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bourgeois sentiments of modernism. Nijinska is only now being seen as the real founder of neoclassicism in ballet – the use of the traditional ballet vocabulary in new expressive ways. If the re-emergence of the male body in dance and ballet at the beginning of the twentieth century can be seen as a disruptive force, it was not through the renewal of bravura male dancing nor the founding of a homoerotic tradition but through the radicalism of early modernism. By denaturalizing and destabilizing the representation of gender in theatre dance, Nijinsky and Nijinska were using the kinds of deconstructive strategies that are more familiarly associated with the work of the postmodern choreographers discussed in Chapter 7.

MEN, MODERNISM AND MODERN AMERICAN DANCE

'Men don't dance.' This, according to Walter Terry, was the message that one of Ted Shawn's fellow divinity students had for Shawn, after the latter's first public dance performance in Denver in 1911. When Shawn cited as examples the men of the Russian ballet, and the dances of men in almost every culture, the reply came 'that's all right for Russians and pagans but not for Americans' (Terry 1976: 41). This is a witty anecdote but also a telling one, in that it brings together key issues facing white men in the United States who go into serious theatre dance.

First, 'Men don't dance' is not far from "'real" men don't dance', i.e. there must be something wrong with those who do. With this go all the homophobic pressures on white men to conform to prevalent and culturally specific heterosexual norms of masculine behaviour. Second, what is or is not all right for Americans is a question of American cultural identity. By the end of the twentieth century, while Russian men have continued to have a high profile on the international ballet scene, American men are now dancing on stage and have played a large part in the development of American modern dance. It must to some extent be as a result of Cold War rhetoric (Gilbaut 1990b) that there has been and still is among some critics and commentators a deep-rooted belief that the United States leads the world in the modern arts. To adapt a good line from the television series *Star Trek*, modern dance is seen as a new frontier where American men have been able to boldly go where no man has gone before.

Third, there is the comment about pagans. One should beware of underestimating the impact of Christian ideas on dance during the first half of the twentieth century, particularly when looking back from 1990s points of view. Shawn and his fellow student were studying for the Methodist ministry. Christian beliefs were sufficiently important for him and for the other three main choreographers whose work is discussed in this chapter – Martha Graham, José Limón and Alvin Ailey – to create a number of dance pieces on biblical themes (see Manor 1980 and 1992). What is argued in this chapter is that representations of masculinity in modern dance in the United States have been informed largely by White

Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) values. Shawn and Graham, each in their own way, developed in dance the image of a heroic masculinity which is valorized with reference to nature, heterosexuality and religion, and presented in a style and vocabulary that looks muscular and hard. The masculine ideal, which their work evokes, is entirely a product of white, western social forces and depends upon an ideologically distorted view of non-western masculinity. Ailey was black and Limón was, in his words, 'of Mexican origin reared in the United States' (Limón 1967: 23). One aim of this chapter is to explore the ways in which the dominance of hegemonic, white gender ideologies in modern dance affected or limited the way Limón and Ailey were able to express through their work their identity as black or immigrant American men.

This chapter does not therefore set out to recount the history of American modern dance, nor the development of roles for men in modern dance in the United States. Instead the main body of the chapter presents readings of a few well-known pieces by these choreographers. What emerges from these readings is a recurring image of 'natural', essential masculinity as expressed through dance.

It is argued that this image, and the masculine ideal to which it corresponds, is a conservative and defensive response to challenges to male hegemony. The image has persisted on the dance stage for a large part of this century, and has developed an autonomy of its own. Choreographers have not been able to ignore it: they have had to take it on board, adapt it, reject it or react against it. It is an image with which choreographers have tried to map out different positions in relation to the problems surrounding masculine identities as they have experienced them themselves. What therefore are these problems and what are the threads that bind modern dance in the United States to essentialist ideals of American manhood?

AMERICAN MEN

The American association of masculinity with toughness renders male dance problematic, dancing still being, in many people's minds, a feminine realm. Marcia Siegel sums this up thus:

Dancing is an equivocal activity in any society that places a low value on the arts in general, but it becomes even more dubious where men have been celebrated as kings of the frontier, masters of the gun, the ax, and the plow.

(Siegel 1981: 305)

This may be how American men have been celebrated, but the reality has of course been somewhat different. Throughout the period which this chapter covers, there have been continual conflicts and sources of in-

security about the nature of masculine identity as various sometimes contradictory factors have seemed to threaten to weaken or undermine it. A heavy-handed return to ideals of 'natural', essential, instinctive and 'traditional' masculinity is of course only one of many differing responses to such insecurities: but it is these sorts of ideals that underpin the representations of masculinity one finds in the choreography of Shawn and Graham. Why then has this idea of American man as a gun-slinging, axe- and plough-wielding frontiersman developed?

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the prairie was increasingly being ploughed up and the expansion westwards into unsettled land was ended. While American men might still dream of the frontier life as a viable avenue through which to establish their identity as men, the frontier had effectively ceased to exist. In general, modern civilized lifestyles and values were widely perceived to be having a softening and degenerating influence on the effete, educated, Eastern male elite. There was widespread concern about the feminization of American culture (see Douglas 1977) which had a softening and degenerating influence on traditional male lifestyles and ideals. When Shawn first became interested in dancing around 1910, dance in the United States was almost exclusively a female preserve. Other factors also were affecting men, and white-collar male workers in particular. The rise of women's suffrage and changes in the world of work, with women increasingly entering the job market, meant that jobs which until then had been the preserve of white-collar male workers were now being done by women.

One response to these pressures and sources of insecurity about the changing nature of masculine identity was the development of an essentialist reassertion of 'natural' male energy that could be read as a reassuring rebuttal of the charge that men are growing soft. Michael S. Kimmel (1987) has called this sort of conservative reaction to changing masculine norms of identity a 'pro-male' response.

In the last chapter, Lord Baden-Powell's ideas on the need to stay in touch with 'essential' masculinity were considered. His career and jingoistic outlook begs comparison with that of Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), President of the United States (1901-9). Both shared what might be called a pro-male attitude towards masculinity. The writer Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875-1950) was closer in age to Shawn (1891-1975), and the image of 'natural' masculinity embodied in Burroughs's great fictional character Tarzan is a useful reference point for Shawn's early male solos. Shawn's first performance as a dancer was the year before the publication of the first Tarzan novel. In the latter, masculinity is conceived of as 'natural' and innate, while civilized behaviour is a thin veneer which is learned because of women. This is in line with the pro-male, misogynistic view that, while it is women's function to uphold and maintain the values of civilization, the consequent feminization of culture leads to the weakening of manhood.

This is the opposite of the view (considered in Chapter 1) that women are closer to nature and their emotions, while men are more rational and more cultured. In the first novel *Tarzan and the Apes* (1912) it is only through contact with Jane Porter that the eponymous ape man decides to enter into civilized society. As Joseph Bristow points out,

Tarzan obviously bears the traces of earlier varieties of man – the gentleman of Victorian fiction; the imperial soldier on the battle-front; the Scout making himself at home out of doors – but he is, for all to see [when he first kisses Jane], a belatedly Darwinian being whose sexual passion knows no reason. The political imperative to survive has here been transformed into a sexual imperative to be a man.

(Bristow 1991: 217)

This political and sexual imperative is a homophobic one. The idea of a 'natural' and instinctive masculinity evoked by Tarzan, and asserted by figures like Roosevelt and Baden-Powell, was a reassuring myth to hold on to during a period in which traditional gender norms were perceived to be under threat. This myth is, of course, largely a product of white, Anglo-Saxon social forces, but one which draws on an ideologically distorted view of non-western masculinity. Tarzan is not unlike the later film heroes that Martin Pumphrey has commented on. Like Stallone's Rambo and Schwarzenegger's Terminator, Tarzan can be seen as a hero who directs his violence against an externalization of contemporary crises rather than acknowledging the internal contradictions his identity encompasses (see Chapter 1).

By the 1940s and 1950s there were similar pressures on traditional tough norms of masculine identity and behaviour. The Second World War had a decisive impact on the development of gay and lesbian communities in the United States. It brought large numbers of people together and thus created situations in which individuals came to recognize their sexual orientations, and in which homosexual behaviour became far more commonplace for large numbers of people. The plus side of this was that, by the 1950s, there was increasing tolerance of gays and gay communities, but there was also substantial harassment which was in part stimulated by McCarthy's witch-hunts (D'Emilio 1983: 41–53). There were other factors, in the 1950s, that undermined 'traditional' notions of masculinity in the world of managerial work and suburban family life in the United States. Barbara Ehrenreich has discussed the pressures on these sorts of office-working, family men. The rise, in the 1950s, of the affluent consumer economy in the United States, she suggests, gradually eroded the opportunities for men to live up to the traditional American male values to which Siegel refers above. David Riesman proposed that the requirements of business dictated that the male role should move away from the goal-oriented, entrepreneurial man (who might have dreamed about

frontier-breaking) to the easy-going, likeable male colleague. In this new industrial society, it is not things that matter or are a problem, but other people. 'Today it is the "softness" of men,' he wrote, 'rather than the "hardness" of material that calls on talent and opens channels of social mobility' (Riesman 1950: 127). If there were pressures in new styles of management for men to move away from traditional masculine norms of behaviour, it was also necessary for the US economy for these men to abandon the Protestant work ethic and spend, consumerism being the motor for post-war industrial growth. Motivational researcher Dr Ernest Dichter told American businessmen:

We are confronted with the problem of permitting the average American to feel moral . . . even when he is spending, even when he is not saving, even when he is taking two vacations a year and buying a second or third car. One of the basic problems of prosperity, then, is to demonstrate that the hedonistic approach to life is a moral, not an immoral one.

(quoted in Ehrenreich 1983: 45)

It is these issues and concerns which affected thinking about masculine identity (or identities) during the period covered by this chapter. Many of the ideas which Ted Shawn developed about dance and masculinity can be seen as a product of the debates about the nature of masculine identity around the turn of the century. It is largely through Ted Shawn that the sort of masculine identity that can be described as western, Christian, Darwinian, pro-male and mythical became a norm of American modern dance. It is this image of the male dancer which was inherited by Graham, Ailey and to a lesser extent Limón, and mediated the ways in which they responded to the gender ideologies of the 1940s and 1950s.

Ideologies of American modernism

For Americans until the 1940s, modernism in the arts was associated largely with Europe in general and Paris in particular. Modernism was international – the modern movement in architecture was called the International Style – while the United States was, in terms of political outlook, isolationist for most of the twentieth century up until 1943. American entry into the Second World War was accompanied by a change of political direction – the idea that the American people should take on the mantle of world leadership and make the twentieth century the American century (see Gilbert 1985; Wilkie 1943). Eva Cockcroft (1985) and Serge Gilbert (1985 and 1990b) have described the transitional process through which American abstract expressionist painting was taken up and promoted abroad through State-Department-sponsored exhibitions as part of the internationalization of American culture. American modern

dance companies were also sent on foreign tours by the State Department as part of this process. Gilbaut argues that the anti-capitalist criticism of some of the foremost American painters became hidden and silenced as they were cast in the role of the 'free', progressive and above all modern artists of the 'free world', in contrast to socialist realism, the politically restrained and old-fashioned representational art advocated by the Communist Party in Europe. What was stressed in new liberal American politics was these artists' individualism. As Gilbaut puts it, 'In the modern world which brutally stifles the individual, the artist [became] a rampart, an example of will against the uniformity of totalitarian society' (1985: 162). The spectre of bland uniformity also, as Ehrenreich suggests, faced American businessmen in the United States. At any rate the 1940s and 1950s were a time when American modern dancers were highly individualistic. As Marcia Siegel puts it: 'In this period before eclectic, ballet-based training reduced most modern dancing to stylelessness, great dancing personalities could be accepted as interpreters of particular points of view' (1987: 237). In painting, this American individualism had a specifically masculine quality: 'Only the virility of an art like [Jackson] Pollock's, its brutality, ruggedness, and individualism, could revitalize modern culture, traditionally represented by Paris, and effeminized by too much praise' (Gilbaut 1985: 161). As we shall see, representations of masculinity in American modern dance have also been characterized as ruggedly virile in comparison with the supposed effeminess of the European ballet tradition. This is the modernist, artistic context within which Graham, Limón and Ailey created the male roles discussed below.

