This chapter focuses on representations of masculinity in five works from the late 1970s and early 1980s. Three of these are from Europe: the German choreographer Pina Bausch’s \textit{Frühlingseifer} (‘The Rite of Spring’, 1975), her \textit{Blaubart} (‘Bluebeard’, 1977), and the British choreographer Fergus Early’s solo \textit{Are You Right There Michael, Are You Right?} (1982). The other two, from the US, are Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane’s duet \textit{Rotary Action} (1982), and Trisha Brown’s piece \textit{Set and Reset} (1983). Each of these five pieces, in different ways, exemplified a range of responses, from male and female choreographers on both sides of the Atlantic, to issues surrounding gender, ‘race’, and sexuality. These are issues that I have been considering in the previous two chapters. By the time Paxton, Lepkoff, and fellow dancers were developing contact improvisation in the 1970s, these, and the way that cultural forms mediated them, were becoming topics of sophisticated public debate of a kind that had not existed when other works discussed in Chapter 5 were being created. Kobena Mercer has pointed out that the politics of black liberation, spelt out in the Black Panther’s ten-point programme of 1966, inspired the ten-point charter of the Women’s Liberation Movement and the Gay Liberation Front’s demands in 1969 (1994: 303). The idea of liberation also underlay the avant-garde approaches to representation which these five dance pieces employed. In giving this chapter the title ‘Masculinity and Liberation’ I do not necessarily mean that these pieces showed liberated men, but that they reflected changing attitudes towards gender and, sometimes, mediated contemporaneous discussions about a potential or need for men to change their behaviour.

It is clear that Bausch, Brown, Early, Jones, and Zane were aware of this new questioning about the way gender, ‘race’, and sexuality are represented in cultural forms, and knew that their audiences might also be thinking about these questions. But \textit{Frühlingseifer} and \textit{Blaubart} (henceforth \textit{Sacre} and \textit{Bluebeard}), \textit{Set and Reset}, \textit{Are You Right . . .}, and \textit{Rotary Action} were all created at a time when these questions were comparatively new and fresh, and had not yet begun to close down or stiffen into a potentially prescriptive set of ‘politically correct’ approaches. Political correctness was certainly one factor in Jill Johnston’s 1987 critique of Cunningham’s reconstructed use of normative heterosexual partnering in \textit{Routinario} (discussed in Chapter 5), and a hardening of political agendas constituted the context for the work of the gay artists discussed in the next chapter.

I have deliberately used the term avant-garde to characterise this work rather than postmodern. This was, admittedly, the period when the term postmodern dance began to be used. Trisha Brown was one of the group of US choreographers whose work Sally Banes first called postmodern dance. The definition of it that Banes (1980, 1987) proposed, however, sits uneasily with most of the work discussed in this chapter. Her use of the term had little in common with the kinds of meaning which the term postmodern had for art critics such as Rosalind Krauss (1986) and Craig Owens (1992), or theorists such as Frederic Jameson (1985), Jean Baudrillard (1983), and Jean-François Lyotard (1984). She defined it in a way that drew on the high modernist theory of painting and sculpture developed in the 1950s and 1960s by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. Richard Shiff has argued that Greenberg’s writings brought about a ‘drift from acknowledging self and nature as originating art to privileging the medium as the organiser of artist’s energies’ (1992: 98). For her, postmodern dance was progressively ridding itself of old-fashioned, representational, and expressive devices in order to explore the formal and aesthetic properties of ‘pure’ dance. Strictly speaking, from this formalist point of view, questions about gender and sexuality are irrelevant.

This formalist approach could be applied to the work of Trisha Brown, but not to gender representation within it. It sits uneasily with Jones and Zane’s use of narrative and their references to popular culture. In Banes’s view postmodern dance was a ‘largely US phenomenon’ (1987: xxvi), US choreographers having made their breakthrough by ‘reacting against the expressionism of modern dance which anchored movement to a literary idea or a musical form’ (1980: 15). This was something that, in her view, Pina Bausch failed to do. For Banes, Bausch’s work was ‘expressionist rather than analytical’ and seemed ‘more influenced by imagistic avant-garde theatre than by either German or US dance traditions’ (1987: xxxvi). Fergus Early has indicated that he doesn’t see his work as postmodern. As I will show, it has drawn on the ballet tradition but reframed this in ways that deliberately dismantled and deflated its elitist status in order to enable his work to express, within a British context, a broad-based, inclusive politics.

Advanced choreographers during this period were, as Banes suggests, abandoning the idea that representation and expression should be the focus and purpose of theatre dance. This chapter, however, argues that this did not necessarily result in the shift towards an exclusive focus on pure abstract form. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, choreographers responded to new concerns about gender and sexuality by focusing on
theatre dance’s potential for embodying meanings and generating affects. This was a shift towards the medium of embodied experience rather than one towards pure, abstract form. This chapter, therefore, identifies and discusses the new possibilities for meaning production and affective experience which these five works opened up.

The choreographic context in which Brown, Jones, and Zane were making work in the early 1980s is one which developed logically from the US work discussed in the last two chapters. The relationship between Bausch and Early’s generation of European dancers and the modern dance of the first half of the twentieth century is a far more complicated and difficult one than the relationship between so-called postmodern US dancers and historical figures such as Isadora Duncan, Ruth St Denis, or Martha Graham. At the same time that Graham made her American Document (1938) and used the role she created for Erick Hawkins to signify the spirit of the US New Deal, Mary Wigman was asserting that there were essentially German qualities in her own dancing (see Manning 1993). The US dance world has not had much incentive to reflect on the rhetoric of US exceptionalism that sometimes informs discussions about its modern dance. The undeniable acquiescence by Laban and Wigman with nationalistic discourses about German national identity (see Karina and Kant 2003), made their modern dance, in the post-war period, incompatible with the new spirit of European internationalism.

