify ‘actions of difference’ – are repeated, refined and internalized, effecting the way those individuals, communities or groups begin to define and perform themselves (whether they are conscious of it or not). However, the actions or behaviours themselves (due to their

materialism and corporeality) present an illusion of an essential nature, which diverts attention away from the social control and regulation of those 'bodies' or 'identities' and the politics of that process. Judith Butler moves this on further by saying...

If the 'cause' of desire, gesture, and act can be localized within the 'self'... then the political regulations and disciplinary practices which produce that ostensibly coherent gender [or behavior] are effectively displaced from view. The displacement of a political and discursive origin of... identity on to a psychological 'core' precludes an analysis of the political constitution of the gendered subject... (Butler in Counsell and Wolf 2001: 74)

This theory supports my own ideas that all 'actions' (including inaction or 'unconscious' and 'thoughtless' action) and particularly those I witnessed over the 4 days of rioting are indeed political. There may not have been a pre-meditated, or thought-out political intent or conscious political protest, but by reading the body and exploring and understanding these social and bodily discourses, we can hopefully begin to unravel and re-interpret the language that was being displayed within a political framework or understanding.

This concept of the social coding of the body and the creation of its various 'identities' suggests the presence of, 'a power to code' while simultaneously asking for an 'explanation' as to the 'who' and the 'what' of that power. In terms of social organisation, there is a clear hierarchy – one whose own identity and position is constantly threatened by the 'appearance' of anything different from that of itself. This 'position' reproduces and reinforces binary ideas that have been present throughout history in opposing groups that present difference and therefore, a threat to the culture, characteristic and rightness of the 'dominant group' and its own understanding and image of itself as 'proper', 'good' or 'superior' as well as its interpretation of 'the other'. "The concept of 'race'... was established... as a way of classifying individuals on supposedly 'biological' grounds. In doing so, it actually functioned ideologically, attributing to other people's innately inferior qualities of temperament, personality [and] intellect...(Counsell and Wolf 2001: 95)

## **Otherness**

The designation of labels to 'lesser' people and their 'lesser' characteristics and behaviours, was an attempt at dialoguing with difference and then deciding upon that which was being witnessed, based on one set of ideas accepted and deemed as correct and therefore universal. This leads me onto the theories and discussions that



are most predominant in the field of post-colonial studies.<sup>11</sup> This I feel is most relevant as it seems that in our current social and political climate and in discourse surrounding the riots and the groups involved, 'urban youth' seem to have now been made 'the other'.

... Everything throughout the centuries depends on the distinction between the Selfsame, the ownself (- what is mine, hence what is good) and that which limits it: so now what menaces my-own-good (good never being anything other than what is god-for-me) is the 'other.' What is the 'Other'...? It is the other in a hierarchically organised relationship in which the same is what rules, names, defines, and assigns 'its' other... the reduction of a 'person' to a 'nobody' to the position of 'other'... There has to be some 'other' – no master without a slave, no economic-political power without exploitation, no dominant class without cattle under the yoke... If there were no other, one would invent it... The other is there only to be re-appropriated, recap-tured, and destroyed... (Cixous in Counsell and Wolf 2001: 69-70)

And so similarly to the ideas presented above, there is the construction of the 'other', the finger pointing out there - the construction of an 'entity', that is obviously the problem – and the only way to eradicate the problem is to 'destroy it'. And so marginalised groups continue to 'repeat' and 're-perform' what has been constructed by difference and they are then 'destroyed' by labels and further limitation, further impingement on their growth and development. We imprison 'them'. We try to rehabilitate without a coherent understanding. We try to control and reform it, when clearly 'it' needs expression, it has been placed there by a society and a collective that is unwilling to embrace aspects of it's own humanity, or experience. A politically 'powerless' group (apparently) - uneducated, and in many ways unable to engage in political discourse and understanding of the factors and variables at play – because that's the way they 'were made' - removed from the discourse yet still very much an 'active' part of it – the body showing and 'telling' that which cannot be verbalised and 'articulated' because that is not the language that 'it' speaks.

In his seminal essay, *'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature'*, Abdul JanMohamed states that;

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<sup>11</sup> I will not be exploring this field of study in detail due to word count limitations, however I am pointing to relevant theories within the field in relation to the construction of the identities of ethnic minority people's and marginalised communities as this feels relevant to the 'majority group' who were performing the riots and therefore to this discussion.

The dominant model of power and interest-relations in all colonial societies is... opposition between the putative superiority of the European and the supposed inferiority of the native... a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object... an exploration and a representation of a world at the boundaries of 'civilisation', a world that has not (yet) been domesticated by European signification or codified in detail by its ideology. That world is therefore perceived as uncontrollable, chaotic, unattainable and ultimately evil. (JanMohamed in Counsell and Wolf 2001: 101)

The demonstration of this 'opposition' confirms the binary status relationship that occurs and the series of decisions that are made about the 'other', coming from one very limited cultural viewpoint – a viewpoint which has no real understanding or desire, other than the justification of 'its self' and 'its own' – a viewpoint which interprets these differences as 'savage' and 'uncivilised' when held against the ideology of 'civilisation' that 'it' (re) presents. To step closer to that difference, and to engage with that other with a desire to really learn and understand their experience, would require the sacrificing or at least a temporary withdrawal from the stance that 'their' way is in fact the only way. JanMohamed deems this as impossible, as these 'steps' into the world of the other and the simultaneous distancing from 'their own' cultural values, would produce such a crumbling of 'their own' ideology and therefore themselves.

Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions and ideology of his culture... this entails in practice the virtually impossible task of negating one's very being, precisely because one's culture is what formed that being. Moreover, the colonisers invariable assumption about his moral superiority means that he will rarely question the validity of either his own or his society's formation and that he will not be inclined to expend any energy in understanding the worthless alterity of the colonized. (JanMohamed in Counsell and Wolf 2001: 101)

### **The Cartesian Split**

This dualism - the 'splitting off' and separating from the 'other' and all that they represent, reaches right into the very depths of human society and relations. The work of philosopher Rene Descartes (also known as the Cartesian split) carries this further into the experience that occurs within the individual - here the natural body is 'othered'. "He argues that only the mind had the power of intelligence... and therefore selfhood. The corporeal body was nothing but a machine, directed by the soul..."

(Valentine 2001: 17) This further symbolizes the need to identify with one aspect, dominant perspective, or mode of expression, and to demonise, destroy and disregard the other. In this example, the mind reigns supreme along with all that is cerebral, logical and of the intellect, (representing the White European Male, 'his culture' and his ideologies), supporting that as the supreme wisdom, whilst relegating the body and its corporeality (and all that exist in stronger relationship to its earthly domain) to that of a lesser value and position. The wisdom, expressions and natural functions of the body were overlooked and denied along with the groups who seemed to exemplify and express behaviours that were of a more physical, primal or emotional nature - with 'mans' attempt at controlling the body, came the discipline and control of any other 'group' that seemed to represent its corporeality, its physical wildness and its emotional unpredictability.

This theory had a profound impact on Western ideology, becoming the premise from which human beings were understood. The entire model of western medicine became oriented around this central and governing idea - from this point of view, the body was made 'other' – marginalised, repressed and excluded from the 'self'. Its organic expressions perceived as uncontrollable, wild and even dangerous – its human nature, made evil, and its functions and primal creative urges perceived as savage and unacceptable. Natural urges and intuitions were ignored and made meaningless, cutting us off from powerful emotional and instinctive natures. Embodiment was something to transcend in favour of more 'mindful' and 'civilised' pursuits, the 'natural' body was slowly but surely in the process of being caged in and buried under convention and manners and repressed with nowhere to go. (Newman, Overton and Muller 2008; Nuzzo 2008) The similarities I have observed here – between those of the body and the young people who participated in the riots, highlight an untrained, unclean-ness that seems to be (re-) presented by all marginalised and discriminated bodies.

I would also like to suggest here that the 'actions' of the body displayed in the rioting were an unconscious physical and emotional response to this socialising process - a rebellion against the construction and oppression of these given identities. "They represent a body in revolt, a body disavowed by consciousness which it is yet unable to ignore." (Grosz in Counsell and Wolf 2001: 145) This group (along with women, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, the disabled, and the elderly) has been cast out, to

the margins, due to society's inability to accept their physical expression as part of its own.

## **Abject Bodies**

By 'removing', 'segregating' and 'excluding' these bodies from sight and from aspects of social life, society is also repressing and expelling part of 'its' own unwanted nature. It seems that for 'civilised' man to feel in control, that which threatens his logic and rationale must be removed from his 'space'. He will never accept it as his own. When it does appear, it represents and expresses that which lies dormant and repressed in his own subconscious and therefore, deeply threatening and confrontational to 'his reality'. He projects his disgust, his disappointment and his displeasure onto those others, those uncivilized groups, while they continue to cooperate and 'play their roles', acting out that which has been ignored and buried in our western societies – the collective 'body' and its valuable instincts and emotions. It is clear however, that we cannot eradicate the primal nature of our species. No matter how we discriminate, subjugate, rehabilitate and punish. The wild, the natural, the emotive, the primal, the bodily and what is essentially a powerful aspect of our 'being' and 'nature' will continue to be represented and to express itself from the margins, (be it consciously or unconscious) until we re-integrate these aspects back into our individual and collective experience.

[Julia] Kristeva [in her theory of abject bodies] is fascinated by the ways in which the 'proper' sociality and subjectivity are based on the expulsion or exclusion of the improper, the unclean, and the disorderly elements of its corporeal existence that must be separated from its 'clean and proper' self... What is new about Kristeva's position is her claim that what must be expelled from the subjects corporeal functioning can never be fully obliterated but hovers at the border of the subject's identity... Her point is that it is impossible to exclude the threatening or anti-social elements... They recur and threaten the subject... Even in the lost sacrosanct, purified and socially sanctioned of activities, the unclean and the improper, must be harnessed... The abject is undecidably inside and outside the body... It is what disturbs identity, system and order, disrupting the social boundaries demanded by the symbolic. It respects no definite positions, or rules, boundaries or socially imposed limits. Abjection is the body's acknowledgment that the boundaries and limits imposed on it are really social projections... (Grosz in Counsell and Wolf 2001: 143-145)