TED SHAWN, AMERICAN-NESS AND NATURAL MASCULINITY

Marcia Siegel sees Ted Shawn's choreography for the male dancer as an expression of American cultural values which could not be represented within the European dance tradition. She argues that Shawn's principal contribution to choreographic development was his focusing of attention on heroic male body images.

He must have decided early on that there was no reason the arms and upper body had to be round, light, and delicate, as dictated by the decorative European ballet. They could be strong and ready for work just as well. As a corrective, his thinking was quite logical. The things men do when dancing are strong and do demand great physical endurance, precision, and daring. The whole ballet convention consisted in more or less hiding these attributes, with elaborate costuming, passive role-play, and that soft, aggression-denying upper body. . . . Shawn wanted to restore or complete the energy

system that has been emasculated by tradition. The clumsiness of his efforts at choreography doesn't invalidate his vision. (Siegel 1979: 307)

Whereas Siegel suggests he completed an energy system that had been emasculated by tradition, her description suggests that his choreography expressed only the 'positive' male attributes of strength and expansiveness, narrowing the range of the male dancer's expressiveness to the more macho side of male behaviour. She argues this by equating on the one hand America with the modern and on the other hand Europe with ballet. When Shawn argued with his fellow divinity student in 1911 he cited the men of the Russian ballet as positive examples of male dancers. He may well have been thinking of Mikhail Mordkin, who toured the USA with Pavlova in 1909 and then with his own company in 1911-12. No one surely would have said of Mordkin that he indulged in passive role-play, or presented a soft, aggression-denying upper body. It was the American exponents of ballet that were problematic. Writing in 1946, Shawn recalled:

At the beginning of my own career, the dance parts performed by men had become less and less creditable – men ballet dancers were being largely used as props for a danseuse during an arabesque – while the training of men was such that men and women were trained together and there was little differentiation of the movement, with the result that dancing for men was under a cloud; but in these later years, my group of men dancers, focusing on masculine problems of the dance, have also enriched the field until today no one who has seen my men dance can tolerate effeminacy in the male dance.

(1946: 98-9)

Shawn developed his own style through gradually rejecting the conventions of European ballet movement, and replacing balletic mime with vocabularies of gesture derived from the work of Francois Delsarte (1811-71), as did many early American modern dancers.¹ The aggressive masculine stance of his work should not therefore be seen solely as a consequence of rejecting ballet. It needs also to be located within specifically modern American social and religious ideologies.

Shawn's earliest solos such as *Savage Dance* and *Dagger Dance*, both of 1912, and *Dance Slav* (1913) were concerned with primitive or non-western warrior cultures, as were subsequent pieces like *Invocation to the Thunderbird* (1918), *Spear Dance Japonaise* (1919) and *Pyrrhic Warriors* (1918). In these Shawn seems, like Edgar Rice Burroughs, to have been borrowing the outer appearances of primitive and non-western cultures in order to evoke a 'natural' masculinity with which these 'Others' were believed to be in touch. This notion of masculinity bore little relation to the realities

of non-western social structure, and only really meant anything in the context of contemporary western society.

The assertion of 'positive' male attributes of strength and expansiveness can be related to what has been called Muscular Christianity (see Kimmel 1987). Shawn initially trained to become a Methodist minister, and started going to dance classes for exercise after recovering from diphtheria. Notions of manliness in the late nineteenth century were associated with the practice of sports and athletics within the spheres of education and the church. One American preacher at that time pronounced that Jesus was no dough-faced lick-spittle proposition, but the biggest scrapper that ever lived (Kimmel 1987: 140). Shawn choreographed a church service, and many pieces based on biblical and religious themes. For his company Ted Shawn and his Male Dancers in the 1930s he choreographed many evocations of the male world of work such as *Cutting the Sugar Cane* (1933), *Dance of the Threshing Floor* (1934), *Labour Symphony* (1934) and *Workers' Songs from Middle Europe* (1931). It is probably coincidental that Shawn settled on this theme at around the same time that the Workers Dance League were beginning to explore it (Prickett 1990a and 1990b). But male work as a subject offered a safe, unequivocally masculine range of movements. In 1946 he wrote about this in an essay on the male dancer:

in watching movements of men in manual labour all over the world, continuously and carefully, I have come to the conclusion that most of them are big movements of the whole body and the arm movement is a continuation of the body movement, as for example the movement of a man using a scythe.

(Shawn 1946: 104)

Shawn thus argues that men's work is totally different from women's work and that it is neither right nor natural for women to do male work. 'We felt that it was best when woman was working in the home, taking care of the needs of her husband and children, and so most religious and moral education has come from mother to children' (Shawn 1946: 105). Thus his assertion of the supposedly essential difference between male and female movement as a basis for dance is in line with the conventions of conservative Christian propriety.

If it is all right in the late twentieth century for American men to dance, this is largely due to Shawn;² but, in bringing this about, he and his dancers portrayed men in almost every culture but that of modern America. (Even his worker pieces referred to Eastern Europe, sugar cane plantations or to modern machines rather than to modern American men.) What is significant is the position of power that Shawn as a member of the dominant Anglo-Saxon American social group enjoyed in relation to the subject societies whose cultural forms he and St Denis chose to borrow. The cultural and racial stereotypes which their work retailed are part of the

period's nativist and racist ideologies (see Kendall 1979: 105-6). That there were no black dancers in the Denishawn company (Shawn and Denis's dance company) is hardly surprising in a period when a colour bar forbade black performers appearing on stage with white ones. But Shawn saw the influence of black dance on American social dance as a degenerate one, saying so in his 1926 book *The American Ballet*. Looking back at this period in 1946, Shawn again deplored the way white people had adopted black social dances:

I was sick at heart that we, this whole vast country of millions of white people, still kept on dancing dances of negro derivation. Have we lost completely the qualities that made us a great nation? We were capable in the past of creating our own dances. Why is it in this last period that we have let this negroid influence so completely obliterate everything else?

(1946: 84)

Doris Humphrey suggests in her unfinished autobiography that Shawn and Denis might have been anti-semitic (Cohen 1972: 62). In relation to the native American and non-western dance traditions from which his work borrowed, Shawn's ethnocentric point of view ensured that he found only what he wanted to see – a confirmation of conservative, western gender ideologies. If the only way western male norms could be represented in dance was by referring to non-western men, this is a curious example of the discontinuities and double-binds inherent in the construction of western masculinity at that time.

While Shawn succeeded in raising the status of male dance in the United States, he achieved this by remaining within hegemonic norms rather than confronting them. The strong, positive qualities of his choreography for men are in line with the continuum between conservative Muscular Christian ideologies and the contemporary appeal of 'natural' masculinity identified above; but they are also open to appreciation from a manly, classical homosexual point of view. There was a chapter on nudity in Shawn's *The American Ballet* that extolled the Greek ideal of nudity, 'of youths at the ancient Olympics, entering races and wrestling matches with gleaming, oiled, nude bodies' (Terry 1976: 39). In his solo *Death of Adonis: Plastique* (1923), made up as a classical marble statue and wearing only a fig leaf, Shawn moved through a series of thirty-two choreographed poses on a sculptural plinth. In the context of a larger dance spectacle of the ancient world for which the solo was devised, the piece seem to have been acceptable.³ It clearly evokes an acceptable, classical male image; but it can also be related to homosexual thematics. As was stated in Chapter 4, some nineteenth- and twentieth-century homosexuals have looked to Ancient Greek society as an ideal manly culture within which homosexuality was considered normal (see Dyer 1990: 22-5).

Shawn became engaged to his first dance teacher and dancing partner Hazel Wallack, and in 1914 married Ruth St Denis (later separating), but his subsequent relationships were all with men. Terry says that Shawn's homosexual side was latent 'during all but the last days of Denishawn, and his acceptance of his homosexuality was known only to a few' (1976: 140; see also Sherman and Mumaw 1986). In his society at that time Shawn would have had many reasons for keeping his sexual orientation a secret, not least the fear that any suspicions about his sexuality and that of his male dancers would, at the least, have seriously affected the financial viability of his company, let alone the possibilities of blackmail, persecution or even prosecution (D'Emilio 1983: 40 and *passim*). Nude and semi-nude photographs of Shawn and his male dancers clearly relate to an American genre of male erotica (see Cooper 1986: 233 and *passim*), but could also double as acceptable images of athletic, classical males. It was these sorts of acceptable values that Shawn stressed in his polemical writings in support of male dance (Shawn 1916, 1933, 1936, 1946 and 1966) and in the 1930s with his all-male company. A review, in the *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, of a 1937 performance by the company is typical of notices the company received.

Men, brought the first time by their wives, returned of their own accord, and found that the dance, as an exhibition of art, muscular poise and coordination, was as exciting as a track meet and a wrestling match. They agreed with Shawn, that 'dancing is not a sissy art'.

(Schlundt 1967: 47)

This last quote appears in variations in many of the reviews quoted by Schlundt (1967), and must have been said often by Shawn. By arguing that dance was not 'pansy' or 'sissy', Shawn seems to have attempted to fit in with dominant heterosexual male norms, rather than challenging them. Shawn's work thus tried, within the social restrictions of the period, to occupy common ground, albeit of a problematic kind, between a gay and straight point of view. But such value-free common ground never exists. The restrictions may allow a limited expression but at the same time they block and deform it. Shawn undoubtedly did a lot for male dance, but, by keeping carefully within the bounds of propriety, he unfortunately limited the range of male dancing to tough, aggressive expression.