The realisation of the horrors of Auschwitz and the death camps inspired the European Convention of Human Rights in 1950 which in turn initiated the political process of integration that eventually became the European Union. The new internationalism, and the suspicion of nationalism that had inspired it, led to institutional support for ballet by German opera houses because it was a neutral, international form (see Partsch-Bergsohn 1993). In practice, this meant that West German ballet companies adopted an Anglo-American model while East German ones looked to Russia. Modern dance went underground in a divided Germany that found its own histories and memories traumatic. The metaphysical vision, to which dancers such as Wigman and Kreutzberg aspired in the 1920s and 1930s, subsequently lost its credibility at a time when the philosopher Theodor Adorno was asking whether, after Auschwitz, it was still possible to reconcile metaphysical speculation with experience. What can make Bausch’s pieces hard work to watch is the way they refuse to offer any transcendence. Where she has exposed her dancers and audiences to extremely painful dance material, particularly in early pieces such as her Sacre and Bluebeard, this needs to be understood in the context of the problematics of European memory in the public sphere. Similarly, memories of British Imperialism, as I will show, informed Early’s work. Early’s aim was to develop an alternative to a supposedly apolitical, but class-based and institutionalised ballet practice. Understanding this politics of history and memory is essential to interpreting the way masculinity is represented in their pieces. Although Rotary Action and Set and Reset were not informed by memory and history in this way, Brown, Jones, and Zane were, however, aware that the kinds of representation of masculinity their works presented were meaningful because of the way they opposed or contradicted the representational strategies of mainstream modern dance.

The works discussed in this chapter all betray an open spirit of enquiry into the kinds of strategy that could be used to trouble and subvert existing conventions and traditions; this was at a time when artists and intellectuals were becoming aware that cultural texts mediated normative ideologies. There are two related strategies that, as I shall show, Bausch, Brown, Early, Jones, and Zane all adopted. First, all of the works discussed in this chapter, in varying ways, resisted or disrupted normative, habitual patterns of spectatorship. Through their avant-garde approach, they sought to free the spectator’s gaze, and, at the same time, required them to engage more actively in the process of interpretation. I identified this approach, in the last chapter, within work by Cunningham and Paxton. Second, an important way in which these works disrupted normative spectatorship was through staging intimacy, and, in doing so, they were all informed by new attitudes towards the dancing body. Reviewing a 1983 performance of Set and Reset in London, Michael Huxley wrote:

The company’s work is so strongly founded on a concern for the body, and for dancers as people, that this message (as meaning) shines through the performance. The formal complexity which presents so many possibilities for dancers allows the dance to happen. The choreographer’s and dancers’ use of the body allows the dance to happen, and nowhere does it happen more satisfyingly than in Set and Reset.

(1983: 30, emphasis in original)

This libertarian concern for the body is one which links Brown’s work with contact improvisation and related forms of movement research (such as Body Mind Centring, Skinner Releasing technique, Klein technique, and approaches to dance informed by the Alexander technique). Jones and Zane were introduced to contact improvisation in the early 1970s, and their knowledge and experience of it is evident in Rotary Action. Huxley implies that this new concern for the body and its physical presence could not be separated from a concern for dancers as people, and argued that work which expressed these intertwined concerns was meaningful for this very reason. This chapter argues that the libertarian message, which Huxley identified in Set and Reset, can also be found in Bausch’s Sacre and Bluebeard, Early’s Theatre Dance, and Jones’s Rotary Action. It, therefore, investigates correlations between new ways of staging the physical presence...
rather than the visual appearance of male dancing bodies and a sceptical questioning, predominantly by feminist and gay writers, of the supposedly normative nature of heteronormativity.

**BAUSCH’S SACRE: MEN AND SHAME**

Bausch’s *Sacre* was first performed in December 1975 as the last item in a triple bill of pieces set to music by Stravinsky. Superficially, this was the kind of programme of dances set to well-known classical music that ballet companies were presenting in subsidised opera houses across West Germany (as it then was). As Rob Burns and Wilfred van der Will have pointed out, with economic prosperity, towns and cities ‘realized that their image depended substantially on their ratings as centres of culture’ (1995: 259). Wuppertal Opera House’s early support for Pina Bausch’s controversial work needs to be seen in this context, since Bausch substantially challenged and disrupted the kinds of work being presented elsewhere.

Since the Ballets Russes’s historic first production in 1913 (see Chapter 3), Stravinsky’s score *Le Sacre du printemps* has been used by an enormous number of ballet and modern dance choreographers. To date, Stephanie Jordan and Lorraine Nicholas have catalogued over 160 versions.1 As Susan Manning (1991) has pointed out, many of these were German. She notes that, whereas, in the late 1950s and 1960s, many choreographers had been using the music of *Sacre* as a vehicle for new or substantially revisionist versions of its sacrificial theme, Bausch’s *Sacre* returned to the original story. Bausch could, therefore, count on her audience having a degree of familiarity with the music and the story of its sacrificial victim, and read her production against a well-established set of conventions. The physical exhaustion and emotional violence, which performances of her *Sacre* generated, made the more conventionally modernist abstraction of contemporary European ballet choreography seem redundant. The dancers performed on an empty stage whose flooring was covered with dry peat. As they became hot and sweaty with their exertions, this became stuck to their bodies and clothes. The community of uniformly dressed dancers seemed undifferentiated, the men in black trousers but bare upper bodies, the women in thin, light colour, knee length shifts. Norbert Servos has described the way Bausch’s *Sacre* made spectators aware of the physical effort involved:

The dancers have no need to act their growing exhaustion: it is genuine as they dance against the resistance of ankle-deep earth. The energy demanded from the dancers is not disguised, it confronts the audience directly. No smiles mask the strain, it is made audible by the dancers’ heavy breathing. The visceral sensuality which the actors create with this seemingly limitless physical exertion gives the story additional physical credibility, makes the sacrifice something one is exposed to at close quarters, a personal experience. (1984: 30)

Servos stressed the physical presence of exhausted bodies rather than the visual appearance of choreographed material. It was as if existing and recognisable dance movement was no longer meaningful in itself but seemed to be a pretence, and had no legitimacy any more unless it could be revalidated through the intensity of the dancer’s actual experience.