The primal body, the collective emotional body will not be denied, will not be ignored and will not lay dormant for too long, before it rises back up (in the form of another 'group') and jumps back into the face of our society, kicking, jumping and smashing through windows and tearing down barriers – ordering its 'self' to be seen, to be acknowledged – begging to be understood and openly engaged - wild 'undisciplined bodies, showing and performing themselves and the frenzy of lies that they have been 'made' to believe about themselves. This 'energy' exists in us all. It is a part of the body, of our collective body and wherever we try to kill it, it seems to emerge in some other place. And so how might we intervene? What can we do with this movement? How can we engage with this physicality, with this emotion? It is beneficial to understand the political and historical coding of social bodies, but we also have to move beyond this understanding to the subjective experience of individual bodies, of their internal, their physical, their lived experience<sup>12</sup>. (Ponty 1962; Turner 2000) The body is clearly a site of political action. Its politics are its rebellion, its struggle against the structures that have denied its corporeality, its humanity. These bodies have been socially 'influenced' and over-ruled by a 'system' that has failed in understanding them or in learning what they have to teach and in keeping them away from the depth of their own instinctive emotional experience. (Martin 1990; Franko 2006)

We need to learn new ways of approaching this aspect of our nature, and new ways of integrating these parts of ourselves into our personal and social experience. The body is flexible and malleable and is in need of discourses and applied methodologies that reflect that. (Canavan 2010) We need fluid and supportive structures to physically engage and make space for that that which cannot be tamed by society or the mind, for that which exists beyond the social inscriptions that we perform with such commitment, resentment and compelling obligation. We need new ways to re-engage and empower bodies, to re-construct and re-imagine bodies, we need to consciously take ownership of our bodies and to learn the language of their sensations, their perceptions and their sensory experiences, in order to create new 'dialogues'.

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<sup>12</sup> Here I consider the work of Bryan Turner and Merleau Ponty and theories of phenomenology, perception, embodiment and the lived experience. Due to the limits of the word count I am not able to enter into a discussion of these theories however I would like to acknowledge the contribution of these ideas to my line of thought.

## CHAPTER 3

# FREEDOM DANCES: ENGAGING ABJECT BODIES

If the body is not a 'being' but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field of... hierarchy... then what language is left for understanding this corporeal enactment... (Butler in Counsell and Wolf 2001: 75-76)

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### **Rize Up**

*“Rize”* documents the emergence of ‘krumping’ – an ‘aggressive’ dance phenomenon that emerged from the urban ghetto’s of South Central LA in a physical ‘response’ to the issues facing the young people in the community. Poverty, racism, gang violence, drug addiction, crime and imprisonment create an environment and community fraught with difficulties, challenges and a huge amount of frustration, pain, aggression and rage within its ‘young people’ at a socio-economic struggle and situation that offers very little in the way of hope or an alternative to the lifestyle that is most seen and therefore most common. “The young people in the film echo these social references throughout the film with their words and movement, discussing the hardships they face.” (Duggan 2006: 49) Their bodies are quite literally telling these stories and embodying these narratives through the physicality of their dances.

The film opens with a montage of images of the 1965 Watts race riots, and the extremely controversial Rodney King riots of 1992<sup>13</sup>, setting a historical and political context for the piece and its subjects, within a community where (similarly to the UK riots last year) there is a tense and difficult relationship and history with the police and an undercurrent of anger, injustice, oppression, volatility and rage. (Appendix D)

Young people documented throughout the film speak of an increased sense of self-belief and hope that comes from their dance, and with it a stronger sense of self-responsibility, caring more about their futures and the consequences of their actions. They become more socially engaged and interested in supporting and mentoring the younger and newer members of their ‘crews’. This new social awareness comes as a direct result of a more positive relationship to themselves and an ‘experience’ of their

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<sup>13</sup> The Rodney King riots occurred in response to a highly publicized incident of police brutality. The victim, a black man was beaten by four police officers while a passerby captured the beating on film. The four police officers were acquitted on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1992 and riots started soon after the. This was particularly relevant to the London riots and the death of Mark Duggan.

potential, as opposed to the pre-destiny that they once believe is laid out for them.

They are creating and/or reinforcing meaningful social relations. They are enacting roles that are significant to them from their histories, mythologies, religious beliefs, political lives and such. They are establishing and strengthening social connections that enable them to get on with their lives. (Williams 2004: 21)

They are deconstructing outworn identities, breaking them apart with movement, expressing the negative emotions and embodying the narratives and the stories of their particular body or bodies within their socio-economic and political context. They are also creating new narratives, constructing healthier self-images and experiencing themselves anew. There is an alchemy occurring here and a clear 'transformation' of attitude, belief and therefore experience and reality. "When people dance they are organizing, attaining, experiencing, communicating, or representing knowledge and belief." (Williams 2004: 35) And as one of these elements is affected and transformed, so too are the others.