MARTHA GRAHAM AND SHAWN'S LEGACY

Though Terry may have claimed for Shawn the accolade of father of modern dance, the field in the United States was, of course, until the 1950s, dominated by women dancers and choreographers. If one is concerned with questions of genealogy or status then Martha Graham was one of the most important figures in this development. Where images of the male

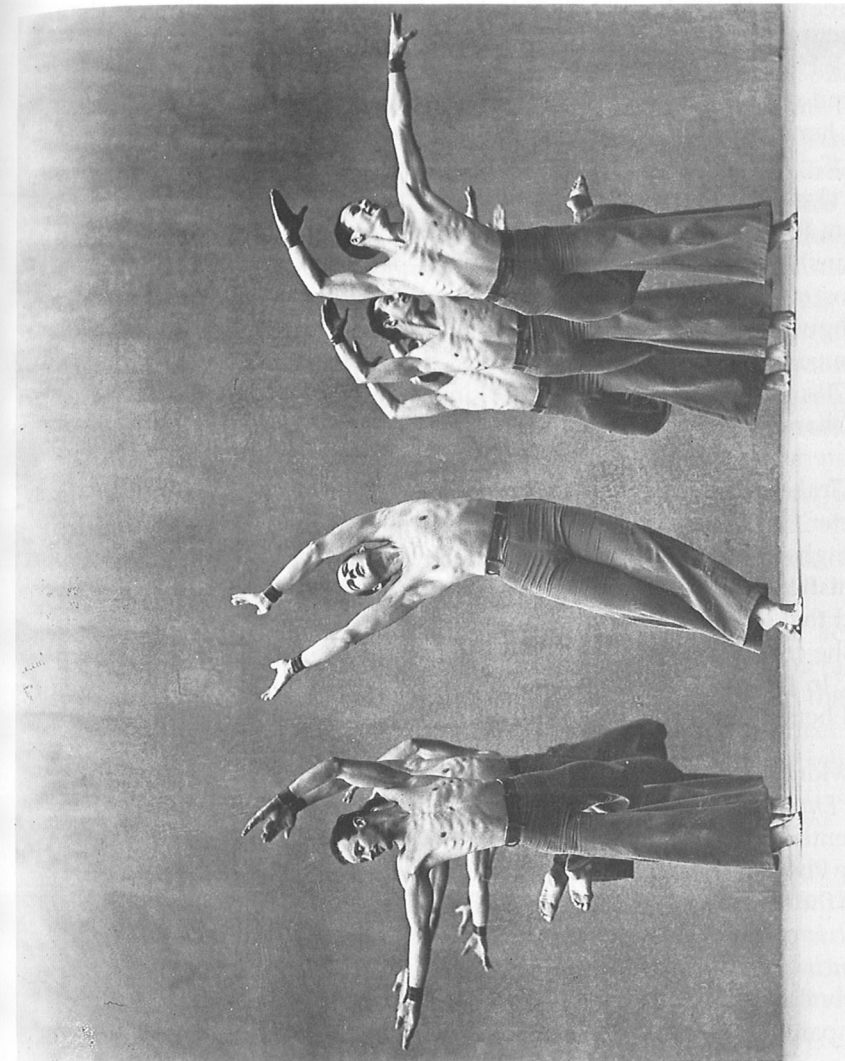


Figure 6 Ted Shawn's group of male dancers proved that 'dancing is not a sissy art' by narrowing the range of the dancer's expressiveness to the more macho side of male behaviour. Photo of Ted Shawn and his male dancers in 1936 dancing *Kinetic Molpai*. (Photo: Sherman; New York Public Library, Shapiro Dance Collection)

dancer are concerned, Graham can be seen to have continued and extended the way of presenting the male dancer which Shawn initiated. When, in 1922, Shawn temporarily split from Ruth St Denis and toured with his own company, it was Martha Graham who was his principal partner. Graham started choreographing group pieces in 1926 but it was not until 1938 that she included male dancers in her company. When one examines the sorts of qualities Graham choreographed for her male dancers, these seem to owe more to her association with Ted Shawn than is sometimes acknowledged.

Erick Hawkins joined Graham's company to be its first male dancer in 1938 and was subsequently, for a while, her husband. Merce Cunningham joined her company in 1939. Hawkins came to her from Lincoln Kirstein's Ballet Caravan, and she suggested to Cunningham that he should take ballet classes at Balanchine's School of American Ballet. According to Bertram Ross (who joined Graham's company in 1954 after her split with Hawkins), when Graham choreographed parts for men she didn't like demonstrating movements 'because she did not have a man's body'; she would give movement directions verbally instead (Mazo 1991: 44). This is confirmed by Tim Wengerd, who danced with the Graham company in the 1970s: 'This being the case, Hawkins and Cunningham probably had major shares in the creation of their roles from the start, and Martha shaped the material to suit her purposes' (Wengerd 1991: 52). Between 1938 and 1944 Graham made a number of works that present a central female character (performed by herself) and two male roles initially danced by Cunningham and Hawkins. These pieces are generally acknowledged to present her most rounded and interesting male roles, but it could be argued that this was sometimes achieved at the cost of subordinating the roles she created for herself – for example the bride in *Appalachian Spring* (1944). In these two-man pieces, Deborah Jowitt suggests, Graham presented herself poised between two antithetical males.

Hawkins was called 'The Dark Beloved' in the sombre, seething *Deaths and Entrances*, and he played this role – sexually alluring, masterful, potentially dangerous – in more than one dance. Cunningham was 'The Poetic Beloved,' a slightly mystical, even androgynous figure: he was the blithe acrobat to Hawkins's whip-wielding ringmaster (*Every Soul Is a Circus*), the winged Pegasus to his swaggering husband (*Punch and the Judy*), the gentle Christ figure in *El Penitente*, the fanatic Revivalist in *Appalachian Spring*. After Merce Cunningham left the company, Graham made no more dances that expressed this double image of man. Perhaps the male roles also embodied a duality within herself: sensuality and idealism; or the taskmaster/perfectionist and the undisciplined, irrational visionary.

(Jowitt 1988: 228-9)

Appalachian Spring is a particularly interesting example of how she was dealing with the male image at that time. The piece shows an American wedding in a small frontier farmhouse in the first half of the nineteenth century. The cast consists of the Bride, Husbandman, Revivalist preacher, the older Pioneer Woman, and four young women who are followers of the Revivalist. They all come on stage in a formal procession, and throughout the piece, as well as a duet for Bride and Husbandman, the principal characters each have a solo during which everyone else is frozen still.

Following Jowitt's suggestions above, the two male roles can be seen as projections of different sides of Graham's own desires and aspirations, although it doesn't make much sense to see them as those of the Bride – the role Graham herself danced in the piece. As Marcia Siegel points out, *Appalachian Spring* reworks themes originally explored in her earlier solo *Frontier* (1935). In this earlier piece, a woman dancing by a fence on the prairie seems torn between repressive religious feelings and the spatial freedom symbolized by the new land of the (open) frontier of unsettled country. She was thus evoking imagery that, as we have seen, was clearly associated with American masculine values. In *Appalachian Spring*, the two men could be said to represent these two sets of opposing values: the Husbandman expresses a straightforward love of freedom, space and the natural cycle, while the Revivalist vents the tortured and convoluted feelings of his (and Graham's) puritanical fervour.

The movement material which the Husbandman performs is very straightforward in contrast to the mercuric distortions of the Revivalist's solos or the nervous temperamental quality of the Bride's role. Marcia Siegel conjures up the flavour of the Husbandman's role:

The husband's movements are large and expansive. The actual steps he does when he first takes centre stage are a conglomeration of knee-slapping, rein-pulling mime motifs; balletic turns in the air; and leggy, travelling jumps, reachings, and stampings. You feel he's showing off, but not in a narcissistic way; rather, he's giving vent to his happy feelings and pride, his natural assertiveness and drive.

(Siegel 1979: 147)

He also surveys the horizons and makes some gestures which suggest ploughing or working the land. Edwin Denby in 1945 wrote that the Husbandman's role 'suggests farmer vigour and clumsy farmer mirth' (Denby 1986: 314). The stamping gestures he makes are part of the traditional image of the farmer: in the folk song 'Oats and beans and barley grow'

First the farmer sows his seed
Then he stands and takes his ease
Stamps his foot and claps his hand
And turns around to view the land.

This recalls atavistic notions of fertility. The Husbandman is supposed to be virile and fertile. The quality and nature of his movements fit in remarkably with Shawn's description of the way male dance movements relate to the movements of male work activities referred to earlier.⁴ Like Shawn's manly Christian male dancer, the Husbandman looks hard and muscular in a role that is expansive and tough, if not exactly aggressive, and he definitely does not have a soft, aggression-denying body.

For all that, the Husbandman is hardly a deeply observed character. Like most of the men in Graham's pieces he is flat and one-dimensional. The role of the Revivalist is the exception to this; as both Jowitt and Siegel suggest, he is more rounded. This is surely because this role articulates one of Graham's central themes, the contradictory pull of repressive, old-fashioned evangelical Protestantism. There is a quality of torture and inner contradiction at the heart of some of Graham's best work that comes from her Presbyterian upbringing and her consequent love-hate relationship with Christianity.

The Revivalist's main solo represents a sermon that is all hellfire and damnation. He starts it by stamping one foot repeatedly on the ground and then hitting himself with a clenched fist on the side of the trunk. There are stamping movements in the Husbandman's solos, that, it has been suggested, connote virility and fertility. By stamping and then hitting himself, the Revivalist is starting off his sermon by condemning everything the Bride and Husbandman are looking forward to enjoying, the pleasure both of being close to the land, and of being close to each other.

The solo continues with wild, angular movements and asymmetrical gestures, bewildering leaps and risky falls. Two films of *Appalachian Spring* show differing interpretations of the Revivalist's role. David Hatch Walker in the 1976 film⁵ projects the hellfire straight at the bride and groom. Bertram Ross, however, in the 1959 film⁶ is less fierce; his Revivalist is surely aware that he himself is not immune to the perils and weaknesses of the flesh. The Revivalist is surely meant to enjoy playing up to, and exerting his power over, the four excitable girls – at one moment rolling from the floor up into their laps. The virtuosity demanded by the Revivalist's role makes the straightforward manliness of the Husbandman's movement material look boring in comparison. It is noticeable that the expressive range of movement in the Revivalist's solo is far greater than that of the Husbandman or of Shawn's Muscular Christian dancers. Paradoxically then, Ross's (Christian) Revivalist seems less restricted than them by the need to maintain a decorous, Christian propriety.

Male roles in later Graham pieces also recall Shawn's work. Wengerd says that Jason's big solo in *Cave of the Heart* (1946) includes a large number of movements that are to be found in Shawn's *Spear Dance Japonaise*.

Whether she suggested them to Hawkins or whether he had seen them before and felt their appropriateness for this dance we cannot know, but this figure is often pointed out as being 'typical' Graham choreography for men. In reality, there is nothing like him up to this point, and while similar treatments of men are found in later 'Greek' pieces, this is the first and most extreme.

(1991: 52)

The way most of Graham's male dancers move may have much in common with Shawn's Muscular Christians, but Graham's view of woman is radically different. For Shawn, a woman's place is in the home. The Bride in *Appalachian Spring* (1944) is the nearest Graham gets to this. In other pieces from around this time, such as *Letter to the World* (1940) and *Deaths and Entrances* (1943), the home is the scene of tensions. Her later heroines are powerful and dangerous, and a threat to the family home. In the 'Greek' pieces in particular, women are incestuous – Jocasta in *Night Journey* (1947) – or murder their children – Medea in *Cave of the Heart* – or murder their husband – *Clytemnestra* (1958). This is the context within which Graham's heroines simultaneously fear and desire their leading men, and it is from their point of view that these male dancers are seen. Then, starting with *Diversion of Angels* (1948) in which she herself did not dance, Graham created pieces which are generally lighter and have much less narrative in them, but which present the dancers as idealized 'celestial acrobats'.