Sexual difference in Bausch’s *Sacre* was painfully polarised in a way that, as I suggested in Chapter 3, found a lone precedent in Nijinski’s *Les Noces*. Women, in both ballets, were evidently subordinate to, and in fear of, the men; in Bausch’s *Sacre* the men harassed them until one of them gave up and became the sacrificial victim (this role initially danced by Maris Alis). The whole community, then, witnessed her symbolic suicide. To signify her status, she put on a flimsy red dress that had been passed around by dancers for most of the piece. This fitted her so loosely that, during the final solo, it kept slipping off her shoulders to show her breasts, making her appear particularly vulnerable. Throughout the piece, all the women dancers seemed frightened and vulnerable, particularly when male dancers were near them. The male dancers, however, when not involved in executing strenuous movement sequences, seemed passive and emotionless. The women must, of course, have known from the start that one of them would become the chosen victim, while the men knew that they, themselves, were not in any danger.

At the beginning, the women came on, in ones and twos, looking around warily, and briefly acknowledging one another. The men, however, arrived on stage all at once, seemingly penetrating the loosely assembled group of women and, whether intentionally or not, their physical presence making the women flinch. Sometimes, during the piece, both sexes came together as a community through the execution of common movement, often in the form of a circle dance. At other times, the men and women formed separate groups; or groups of men surrounded a single woman in a potentially threatening way. This threat was signalled by the women’s reactions rather than by the men’s manner, as the latter remained almost stoically impassive.

The men seemed to have no potential within them for intimate response, either to one another, or towards a woman (which is partly what, as a man, I find so unbearable about this and similar pieces Bausch made at this time). The women’s reactions to one another suggested temporary, fragile intimacies of a kind that could be easily abandoned. Bausch’s *Sacre* showed a community that was falling apart. Everyone appeared to be on their own, unable to trust anyone. This must have been particularly resonant and painful in West Germany at the time it was made and first performed. As Alice Yaeger Kaplan has observed: 'Postwar German society
was caught up in a massive social project where reconstruction and forgetting were intertwined (1989: 167). By the late 1960s, however, a younger generation of West Germans, particularly students who held left-wing views, had become disenchanted with what they saw as the dishonesty of the older generation of parents and teachers who, as Kaplan puts it, had told them ‘to remember the Holocaust but ... to forget fascism’ (ibid.: 164, emphasis in original). From the early 1970s until its climax in the ‘German Autumn’ of 1977, West Germany was shaken by a series of terrorist attacks by left-wing groups associated with the Red Army Faction, whose best-known members were Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhoff. The German government’s response to terrorist kidnappings, killings, bombings, and other outrages was to take on authoritarian emergency powers. This, as Burns and van der Will (1995) have shown, seemed to many on the left, who did not actually support terrorist violence, to confirm the Red Army Faction’s warnings about the government’s ‘fascist’ leanings.

When Bausch’s Sacre was first performed, the emotional atmosphere of its times resonated within it. Some of what Bausch said about the way she worked on movement material with her dancers takes on a particular significance when seen in the context of this atmosphere of suspicion and hysteria. As she told Raimund Hoghe, who became her dramaturge during the 1980s (and whose own version of the Sacre I discuss in Chapter 8), she was very sensitive to non-verbal, bodily signs of suppressed emotions:

Somehow we are very transparent ... the way somebody walks or the way people carry their necks tells you something about the way they live or about the things that have happened to them. Somehow everything is visible - even when we cling to certain things. You can really see where something is suppressed. There are spots where people don’t think about controlling themselves.

(Hoghe 1980: 65)

This statement is particularly significant when one considers what sorts of things were happening to German people in the mid 1970s, and what they might wish to suppress. Moreover, when Bausch said that people ‘are very transparent’ this is not quite the same thing as Martha Graham’s famous, puritanical dictum that movement never lies. Whereas Graham expected her dancers to express emotional sincerity in a controlled, conventionalised way, Bausch was interested in areas where people did not think of controlling themselves. She sought, therefore, in an avant-garde way, to reconnect dance performance with the unselfconscious way individuals behave in everyday life. Bausch implied that if one respects dancers as people and is sensitive to their use of the body, this, then, will allow the dance to happen. This is what Michael Huxley said of Brown’s Set and Reset (1983: 30). By allowing spectators to see what has happened to the dancers as people, Bausch opened up the possibility for spectators to detect signs in their physical behaviour that hinted at suppression. While the women in Bausch’s Sacre tried unsuccessfully to hide their fear, the men seemed to be suppressing any sign at all of a potential for feeling. The men in Bausch’s Sacre danced with naked upper bodies. In the last three chapters I have described a number of pieces in which male dancers have been dressed in a way that revealed their naked chests and backs. (This is not as frequent an occurrence as my choice of examples might seem to suggest.) With the exception of Paxton’s Flat (in Chapter 5), all these pieces undressed male dancers in order to eroticise them for the viewing pleasure of gay male and heterosexual female spectators. One of the most popular post-war European ballets which did this was Maurice Béjart’s 1959 version of Sacre, in which there was both a male and a female sacrificial victim who engaged in a copulatory fertility rite. The powerful material Béjart created for a male corps de ballet, in particular, attracted critical acclaim. Like Béjart’s Sacre, Bausch undressed her male dancers and gave them some vigorous and powerful movements to perform. The more the men in Bausch’s Sacre sweated, however, the more the audience could see, and the more the audience’s admiration for them, in particular, the more the audience’s admiration for them in the context of this atmosphere of suspicion and hysteria. As she told Raimund Hoghe, who became her dramaturge during the 1980s (and whose own version of the Sacre I discuss in Chapter 8), she was very sensitive to non-verbal, bodily signs of suppressed emotions:

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(Hoghe 1980: 65)
the women's roles, and in particular that of the sacrificial victim. Although Bausch drew attention to the problematic nature of masculinity, she was unwilling to accept that her work had anything to do with feminism. She acknowledged to Hoghe in 1980 that the way she saw gender roles ‘certainly has to do with myself – with the fact of me being a woman’:

But ‘Feminism’ – perhaps because it has become such a fashionable word – and I retreat into my snail shell. Perhaps also because they very often draw such a funny borderline that I don’t really like. Sometimes it sounds like ‘against each other’ instead of ‘together’.