Another striking characteristic of this particular dance form is its emphasis on catharsis. Dancers' claim that...

hurt, sorrow and anguish that others don't know about are channeled into the dance. Through... dancing [they] find acceptance, an arena to develop and display their competence, and emotional and spiritual fulfillment... The intense physical expression of emotion engenders feelings of strength and invincibility in the performers and awe in the spectators. Whatever the deprivation and pain of their everyday existence, both the dancers and the spectators experience empowerment and catharsis through the dance. (Duggan 2006: 50)

In his descriptions of specific forms of African dance, Ladislav Segy observes

...as he began to dance, he underwent transfiguration: he was no longer an individual with a definite identity, but a spirit... Not only does the dancer lose his own identity... he is stimulated by the 'audience' [or other dancers in the community who are 'witnessing' his 'dance']... This communal participation is also an act of acceptance, a confirmation of his act, and he is not only the spirit, a member of his dancing group, but also he has established a psychological relationship with a great multitude of people, his own community. (Segy in Williams 2004: 44)

There are two things that stand out here that are present both in the krumping dances of "Rize" and the ecstatic dances of the 5Rhythms. Firstly, there is the act of being seen, being witnessed and being accepted as an individual and as part of a

community. Being acknowledged for that which you are and that which you are deconstructing, and becoming is a powerful experience for individuals. There is also an acknowledgment of the dance and the body's 'ability' to transport the dancer to beyond their lived reality, their fixed personality and behaviours to a spiritual or ecstatic communion. With more practice and experience, practitioners (or participants) develop their practice and discourse around this experience and its effect upon them. Within both communities, there is a very open acknowledgment that the dance has transformational power available for all to access and deepen through regular practice and commitment.

The intense physicality of krumping allows it to touch adherents on a spiritual level... the dancers reach a critical level of intensity that transports them to a different plane of experience, an altered state of consciousness. The transformation that occurs is a manifestation of the spirit, emanating from the body. It derives from a long and venerable tradition of dances in the African diaspora which function to connect with and embody the spirit... The release and pleasure experienced by krump dancers, which reinforce their practice of this demanding, energetic art form, are akin to the ecstatic transcendence achieved in religious dance. (Duggan 2006: 52)

This is a dance of 'othered' and 'abject' bodies. In communities where literacy levels are often poor, engaging the body through various forms of improvised dance provides individuals with a way to dialogue with their experience and develop themselves, their creativity and their self-awareness through a powerful ecstatic experience that transcends a fixed physical reality and the limitations of constructed identities, and offers an experience that fosters inner strength, courage and a new sense of self-identity. Through the dance, they find a way to engage with 'negative' emotion and to transform their understanding and attitude towards their lives and social situations.

The capacity to facilitate ecstatic transcendence is a part of what makes dance a healing art... [It] contributes to increased understanding of self and others and promotes growth on physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual levels... Krumping provides... a social system... a structured activity... and an articulated, continually evolving body of knowledge... Pro-social values of co-operation and striving for excellence, of collective identity and individual expression, are all embodied in the dance... (Duggan 2006: 51-53)



## The 5Rhythms

When I dance, I break free. I make up my own steps... I bump up against part of myself, go between, around, stretch what I know... Through dance I've journeyed through my body, into my heart, past my mind into another dimension of existence, a dimension I call ecstasy... And all I know is that ecstatic movement is empowering and healing. My method comes not from books but from living and dancing. My laboratory has been the auditorium, the studio, the dance floor, the theatre and the street. (Roth 1998: 49- 50)

The 5Rhythms is an ecstatic dance (or movement meditation practice) developed in the USA by Gabrielle Roth. (Appendix D) The ecstasy that krump dancers experience, moving into, through and beyond the limitations of self-image and self-conception, social identity and personal situation, is also very much part of an open dialogue within the dance of the 5Rhythms. The experience of being witnessed within the context of a community that supports and holds a space for whatever your situation is, while at the same acknowledging your constant growth and 'becoming' within 'that situation', is also a powerful part of the participatory experience. The 5Rhythms dance is a potent means of engaging the body, and emotions. Within the subjective experience of the dance is also a conceivable probability of coming up against the dominant personal and social narratives within us all, while providing the tools to creatively dialogue with them (through movement) and deconstruct (through the experience of the dance), the limitations of previously held ideas and beliefs. The invitation of the dance is in re-imagining and re-creating ideas about self and one's place in the world, using an unpredictable, and improvised dance and movement language, (or 'form') that acts as both container and catalyst for a depth of self and social reflection and engagement, that has been completely transformative for so many.

My own experience of the 5Rhythms has provided a powerful vehicle for my own creative expression, and particularly in engaging with emotional issues relating to my own social environment and its dominant narratives. In the dance, I found a powerful way to explore my emotional landscape and a safe and supportive place to express the wildness, the rage, and the vulnerability of that emotional spectrum. The emphasis on the relationship to other and the wider community also provided an experience of acceptance within the context of such difference, and a place where for the first time in a long time, there was a feeling of safety and a real respect for individuality and difference.

The 5Rhythms welcomes and embraces the diversity of all bodies on the dance floor, it is an inclusive international community of individuals, 'moving' towards an inclusive relationship with themselves, each other, and their surroundings – dancing to reclaim the physical, emotional, instinctive, wild, rebellious aspects of humanity that 'we' have been separated from through the power of the socialising, civilising and separation 'processes' (discussed earlier).