Wengerd suggests that the same basic male types recurred throughout her career: adored men, men feared, man the unattainable, even man dehumanized. 'Few men in dance are allowed to be as thoroughly tortured as Orestes, as adored as Oedipus, as loathsome as Jason, and as simply joyous as all the men in *Adoration of Angels*' (*ibid.*: 52). The fact that Graham was producing work from a woman's point of view for a predominantly female audience constitutes the context within which the male roles in her work were produced. Within Graham's female-centred stories, men are seen as desirable while they act out an erotic display. In doing this, Graham is subverting the norms of gender representation by reappropriating images of men for her own pleasure and that of other women, almost thirty years before feminist visual artists started controversially dealing with similar eroticized representations of the male body (see Walters 1979; Kent and Morreau (eds) 1985).

In retrospect, although one can infer that the male body was desirable for Shawn, this was never admitted either in the subjects and themes of his pieces or in his polemical writings in support of male dance. If within Graham's pieces male dancers are subversively seen as desirable, at least the framework within which female desire operates is clearly marked as heterosexual. As Lynn Garafola has suggested

Although Graham's works of these decades take the heroine's point of view, it is maleness that fuels the drama; it is what stokes the passion of her heroines and destroys it, what drives them again and again to seek what they cannot have, to desire what they should not want.

(Garafola 1993: 172)

Graham's men and women seem in Graham's own eyes to have represented differing but positive ideals – men and women in abstracted images of heterosexual relations, not fixed in any historical period.⁷ Graham's readings from Jung no doubt led her to see the actors in her 'Greek' pieces as perennial, archetypal beings alive in the collective unconscious. Pieces like *Diversion of Angels* suggest, by their modernity, the type of ideal, mythical beings discussed in Chapter 3: their movement suggests beings who are more intense, more energetic and more physically aware, more masculine and more feminine than ordinary people. One could say of these modernist male roles that they represent 'belatedly Darwinian beings' for whom the imperative to survive has been 'transformed into a sexual imperative to be a man'. This, it will be recalled, is Joseph Bristow's description of Tarzan when first kissing Jane.

The most flat and caricatural male role Graham choreographed seems to have been Jason in *Cave of the Heart*. This is the role whose movements, Wengerd suggests, resemble Shawn's *Spear Dance Japonaise*. Wengerd describes Jason as 'a sort of cardboard-cutout Greek Hell's Angel' who is allowed only 'to show his humanness after he has been utterly undone, but prior to that he is one hundred percent male chauvinist pig' (1991: 52). There is nothing, however, to suggest that Graham here was criticizing men in roles like this. Medea may have hated Jason (who in the myth leaves her for another woman) but only because she still desired him. Nevertheless, compared with the roles in *Appalachian Spring*, male roles in the dark, brooding 'Greek' dances, and in pieces like *Diversion of Angels*, are reduced to caricatures of posturing machismo. Deborah Jowitt suggests that these men are all prick and no personality.

The movements [Graham] devised for them – stiff-legged walks and jumps, bows bending like a V at the hips, assertive gestures – imbued them with phallic significance. ('We're usually stiff foils, or something large and naked for women to climb on' is how Paul Taylor put it.)

(Jowitt 1988: 230 quoting Taylor 1975: 85)

What is it, then, that stops Graham's 'Greek' men from being so grotesque as to appear inhuman, and thus a challenge and critique of dominant masculine norms? Because they are seen by the central female character – through Graham's eyes – it becomes possible to discount what is disturbing

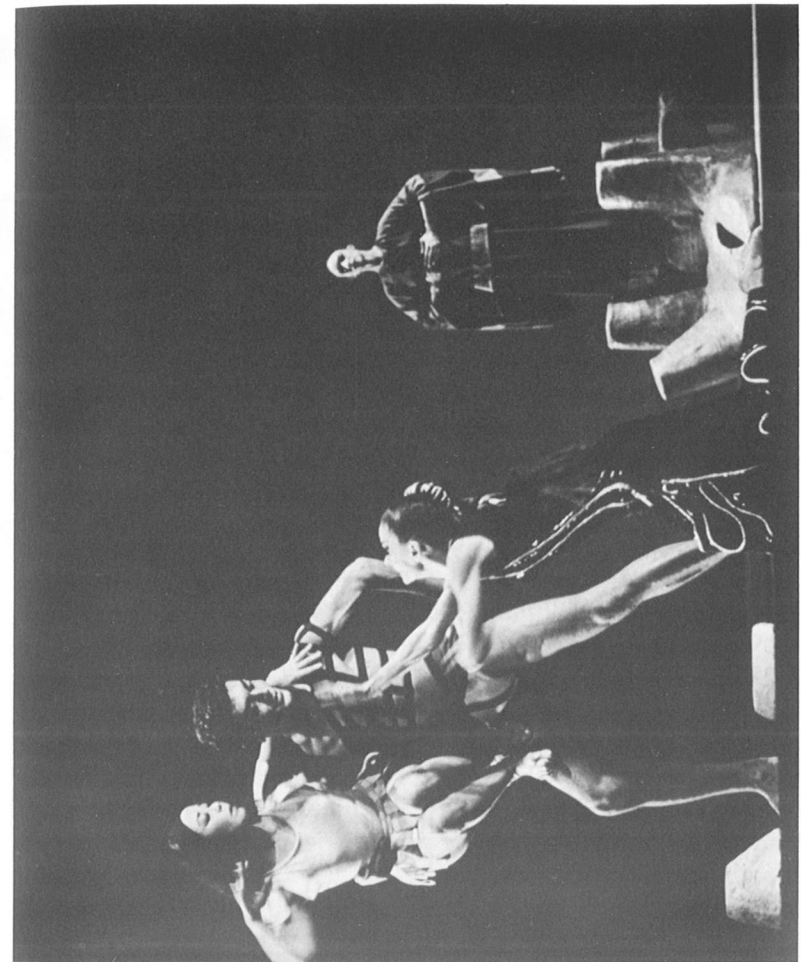


Figure 7 Graham's 'Greek' men: 'something large and naked for women to climb on'. Yuriko, Robert Cohan, Helen McGhee and Matt Turney in *Cave of the Heart*. (Photo: Martha Swope)

about these representations of masculinity and see it as just an aberration, a personal quirk of Graham's. Of course 'we' don't see them the way she does. As Martha Siegel puts it, 'Graham had been making display dances for men since she had first had men in her company' and she 'didn't gloss over the idea that the woman was physically turned on by what [the male dancer] was doing. All through the 1940s and 1950s men were Graham's villains, and though to us they may look pompous and grotesque, to her heroines they were fatally erotic' (Siegel 1979: 316).

Like Shawn's male dancers, Graham's 'Greek' men's movement range is 'limited' to represent only the more macho side of male behaviour. They are tough – so much so as to be tight and insecure about their boundaries (Theweleit), defending themselves against repressed developmental conflicts (Chodorow). The tight qualities of the movements should not be attributed entirely to Graham. She didn't demonstrate them but gave verbal instructions: the male dancers she was working with found these tensions within their own bodies. In compensating for the embarrassment of being the object of Graham's erotic gaze (when Bertram Ross first started learning male solos he rehearsed in private with Graham without telling anyone (Mazo 1991: 44)), they turned themselves into the one-dimensional macho 'Greek' Hell's Angels of modern dance.

This was a male image which had particular social resonance in the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This was, as Ehrenreich points out, a time when social and economic forces were eroding traditional male values. This was also the cold war and McCarthy period, and a time of repression of homosexuals (discussed in the next chapter). Graham's male dancers, in their excessively physical, excessively masculine form were surely an example of a pro-male reassertion of traditional masculine qualities – strength, hardness, aggressiveness, expansiveness. The male dancer in her work may be subject to a female erotic gaze, but it is a heterosexual one in which the power of the male body is acknowledged as an unproblematic norm.

Graham jotted in a notebook:

The aching muscles
the remembered glories
the agonies of the future
(Graham 1973: 304)

But, as Robert Cohan put it, 'She loved you to want to kill her'.⁵

DANCE, MODERNISM AND THE 'OTHER'

What Cohan and Graham are talking about here has far-reaching implications for the way masculinity is represented in modern dance. It means

that a particularly strong tradition that comes from Shawn and is developed by Graham has become associated with a heroic masculinity which is valorized with reference to nature, heterosexuality and religion, and presented in a style and vocabulary that looks muscular and hard. It has been argued that this tradition is determined by the need to repress the internal contradictions of dominant, white, masculine identities.

One difference between Denishawn (in which Graham and Humphrey both started to perform) and the subsequent work of Graham and Doris Humphrey is the modernism of the latter. In contrast to the blue-eyed, blond whiteness of Denishawn, Humphrey's and Graham's companies in the 1930s and 1940s were ethnically diverse, reflecting the social make-up of urban America. Metropolitan experience was among the factors which Raymond Williams associated with the development of the formal innovations of early modernism (discussed in Chapter 4). The abstracted works that Graham and Humphrey created in the late 1920s and early 1930s – such as Humphrey's *Colour Harmony* (1928) or Graham's *Lamentations* (1930) – must in part be seen as a reaction against the exotic and period costume dances that they had performed in while members of the Denishawn company. Writing about her teaching with Charles Weidman in New York in 1928, Doris Humphrey stated:

The students were stimulated by our enthusiasm for some discoveries about movement, which had to do with ourselves as Americans – not Europeans or American Indians or East Indians, which most of the Denishawn work consisted of, but as young people of the twentieth century living in the United States.

(Cohen 1972: 61)

Unhindered by the need to create an identifiable setting or social reference, Graham and Humphrey were able to look at the expressive potential of movement itself. This kind of concern with the medium of dance itself is an attribute of modernism. It is this concern with expressive movement, together with emergent ideologies of American rugged individualism, which, from the 1940s onwards, informed the work of José Limón and Alvin Ailey. In turning now to look at them there is a shift to two modern dance choreographers who were definitely not white Anglo-Saxon Americans.

A major problem facing black and immigrant or 'hyphenated' American dancers is how to deal with or avoid the effects of stereotypes. Stereotypes are not natural or inevitable but socially constructed and reproduced in cultural forms including dance. Black male dancers may in some cases be able to appear less soft and effete, less contaminated by civilization and thus more 'essentially' and 'naturally' masculine than white dancers of European origin; but black dancers can often be

stereotyped. J. Aschenbrenner has pointed out that reviews by American dance critics of black dance performances have tended to reinforce general stereotypes of black people. Aschenbrenner notes that reviewers often comment on the supposedly innate ability of black dancers rather than acknowledging the work that goes into preparing for performance or in attaining a degree of technical proficiency. Reviewers also attribute mysterious qualities to black performers, and Aschenbrenner notes that there is an overemphasis on the physicality of dancers (Aschenbrenner 1980a, b). Black dancers, as Christy Adair observes, have to fight these stereotypes in order to establish themselves as serious creative artists using their rich African American heritage (Adair 1992: 180).

Stereotypes do not work just by putting down groups deemed inferior, but also carry with them a degree of ambivalence. As the photographer David A. Bailey has pointed out,

The process of stereotyping is not as simple as one group discriminating against another. There is a complex *ambivalence* in operation. This is a concept in psychoanalysis based on *otherness* and *difference*. Here the stereotype derives from an underlying fear of the subject which is combined with desire and fascination. For instance, blacks pose a threat to white society, yet within this fear there is a desire and fascination with the physical, textual and sexual physique of the black subject's body.