(Hoghe 1980: 73)

What she said she disagreed with was the ‘single-stranded thinking’ with which some interpreted her work. This, she said, simply wasn’t right because ‘you can always watch the other way’ (ibid.). By troubling and subverting conventional expectations, Bausch opened up possibilities for watching in other ways. Mainstream, modern, European ballets had celebrated abstract ideals, Bausch’s Sacre refused any transcendence, foregrounding the physicality of dancing bodies to draw attention towards difficult and problematic experiences. This came at a time when many Germans recognised the necessity of facing up to things that had been ignored or hidden. Where Béjart’s Sacre eroticised male dancers, Bausch did the opposite. By foregrounding the intensity of the dancer’s physical experience and disrupting normative aesthetic expectations, her Sacre challenged spectators to actively consider the nature of their own responses to the way she framed the male dancers’ performances.

While Bausch’s use of music conformed to the practice of other more mainstream European ballets of its period, her approach to gender representation at the time was radical. Her Sacre, is, however, not typical of her later, tanztheater pieces. Her Sacre was the last piece which she made that set movement and steps to a single, substantial piece of music; but already, in small parts of it, dancers were executing task-based sequences of movement that were disconnected from any musical rhythm or motif. Later works consist of collections of cameo-like incidents in which the behaviour of individuals is set against the behaviour of the group as a whole. The avant-garde way in which these have challenged spectators is, perhaps, more obvious. Her 1977 piece Bluebeard, whose full title in English is ‘Bluebeard – while listening to a tape recording of Béla Bartók’s Opera “Duke Bluebeard’s Castle”’, made explicit this deconstruction of the music.

**BAUSCH’S BLUEBEARD AND THE LANDSCAPE OF MEN’S SOULS**

Bausch’s Bluebeard took as its basis the European fairy tale about a king who, giving his new wife the keys to his castle, tells her that she can enter any room except one, which she, of course, enters when he is absent, only to find in it the butchered carcasses of all his previous wives. Karen Mozingo (2005) has drawn attention to the sympathetic way Bausch interpreted feminine experience in this piece. As Judit Frigyesi demonstrates, in Bartók’s version, with its libretto by his friend Béla Balázs, the castle was an allegorical symbol for Bluebeard’s soul so that, as his new wife Judith explored its chambers, she already knew what she would find in it: ‘One walks within the soul softly and with care (as Judith opens the door softly, kindly) ... Bluebeard’s castle is the landscape of his lost life’ (1998: 200). As Bausch’s Judith walked softly, she revealed that Bluebeard’s violence and his desire to control others were the central signifiers of his masculinity. In many ways, Minarik’s role, as Bluebeard, was a logical development of the priest-like figure in Sacre, representing a masculine subjectivity that has no potential for expressing emotion other than through violence.

Minarik’s Bluebeard kept control through the tape recorder, mounted on a wheeled table with wires running up to the lighting grid above the stage. He stopped and rewound the music to repeat things he found pleasurable, or to stop things that made him uncomfortable. When, on the tape, the Duke sang ‘This is my torture chamber’ Judith on stage screamed and acted out fainting. The excerpt was frantically rewound and switched on again a few times so that Bluebeard could repeatedly enjoy watching her horrific reaction. He used the tape to maintain his own limits, stopping things that make him feel uncomfortable. He was irritated when the women acted spontaneously. Their giggles and laughs, as they played in his magic garden, eventually drove him to switch off the tape and turn round sharply, as if to reprimand them if they had not stopped. Independent expressions of female sexuality were worse. As he sat by the tape recorder, Judith knelt between his knees and reached up to caress his chin and cheek. Bluebeard put his hands on top of her head and violently thrust her down onto the floor; but, of course, she tried again in endless repeats. But, earlier, Bluebeard had buried his head in an infantile way against Judith’s belly and, in response, she leaned her upper body right over him as if hiding him. He was hiding from sexually explicit behaviour. Later, Bartók’s Judith, on the tape, sang (about the seven doors) ‘open them, open them for me’. As the tape played this, women, all over the floor around Bluebeard, clambered crab-like above the men, planting their legs wide apart to show their crotches. I noted in Chapter 5 Fred Orton’s (1994: 126) account of the allegorist as someone who seeks to reconnect things and meanings that the modern world has pulled apart. Although the feelings expressed in Bartók’s opera played on tape were disconnected from the events taking place on stage, Bausch’s piece Nevertheless sought to reconnect them. Following Frigyesi, it is possible to read Bausch’s Bluebeard as an almost therapeutic encounter between the king and his wife, in which Judith tried, carefully, to help Bluebeard come out of his repressed shell and become
a more open and responsive man. In this way, I suggest, both these pieces by Bausch mediated contemporaneous discussions about a potential, or need, for men to change their behaviour.