## CONCLUSION

My desire to train and teach this body of work within the framework of applied theatre is what led me to the writing of this dissertation. The events of August 2011 and the statistics that emerged from my research (regarding the majority groups 'performing these riots') led me to define the groups that I am most interested in working with. My own personal experience and social background have also provided me with an insight and understanding of 'certain communities' and the dominant narratives and issues that exist within them, and my course of study in applied theatre has given me an opportunity to engage with the theoretical and ethical ideas and challenges that have informed my practice and helped me in establishing (and understanding) my philosophical position, as well as giving me the practical and creative skills that allow the translation and introduction of the 5Rhythms methodology into my chosen context.

Social engagement work with the groups I have defined is not so common yet within the 5Rhythms teaching community (although Gabrielle Roth, founder of the practice began working with marginalised groups and is very much focused on developing the work in this particular area). The current context of the practice however - its language and approach - is one that would need adapting in its application to different social groups and contexts and this is my intention. For this reason, I spoke with Emma Leech, another 'teacher' of the 5Rhythms (Appendix F) who is one of the only 5Rhythms teachers with a wealth of experience of social engagement work using the dance often within a dramatic (or drama context). Emma spoke of the challenges when working with 'young people' at risk, in gangs, or in prison and shared some of her own experiences, challenges and positive outcomes in using the dance with these groups. We also discussed the riots and the physicality of the actions that we saw, discussing the dance as an intervention and creative channel for violent and aggressive emotions or behaviour, that in our society have nowhere else to go.

Having witnessed what I can only describe as a cathartic physical explosion (of young people rioting and looting last summer), and having explored some of the theoretical arguments around the socialising, inscription and construction of the bodies, communities and identities 'performing' these actions, I feel my own professional calling as an artist and practitioner into working with these ideas with an

embodied creative practice and a support, inclusive therapeutic setting. Having dedicated myself to dancing the 5Rhythms practice for the past 6 years and having experienced and witnessed the power of the dance in finding an expressive channel for challenging emotions that have no real place in our society, I am further called to working with this practice. I can see the incredible potential of a physically dynamic improvised dance form such as this, being able to offer the kind of 'space' that allows the fullness of those emotions, resentments, angers and frustrations to become a moving art within the context of a supportive community that embraces difference, welcoming those groups and communities that exist at the margins of society, as well as holding a space for the full spectrum of our human emotion and experience to be integrated back into our individual and collective experience.

The 5Rhythms are used as a vehicle to help express and explore what is felt individually and collectively. The practice of the 5Rhythms and all the amazing variations that manifest are played with in the free creative spirit characteristic of any artist involved in improvisation. This practice combines the serious discipline of structured meditation, such as that practiced by artists (writers, painters, musicians) involved in honing their craft, with the creative and therapeutic process of following impulse, instinct, inspiration, expression... (Juhan 2003: 85)

The improvisational nature of the 5Rhythms practice encourages individuality, creativity and a deeply self-reflective form for individuals to engage in the full landscape of their own physical, emotional and intellectual landscape. It supports the empowerment and transformation of individuals in developing and taking ownership of the deconstruction and exploration of their own self-identity, belief systems and attitudes all within an embodied approach that supports the acceptance of all experience – the disowned and rejected as well as the 'nice' and 'proper'. The power that is felt from experiencing and moving with the fullness of these 'negative' emotions provides a feeling of strength and courage to face the challenges that life present and the flexibility and ease to keep on moving.

People learn through the power of their own movement – they learn through their own power, or own sense of self, that they can change, they can move things on, they can move through things, they can move past things and that there is a place inside them that actually really knows how to do that, knows how to not let life challenges be an excuse, but more to let challenges be something through which they can learn. This work gives people the embodied experience of that, and they know they can create it for themselves. (Darling-Kahn in Juhan 2003: 89)

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Transformation is tricky**

The idea of transformation as a positive force for humankind is a compelling one. It is a notion that is tempting to adopt for the arts because it gives them a powerful justification to exist... It takes art from mere craftsmanship into a metaphysical realm of spiritual enhancement. Indeed, the concept of transformation is a powerful force in many cultures. The idea of transcending our human failings through the purity and strength of rejuvenation, re-birth, or resurrection has been etched in the consciousness of many cultures for millennia. Belief structures concerned with transformation have permeated literature, performance, and visual and applied arts in many parts of the world. (Houston 2005: 167-168)

Here I would like to acknowledge and explain my very 'conscious decision' to use the term transformation throughout this dissertation and specifically in reference to my desire to 'apply' the 5Rhythms to socially, emotionally and physically engage the groups of young people I have defined and address throughout this dissertation. I would also like to acknowledge my awareness of the difficulties and ethical considerations that are called into question with regards to the 'transformation' of individuals or groups through the work of any applied arts (dance, theatre or movement) practices.

An interesting article I found on '*Participation and Transformation in community dance*', laid out some of these opposing arguments in relation to claims of dance as transformation, characterizing them "as 'heroic visions' fitting neatly into the long-held European notion that the arts perform a service in developing civilisation..." (Houston 2005: 166) This provoked concern for me in my use of this terminology, by seeming to imply the application of the arts (or the dance) as a way to influence, civilise (and further 'colonise') the groups, or individuals in question.