(Bailey 1988: 36, emphasis in the original)

Some of the pleasures derived by white spectators from the spectacle of black dancing bodies must surely be determined by the conjunction of fear, desire and fascination which Bailey describes. This may also be a factor for black spectators, to the extent that black people internalize negative images of themselves developed within white societies.⁹ Limón and Ailey's ethnic or racial backgrounds are relevant to a consideration of representations of masculinity in their choreography. Where postmodern choreographers, including some considered in Chapter 7, have chosen to deal with issues of race and ethnicity, their work constitutes a political intervention within the dominant modes of representations. Such an intervention was inconceivable for choreographers such as Limón and Ailey because of the underlying ideology of modernism within which their work was situated.

It has been argued that, where representations of masculinity are concerned, non-white masculinities appear from a dominant, white point of view to be in touch with 'essential', 'natural' masculinity. These are of a kind with which modern whites of European origin believe themselves to be out of touch. Representations of non-white masculinity therefore pose a threat to white masculine identity in so far as they

highlight the inadequacies of the latter; but, as Bailey points out, they are also a source of desire and fascination. In the following discussion of Ailey's work it is argued that modernism in dance had the effect of limiting the threat while maximizing the desirable and fascinating spectacle of the non-white body.

LIMÓN, MODERNISM AND ETHNICITY

Limón recalls in his autobiography that when he first showed Doris Humphrey his piece *Chaconne* (1942) she commented: 'This is one of the most magnificent dances I have ever seen. It is that for a number of reasons, but chiefly because it is a man dancing' (quoted in Siegel 1987: 210). As one of the principal dancers of the Humphrey-Weidman company during the 1930s and then with his own company from 1947 onwards, Limón was a powerful and handsome dancer. One of his greatest assets as a dancer was his ability to look manly and virile on stage.¹⁰ For this, Limón's Mexican origin must have worked to his advantage: a personal sense of pride derived from his cultural inheritance as a Mexican and as someone of Spanish origin (Pollack 1993: 2).

It is difficult, in the absence of more biographical information, to judge exactly what being American meant to Limón.¹¹ Barbara Pollack has described the way that Limón's father (who was of Spanish and French origin, his mother being part Spanish and part Indian) brought him up speaking pure Castilian Spanish which accorded the family some status in Mexico (*ibid.*: 4). The family moved to the United States in 1915 when Limón was 7 years old. As a Mexican immigrant living in poorer districts of Arizona and California (*ibid.*: 4-7), he must personally have experienced some racism, and have subsequently been aware of racist attitudes towards others of Mexican origin. He grew up in California and returned there for a few years after he left the Humphrey-Weidman company in 1940. While on the West Coast, he danced with May O'Donnell before returning to New York in the summer of 1942. Limón was thus in San Francisco during the period immediately preceding the so-called Zoot Suit riots of 1943 in Los Angeles between street gangs of Mexican immigrants and white American servicemen. Stuart Cosgrove points out that the zoot-suited *pachuco* youths were second-generation working-class immigrants who were 'stripped of their customs, beliefs and language' (Cosgrove 1989: 7); they thus constituted a disinherited generation within disadvantaged sectors of North American society, and were alienated both from the aspirations of their parents and from the dominant assumptions of the society in which they lived. Drawing on Joan Moore's study of Los Angeles street gangs, Cosgrove distinguishes between machismo and pachuquismo:

The concept of pachuquismo is too readily and unproblematically equated with the better known concept of machismo. Undoubtedly, they share certain ideological traits, not least a swaggering and at times aggressive sense of power and bravado; but the two concepts derive from different sets of social definitions. Whereas machismo can be defined in terms of male power and sexuality, pachuquismo predominantly derives from ethnic, generational and class-based aspirations, and is less evidently a question of gender.

(*ibid.*: 13-14)

It would be ridiculous to try to make some direct connection between Limón and the pachuco gangs. He was not disadvantaged, nor was he ever particularly out of touch with his Mexican roots.¹² By all accounts, far from being swaggering, Limón's dancing was highly lyrical - Humphrey, as we shall see, attributed to Limón's performance of his *Chaconne* (1942) an appearance of authority without boastfulness, of power tempered with intelligence. The roles he created for himself, such as Othello in *The Moor's Pavane* (1949) or Emperor Jones in the dance of that name which he made in 1956, conveyed a sense of tragic nobility. In fact, compared with the pachuco gangs, Limón was an example of a successful Mexican American who had kept in touch with his roots. This was doubtless a factor behind tours of the José Limón Dance Company sponsored by the American State Department to Mexico, South America and Europe.¹³ According to Pollack, Limón told South American audiences (speaking in Spanish):

In North America, with all our crudities, we are Americans. We are not afraid to declare ourselves, and have done so in our dance. The academic dance from Europe is not adequate to express what we have to say. Hemingway and Faulkner write in English, but they write as Americans. In the same way, we are trying to find a new language for American dance.

(Pollack 1993: 37)

The difference between Spanish- and English-speaking Americans seems therefore, for Limón, to have been less than the difference between Americans (Northern and Southern) and Europeans. Where there are signs of a certain male superiority and aggressiveness in Limón's roles, these should nevertheless be seen as deriving from Latino cultural traditions, and would have been recognized as such by audiences in the United States and abroad. The 'new language for American dance' which Limón used to create these roles was a modernist one.

One aspect of the modernism of American modern dance was a move away from imagery informed by a particular reference or content that might carry specific social and political meanings, towards the generalized, the universal and the humanistic. A movement towards the ex-

ploration of more individualistic, non-specific material would also have been a response to the rise of McCarthyism in the 1940s. We have already seen how Graham moved from her 'American' pieces of the late 1930s and early 1940s to her abstracted 'Greek' pieces and even more abstracted 'celestial acrobat' pieces like *Diversion of Angels*. Limón choreographed abstracted musical visualizations (which recall Humphrey's work) like his *Chaconne* and *Fantasy and Fugue in C minor* (1952) as well as narrative works throughout his career. The latter exhibit a progression that is similar to Graham's. Limón seems to have had left-wing sympathies in the 1930s, for example dancing as a revolutionary in his *Danzas Mexicanas* (1939). From Mexican and American themes in this and works like *Danza de la Muerte* (1938), *Western Folk Suite* (1943) and *La Malinche* (1947), Limón moves gradually towards more universal and humanistic themes,¹⁴ and subsequently to abstracted ones in late works such as *The Winged* (1966) and *The Unsung* (1970/1).

A number of Limón's pieces centre on a conflict between two men. One of Limón's early pieces for the José Limón Dance Company was *La Malinche* (1947) in which he danced the role of a Mexican Indian in a conflict with a European conquistador played by Lucas Hoving. In *The Moor's Pavane*, made later the same year, Hoving played Iago, another European courtier, while Limón danced the role of Othello, the Moor. In both roles Limón was non-European, but whereas he was cast to type as a Mexican in *La Malinche*, he was more universally 'Other' while playing Othello in *The Moor's Pavane*. Later in *The Traitor* (1954), where Limón as Judas comes into conflict with Hoving as Jesus, Limón is not even noticeably black, but even more despised and 'Other'. The move from the specifically Mexican towards a more generalized and universal role is a modernist one. Beatrice Gottlieb, writing in 1951, criticized Limón for his 'limited sense of tragic action [which] reduces drama to a struggle between two people' and which ran the risk of sentimentality (Siegel 1987: 262). The narrative situations that his works explored were not over-complex, with the consequent danger of stereotyping. The danger for Limón of being looked down upon as a Mexican could to some extent be averted through the ideology of modernism: an abstracted, highly expressive modernist dance vocabulary which evoked generalized, universal values.

One aspect, at least, of what Humphrey admired in Limón's dancing was that she felt it expressed universal, modern male values. This is one implication that can be drawn from a passage she wrote about Limón's performance in his *Chaconne*. It comes in her reply to a review by John Martin in the *New York Times*:

I see in the Chaconne implications of what one of the Greek philosophers meant when he said, 'every good citizen should dance

in order to understand the State and be a good citizen.' Here are courage, balance in every sense, authority without boastfulness, power tempered with intelligence, the possibilities of the whole mature man brought to a high degree of perfection.¹⁵

Humphrey's own work often stressed shared, communitarian values, and, where it had any narrative content, the characters or roles were of a generalized, humanistic view of somewhat impersonal 'man' and 'woman' in society. Her vision was not a particularly optimistic one. One motto she adopted from the American Shaker sect (whose rituals she used as a source for her piece *The Shakers* (1931)) was 'Ye shall be saved when ye are shaken free from sin'. One might surmise that, for her, dance was the expression of the individual's best contribution to human society, and modern dance a modern expression of this.

Limón later quoted Humphrey when searching for a definition of the unique power of dance:¹⁶

The human body is the most powerful expressive medium there is. It is quite possible to hide behind words, or to mask facial expression. It is conceivable that one can dissimulate and deceive with paints, clay, stone, prints, sounds. But the body reveals. Movement and gesture are the oldest language known to man. They are still the most revealing. When you move you stand revealed for what you are.

(Limón 1979: 100)

Limón himself argues in his essay 'The virile dance' (written in 1948)¹⁷ that a man dancing reveals himself for what he is, and thus expresses the 'truth' about masculinity: 'Since dance and gesture were his long before the spoken word, he still has the power to reveal himself more truly in this atavistic language [dance] not only as an individual but also "en masse"' (Limón 1966: 82). What Limón is arguing is not Graham's view that the body cannot lie but the idea that man as a dancer can choose between the good of revealing himself truly and the evil of dissembling through dance. These are the alternatives facing the three Kings that Limón writes about in 'The virile dance'. The biblical King David danced 'a ritual of surpassing purity and power and showed the man as dancer at his most sublime' (*ibid.*: 83). Louis XIV of France danced too, but for Limón this was an arrogant, mincing expression of the cynical, licentiousness of his regime. An (unidentified) twentieth-century European king,¹⁸ who has been deposed and lives out a seedy exile dancing in night clubs in Paris, represents 'the fearful spectacle of a sick world *in extremis*' (*ibid.*: 85). Limón expressed the hope that 'it will be a saner world when the President of the United States, as chief magistrate, will lead the nation in solemn dance on great occasions before the Dome of the Capitol' (*ibid.*: 86). All of this is clearly in line with Humphrey's idea that, as man dances, he expresses his

status and maturity as a member of society. Since man, for Limón, has the power to reveal himself truly through dancing, Limón feels affronted by what he perceives as dancing that lies, dissembles and betrays other signs of degeneracy. His conclusion is therefore that there is hope for sanity and propriety only in a modern American setting – before the Capitol, in a dance that presumably expresses the 'truth' about masculinity. Limón himself expressed this 'virile dance' in his most famous role, Othello¹⁹ in *The Moor's Pavane*.

The Moor's Pavane

The Moor's Pavane (1949) is based on the play *Othello*, Shakespeare's plot being reduced to a simple narrative involving the handkerchief which Othello gives to Desdemona. In one duet Iago makes his wife Emilia aware that he wants her to get it for him, and Emilia achieves this when Desdemona drops it during a group sequence. Emilia then teases Iago with it, playing hard to get, and then in turn Iago taunts Othello with it provoking him into killing Desdemona. This last takes place on stage hidden behind Iago's and Emilia's backs, and is followed by a denouement.

The piece starts with a 'pavane'²⁰ – a formal, centrally focused, symmetrical group section for the four dancers – which evokes an image of flowing, balanced, stately, ideal social relations. The dancers return to this in variations and developments throughout the piece, which, as the narrative tensions increase, gradually degenerates into a tense, anguished ritual. The tempo varies and the initial square floor patterns become increasingly unbalanced, finally veering into a skewed diamond on a steep diagonal out of which Othello and Desdemona break to run wildly around the stage. Thus the unfolding narrative of increasing tension between the community of characters is expressed as much within this group dance as within the duets and mimed sections. Only Othello himself remains stately, ideal and noble throughout the piece, expressing the 'truth' about masculinity, although it leads him to a tragic end.

Shakespeare's Iago is European and, in contrast with Othello's blackness, is probably a blond, blue-eyed white. Limón gives his role a gracefulness of carriage and gesture that hints at the European ballet tradition. Hoving, who created the role, was born and brought up in the Netherlands and had worked with Jooss and Laban before coming to the United States. From Limón's point of view, the role of Iago must have represented the sort of European courtier about whom Limón had expressed such dislike in his essay 'The virile dance'. Iago is light on his feet, and uses his hands and arms precisely extended to make obsequious gestures. He taunts Othello, then steps back, smiling, to watch the result.

By contrast, Othello is much more grounded and weighty in his movements, and his increasing emotional turmoil is conveyed through a repertoire of expressive mannerisms. He grasps a taut fist, then pushes it away from him, turning his fingers outwards into a tortuously twisted shape; he bends over forwards or arches backwards, almost as if he has a terrible pain in the stomach. Othello confronts people eye to eye, pulling their heads towards his own to search their souls. It is through this repertoire of mannerisms that Limón surely believed he was evoking the 'truth' about masculinity. The contrast between Iago's and Othello's gaze thus conveys both gender (active male looking) and notions of honesty and guile.

Lucas Hoving, commenting on the role of Iago, mentioned the possibility that there is a homoerotic motivation behind Iago's hatred of Othello.²¹ This suggests the possibility of reading the violence and aggression between this pair of men (and other similar pairs in Limón's *oeuvre*) as an expression of the tensions in male-male relations that result from homophobic conditioning. It was argued in Chapter 1 that homophobia is a mechanism for regulating the behaviour of all men rather than just self-identified homosexuals. Men are in a double bind in that, while they are encouraged to work closely together in the interests of men, there is no clear dividing line between approved forms of male homosocial bonding and expressions of male homosexuality. Iago's relationship with Othello could be seen as an example of this double-bind. As Othello's second-in-command on Cyprus he is in a position in which he has to work as closely as possible with Othello in the interests of maintaining Venetian (patriarchal, Christian) hegemony. But as a white spectator, following David A. Bailey, Iago simultaneously fears and is fascinated by Othello's (black) body. This conclusion can be derived not only from the relationships as mapped out in Shakespeare's play but from key elements within the choreographed encounters Limón devised between Othello and Iago. These can be interpreted as sexual and homoerotic.

Several times Iago comes up behind Othello to whisper in his ear, elegantly placing his hands on Othello's shoulders, and crooking his right leg forwards to partially encircle Othello's body. It is as if he is about to press his body up tightly against Othello from behind. In his combative duets with Othello, Iago is more than once dragged across the stage, lying on Othello's back. On one level Othello's expressed disgust and his rejection of Iago is because of what the latter is telling him (that Desdemona is unfaithful to Othello), but it also surely has to do with the manner in which Iago makes his approach. In the sequence where Iago taunts Othello with Desdemona's handkerchief, Iago gets down on his knees and arches his back as he twice rubs the handkerchief against his own body from his crotch up to his face. Iago is implying that he has had sex with Desdemona

and thus that Othello is a cuckold (in Shakespeare's play, he suggests Desdemona has slept with Cassio); but the manner in which Iago conveys this draws Othello's attention to the sexual attractions of Iago's own body. He is thus revealing himself as a (male) erotic object to Othello's (male) gaze, thus evoking the forbidden realm of homosexual sexuality.

What is argued here is not that the suppressed homoeroticism in Limón's *The Moor's Pavan* is an expression of Limón's sexual orientation but that it is conditioned by the problems underlying male-male bonding in a homophobic society. Othello represents an attractive, ideal masculine type, a man's man. But because he is so attractive, this brings up the problem of homophobic constraints on male bonding. What Bristow calls Tarzan's imperative to be a man is an imperative to be heterosexual. Men must violently reject any approach that might be interpreted as homosexual. Thus the two men's relationship in Limón's choreography turns from dignified, ideal bonding into an aggressive, combative and ultimately destructive tie. Othello's problems are further complicated and exacerbated through the sexual connotations of a male dancer's body when he is identified as 'Other'. These sorts of issues would undoubtedly have been unacceptable ones for explicit exploration in cultural products such as dance during the cold war period. It was the universal, humanistic ideologies of modernism that restrained Limón's work from recognizing and dealing with these issues directly, while the aggression in pieces like *The Moor's Pavan* unite Limón's and Graham's male dancers.

ALVIN AILEY AND BLACK MASCULINITY

Alvin Ailey is recognized as a key choreographer in the development of black dance in the United States. At the time of writing, although it is a few years now since Ailey's death, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre is still one of the largest and most successful American dance companies, attracting both black and white audiences.²² It is generally recognized that Ailey, along with Talley Beatty and Donald McKayle, was responsible for making black modern dance respectable. As Lynne Fauley Emery observed, 'It is [Ailey's] blending of the black heritage with modern dance that results in his greatness' (Emery 1972: 275). White modern dance artists had used black music (for example both Helen Tamiris and, surprisingly, Ted Shawn used negro spirituals), but Ailey integrated modern dance forms with a black thematic.

Joseph Mazo likened Ailey's popular manner of presentation to that of Ted Shawn:

In some ways Ailey is a throwback to Denishawn with its direct choreographic style, its emphasis on theatrical presentation, and its amalgam of dances drawn from the various traditions of the world. The

naive muscularity of the dances Shawn made for his all male company is sometimes echoed in the exuberant athleticism of Ailey's work.

(Mazo 1978: 8)

Mazo's use of the word 'various' is, however, a pointer to some key differences between Shawn and Ailey. Shawn, as we have seen, drew on a variety of dance styles and traditions, mostly from Eastern Asia and from Europe, none of which had any direct connection with his identity as a white, Anglo-Saxon American. Ailey, however, drew on a range of traditions all of which related to his black identity - styles ranging from Africa and the Caribbean to the black American vernacular. It is these, as Emery observed, that he combined with modern American dance.

Ailey, like Graham and Limón, can be seen to have moved from the culturally specific towards a more generalized, modernist stance. His first piece, *Blues Suite* (1958), for his newly founded Alvin Ailey American Dance Company, took as its starting point his memories of black people in the Brazos Valley in California where Ailey had lived until the age of 11. Two years later with *Revelations* (1960) Ailey explored the more generalized subject of religious faith and communal spirit found in black Baptist rituals. Ailey's later pieces to music by Duke Ellington - such as *Night Creature* (1974) - are more generalized again, evoking celestial jazzy acrobats. Underlying the direction Ailey's work took was a belief in an integrationist politics. In the 1970s he told Joseph Mazo:

I wanted my dancers to feel that they were not just 'black dancers', that they were part of society. There was one white girl with us on the tour in 1962 [of south-east Asia], but I discovered as we travelled through Asia that there were blues in all cultures, and that there were spirituals in all cultures, and that the people of any culture can express them. I got a lot of flack about it during the 1960s, but I think that an integrated company enlarges the statement I've been trying to make.

(1978: 13)

Whether or not he actually held this position throughout his career, what concerns us here is not Ailey's politics but the ideologies of modernism within which his work was situated. The modernist emphasis on the generalized and universal ('there are blues in all cultures') precluded any exploration of the critical potential of oppositional black cultural experiences. It has already been argued that where representations of masculinity are concerned, non-white masculinities appear from a dominant, white point of view to be in touch with 'essential', 'natural' masculinity. These are of a kind with which modern whites of European origin generally believe themselves to be out of touch. Representations of black masculinity, therefore, pose a threat to white male identity, in so far as

they highlight the inadequacies of the latter; but, as Bailey points out, they are also a source of desire and fascination.

Most of the choreography Ailey created for male dancers fits into the sorts of representations of masculinity that have already been discussed in this chapter. The male dancers' bodies are shown off in the trio 'Sinner man' in *Revelation* in a similar way to the male display dances which Graham made in her Greek pieces. Some of the more celebratory sections in Ailey's works contain passages for dancers that could be compared to Graham's passages for what she called 'celestial acrobats', though Ailey's choreography is more balletic (with high extensions and pirouettes) and jazzy (with fluid and rhythmic movements of the pelvis). Ailey worked on his early *Blues Suite* (1958) after working with Anna Sokolow, from whom he said he had learned 'how to go inside one's self for themes' (quoted in Mazo 1978: 11). In key roles in this piece, it could be said that Ailey, like Limón, seems to be trying to express the 'truth' about masculinity in dance. But the main difference between Ailey's choreography for male dancers and that of these other choreographers is the meanings his work derives from the fact that his dancers are (predominantly) black.

Where Ailey's work deals with themes or imagery that are specifically to do with black experience (and least reducible to a notional universal experience) it is potentially at its most threatening to the dominant white point of view. The function of stereotype is to defuse the threat posed by the threatening 'Other'. Because of Ailey's adherence to popular modes of theatrical and choreographic discourse, the representations of black people that he made are in danger of tending towards the stereotypical. The popular is a source of pleasure because it is familiar. Stereotypes are also familiar and may be pleasurable for some spectators. They may not even necessarily be recognized as stereotypes by members of the oppressed group in question. In what areas, then, are representations of masculinity in Ailey's work in danger of being read in relation to stereotypes?

Most of Ailey's choreography falls into two broad categories: either his dancers present a jazzy spectacle of their joy in dancing, or they make a sincere expression of emotions that often refer to religious experiences. Representations of masculinity in the former type of dance piece are in particular danger of being read as stereotypes. As Aschenbrenner points out, white reviewers (and by implication the dominant white male point of view) have come to expect black male dancers to be highly energetic in performance and display a supposedly innate sense of rhythm. The high kicks and balletic pirouettes of Ailey's jazzy celestial acrobats can thus be seen to conform to popular, conservative notions of a high-quality dance product, without the dancers gaining recognition for their achievement in attaining desired qualities. This sort of dancing can, however, be appreciated in a different way from a black point of view. First, the jazzy spectacle is a popular, positive and to a certain extent exemplary black

image. Second, modern dance, like athletics and boxing, has been one of the acknowledged avenues through which young black men of working-class origin can gain recognition and develop a career.²³ And even if they don't, dancing in black venues to the latest in black music has, for most of this century, been an outlet for the expression of black identity, equally for Malcolm X and his contemporaries in Harlem during the early 1940s as for young black men 'vogue' dancing in Britain in the 1990s.²⁴ This is the *mise en scène* for several of Ailey's pieces including *Blues Suite*, *The Moon* (1974), and *For 'Bird' – With Love* (1984).

Where work is rooted in specifically black experience, its consequent authenticity might give it a power and directness that overrides or dispels the stereotype. But even where Ailey can be seen to be trying to express black experience and create representations of masculinity that are meaningful to black audiences, white definitions of dance aesthetic, of gender and of 'Otherness' intervene. The stereotype condemns the black male dancer to be seen as a body and as the objectification of black male sexuality and virility – the source of thrills and fears to which David A. Bailey refers. Two of the male roles in *Blues Suite* offer a useful example of the way the dominant white point of view affects the way representations in this dance can be read.

Blues Suite

In his first piece, *Blues Suite*, Alvin Ailey drew on his childhood memories of night life in the Honky Tonk saloons of Brazos Valley in California. Joseph Mazo describes the suite's central theme as 'the dragging routine of a small town, with no work and no place to go' (1978: 39). 'Backwater blues', the central duet²⁵ of *Blues Suite*, explores a tense, teasing relationship between a stud, whose bare torso gleams behind his open black leather waistcoat,²⁶ and his lady in high heels and wearing a feather boa, who, as the piece opens, is posed half way up a ladder. When she comes down, the spectator might expect an imperceptible transition into partnered dancing; but instead the song comes to an end, and in the ensuing awkward silence the woman glares at the man and gives him the cold shoulder. 'Backwater blues' plays with the expectation that the couple will execute a culminating sequence of ever higher and more technically demanding lifts. This is what the stud clearly wants to happen. Because his desire coincides with that of the spectator, the structure of the piece invites, if not compels, the audience to gaze from a male point of view. One might almost say they become accomplices in rape, when he more or less forces her to dance with him in a duet full of showy and precarious lifts.

Steve Neale's observation (in Chapter 3) that women are a problem and a mystery certainly applies to 'Backwater blues'. The stud, as bearer of the audience's gaze, clearly cannot understand what she wants, or at least why

she doesn't want him. As a man there is no mystery about him, though. His movements and the gestures through which he expresses his self-confident manner – his swaggering walk and the dismissive shrugs with which he responds to each rejection – are open, large, unambiguous. But when the audience look at him, testing him and challenging him to prove himself, they are also objectifying the 'Otherness' of his race and colour.

This is a key to understanding the stud's macho behaviour. All he has of value is his body and his sexuality. Robert Staples (1982) describes black macho behaviour as the destructive passing on by a poor black of the negative image of himself which society succeeds in making him internalize. The only way he has of establishing his value is through projecting his negative image of himself onto others more abject than himself, in this case the black woman on the ladder, and by behaving in an oppressive way towards her. By 'putting her down', he further reinforces the abject, oppressed status they both share as blacks.

'Backwater blues' contains wonderful roles that are a gift for the right performers. But however well or badly these are performed, the roles themselves are trapped within stereotypical conventions which reinforce the terms of their own oppression. The stud is responding, as Bristow puts it, to the sexual imperative to be a man, by asserting that he is a belatedly Darwinian being whose sexual passion knows no reason. Where a white dancer asserts that his sexual passion knows no reason, he is implying that white men have not entirely lost touch with their essential, 'primitive' biological nature. But where a black dancer evokes the same imagery, there is a danger that he will merely reinforce the racist stereotype of blacks as an archaic link in the evolutionary chain, and over-sexed to boot.

Another aspect of this negative image is represented in the misfit or loser in the final section of *Blues Suite*. When he is first introduced, this character is a clown-like figure. While everyone else is 'getting down' with a partner in a dance that seems to be degenerating into a sexual romp, the misfit is on his own, and his attempts to join in are repulsed with increasing finality. By the end, sitting cut off from the rest of the dancers, he is an abject wreck: his shoulders twitch up and down like someone who is suffering a nervous breakdown. When one of the women notices this and lays a friendly arm on his shoulder, he reacts as if she has given him an electric shock, recoiling away from her in a paranoid manner. The misfit and the stud are opposite faces of the same coin. Both characters are driven, in their different ways, by the same sexual imperative to prove themselves as men. Ailey, however, shows us that, largely because of their blackness, the imperative is so absolute and extreme that they cannot possibly achieve anything through responding to it.

Although Ailey's work does not avoid or question stereotypes, it is in moments like these that the terms of the underlying racist oppression are revealed. But such moments are rare. More often Ailey presented dancing

roles that were celebratory, presenting the spectacle of dance for dance's sake. In the later *For 'Bird' – With Love*, Ailey depicted another misfit in the role of Charlie Parker. The movement style of the dancer playing Parker at times verges on the twitchy, abject quality of the misfit in *Blues Suite*. But the overall impression of the piece is one of celebration, as Ailey dazzles us with sequined show girls and smooth male dancers who execute high stepping, jazzy routines. To celebrate and to harrow don't go well together.

Ailey, like Shawn, attempted to find common ground between his own minority position as a black and those of dominant, white interests. Such value-free common ground never exists, although the ideologies of modernism must have seemed to Ailey to offer that possibility. Ailey tried to work within the conventions and traditions of modernist dance, substituting his own point of view for the dominant one. Because he trusted in the supposed universality of these conventions, he didn't block the possibility that his representations of black experience could be viewed in a negative, stereotypical way.

MODERNISM AND THE UNIVERSAL MALE

The simple conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is that Ailey, Graham, Limón and Shawn all produced representations of masculinity that conformed to prevalent, conservative notions of masculinity. In Shawn's case it has been suggested that this may to some extent have been intentional. The others, however, might well have denied the existence of any grounds for such an accusation. They subscribed to modernist views about the nature of art which posited the universality of modernist expression.

To reiterate what has been argued in Chapter 2, the widely held view of modernist dance as a purist move towards increasing abstraction – dance about nothing other than dance movement itself – is an inadequate one. All the works by Ailey, Graham and Limón discussed in this chapter are modernist in their concern with exploring the expressive potential of movement as a medium. Yet all involve a degree of characterization and narrative. All three choreographers, in their different ways, were involved in a modernist rejection of the narrative and mimetic conventions of earlier ballet and theatre dance. Their work constituted a search for new forms through which to express modernity, through which to express the experience of modern life and particularly a supposedly universal metropolitan experience. Thus representations of masculinity in modern American dance came to stand for the universal in American men. The male modern dancer as a belatedly Darwinian being expressed a political imperative to be a man, an imperative that was socially and politically specific but nevertheless unvaryingly heterosexual. This male, humanist

modernism had particular meanings in relation to American expansionism commercially and politically on the international scene.

The ways in which this modern masculinity was expressed are different in Graham's and Limón's work. In the Humphrey/Limón tradition, the overall pattern of the choreography was used to express the communal and the social. The pavane movement material in *The Moor's Pavane* is shared by both male and female dancers and gender differences are not specifically signified through particular steps and patterns at this level. Gender is signified instead through the way the individual interpreted the material in the dance as a whole, through use of weight and expansiveness and in details of the choreography like Iago and Othello's masculine, active gaze and the gestures that signify their masculine aggression. In Graham's work, these levels and vocabularies are more integrated into the movement material itself. Her male and female roles differ radically at the level of steps and movement patterns, as well as looks and gestures. What unites male roles in the work of Ailey, Graham and Limón is the use of highly expressive movement and gesture and their aggression through which these choreographers each, in their different ways, believed 'truths' could be communicated. In the 1950s all three produced highly individualistic performances so that their male roles were in line with contemporary notions of ruggedly virile American culture.

This 'modern dance' of course now looks outmoded. Some of the highly expressive movement material, through which it is suggested Limón tried to express the 'truth' about masculinity, probably now looks rather overdone. Jill Johnston's verdict in 1960 on Limón's *The Traitor* (1954) is apposite here. She complains that some of the more tortured passages are 'like bagsful of hot air': 'This is modern dance at its rhetorical worst. A few well-known movements from a personal style are contrived to "express" a profound emotion' (Johnston 1992: 34). As Marcia Siegel suggests, Graham's male dancers of the late 1940s and 1950s may now look pompous and grotesque. If these dancers' *oeuvres* now look to some people rather clichéd, it is not just because of changes in style and taste, but because both 'truth' and masculinity now seem problematic concepts. The idea of being able to define absolute truths appears inconceivable when we now, as Janet Wolff points out, see all knowledge as socially and historically situated and therefore partial (Wolff 1990: 89). As has already been discussed in Chapter 1, a crucial consequence of seeing identity as socially constructed is that we have become aware of the partial and problematic nature of concepts such as gender and race. The monolithic masculinity, which the male American modern dancer signified, was in effect a denial of the possibility of a plethora of possible masculine identities, differing in relation to class, race, sexuality and so on. To be fair, Ailey, Graham and Limón did not altogether set out to speak the truth about this universal

masculinity but to give expression to the truth of their individual experiences of gender and gendered relationships. It was the ideology of modernism that encouraged them to set this in universal terms. It was then the differences between this putative universality and the reality of their individual experiences that gave rise to some of the more intriguing passages in their work.

6

AVANT-GARDE
STRATEGIES

Merce Cunningham, and in the next generation Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer and other dancers in the Judson Group, between them brought about influential cross-overs between the practices of American choreographers and avant-garde traditions and strategies current in the New York art world community during the 1950s and 1960s. The avant-garde ways in which these choreographers have attacked and subverted conventional expectations of dance structure and aesthetics can be described as 'practices of negation'. This is a term which Tim Clark has coined to describe such avant-garde strategies in the visual arts. In avant-garde painting, Clark argues, these are forms of decisive innovation, in method or material or imagery,

whereby a previously established set of skills or frame of reference – skills and references which up until then had been taken as essential to art-making of any seriousness – are deliberately avoided or travestied, in such a way as to imply that only *by* such incompetence or obscurity will genuine picturing be done.

(Clark in Frascina 1985: 55 note, emphasis in the original)

By using such strategies to disrupt or destabilize the conventions and traditions of mainstream modern dance and ballet, Brown, Cunningham and Paxton opened up the idea of what constitutes choreography in ways that have made possible the development of the eclectic, pluralist and postmodern work of the 1980s and 1990s.

The example of the work of Cunningham and the development of contact improvisation by Paxton were two of the most significant influences on the way masculinity has been represented by postmodern American choreographers in the late 1970s and 1980s. To look at Brown's, Cunningham's and Paxton's work in terms of the use of avant-garde strategies is a useful way of considering representations of gender in their work.¹

Cunningham was closely associated with the composer John Cage, and the painters Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Cage first met the

- 3 See Marks and de Courtivron (1981) and American writers associated with *October* magazine published from MIT such as Rosalind Krauss, Jane Gallop, Hollis Frampton, Annette Michelson. There are problems over the use of the word 'feminism' in France, and Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray and other French writers working along similar lines do not necessarily use it to describe themselves. Nevertheless they have been called feminists in most English-language writing about them: for example Marks and de Courtivron's anthology is titled *New French Feminisms*.
- 4 Claid mentioned this in unpublished parts of an interview with myself for an article in *Artscene*, February 1992. The article was about her choreography but she was also at the time writing about Cixous and other French feminist theorists as part of her master's degree.

4 NIJINSKY: MODERNISM AND HETERODOX REPRESENTATIONS OF MASCULINITY

- 1 It was not of course the supported adagio on its own that was new to western European audiences at the time but the far greater formal and technical complexity which Petipa had developed in St Petersburg.
For this performance, the 'Blue Bird' *pas de deux* was renamed 'L'Oiseau de feu', and was variously retitled in later programmes. In 1921 Diaghilev nearly bankrupted himself when he presented his full-length version of *Sleeping Beauty* in London. The 'Blue Bird' *pas de deux* was not the only classical extract on the programme: see Garafola (1989), appendix C.
- 2 For example, see Nijinska's account of Fokine choreographing the role of Papillon in *Le Carnaval* (1910); Nijinska (1981): 284–9. Nijinsky himself heard Stravinsky play the music for *Petrouchka* some time before Fokine did, which suggests that he was very largely responsible for the creation of that role: Buckle (1975): 180.
- 3 While the Ballets Russes appeared in opera houses they also when in need of money appeared in music halls, and in the American tours in vaudeville theatres. Nijinsky performed in a music hall in London when he formed his own company in 1914.
- 4 Lady Juliet, in Richard Buckle's words, established a kind of record in having seen Nijinsky dance *Le Spectre de la rose* in three cities in the first nine months of its existence. Buckle (1975): 259.
- 5 Quoted in Chadd and Gage (1979): 22. They ascribe the passage to *Vogue* in 1911 or 1912 but give no reference. *Vogue* was not published in the UK until 1916. The quotation may therefore refer to the interest of New Yorkers not Londoners.
- 6 Of course Rambert was writing over half a century later and might well have been thinking of Cocteau's drawing when she wrote this. Richard Buckle suggests that the drawing depicts an occasion when Nijinsky and Karsavina repeated the whole of *Faune* a second time. Rambert (1972): 57; Buckle (1975): 259.
- 7 See Dyer (1990): 17–20 for further information on late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century ideas about the third sex.
- 8 Nevertheless, when *Narcisse* was performed in New York in 1916, the reviews specifically mention Nijinsky's 'effeminacy', though this may have been a reflection of the extraordinary impression left by Mordkin. Buckle (1975): 434.
- 9 In 1912 it was planned for the Ballets Russes to appear at the Narodny Dom Theatre in St Petersburg. Diaghilev had even signed contracts but the season

- had to be cancelled when the theatre unfortunately burnt down. See Buckle (1975): 262. For details of Diaghilev's dismissal from the Imperial Theatres in 1901 and Nijinsky's dismissal in 1911 see Buckle (1979): 60–3 and (1975): 191–3.
- 10 The most interesting example of this point of view is Buchloh 1981, but it can also be found in Lyotard (1984) and Jameson (1985).
- 11 Though during most of his life Stravinsky denied liking Nijinsky's choreography for *Sacre*, he reaffirmed his original opinion in 1967 when a piano score he had marked for Nijinsky during rehearsals was rediscovered. For Stravinsky's retraction see Stravinsky (1969), appendix 3. He had given the score to Misa Serj after the first night of the ballet. She had subsequently given it to Diaghilev who had given it to Anton Dolin. Robert Craft points out that, while the first performance of the ballet must have been a painful experience for Stravinsky, when *Sacre* was performed in a concert in Paris in 1914 the result was a triumph. It is understandable therefore for Stravinsky to have suppressed the memory of the ballet. At the end of his life, however, he said that Nijinsky's was the best ballet version he had seen. Craft (1976): 37 and Dolin (1985): 133–4.
- 12 Nijinska mentions that he had a book of Gauguin's paintings at the time (1981: 442) and told Richard Buckle that he actually had it open during rehearsals (Chadd and Gage 1979: 21).
- 13 For more on connections between the poètes maudits and homosexual identity see Stambouljian and Marks (1979).
- 14 But extremely difficult to perform because of the way the body is always presented in profile, and, as Lydia Sokolova put it, because of the ingenious way it fitted with the music: Sokolova (1960): 40.
- 15 Recently reconstructed at San Francisco for the Oakland Ballet by Frank Ries.
- 16 Nijinska was half-deaf, having being caught in the shelling of Kiev during the civil war, and spoke little French: Baer sums it up best (1987: 42–4).

5 MEN, MODERNISM AND MODERN AMERICAN DANCE

- 1 See Kendall (1979), Jowitt (1988): 78–81, Siegel (1987), and Shawn (1968), his own book on Delsarte.
- 2 Not just through the example of his dancing and that of his company of male dancers but also through his writing and lecturing on men and dance: see Shawn (1916, 1933, 1936, 1946, 1966).
- 3 See Terry (1976): 109. Animating a classical sculpture in this way was also a recognized Delsarte exercise.
- 4 Given this chronology, Shawn might well have actually thought of the Husbandman when he was writing, but it is also likely that Graham and/or Hawkins may have had Shawn and his work at the back of her mind when she was choreographing the piece.
- 5 Dance in America TV film *Martha Graham Dance Company* directed by Merrill Brockway (1976) with Yuriko Kimura as the Bride and David Hatch Walker as the Revivalist.
- 6 *Appalachian Spring*, a film by Peter Glushanok for WQED-TV (1959).
- 7 Of course not all Graham's pieces are situated outside history in this way. *Episodes: Part 1* (1959) about Mary Queen of Scots looks in photographs like a historical costume drama. Usually, where a historical reference is indicated it is less specific: the design of *Time of Snow* (1968) about Héloïse and Abelard seems a strange mixture of Japanese decor and medieval European costume.

- 8 Cohan interviewed by Selma Jeanne Cohen (1973), tape in archive of Dance Perspectives Foundation.
- 9 See Fanon (1968) and Homi Bhabha (1983).
- 10 Marcia Siegel wrote: 'What had always been José's greatest asset, his virile style' (1987: 263). See also John Martin's comments on Limón in 1936 (1968: 281–4) and Deborah Jowitt's tribute to Limón written in 1972 at the time he was dying (1977: 90–4).
- 11 Apart from Barbara Pollack's short biographical sketch (1993) and sections in Marcia Siegel's *Days on Earth* (1987) and Pauline Koner's *Solitary Song* (1989), there is little information on Limón. More research could usefully be done through examination of Limón's autobiography in manuscript in New York Public Library Dance Collection.
- 12 Limón choreographed several pieces on Mexican themes throughout his career, of which one of the earliest was *Danzas Mexicanas* (1939).
- 13 In 1950 and 1951 The José Limón Dance Company visited Mexico by invitation from Miguel Covarrubias of the the Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City. In 1954 the US State Department in collaboration with ANTA sent them on a tour of South America and again in 1960. In 1957 they went on a European tour, again arranged by the State Department. See Koner (1989): 191–236, especially the section where Koner and Limón decide to visit Spain after consultation with 'embassy officials' (1989: 227).
- 14 Limón's *The Traitor* (1954), however, came at the height of the McCarthy era.
- 15 Humphrey wrote a long letter to John Martin in response to his grudging review of a programme of pieces by Humphrey and Limón that were choreographed to music by Bach. Martin didn't think 'modern' dance should use 'classical' music. Part of the letter was printed in the *New York Times*, the full text in Cohen (1972): 255.
- 16 Limón doesn't say where this quotation from Humphrey comes from.
- 17 Limón's essay 'The virile dance' was initially written for *Dance Magazine* in December 1948, around the time that Limón was planning *The Moor's Pavane*, and subsequently printed in Sorrell (1966): 82–6.
- 18 Could Limón have been alluding to the Duke of Windsor?
- 19 Originally the dancers' roles were called 'The Moor', 'The Moor's Wife', 'The Moor's Friend' and 'His Friend's Wife'; this was presumably to distance it from the revered original, but for convenience and clarity the roles here are referred to as Othello, Desdemona, Iago and Emilia.
- 20 Pavanes were stately court dances during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The composer and dance writer Louis Horst taught a series of composition classes on 'pre-classical forms' for modern dance artists, and the pavane was one of the forms examined. There is no evidence that Limón ever went to these, although Lucas Hoving did. Hoving says that Limón picked and chose from the various pre-classical forms what he wanted to make the 'emotional texture' for particular scenes (Mindlin 1992: 17).
- 21 Hoving actually floated this idea while referring to the film by Laurence Olivier of *Othello* (Mindlin 1992: 15).
- 22 Hilary Carty has written an intriguing examination of the make up of AAADT's audience in London in 1992: see Carty (1992).
- 23 This is not to imply that all black dancers in the United States are from working-class backgrounds. In the UK, at least, ballet as opposed to modern dance is not really a viable option for most young black people from lower-income families. There is still a much smaller black middle class in Britain than in the United States.

- 24 As Iain Chambers has put it: 'From plantation to ghetto, black culture, and especially black music, has provided one of the strongest means of survival – a secret language of solidarity, a way of articulating oppression, a means of cultural resistance, a cry of hope' (Chambers 1976: 161).
- 25 Introducing a British television screening of a video of *Blues Suite*, Robert Cohan said that this duet preceded the rest of the piece.
- 26 This was the costume worn on the video referred to, and in performance at the Alhambra Theatre, Bradford, in October 1991 and worn in a photograph in the programme there, but not in the photos in Mazo (1978).

6 AVANT-GARDE STRATEGIES

- 1 Sally Banes (1980) has applied the term 'postmodern' to the work of dancers like Paxton in the 1960s. I shall be applying this term in Chapter 7 only to dance work since the late 1970s. Cunningham's work sits uneasily in definitions of either modern or postmodern dance.
- 2 Cunningham is actually recalling an anecdote from an introductory talk before performances by the Cunningham Company which John Cage gave to college audiences in the mid-1950s. Cage (1961): 94–5.
- 3 One would expect Cunningham to come out well from the test Rubidge proposed, as she is a Cunningham fan, and was working for Ballet Rambert at the time that *Septet* was in their repertoire.
- 4 Carolyn Brown suggests that some earlier defenders of Cunningham who later said he had sold out probably weren't interested in the work itself, only in the revolution. But then can the one be surgically detached from the other? (Klosty 1975: 31).
- 5 One could almost make a subversive, homoerotic reading of the piece as one male energy rubbing against another. Although De Kooning's artistic philosophy was antithetical to that of Rauschenberg, Willem and Elaine De Kooning were on the faculty at Black Mountain College where Rauschenberg was a student and when Cage and Cunningham were in residence there. The De Koonings designed the set for a performance there in 1948 of Erik Satie's *Ruse of the Medusa* organized by Cage with Cunningham, Buckminster Fuller and others taking part. Incidentally Edwin Denby, in his article on photographs of Nijinsky, mentions discussing them with Willem De Kooning.
- 6 Nevertheless the Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art in New York did not purchase it in 1958, fearing 'it would offend patriotic sensibilities': see Orton (1988): 13 note 22.
- 7 These are not the titles Satie gave to the piano pieces, which are 'Manière de commencement', 'Prolongation du même', 'I', 'II', 'III', 'En plus', 'Redite'. See Orledge 1990: 55–6 for discussion of the music.
- 8 The pages in *Changes* are unnumbered.
- 9 More pull is discernible in the *Event for Television* version than in that of Rambert Dance Company. This image could be a reference to Apollo riding a chariot with muses for horses in Balanchine's *Apollon Musagète*.
- 10 This section of *Antic Hay* is performed as part of Cunningham's *Event for Television*.
- 11 Cunningham's *Second Hand* was to have been set to Satie's *Socrate* in a piano duet adaptation which Cage had written. The publishers of Satie's music wouldn't allow this to be performed so Cage developed his own solo piano piece which used Satie's accompaniment but had a new melody devised using chance procedures hence its title *Cheap Imitation*. Cunningham therefore