**CHANGING MEN: ARE YOU RIGHT THERE MICHAEL, ARE YOU RIGHT?**

Fergus Early trained at the Royal Ballet School, and danced with the Royal Ballet from 1964 to 1969 and then with the Royal Ballet's 'Ballet For All' Company from 1969 to 1971. In the 1970s he was one of the group of dancers, mostly like himself—dissidents from ballet companies, who broke away and started to create the conditions for an alternative, new dance. This included founding the X6 Dance Space in London's Docklands and starting the magazine *New Dance*. The question of how to apply sexual politics to dance was a central concern of the X6 Collective and one which is evident in many articles and reviews in early issues of *New Dance*. It is also evident in many of Early's works at the time, including *Three Gymnopedies* (1976), *Sunrise* (1979) based on Albrecht's role in the ballet *Giselle* (1841), and, with Jacky Lansley, *I Giselle* (1980), an evening-length, feminist reworking of the revered nineteenth-century classic. Early was one of the group who produced the controversial Men's Issue of *New Dance* in 1980. Shortly after this, Early created an evening-length solo show *Are You Right There Michael, Are You Right?* (1982) based on his father's life. By taking popular conventions, including those of ballet, and deliberately deconstructing their class-based associations, this piece, in many ways, formed the template for the pieces Early then went on to make for Green Candle Dance Company. Founded in 1987 as a community dance company, this aimed to take dance performances to a wide range of audiences from social groups who rarely attended theatres.

*Are You Right* ... combines theatre, dance, and tape slide presentation to tell the story of his father Noel Early, who, born and brought up in Ireland, became a doctor who served in the Indian Medical Service. In the war in Korea, he broke his pelvis in five places leaving him severely disabled, and the piece concludes with his decline into alcoholism and his subsequent death from cancer. The story is told through taped reminiscences about Noel Early made by members of the family, and accompanied by back projected slides of family photographs and general pictures that establish the *mise en scène* as India, Ireland, or the south of England. Often, these are shown while Fergus is calmly changing from one costume into another in full view of the audience. There is one moment where the staging draws attention to the striking resemblance between Fergus and a photograph of Noel projected on screen; there are the same clothes, moustache, facial expression, and posture. Fergus himself was eight when his father died, and during most of Fergus's life until then his father had been absent overseas. The soundtrack of family stories therefore reproduces the process through which Fergus would initially have found out about his largely absent father's life. The father is a crucial figure in the psychological development of the male child. The boy's (all too often absent) father is a primary figure for identification in the process of creating his own sense of gendered identity. *Are You Right* ... can be seen as the acting out in public of a private, psychologically charged process of assessing his ties with the memory of his father and coming to terms with his death.

Michael Huxley, in his analysis of *Are You Right* ... , has given a very useful description of Early's movement style:

> Despite the use of steps from different styles and periods, the overall range of movement styles is not great and they are executed within a modest spatial and dynamic range. Jumps and turns appear close to the body because their lines are never extended to the full. (1988: 166)

The dance component of *Are You Right* ... was in the form of short numbers interspersed with bits of acting and onstage costume changes. It is Early's belief that dance is (or should be available to be) a valued part of everyone's life; many of the dances in *Are You Right* ... clearly referred to the sorts of social or folk dances that Noel would have done at that time in his life. They affirmed that dancing is a significant part of an individual's life and contradicted the low status that dance and non-verbal communication have in Western society, particularly for men. *Are You Right* ... amounted to a history of Noel Early's experience of embodiment.

In the first dance, Fergus used a life size, two-dimensional, wooden prop made to resemble a cut-out version of a photograph of Noel Early's brothers and sisters all lined up in order of descending height—the photograph itself was recognisable from having previously been back-projected. The dancing was loosely based on traditional Irish step dancing, and was performed to a recording of an Irish jig. By stepping on pedals that made the wooden legs of his siblings move, he appeared to be dancing with them. Through bright, fast steps and jumps, this dance signified Noel's youth, and the Irish culture in which he grew up, and, by showing his interaction with members of his family, the dance functioned as an expression of community and shared cultural values.

Later, to the crackly strains of an old recording by Peter Dawson singing 'Pale hand I loved beside the Shalimar', Fergus presented an animated version of his parents' wedding photograph, standing beside a cut-out figure of his mother in her bridal dress. Taking the words literally, Fergus choreographed, for the first verse of the song, movements for his hand and arm only. The choreography, here, developed a motif based on a yoga exercise in which the hand is rotated so that the palm faces outwards, and the arm is, then, raised up to the side. The exercise is designed to stretch...
the arm muscles in a particular way. In the second verse of the song, he used a motif from another yoga exercise which stretches the leg muscles. During this, Fergus held the toe of his knee-length army boot as he straightened the whole leg. Because he was wearing army uniform and a solar topee, the effect of straightening the leg in this way looked strongly militaristic and hence masculine, reminiscent of a goose step (see Figure 6.1). But, at the same time, it was based on yoga movement, ironically appropriate to the Indian mise en scène of the story and of the song.

In a key section, towards the end of the piece, the disabled Noel fell on the floor and was at first unable, because of his disability, to get himself up again. Through most of the sequence, he rolled and turned himself about on the floor, with his face generally hidden from the audience. Within this movement material there were references to earlier dance sections – for example from the ‘Pale hands I loved’ dance sequence, the light yoga stretch with the hand and the image of the leg being extended with the hand grasping the toe. On one level this suggested that Noel was checking and testing his body out, comparing what he could do in his disabled state of health with what he had been able to do in his prime. It also suggested a process of reflection on his life.

Overall, it was by parodying ballet and including references to yoga, folk and social dance, and music hall traditions, that Fergus Early staged aspects of masculinity that could not have been represented within conventional ballet. Through his relatively unconventional uses of the body and of hybrid dance vocabularies and methods of theatrical staging, he challenged the spectator to reassess aspects of masculine identity and experience that are generally denied or rendered invisible in mainstream cultural forms. If Bausch and Minarik’s Bluebeard made public a need for change, Early’s piece exemplified ways of going about doing so.