In relation to the theories I explored in Chapter 2, this was definitely a problem, which seems to position the concept of transformation as 'another means' of controlling and socialising bodies, and having them conform to dominant ideologies (under the guise of an experience that was intended to benefit them and their engagement with their own life experience). This was something that bothered me hugely, it was also something that I hadn't really considered – an idea that I understood in theory but that challenged and clashed against my own intentions.

Another other side of the argument provided a more socially liberating perspective from 'the grassroots', in their support of "the radical voice the arts can give to marginalised people through participation". (Houston 2005: 166) This I found to be a far more empowering idea – approaching the dance (or chosen art form) as a creative channel for the voice of marginalised or socially disengaged groups. When I thought of the young people in "*Rize*" (and my own experience and many others within the 5Rhythms dance) I could see this idea in practice - I could see its value and its incredible benefit (to participants and their wider communities).

Participation may be a potential road to empowerment and transformation, but that road is far from straight or smooth. The complexity of dance practice necessitates some caution in proclamations of transformation. At the same time, the community dance sector might feel confident in its ability to act in creating a space where something empowering might happen. In creating that space, practitioners, commentators, and politicians need to respect the power that dance may have to change lives. Without inflating its potential or ignoring the right of the individual to explore and to experience dance as he or she wants, they can simply provide, through dance, the framework of a bridge that participants may or may not wish to build on and eventually cross. (Houston 2005: 176)

From this position, the individual is given the freedom to choose, to engage, and to participate, or not. By acknowledging their power and agency in this way, we are pointing to the subjective experience and the power of their choice.

From here, it appeared that participation might well be the key to my argument, my understanding and my self-justification. It seems that by positioning the individual within a place of self-reflection, and self-understanding of their own experience, 'we' permit a more ethically considered conversation about transformation - not ignoring its challenges, but approaching them in consideration (and with preference) to the subjective experience (especially as the physical and internal experience of the dance is so personal). This leads me to other concerns highlighted with regards to the difficulty and ambiguity in 'quantifying and proving' what constitutes as transformation or transformative effects, leading me finally into the field of heuristics and heuristic models of research, (methods which Andrea Juhan employs in her Ph.D study of the effect of 5Rhythms on a group of dancers, discussed in Chapter 3). These methods support my intentions far more cohesively than anything I had yet discovered, and are often employed when researching and dialoguing with such complex subjectivities.

The root meaning of *heuristic* comes from the Greek *heuriskein*, meaning to discover or find. It refers to a process of internal search [or 'tracking' as Gabrielle Roth would call it] through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the 'researcher' [or participant] is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries... The process of discovery leads investigators to new images and meanings regarding human phenomena, but also to realisations relevant to their own lives... The heuristic process is autobiographical, yet with virtually every question that matters there is also a social – and perhaps universal – significance... Heuristics is a way of engaging in scientific search through methods and processes aimed at discovery; a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences. The deepest currents of meaning and knowledge taking place within the individual are through one's senses, perceptions beliefs and judgments. This requires a passionate, disciplined commitment to remain with a

question intensely until it is illuminated and answered. (Moustakas 1994: 17-18)

I would say that the heuristic approach lies at the heart of the 5Rhythms practice and any dialogue around it, I would also say it is exemplified within the 'practice' of the krump dancers in "*Rize*". It is within this self-reflective context that I would like to position myself and my intentions with this dissertation - to talk about 'transformation' not as a romantically loose or idealistic gesture that 'fixes' those at the margins so that they 'fit', but as subjectively quantifiable within a framework akin to what had been laid out above – giving the participant ultimate power to explore their own self-concepts. Finally, I use the term 'transformation' within the models of humanistic psychology (Reich 1969) which "revolves around the central idea that the innateness and potential of human beings is 'good' at its core and that they are in fact able to self-actualize that 'goodness' ... if given the 'right' internal and external environmental circumstances." (Juhan 2003: 14). This I hope will serve to clarify and confirm the philosophical perspective from which I position myself, not only as the researcher and author of this dissertation, but as a practitioner, a committed 'dancer', a dedicated student of the dance, and a member of the human community. I also support and echo the ecstatic and transcendental experience of the dance, and I confirm from my own experience, the transformative possibility of 'the dance' in engaging 'participants'.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **When I dance...**

“When I dance I become, I connect with others, the world, and myself. When I dance my perception of time and space is different from everyday experiences. When I dance with each breath I reach out, become a part of a bigger whole. When I dance I feel alive.” (Renz in Fraleigh 2004: 64)

I have been compelled to write this dissertation for various reasons. The first being that the 5Rhythms has been my regular practice now for the past 6 years and within it's teachings, I have grown and transformed in so many ways. My commitment to the dance, the art form, the ritual and the community continues to grow, as does my desire to 'take' the work and 'translate it' to groups and communities whom I feel would benefit from it. I am inspired to take this practice back to my 'roots' (so to speak) - into work with gangs, young offenders and young people 'at risk', as this is where my passion lies.