The extent to which Early’s anti-virtuosity contradicted conventional expectations can be gauged in a review by Nadine Meisner. ‘Part of the trouble’ for her in Early’s Are You Right ... ‘lies in an incongruous combination of choreography and costume: it is difficult to take seriously a small, stocky man moving poetically in, for example, unflatteringly chunky army shorts and jacket, thick knee socks and sandals’ (1983: 28). Early’s physical presence detracted from the transcendent poetry she assumed anyone who had been associated with the Royal Ballet must intend to achieve. Meisner sensed Early was using ballet-derived vocabulary in a way that contradicted conventional expectations. She allowed that the piece ‘pleases by its measured, unsentimental tone, its careful structure, its thoughtful, disciplined originality’ (ibid.). But, for her, the incongruities in the way the male dancing body was presented were a problem. What did not occur to her, but is implicit in what she wrote, is the possibility that traditional ways of using ballet movement are not appropriate for expressing the sorts of idea about masculinity Early set out to explore in
this piece. It didn’t occur to her that Early might, on the level of body politics, intentionally want to make trouble, through ironically dissociating ballet-derived movement from conservative, metaphysical ideas about dance as art, and sexual difference. I have shown that Bausch made trouble in similar ways. Just as Judith walked softly within the landscape of Bluebeard’s soul, Fergus Early walked softly but publicly within a landscape of his own very personal involvement with memories of his father’s life and death. On a private level, to uncover and become aware of repressed conflicts might be therapeutic; but to do so, within a performance, can have the effect of offering this as a positive and valuable thing to do, and thus to subvert norms and demonstrate possibilities for change.

JONES AND ZANE DANCING TOGETHER

Moving across the Atlantic, the social and political context of Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane’s work in the late 1970s and early 1980s was very different from that of Bausch or Early. There was also a generational shift. Whereas Bausch and Early had each studied at conservatories, Jones and Zane met at a gay liberation consciousness raising group while at university (Jones, Bill T. 1995: 81). Their wide range of cultural and artistic references indicate that the curriculum they studied included critical perspectives on contemporary and avant-garde art and film. In terms of class, both had benefited from public education while Jones also benefited from the aftereffects of the Civil Rights movement: neither of their parents had had the opportunity to go to university. Jones’s family were African Americans involved in migrant farm labour. Zane’s parents were both immigrants, his father an Italian Catholic from Brazil and his mother an orthodox Lithuanian Jew.

As I have shown, Early deliberately developed a hybrid approach to both movement and staging in order to reach a wide social range of audience. Jones and Zane, although performing for less diverse audiences, developed a working method, within their multi-layered, collaboratively choreographed pieces, in which contradictory and clashing material was juxtaposed in challenging ways. Their friend and collaborator, the visual artist (and later, film director) Robert Longo, has spoken of the cultural collisions in their work (in Zimmer and Quasha 1989: 86). Many in the New York art and rock music scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s, including Longo, Gretchen Binder, Keith Haring, and Jenny Holzer, all of whom collaborated with Jones and Zane at that time, had a taste for such collisions. Like many New York-based artists they were reconfiguring what could go together with what in order to de-hierarchise high and urban, street culture. Despite its carefree and insolent anger, this work used similar allegorical structures to those which Fred Orton (1994) has identified in Jasper Johns’s work. In Jones and Zane’s case, an exhaustingly rigorous and characteristically US energy gave their performances of masculinity a very different character to those in contemporaneous European work; and issues of class, ‘race’, and sexuality appeared in Jones and Zane’s work in a distinctively US way.

*Rotary Action* (1982) was made for a dance festival in Vienna. Their previous three duets, *Monkey Run Road* (1979), *Blawood Mountain* (1980), and *Valley Cottage* (1981), had attracted attention both in New York and in Europe. *Rotary Action* opened and closed with a darkened stage in which the two performed a series of formalised moves and poses under tightly focused beams of light that came on and off in a way that recalled a disco. Between these set pieces, Jones and Zane each performed their own solos on a fully lit stage and came together for a fast, free duet which combined the fluid intimacy of contact improvisation with poses that allude to a wide range of sources. As Susan Foster has noted, these could suggest ‘hip-hop, ballet, clowning, pantomime, break-dancing, gymnastics, club dancing, or sporting events’ which would ‘suddenly appear alongside moves with no identifiable origin, incorporated randomly into the longer phrases of movement’ (1999: 111).

Jones had taken some classes with African American dancers Percival Borde and Pearl Primus. Zane had collaborated with Johanna Boyce on a piece that explored their responses to the holocaust. He was also interested in minimalist postmodern choreography, including the work of Laura Dean and Lucinda Childs, and performed in a piece by Andy DeGroat. *Rotary Action* used formalist means to structure widely disparate cultural references. The opening suggested a gay appropriation of the kind of disco dancing popularised by John Travolta in the 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever*. This use of poses, which can also be seen in Jones’s 1983 piece *Fever Swamp* commissioned for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, suggested a gay awareness of being looked at. In its arch use of mimicry, it resembled what would later emerge as vogue dancing in the gay and transvestite balls which Jenny Livingston documented in her 1990 documentary film, *Paris Is Burning*. *Rotary Action* was not, however, a piece that set out to explore or make statements about identities but, as Longo put it, to create cultural collisions.

When I saw Jones and Zane perform *Rotary Action* during their 1983 English tour, I wrote that ‘the most impressive thing about them is the way they dance together. It is as if neither needs to know what the other is doing but knows where the other is and exactly how they will respond in any situation’ (Burt 1983: 35). They looked and were very different from one another – Jones has said that whereas he was a big black man, Zane was ‘a short, “funny-looking,” Italian-Jewish man’ (in Daly 1998: 120). Susan Foster has commented on the way that: ‘one minute they are manoeuvring, gallivanting, gesticulating as wildly as independent bodies, and the next they are dancing alongside each other in tandem. The sudden
in-tuneness of the two bodies is nothing short of thrilling’ (1999: 113). This was, of course, a thrilling sense of two men being in-tune with one another. Unlike all the earlier examples I have discussed where men who were gay danced together, Jones and Zane made no attempt to pretend that they were anything other than a gay couple.

Zane admitted to Elizabeth Zimmer: ‘I didn’t want to share my life with an audience, and yet I wanted to work with this person. He was drawing my life into the performance area’ (Zimmer and Quasha 1989: 56). Talking to Ann Daly in 1998, Jones confirmed that Zane had never wanted autobiographical materials in his work. Jones himself, however, had realised that there was always an ambiguity in the search for the truth. My truth was not everyone’s truth, witnessed by the way I looked, the way they looked, the way Arnie looked. I thought that the truth was in the ambiguity. Therefore, pile on more and more logs, more and more contradictions, more and more painful references that are unresolved and cannot be resolved in dance.

(Daly 1998: 119, emphasis in original)

The allegorist, as Fred Orton (1994) notes, recognises the modern world as a space in which things and meanings disengage. Jones is therefore challenging the audience to read his work allegorically. Disengagements and contradictions were most evident when, towards the end of Rotary Action, the stage returned to darkness with narrow beams of light, and Jones and Zane returned to the more formal presentation of sets of poses with which the piece had begun, this time also engaging in a spoken dialogue. At one moment in this, Jones seemed to interrupt Zane to tell him: ‘You know you’re taking a lot of liberties… You’re creating a fantasy for us. It’s yours, not mine’ (in Zimmer and Quasha 1989: 70). Rotary Action therefore exemplified a concern for each other’s bodies, and a concern for each other as people. Rather than trying to pretend to resolve contradictions, they just let the dance itself emerge, with the thrilling in-tuneness of its contact work alongside a painful admission of personal tensions. Just as Judith in Bluebeard trod carefully in the landscape of her husband’s soul, Jones and Zane trespassed in the landscapes of each other’s lives with more sensitivity than most men at the time generally felt able to reveal in public. By doing so they created a public space in which to show otherwise unacknowledged private identities and personal truths in terms of class, ‘race’, and sexuality, and, in doing so, contributed to changing perceptions of masculine identities.

**REDISTRIBUTING MALE ENERGY IN SET AND RESET**

There was one moment in Trisha Brown’s 1983 piece Set and Reset, beautifully caught in a photograph by Jack Mitchell (see Figure 6.2), where the two men in the original cast, Stephen Petronio and Randy Warshaw, jumped powerfully into the air and Petronio caught Warshaw. Both were barefoot: all they were wearing was semi-transparent, loose, silk trousers printed with collaged imagery designed by Robert Rauschenberg. Warshaw had taken a running jump and Petronio had caught him by curling his hand and arm around Warshaw’s stomach, and was smoothly diverting the

*Figure 6.2 Stephen Petronio and Randy Warshaw in Trisha Brown’s Set and Reset.*

Photo Jack Mitchell.
direction in which Warshaw’s jump was taking him. It was a very dynamic 
and exciting image in which both dancers were moving with a level of 
ergy that is comparable to that of a male, bravura solo by a ballet dancer. 
Their bare chests and backs revealed their strong, muscular, male bodies 
in a way that recalls Shawn’s male dancers, or even those of Graham and 
Ailey. The basis for the movement in Set and Reset was somewhat different, 
being based within the kinds of movement research mentioned at the 
beginning of this chapter. What stopped this spectacular image from being 
a hypermasculine assertion of male dominance was the way this one, brief 
moment fitted into the piece as a whole.

Petronio and Warshaw had both studied contact improvisation and were 
members of the improvisational dance company Channel Z. Improvisation 
has played an important role in Brown’s development since she attended 
a summer dance workshop in San Francisco with Anna Halprin in 1960. 
Although she has never actually studied contact improvisation, she had a 
close working relationship with Steve Paxton. She was improvising with 
him as early as 1963 in Lightfall and the two of them were subsequently 
members of the dance improvisation company Grand Union in the early 
1970s around the time Paxton was developing contact improvisation (see 
Chapter 5). Paxton even danced in some performances of Brown’s Line- 
Up (1977). Set and Reset was not, however, improvised but, as its name 
implies, its movement material was carefully structured.

When Brown later divided up her choreographic output into cycles, this 
piece was part of the ‘unstable molecular structures’ cycle. Brown, and 
many of the dancers in her company in the early 1980s, had been interested 
in various forms of movement research. The way of moving which the 
dancers developed in Set and Reset exemplified a desire to improve 
bodily alignment through working to free inhibiting muscular tensions 
and thus gain a more stress-free, ‘natural’ posture. Physical clarity was 
valued more than visual appearance. Brown, herself; described her approach 
to movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s as making ‘animal dance’ 
in comparison with the highly intellectual, conceptual structures she had 
employed in choreographing pieces during the 1970s. This is what Michael 
Huxley was responding to when he praised the piece’s concern for the 
body and for dancers as people (1983).

Set and Reset presented a seemingly continuous flow of lyrical dance 
movements that have the sort of fresh, impulsive, and spontaneous quality 
that is generally only found in improvised dance. There was a clear structure 
to the piece: dancers explored the periphery of the performance space and 
continually came into the middle to engage in duets and trios. There were 
many instances in the piece, as Henry Sayre points out, when dancers 
came: ‘in and out of sync with one another, forming duets and dissolving 
them, or of dancers following the gestures of another, “resetting” them, 
across the space of the stage’ (1992: 144). Dancers also defined, with their 
hands, arms, and legs, an imaginary wall across the middle of the stage 
‘re-establishing and dis-establishing the line’. This line then reformed, in 
the centre of the space, and wheeled around its middle so that everyone 
in the auditorium could see it end on. A structure was created through 
the even distribution of movements all over the space: this was done in a 
way that was initially not centrally focused, but then, as the central line 
rotated, the central focus was projected to every possible viewing position 
in the auditorium. It was the antithesis of the balanced, symmetrical 
groupings found in, for example, the ballets of Petipa. Furthermore, the 
piece avoided any sense of development or climax through its fragmented 
textures and continuously surprising distributions of incidents, and through 
its continuous, fast, strong but free pace.