(Image taken from a 5Rhythms workshop 2011)

When I was about 5 years old, I would wake up early in the morning, put on my leotard and creep into the living room (while my mum, dad and sister were still asleep). There was nothing happening on TV at that time, other than the face of a young girl on the squiggly black and white screen, and beautiful classical music rolling in the background. I moved the furniture to create a space – and in that space, I would dance. I would twirl and roll and kick and leap, my body making shapes and creating lines. I remember losing myself in the dance, again and again. As I got older, the spaces changed, moving from the living room to the gym class, and from the gym class to the nightclub, but the experience on the dance floor was always the same – in the dance I lost all sense of time and space, I lost and found myself. I let go of my inhibitions, I didn't care about anything – I was invincible. I landed in my body and at the same time I was transported to another



place. I was more 'me' on the 'dance floor' than anywhere else. I rode the waves of the music and from that place, anything was possible – and nothing else mattered. I was bigger than all of it – I was free!

Years later, when I discovered the 5Rhythms, I found my dance (and my freedom) in a whole new way. When I found my flow, I discovered my creativity and my flexibility. When I found my feet, I found my stability, my grounding, and the support that is always there, holding me. When I found my hips and my 'staccato', I realised my passion and my strength – I found a place to express my wildness and my rage – a place for pain that didn't hurt me, or anyone else for that matter. In chaos, I wrestled with my need to control and my fear of surrender, and finally I gave in. In lyrical, I found the lightness and the infinite possibility that life holds - I experienced the playfulness and the magic of my dance unfolding in the moment. And in stillness, I found my way home. I discovered the silence and the quiet place inside me that is my centre and my sanctuary. I escaped. I arrived. In ecstasy I died, and I was reborn in my body, over and over again.

I never really considered myself as 'political' and I don't think I even understood what that meant until I got to Central in 2009. I had never voted in my life, neither had anyone in my immediate family. I came from a 'lower working class' background and grew up surrounded by 'underworld activity' and people. Where I came from, the politics of my immediate environment and the situations that existed within it were enough to deal with - politicians and governments had no place for 'us', they didn't mean anything - they represented injustice, lies and corruption, and had no understanding or desire to understand 'our lives' and the issues we faced. We were 'different' and therefore the rules that governed 'our world' were also very different. I grew up on a council estate in Brixton, South London, where lots of the people around me were involved in drugs and crime – many of them had been in prison and a few lost their lives as a result of the 'actions they chose', and the consequences of those actions.

When the riots happened last summer – they got my attention. I couldn't stop watching, reading and wanting to understand what was going on and why it might have happened. The events politicised me in a way that I hadn't really experienced before. I had so many friends and young relatives that were involved (both as perpetrators and victims) in the increasing gang culture in this city and I felt very strongly about what I saw. I heard various opinions, listening to politicians and the 'middle classes' discussing their theories – that these were the actions of 'lawless criminals', with no political intent, just gangs of mindless thugs wreaking havoc and destroying our communities. I was angered by how ignorant their voices were, to the situations of many of these young people. And I was confused at how unable and unwilling they were to look beyond the behaviours and to their possible root causes.

Something about the physicality that I witnessed during those days of rioting fascinated me and encouraged a development in my own interest in how to channel and engage physicality and intense emotion and work with it in physically creative and 'constructive' ways – it led me to "*Rize*" and the krump dancers, and the incredible similarities between their experiences and that of my own dance practice, the 5Rhythms. In the 5Rhythms community, I didn't see the young subjects of which I am most interested represented on the dance floor – there weren't many 'teachers' of the dance working specifically with those groups, so I wasn't sure if the dance 'would work'. However, in the subjects of "*Rize*" I saw similar ideas being expressed within a very relevant 'social group', a different form but similar ideas and experiences with powerful effects that proved to me that the power of ecstatic dance was not only translatable but also transferable.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Not race riots?**

“To date... of the 330+ deaths in police custody, not one officer has been convicted for the death of a civilian. Instead, a conspiracy of silence between the police, the CPS and IPCC prevents the freedom of information... The police it seems are able to get away with murder. (Justin 2012)



(Image of Mark Duggans family and friends protesting 2011)

Police investigating Mark Duggan, stopped a vehicle that he was a passenger in, in an attempt to arrest the man (who was ‘apparently’ in possession of a firearm and ‘under suspicion’ of planning a revenge attack for the violent murder of a relative). In whatever ‘struggle’ was said to ensue, Mark Duggan was shot at close range by one of the arresting officers and died shortly after. Police officers claimed that he fired at them first. However, it was later discovered that no shots were fired from the weapon that the victim was ‘carrying’. Due to the abstruseness of the event, suspicion around the justification of police actions, and the man’s response, an inquiry was held by the IPC (Independent Police Complaints Commission). The coroner opening the inquest stated, “I have reasonable cause to suspect that he died in circumstances that require an inquest.” (Walker in *The Daily Mail* 2011) Initial misleading information given to journalist’s echoed reports from the police that Mark Duggan had fired at them and that his murder was an act of self-defence on their part. However, it later ‘emerged’, that both shots were in fact fired from an officer’s gun – one bullet was found lodged in a police radio - the other, in Mark Duggan’s chest. There was also ambiguity about the firearm that Mark Duggan was reported to have had on his person, as no fingerprints were discovered suggesting that the weapon found on the scene (reported to be the one that he was carrying) may not have belonged to him. According to an eyewitness account cited by *The Independent*, there was no threat by Mark Duggan towards the officers, "he was shot while he was pinned to the floor by police." (Peck 2011)

## **APPENDIX D**

### **When I krump...**

“I’m getting closer to God, when I krump, I krump - I got a lot on my mind when I krump, I krump - this is how we survive...” (Styllz in Lachapelle 2005)

While researching for a socially relevant case study to link and position alongside the 5Rhythms in this dissertation, I came across the documentary film “*Rize*” by photographer David LaChapelle. The ‘story’, its subjects, their passion, and ‘struggle’, inspired and influenced me hugely. “*Rize*” seemed to encapsulate so much of what I wanted to say and what I feel is beneficial about ‘the dance’ and its power to engage with and transform emotion, experience, self-understanding, and therefore individuals and communities, all within a social context that was relevant to the ‘group’ I am interested in within the context of the London riots. It seemed to pull together the specific threads of my argument, while providing a shining example and results that were deeply significant.



(Image of krump dancers taken from “*Rize*” 2005)

The krump dance is aggressive but non-violent - there is a definite look and feel to the movement but no choreographed moves as such. This is an improvised form of dance that seems to come straight from the heart of the dancer (where much of the dance is in fact physically generated). The expansion and contraction of the torso and the intensity of the movement in that area, powers most of the energy of this dance - the heart of the dancer being quite literally the power of this form. There is immense emotional energy in the dance, and a very clear expression of anger that transcends the negativity of any such emotion ‘transforming’ it into a very felt strength and power. There is a feeling of physical struggle in the movement, with the dancers at times looking like they are trying to break free of something that is inside of them – something that is holding them back

and that they are struggling with – an internal and all encompassing cage that they are tearing from themselves and breaking free of. They refer to ‘the dance’ as autobiographical, a narrative – a story of their lives, and the experience of living in their world. They speak about dancing your anger, dancing your pain and dancing with the story, to dance through the limitation, the lack of opportunity and the unworthiness that becomes an internalised and a social reality - these young people are physically resisting and moving with the felt oppression of their ‘constructed identities’, the reality of those effects and the power ‘they’ have held over their bodies and communities.



(Image of krump dancers taken from “Rize” 2005)

The krumping sub-culture provides an alternative to the gangs and partially insulates the dancers’ from gang culture. The dancer’s accomplishments in an art form with street credibility, earns them respect, and their absorption and dedication to the dance provides a focus, which leaves little room for distractions... Youngsters in poor neighbourhoods, whose distressed families have failed them because of substance abuse and violence, sometimes join street gangs in search of a sense of belonging and nurturance. The dancers in “*Rize*” find acceptance and support in krumping crews as they struggle with serious family problems. (Duggan 2006: 49-50)

## APPENDIX E

### The 5Rhythms Practice



The 5Rhythms are states of being... they are a map to everywhere we want to go... inner and outer, forward and back, physical, emotional and intellectual. They are markers on the road back to a real self, a vulnerable, wild, instinctive, passionate self... In dancing them you can unearth a freestyle movement vocabulary rooted in unexpected fresh ways of moving – visceral and highly personal... They reveal ways to creatively express aggression... emotions and anxieties, edges and ecstasies... They initiate us back into the wisdom of our bodies... [They] help us to find our voice [our individuality] and become a vehicle for change and renewal...

**FLOWING**... the pipeline to our inner truth, the impulse to follow the flow of one's own energy, to be true to oneself – listening and attending to our needs, receptive to our inner and outer worlds. When we disconnect... we become blind to what is really happening inside us. We don't feel our bodies... we deny our instincts...

**STACCATO**... is the gateway to the heart [the emotions]. It shows us how to step out into the world connected to our... feelings. This rhythm is the ruler of the linear world, the ruler of the warrior part of us... It is part of us that stands up for what we care about... Staccato is the fierce teacher of boundaries. And it is the protector and ambassador for our fluid beings. When we stop listening to our hearts none of our moves feel right. Instead of being clear, concise, and focused, we become rigid. Instead of being open-hearted, grounded and centred, we become tense, disconnected, aggressive and angry.

**CHAOS**... breaks us free of our illusions and throws us headfirst into the beat. It takes us on the journey from "I can't" to "I will". The simple practice of chaos immediately brings us back to our bodies, to the moment. This rhythm liberates us from all ideas about who we are and gives us a real experience of being total, free, intuitive and creative. Dancing chaos is the practice of going into the unknown...

**LYRICAL**... teaches us how to break out of destructive patterns... and surrender into the integrity and dignity that we often forget is within us. Lyrical is [light, playful, and] expansive and connects us to our humanity, timeless rhythms, repetitions, patterns and cycles.

**STILLNESS**... moves both within and all around us. The dance is our vehicle, our destination is the rhythm of stillness, our challenge is to be a vessel that keeps moving and changing. Eventually... all the other rhythms... converge in the vital resonance of stillness. Moving in stillness and being still in motion transforms the accumulation of our life experiences into wisdom.

(Roth 2012)

**APPENDIX F**  
**Conversational Interview with 5Rhythms facilitator  
Emma Leech**



**It's all about instinct, it's not choreographed and it's not rehearsed, it's completely in the moment... And these kids... you're talking about... they are so sharp with their instincts, because they're from the streets and they have to be... That's the part of them that's developed the most... (Leech 2012)**

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