The dancers in Set and Reset did not look at the audience. They appeared 
to be concentrating on and absorbed in the physical sensations involved 
in executing the choreography. But, unlike the introverted manner of 
Cunningham’s dancers, Brown and her dancers acknowledged each other 
and performed in a fresh, spontaneous manner. Laurie Anderson called 
the music she composed for it ‘Long time no see’ because of the smile, at 
a moment in the middle of the piece, that two of the dancers exchanged 
when they passed each other by. It was a piece the dancers evidently 
enjoyed performing and this, together with the visceral, sensual quality 
of the movement, invited spectators to become absorbed in the performance 
in an intimate way. Petronio and Warshaw were facing away from each 
other at the moment they made contact. Neither was looking actively 
outwards or upwards (in what Richard Dyer; in Chapter 2, called an elevated 
way). Petronio, in Mitchell’s photograph, is looking down while Warshaw’s 
gaze is horizontal. When Petronio catches Warshaw, his action seems quite 
unpremeditated. It is not a climactic moment; and indeed, as I have already 
said, there are no climaxes in the piece. In this event, as elsewhere in the 
piece, Brown made full use of the strength and dynamism these two male 
dancers possessed.

Brown has said she was aware that she often choreographed so that 
‘one phrase fit all genders’ (2000). Looking at a lot of dance, she had felt 
many times that some movement phrases looked undignified for the 
arquitecture of the male body; as, chameleon-like, they fitted into the overall 
style of the piece. Other sorts of movement for male dancers, in Brown’s 
opinion, merely reiterated certain cliched images, from (earlier) modern 
dance, of muscular, male movement. Brown says that she wanted to explore eyond those images to find new choreographic possibilities. There were 
only few lifts, as such, in Set and Reset but several instances where dancers 
carried others who jumped or dived into their arms. The men did, perhaps, 
more than their fair share of this and were themselves caught a few times. 
But, their powerful, physical contributions were redistributed into the 
texture of the piece as a whole. Like the allegorist who recognises that in
the modern world things and meanings have disengaged, Brown has used an overall, decentralised structure to relocate the excitement of masculine strength and dynamism so that it reads differently. In effect, Brown destabilised the power implicit in male display by absorbing it into a collective whole.

I have shown that Bausch, Brown, Early, Jones, and Zane all challenged and disrupted mainstream norms and conventions in an avant-garde way. This, I have suggested, was a direct consequence of the new approach to gender representation that had been developed in the 1970s by feminist artists and intellectuals. Where theatre dance is concerned, this focus on the means of representation resulted in a new concentration on the dancing body and its physical presence. Where feminists argued that the personal is political, I have shown that all these works, in different ways, staged intimacies that redefined the relationship between public and private. Thus, Judith trod softly in the landscape of Bluebeard’s past life. Fergus Early made public his own very personal involvement with his memories of his father’s life and death. Arnie Zane found his partner drawing his life into the performance area. In each case this was an acknowledgement of the vulnerability and insecurity of masculine subjectivity. Brown, too, recognised this through her sensitivity to what might or might not be dignified for the architecture of the male body. Just as, in Bausch’s Sacrè, the dancers’ exhaustion redeemed a theatrical language that seemed in danger of losing its legitimacy, in Set and Reset, the quality of the movement material, that Brown and her dancers developed, conveyed an intimacy which was meaningful because of the clarity and intensity of the performers’ physical experience. Brown’s use of fragmented and minimalistic choreographic structures redistributed the affective sensuousness and power of Petronio and Warshaw’s masculine bodies across the piece, as a whole, which, in effect, disconnected it from its normative association with masculine power and violence. There were parallels, therefore, between Brown’s use of fragmentation and minimalism and its use by Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane. All five dances discussed in this chapter were therefore multi-layered, creating complex, conceptually sophisticated levels on which allegorical representations or affects were produced. This approach to radical, experimental performance is one which most of the choreographers I discuss in the rest of this book have adopted. Just as heterosexual, white masculinity was no longer being seen as an unquestioned, timeless, and universal norm, the means through which it could be represented in theatre dance had now become a recognised issue within choreography.

IDENTITY POLITICS

When David Gere interviewed Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane in June 1987, they admitted that they had actively resisted making their gay relationship part of the frame through which their work was interpreted (Gere 2004: 122–3). Gere spoke to them shortly before Zane went public with his AIDS diagnosis. In his autobiography, Jones has given a very honest account of their visits to a gay bath house in Greenwich Village where, before AIDS was known about, promiscuous sexual practices most likely resulted in spread of infection (Jones 1995: 153–5). It was in 1987 that ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) was founded. Medical researchers first identified the AIDS virus in 1981 but it was, probably, not until the Hollywood film star Rock Hudson died of HIV-related illness in 1985 that the significance of the epidemic registered on public consciousness. ACT UP campaigned against the inadequate political and administrative responses to the epidemic made by US and European governments, and attacked international drug companies for discriminating against and exploiting AIDS sufferers. Zane, with Jones’s support, went public about his diagnosis at a time when the effect of the epidemic on the dance world, in particular, was devastating. Gere (2004) has analysed and documented AIDS activism through dance in the US, focusing on performances which explicitly dealt with AIDS in thematic or metaphorical ways. My aim, in this chapter, is to look at work by choreographers in Britain and the US who were openly gay and, within the context of the AIDS epidemic, used their work to assert gay identities and sensibilities.

As Brett Stockhill has noted: ‘Members of ACT UP realized that to fight AIDS, they would have to fight the homophobia that undergirded the epidemic. In true queer fashion, ACT UP has not just exposed anti-queer bigotry but publicly embraced the right to be queer’ (2000: 5). From the mid-1980s until around 1995, many choreographers who were gay seem to have felt that, by creating work that explicitly explored issues of gender and sexuality, they were making a political gesture. Writing about Lesbian and Gay Pride Day in 1993, which celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Riot and the founding of the Gay Liberation Front, Leo Bersani wrote: