Deterritorializing Gender in Sydney's Breakdancing Scene: A B-girl's Experience of B-boying

Rachael Louise Gunn

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Macquarie University 2009

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Faculty of Arts
Macquarie University, Sydney

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Abstract

This thesis critically interrogates how masculinist practices of breakdancing offers a site for the transgression of gendered norms. Drawing on my own experiences as a female within the male-dominated breakdancing scene in Sydney, first as a spectator, then as an active crewmember, this thesis questions why so few female participants engage in this creative space, and how breakdancing might be a space to displace and deterritorialize gender. I use analytic autoethnography and interviews with scene members in collaboration with theoretical frameworks offered by Deleuze and Guattari, Butler, Bourdieu, and other feminist and post-structuralist philosophers, to critically examine how the capacities of bodies are constituted and shaped in Sydney's breakdancing scene, and to also locate the potentiality for moments of transgression. In other words, I conceptualize the breaking body as not a 'body' constituted through regulations and assumptions, but as an assemblage open to new rhizomatic connections. Breaking is a space that *embraces* difference, whereby the rituals of the dance not only augment its capacity to deterritorialize the body, but also facilitate new possibilities for performativities beyond the confines of dominant modes of thought and normative gender construction. Consequently, this thesis attempts to contribute to what I perceive as a significant gap in scholarship on hip-hop, breakdancing, and autoethnographic explorations of Deleuze-Guattarian theory.

Candidate Declaration

This statement is to certify that this work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. All work contained in this document is original and my own, unless otherwise acknowledged.

_____

Rachael Louise Gunn

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*In-text references provided for co-authored article.

Introduction – Where it all began

This thesis came out of my foray into the male-dominated breakdancing world, first as a spectator, then as an active breakdancer crewmember and competitor. I want to begin by contextualizing in an autoethnographic manner the questions, firstly about gender and identity, that were raised through my experience, but then grew into bigger questions about the possibilities to displace gendered identities that led me to begin this research project. I was first introduced to breakdancing in 2008 through attending my boyfriend Sam's crew training sessions. While I have always loved dance, and have learnt a range of different styles over the years (including ballet, jazz, tap, ballroom, and salsa), I was wary of learning breakdancing. My boyfriend's crew was all male, and the only girls present were sidelined as girlfriends or sisters of the crewmembers. There was no place for girls to experiment with new steps, but I was curious to see how my body would respond to the moves my male friends could effortlessly perform. Although extremely shy and overwhelmed at the prospect of learning any steps in front of them, I felt a desire to connect to the dissident flavour of the crew, and challenge the space where girls felt they could not enter.

In 2011, I attended my first breakdancing, or as I soon learned to call it 'b-boying', competition. This event was out shadowed by male competitors, and yet all the previous dance styles I had learnt were female dominated. I'd grown up in a dance school where boys were the *unusual* ones. Why, then, weren't there more female breakdancers? This observation, led me to start to critically reflect on the gendered disparity within the scene, my desires to join this overtly masculine space, and my assumptions about dance participation. Through all of this my one question was: why are there so few female breakdancers?

It was at this event that I saw female breakdancers, or 'b-girls', for the first time. Though by this stage I was aware that women did breakdance, they seemed almost mythological to me, having never actually seen one. And yet here they were, competing, laughing, and talking to everyone, just like their male peers were. While the hundred or so male breakdancers at the event vastly outnumbered them, these women were neither excluded nor discouraged; quite the opposite in fact. They were welcomed and warmly supported, without any hesitation. From these experiences I was left with

questioning: if the scene was so supportive and inclusive, and it was a dance-based scene after all, why didn't more women breakdance? And this is the question I want to address in this thesis.

Before I embarked on any research, my answer to this question was an assumption about gender. When faced with the notion of who a 'breakdancer' was to me, I immediately thought of a male body – a tall, strong, athletic young man – in other words, a 'b-*boy*'. In addition to this projected image, my initial assumptions were that women weren't breakdancing because of physical limitations. This could be due to the strength demanded, the confrontational nature of competitions, and overall because the dance style was highly masculine. This is, after all, what initially discouraged me from wanting to learn. From what I saw in Sam's training sessions, and at my first competition, breakdancing was much more aggressive than any other dance style I had encountered. Competitions, or 'battles' as they are more often called in the scene, are intensely confrontational, and also improvisational. Unlike my overly rehearsed childhood routines to saccharine songs that I performed at end of year concerts, these breakdancers instantly responded to the funk music in a frenzy of spontaneous movements. As the battles increased in intensity, the space of the dance floor would contract, as the breakdancers were drawn to one another, closing in on themselves. I was amazed at the technicality of their movements, their self-confidence, their strength and vigour, their speed and accuracy. There was intensity in the interactions between those participating in the battle, with them often-shouting insults and laughing at their opponents until they made a mistake. But once the battle ended, they all shook hands, smiling and laughing, revelling in their collective success.

As I met more b-girls through competitions, I came to realize my initial assumptions were unfounded. Women *could* breakdance and compete. So again, the question that haunted me was: why are there so few b-girls? Why did so few girls feel this dance was open to them? I began to critically reflect on my early assumptions about breakdancing – why did I assume that it was a dance style more suited to men? Why did I assume that I couldn't, or even shouldn't, learn the dance style? And where did these assumptions come from? The aim of this thesis is to test these assumptions about breakdancing. I do this through interweaving autoethnographic research, which draws on my own experiences and observations of Sydney's breakdancing scene and

interviews with scene members, with cultural theory.[1] Specifically, utilizing the theory of Deleuze and Guattari, Butler, Bourdieu, Gatens, and Colebrook enables an in-depth examination of the gendered codes and conventions of Sydney's breakdancing scene. These theorists provide the tools to examine how bodily capacities are constituted in this space, and what possibilities there are to 'deterritorialize' gender. That is, to decode and displace the stronghold of limiting identity categories, and I will elaborate on this term further below. Importantly, I will not be providing an exposition of the work of these theorists; rather I am using them to understand how gender operates in this scene, and to also underpin my cultural analysis of breakdancing.

The argument and cultural analysis is built on my autoethnography, which in turn narratively unfolds from my early foray into breakdancing through my competing as a breakdancer to my questioning of its masculinist assumptions about the body. That is, interweaving through, and supporting and informing my experience and my autoethnographic approach, is a cultural analysis using the works of philosophers and theorists mentioned above.

In attempting to bring these two methodological frameworks together in this way, my aim is to illustrate my own developing experiences and unfolding conceptualizations of the scene. Indeed, as I moved through the scene, and continued to extend my use of cultural theory, I explored different ways to challenge the limiting gendered assumptions that plagued bodily expression, and instead moved towards examining the creativity of breaking as a way to deterritorialize gender. I do not explore this latter argument until Chapter 6, as the argument only developed after years of training and competing. Indeed, through this research process, I came to understand that deterritorializations could only happen once I learnt the requisite moves, codes, and conventions of Sydney's breakdancing scene. Consequently, this is why my autoethnographic experiences appear in the thesis in the way they do, situated alongside the cultural theory and building as the thesis develops, thus supporting the parallel genealogies of my foray into this scene and research process.

In combining these two methodologies in this way, I also attempt to call attention to different ways of writing and thinking. This manifests through shifting between first and third person writing, and is a conscious attempt to undermine the binary between autoethnography and theory. While I discuss my critical framework and

[1] This research received ethics clearance, MQHREC approval number: 5201100717.

methodology in much greater detail in the following chapter, I want to briefly introduce my theoretical approach here. This is because my critical framework not only helped me to make sense of my assumptions and experiences in Sydney's breakdancing scene, but also provided the means to elucidate my argument that I explore in this thesis: that breakdancing can lead to potential opportunities, displacements, and reconstitutions of gender.

Analysing Gender

The premise needed for a working understanding of 'the body' and gender, and the possibilities to reconfigure them, is required before any cultural discussion can take place. As such, to fully develop this study of female participation in the Sydney breakdancing 'scene',[2] this thesis will take into account the cultural construction of bodies, and acknowledge that even when taking part in a leisure activity such as dance, participants are beholden to socio-cultural assumptions that regulate their corporeal capacity.

The production of the gendered body is merely one such control of the corporeal. Social expectations disguised as biological assumptions have a material effect on corporeal possibility and expression (Aalten 1997; Desmond 1997a; Foster 1996b, 1997; Hanna 1988; Markula 2006c; Wade 2011). For example, Judith Butler and Pierre Bourdieu have in common an understanding of the body as not 'natural', but as constituted through its environment. Here, bodily techniques, performances, and habits are the product of historical directives, imposed social roles, and even the specific conditions of a cultural milieu. For Butler, this understanding takes shape through her theory of performativity, where she views the "stylization of the body"

[2] There are broader discussions around the terminologies of cultural formations that I am unable to divulge into here. Briefly, though, while Maxwell (2003) examines the *culture* of hip-hop in Sydney, examining how participants construct and make sense of their 'belonging' to this culture, Mitchell (2003) has identified hip-hop as a 'subculture', which draws on the broader field of 'subcultural' studies propounded in the work of, to name a few, Paul E. Willis, Albert K. Cohen, John Clarke, Dick Hebdige, and Ken Gelder. The term 'subculture', however, is charged with a history of privileging male-dominated activities while sidelining female participation (see McRobbie and Garber's (1977) seminal feminist re-reading of subcultural studies). Numerous other terms have emerged that can be used to address youth cultural formations, such as 'tribe' and 'neo-tribe', which draws on the work of Maffesoli (1996), 'lifestyle' as propounded by Miles (2002), 'scene' (Bennett & Peterson 2004), and 'post-subculture', with much work dedicated to their collective criticism (see, for example Bennett 2005, 2006, 2011; Hesmondhalgh 2005). While I use these various terms concomitantly to describe different components of breakdancing in Sydney, my preference for the word 'scene' is due to the inextricable connection breakdancing has with 'place'. It is both an embodied and physically located praxis. In the next chapter, I introduce Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) concept of 'assemblage' and proceed to use it to describe breakdancing in Sydney, as it allows for a more fluid and open-ended conceptualization of breakdancing's organization.

(1990, xv) and their ritualized repetition, as producing "the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (1990, 191). Using performativity to examine Sydney's breakdancing scene enables an analysis of how the body's performance is not only regulated in-line with broader gender norms, but also, and in doing so, becomes naturalized. To further enrich this understanding of the gendered breakdancing body, I employ Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'. This concept productively highlights how dispositions, habits, and gestures are both "regulated and regular", but without any strict "obedience to rules" (Bourdieu 1990, 53). Indeed, habitus encompasses the "principles which generate and organize practices and representations" (Ibid.), though ones that are at the same time adaptable and without a conscious directive. The fusing of performativity and habitus in this thesis enables a critical examination of not only *what* bodily techniques are repeated in Sydney's breakdancing scene, but also what their repetition may reproduce, in other words, the broader consequences of their repetition in reinforcing existing structures and also naturalizing ethics.

To locate the specific ways that bodily habits are repeated and (re)learnt in Sydney's breakdancing scene, I draw on the work of a number of key dance theorists. For example, Hanna (1988), Foster (1997), and Markula (2006a, 2006b, 2006c) share a view of dance as a distinctly productive means to challenge normative expressions. This is because, as Judith Lynne Hanna states, "[d]istanced from the everyday, the performance is an arena in which we can safely challenge the status quo" (1988, 6). The creative component of dance enables experimentation with different expressions and ways of moving and, as such, facilitates an exploration of the body's possibilities. In addition, the training and rehearsal space sees the body learn new techniques and habits and here, as Susan Leigh Foster pronounces, "the training process repeatedly reconfigures the body" (1997, 239). Through learning and training dance, the body experiences a re-learning of expressions that can open up and expand its capacities. For Pirkko Markula, who turns a Deleuze-Guattarian lens on the dancing body, the possibilities enabled through dance "might transgress the limitations of feminine identity in contemporary society" (2006c, 4), and I employ her work in Chapters 5 and 6.

My analysis of the masculinity of Sydney's breakdancing scene and the way this distinct social space regulates bodily capacities is also informed by Australian gender theorists: Gatens, Lloyd, Colebrook, and Diprose. These theorists share an understanding that the way specific spaces and dominant ideologies are defined,

structured, and represented are, in fact, in *opposition* to the womanly (Diprose 1994; Gatens 1996; Grosz 1994; Lloyd 2002; Shildrick 2015). For Genevieve Lloyd (2002) in particular, many of these unequal power relations are due to the lasting authority of the Cartesian dualism. This conceptual shift that emphasizes the exclusive structuring of spaces productively shifts my initial considerations of the gendered disparity of Sydney's breakdancing scene. Rather than viewing female breakdancers as 'lacking' the skills and techniques required to participate, we can, instead, propose that how breakdancing operates – the way it is structured and defined – is in *opposition* to the feminine. This is not to say that women are physically unable to participate, nor is it an attempt to reduce the experiences of men via the category of masculinity (as warned by Noble 2009, 879); rather that breakdancing's dominant representation privileges expressions that conform to normative masculine significations. As such, I want to examine how bodily expression is both regulated and hierarchized in Sydney's breakdancing scene in order to facilitate a more situated analysis of the potentiality of breakdancing. Here, Claire Colebrook's (2003) discussion of gender provides the critical framework to examine the body beyond dominant modes of thought, and instead views bodily 'difference' as open, prolific, and creative, and I elaborate on this framework below.

This understanding of the body – as constituted through broader structures of power – resonates with Foucault's canon of work. Indeed, Michel Foucault contends that examining histories, discourses and practices can expose how bodies and subjects are constructed in ideologically appropriate and determined ways. Foucault, as well as other key thinkers such as Butler, and Deleuze and Guattari, provides the theoretical groundwork to de-naturalize the body and identity, and to, instead, view it as constituted through dominant and pervasive systems of power. As such, I interweave these various theoretical frameworks to examine the conditions of Sydney's breakdancing scene, how it creates bodies, and the ramifications of these conditions in regulating creative capacities.

The value in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's approach lies in their inheritance, and extension, of a Spinozist understanding of the body. Rather than seeing the body as only constituted by "the great dualism machines" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 305) such as the Cartesian dualism, which views the functions of the body as male or female (and where the female is construed as subordinate to the male), taking a Spinozist position enables the difference between bodies and their varying capacities to

be viewed as ‘positive’. It is a way of thinking that both creates and *affirms* difference, expanding understandings of difference beyond dualistic structures. This conceptual shift has broader consequences in rethinking bodily difference and relationships, as Colebrook explains, “the reduction of sexuality to maleness and femaleness both belies the multiplicity of sexual difference and imposes one particular political structure – the nuclear family – on a human history that has yielded far greater assemblages” (2003, 189). For Colebrook, and by extension Deleuze and Guattari, any dualistic structures – such as man/woman, masculine/feminine – are overly reductive frameworks that limit expression in myriad ways, and thus cannot account for the various relationships and organizations that manifest throughout history. As such, and for Gatens (1996) particularly, a Spinozist framework facilitates a more ‘ethical’ engagement that does not simply ignore bodily difference, but rather sees ‘difference’ as integral to enabling greater inclusivity. It moves towards an opening up of ‘difference’, rather than its reduction to determined identity categories.

To aid in my examination of difference and to locate the potentiality of breakdancing practice, I also utilize key concepts from Deleuze and Guattari’s canon, particularly in their seminal work *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (2004). Specifically, their concept of territorialization elucidated in this text was central to formulating my argument that gender can be displaced and reconfigured through breakdancing, as it opened up the space to see the broader potentiality of such actions. This is because processes of territorialization call attention to the underlying potential for change within any given organization, while at the same time providing a platform to see how these changes may interlock with, or affect, connecting organizations. For example, performative transgressions in Sydney’s breakdancing scene might, as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) often say, ‘cut across’ to the Australian breakdancing scene, thus facilitating a larger transformation of how bodily expression is viewed.

The various dimensions of territorialization – including ‘deterritorialization’ and ‘reterritorialization’ and ‘absolute’ and ‘relative’ – are used in this thesis to examine how Sydney’s breakdancing privileges male engagement, the trangressiveness of female breakdancers’ participation, and to also locate productive sites to facilitate transformations of gender. While I will explain these concepts in more detail in the following chapter, in brief Deleuze and Guattari (2004) characterize ‘relative’ deterritorialization as the ‘vector’ of transformation that displaces or delocalizes elements of a social milieu. This concept exists simultaneously with – not in opposition

to – reterritorialization, which sees these elements reconfigure to enter into new relationships and meanings.[3] In other words, and perhaps overly simplistically, deterritorialization is the force of change, while reterritorialization is the reorganization.[4] Importantly, bringing these concepts into my analysis of Sydney's breakdancing scene led me to reformulate my argument: that breakdancing is a site to deterritorialize gender.

To support this argument, and to further enrich my analysis of breakdancing throughout this thesis, I use analytic autoethnography. This methodology involves critically examining lived experiences through self-reflection, interviews and theoretical analysis (Anderson 2006). Key to this approach is that the underlying research questions must be analytical. For example, throughout Sara L. Crawley's extensive work using analytic autoethnography she questions: "What can my lived experiences add to social theories of gender, identity, and the body?" (2012, 149). Like Crawley, throughout this research project I question what my personal experiences can contribute to theories of gender and the body, as well as dance practices and hip-hop culture more broadly.

The distinct value of analytic autoethnography lies in how it can shed light on the ways by which identity markers, and their corresponding assumptions of the body, can have tangible implications for participation in a particular social milieu, such as being a female entering the male-dominated space of Sydney's breakdancing scene. This multi-faceted approach to researching a social phenomenon that analytic autoethnography allows for opens up a contemporaneous space for research, whereby the personal and the theoretical can simultaneously inform and enrich one another in analysis. It also calls attention to different ways of producing knowledge, while at the same time blurring the classic hierarchization of 'researcher' versus 'participant'. Throughout this thesis, then, I incorporate stories and experiences from my fieldwork in Sydney's breakdancing scene. This includes my attendance at over sixty events – a great number of which I was also a competitor (see Appendix A for details) – as well as my participation in many high-level, intensive workshops of internationally accomplished breakdancers (see Appendix B). To augment these observations and

[3] The way these concepts exist simultaneously can be seen in Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the types of 'refrains', which "mark new assemblages, pass into new assemblages by means of deterritorialization-reterritorialization" (2004, 360). Additionally, it can be surmised from their warning, "it is always *on* the most deterritorialized element that reterritorialization takes place" (Ibid., 243).

[4] As Deleuze and Guattari write, "decoding-deterritorialization and overcoding-reterritorialization" (2004, 243).

experiences, I also include quotes from the interviews I conducted with nine prominent breakdancers in Sydney (see further Appendix C). The qualitative analyses of these interviews work to enrich my analysis of the transgressive-potential of breakdancing, and provide the additional histories and perspectives regarding how Sydney breakdancers negotiate the gendered assumptions of the scene. In using the theory outlined above to analyse my experiences, and that of my peers, I argue that breakdancing, while on the surface is distinctly masculine, is in fact a productive site to deterritorialize gender.

These theoretical and methodological frameworks are interwoven throughout this thesis in a way that not only develops a clearer perspective on how the body is gendered in Sydney's breakdancing scene, but also informs the process of locating opportunities to displace and deterritorialize gender in this context. I discuss these theorists and my methodological framework in much greater detail in Chapter 1: the literature review, as I now want to provide a brief summary of breakdancing and the way it is practiced in Sydney.

Breakdancing

It is important to understand that breakdancing, along with emceeing (rap), deejaying and graffiti writing, are all positioned as different 'elements' under the broader umbrella of hip-hop culture.[5] Indeed, Tricia Rose considers breakdancing "the physical manifestation of the hip hop style" (1994, 47). The positioning of these different practices under the one culture is not only due to their shared origins in the Bronx (New York) throughout the 1970s, and the role of African-Americans and Puerto-Ricans youths in developing them, but also because of the similarities in their codes and conventions (J. Chang 2007; Forman 2002; Forman & Neal 2004; George 2005a; Rose 1994). For example, across these different cultural practices is the "'show and prove' mentality" (Fogarty 2012, 460), whereby participants' skill and 'style' determines their status and respect within the community (see, for example, J. Chang 2007; Fogarty 2012; Macdonald 2001; Maxwell 2003). These conventions are central to hip-hop

[5] Grouping these practices together as the 'four elements' of hip-hop culture is largely accepted within both the academic community and hip-hop culture. This may be due to the way hip-hop culture was *presented* to early audiences. For example, hip-hop films such as *Beat Street* (1984) and *Wild Style* (1983), as well as Malcolm McLaren's video clip 'Buffalo Gals' (1982) all presented these different cultural practices as part of a unified culture. I unpack these portrayals of hip-hop culture in greater detail in Chapter 2. It is worth noting, also, that within Sydney other dance styles have been brought into the fold of 'hip-hop dance', particularly through 'all-style' competitions, and these include popping, locking, freestyle hip-hop, waacking, and krumping.

culture, and manifest in breakdancing through idiosyncratic ways of moving, 'original' moves or variations of moves, and appearance (clothing).

While I discuss hip-hop's history and the formation of its traditions in greater detail in the following chapter, my focus here is to highlight how the meritocracy of hip-hop culture – of the "'show and prove' mentality" – does not extend to the female participant (despite Mary Fogarty's (2012) claims), who is more often judged before any kind of involvement.[6] Indeed, Australian hip-hop scholar Tony Mitchell identifies that within hip-hop's 'four elements', "[a]ll are predominantly male-defined activities which only appear to admit female practitioners in the margins" (2003, 7). For those women that *do* participate and are eventually accepted into the culture, they must still negotiate the structure of hip-hop that privileges male engagement and histories. This has been most eloquently outlined by feminist hip-hop scholar Gwendolyn D. Pough, who writes, "[w]omen's contribution to Hip-Hop culture has been lost, or rather erased" (2004, 8). It is thus important to map the ways female participants negotiate the masculine dominance of the scene, and to rethink how to facilitate a more inclusive space for creative expression.

My work on breakdancing has explored how female participants negotiate this unequal access (Gunn 2016, forthcoming; Gunn & Scannell 2013), and similar work has been conducted in graffiti (Macdonald 2001), with a proliferation of research on the gender politics in emceeing (Haugen 2003; Loots 2003; Morgan, 2000; Morgan 2009; Pough 2004, 2007; Rose 2013; Sharpley-Whiting 2007).[7] The male-dominance of breakdancing is by no means unique to Sydney, with this disparity also noted in, to name a few, the USA (Deyhle 1986; Rose 1994; Schloss 2009; Vliet 2007), Japan (Condry 2006), and New Zealand (Kopytko 1986). Yet to say the gender disparity is noted, is a far cry from it being critically questioned, as there are a number of works (Fogarty 2012; Osumare 2002; Stevens 2006) that uncritically accept the male-dominance of the dance, or 'b-boying' as it's more often referred to and, in turn, perpetuate the gendered relations that naturalize it.

[6] This meritocracy of hip-hop has also been acknowledged in minor media, such as the *Red Bull BC One* blog for breakdancing. In a post about race, gender is notably absent in the culture's perceived meritocracy: "It's a merit-based culture, meaning that it bridges racial and socio-economical gaps as members gain respect through their skills in its different disciplines" (Red Bull BC One 2015e).

[7] Some of this research, such as Rose (1994) and Pough (2004), highlight the gender politics that mark deejaying in hip-hop culture. Additionally, outside of hip-hop, Rowley (2009) examines the difficulties facing women in the male-dominated deejaying scene of Chicago's house music.

The substantial domination of the male body in breakdancing is further supportive of the dance's normative construction as 'masculine' and the culture's gendered hierarchy. Perhaps indicative of its tacit gendered hierarchy is the male terminologies used to describe the dance and its dancers – 'b-boy/b-boying' (Fogarty 2012; Schloss 2009). While this usage of the terms is meant to be 'inclusive' of female participants, I want to highlight that when these labels are used it is a male body that is articulated and signified. I want to emphasize that this dominant signification of the male body both reinforces the culture's male prominence and also occludes its female participants (Gunn 2016; Gunn & Scannell 2013). Indeed, reinforcing this underlying gendered hierarchy is that male breakdancers would never refer to their dance as 'b-girling' (and are similarly excluded from 'b-girl battles', though this is meant to provide a platform of encouragement for b-girls). Moreover, the preference for the terms 'b-boy' and 'b-girl' go beyond the history of the vernacular (which I detail in Chapter 2), as they interlock with the gender disparity of the scene. That the dance, cultural practices, and its dancers are more typically referred to by the male descriptor – b-boy/b-boying – simultaneously describes and reinforces the masculine dominance of the scene. As such, in order to avoid reproducing the articulation of gendered bodies, in this thesis I henceforth refer to the dance and its dancers as 'breaking/breakers'. There are further issues with the terminology of 'breakdancing' that I elucidate in Chapter 2.

While there is already a broad body of literature on emceeing in Australia, there is also a significant gap in the literature on hip-hop dance in Sydney.[8] Despite Ian Maxwell's (2003) seminal investigation of Sydney's hip-hop culture in the 1990s, the Sydney hip-hop scene has, in the interim since Maxwell's study, segregated through its elements. That is, hip-hop's different elements (breaking, emceeing, graffiti, and deejaying) are now autonomously constituted. Therefore, not only do I build on Maxwell's (2003) investigation of Sydney's hip-hop culture, but I also examine the period after Maxwell's investigation with the focus on the 'element' of breaking. With exception to the graffiti artwork of a breaking competition flyer, and the important role of emcees and deejays during competitions, Sydney's breaking culture is primarily centered on performances of the dance and its associated cultural practices. These include, for example, crew membership, regular training sessions, battling (competing), cyphering, and participating in the global community such as watching international

[8] See d'Souza & Iveson 1999; Iveson 1997; Maxwell 1994, 1997, 2001, 2003; Mitchell 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2011.

competitions on *YouTube*, live online streaming, or through travelling and competing overseas.[9]

Many of these practices are informed by broader hip-hop traditions, which consequently see Sydney breakers simultaneously participate in a local and global community. As such, the Sydney scene is located at the intersection of a local, national, and global scene and is, to reiterate Mitchell's (1999) analysis of Australian hip-hop, a 'glocal' culture.[10] My observations and experiences of this scene are thus produced through myriad conflicting politics, socio-cultural norms and assumptions. To navigate these politics, and to further shed light on how they affect the gendered assumptions of this space, throughout this thesis I draw on literature and examples not only from the Australian context, but also broader literature on hip hop (particularly from the USA) that inform, and interrelate with, Sydney's breaking scene on a local, national, and global scale.

To contextualize the discussion of gender that follows, I want to briefly describe Sydney's breaking scene. I include this description to paint a broad picture of the *who* and the *where* of the scene under enquiry, though I am wary of categorizing participants and, in doing so, reinforcing broader identity politics. Spread across 'Greater Sydney', the Sydney scene includes the City itself (where I am based), and to the west of the City: Parramatta, Liverpool, Cabramatta, Bankstown, and also Epping to the northwest. I would suggest – based on my own observations and experiences[11] – a rough estimate of participation to be fifty male breakers to every one female breaker, and this imbalanced ratio of participation appears to be consistent with the other breaking scenes throughout Australia, which includes Brisbane, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth. In addition, the Sydney scene is constituted of participants from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, and like

[9] According to *Bboy Rankingz*, a website (www.bboyrankingz.com) that uses algorithms to provide statistics in the global breaking scene by ranking the top countries, crews, breakers, judges, deejays and hosts. As at May 14 2016, the top five countries are: USA (which is consistently in first place), followed by Japan, South Korea, Russian Federation, the Netherlands (these last four places usually switch positions among themselves throughout the year), while Australia is in the last listed place at number thirty.

[10] This term 'glocal' was first used by Robert Robertson (1995) to describe the ways global and local politics and practices were increasingly intersecting, rather than being juxtaposed against one another. Mitchell (1999) then applied the term to Australia's hip-hop culture, arguing that although the USA was the inspiration and source of hip-hop, local scenes have adapted the culture in-line with more local issues and concerns, an argument he later continues in his book *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA* (2001), which examines local specificities and 'indigenizations' of hip-hop culture world-wide.

[11] For example, in the *Red Bull BC One*: Australian Qualifier, I was the only b-girl out of sixty-three competitors to enter (see Appendix C).

Mitchell's (2008b) observations of hip-hop, there are many first or second-generation migrants with Asian heritage. Unlike emceeing where "blackness" (d'Souza & Iveson 1999, 59) or socio-economic identification (Maxwell 2003, 54) are important signifiers of authenticity, in Sydney's breaking scene the politics of these identifiers are peripheral to the demonstration of skills and style, as outlined above. The dance floor is a space for creative exchange, regardless of racial or cultural background, and this has been most eloquently articulated through Osumare's (2002) concept of the 'intercultural body', which I discuss in more detail in the subsequent chapter. While such a description of racial inclusivity may seem overly utopic – particularly coming from a white researcher such as myself – there has been much work that has at least acknowledged, if not examined, the different ways racial and cultural politics operate in the global breaking culture (Condry 2006, 2007; Fernandes 2011; Fogarty 2012; Osumare 2002, 2008; Stevens 2006), and I discuss these works in further detail throughout the thesis. As such, while breaking can often operate as a site of liberation for many of its participants, it simultaneously affirms a masculinist position that I argue is constantly negotiated through b-girls' performances.

Despite the asymmetrical power relations that subordinate female breakers, hip-hop's cultural conventions value creativity and the development of 'style'. Consequently, breaking is not only a coalescence of different practices and ways of moving, but also its moves and techniques are prolific. Roughly divided into four main categories – toprock, footwork, power, freezes (see Appendix D for glossary of terms) – breaking's repertoire is constantly evolving and expanding. For New York breaker and academic Joseph G. Schloss, some of these moves are even "mistakes" that have occurred during a breaking battle or 'cypher', and "part of the b-boy attitude concerns learning how to successfully turn a mistake to one's advantage" (2009, 89). While some of the moves in breaking were created *by* breakers through such means,[12] others were influenced by disparate styles and traditions and have been re-situated into the context of breaking. For example, dance theorist Sally Banes (1994) lists breaking's coalescence of movements as inclusive of jazz and swing dance styles (the Charleston, lindy-hop, jitterbug), the Latin 'Hustle', the more physical activities of capoeira and gymnastics, and poses from popular culture (such as pin-up girls). Similarly, Schloss

[12] For example, the floorwork move 'Icey-Ice', created by b-boy Icey-Ice, consists of the body positioned on its side facing outwards and supported only by one hand, the legs are in a V position off the ground and work with the hand to gain momentum to spin the body on the spot.

(2009), like Banes (1994) and Hoch (2006), suggests that breaking consisted of 'rocking' (later to be called 'uprocking'), battling, Kung Fu, and salsa. Additionally, in renowned documentary *The Freshest Kids: A History of the B-boy* (2002), pioneer b-boy CrazyLegs cites 'the good foot' as an important influence, while hip-hopper PopMaster Fable acknowledges tap dancers, including Sammy Davis Junior and the Nicholas Brothers, as inspiring their creativity.

The incorporation of new ways of moving into breaking's repertoire can be understood as 'deterritorialization', a term, as discussed, Deleuze and Guattari use to describe the unhinging and transformation of a particular organization. Its function, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "is the movement by which 'one' leaves the territory. It is the operation of the line of flight" (2004, 559). With this in mind, we can see that the amalgamation of disparate styles and practices into the breaking repertoire not only deterritorializes them from their original milieu, combining them into a new cultural expression, but also works to expand breaking's repertoire of bodily expression.

This hardly means that 'anything goes'[13] in breaking culture; rather there remains some sort of organization that not only binds these disparate styles together, but also represents them as *breaking*. Maxwell explains how this tension was managed in Sydney's hip-hop culture in the 1990s: "Self-expression – *representing* – relies on *practice*: you must perform the correct genres, and affect the correct embodiments, but you must do so in a manner that expresses your *self* at the same time" (2003, 27). Indeed, self-expression, or '*style*', facilitates the space for creative experimentation and, as Maxwell describes, "that which marks your difference" (Ibid.). Yet if 'style' is inclusive of 'difference', why, then, is feminine expression consistently sidelined? Why are the 'correct genres' and representational 'embodiments' (Ibid.) of breaking dominated by masculine signifiers? Again, these are the questions I want to explore throughout this thesis.

There is an important tension implicit in discussions of style that is echoed throughout hip-hop scholarship, whereby 'self-expression' or the conventions of 'originality' and 'style' represent a fixed, stable identity. This identity is expressed through a new name, crew membership, style of dress, music preference, and artistic practice (such as vocabulary and way of moving) (see, for example, Banes 2004; J.

[13] The phrase 'anything goes' is taken from a certain type of postmodern theory, most famously expounded by Richard Rorty. See further Bertens and Fokkema (1997).

Chang 2007; Fernandes 2011; Kopytko 1986; Langnes & Fasting 2016; Ogg & Upshal 1999; Osumare 2008; Schloss 2009). For example, Schloss describes the 'essence' of 'b-boying' as its 'foundation',[14] and he writes, "the most important thing that foundation teaches is how to develop your own individual identity" (2009, 67). This is by no means a unique view, as both breaking and broader hip-hop culture are seen as practical cultural tools that enable individuals to further develop and reconstitute their position in the world. Indeed, this capacity of hip-hop has explained its popularity with a range of marginalized and disenfranchised youths (Deyhle 1986, 1998; Elflein 1998; Kopytko 1986; Langnes & Fasting 2016; Mitchell 2008a, 2008b; Osumare 2008; Vliet 2007). Yet in doing so, these understandings can limit the broader opportunities breaking can offer by failing to take into account the singularities and events that manifest *in the moment* that breaking occurs. The equipoise of 'originality' and the 'familiar', or what could be more simply termed in the philosophical tradition of 'difference' and 'repetition' (such as Deleuze's (1994) seminal work of the same title), that manifests within breaking culture is central to my argument that breaking productively initiates processes of territorialization.

As a point of departure from some of my hip-hop scholarly peers, then, I view style, or "that which marks your difference" (Maxwell 2003, 27), as not fixed to bodies or identities, but rather as *one* expression on a continuum of difference. Moreover, style is not something that pre-exists bodies as some kind of transcendental and universal, that is, metaphysical and foundational concept or position, but rather manifests in the moment of bodily action. This view of style and more broadly bodily expression resonates with Colebrook, who, in a rare discussion of dance, theorizes:

> Dance would be style not as that which is added on to a body, but as the body in creation itself: style not as that technique through which creation takes place but as pure creativity with no end or ground outside itself. (2005, 8)

In applying Colebrook's understanding to breaking culture, style becomes not that which precedes the body, as such a framework is responsible for the reduction of expression into pre-packaged gendered signifiers; rather style and potentiality manifest in their creation – through the moment of the body's movement. Such an understanding

[14] Problematically, as Schloss goes on to write, 'foundation' is inextricably connected to one's gender identity, and this is prominent in his definition of 'foundation': "style, boldness, attitude, rhythmic fluency, musical sophistication, historical awareness, even gender identity" (2009, 67).

re-opens the possibility for bodies, facilitating the space to re-examine the expressions, sequences, and gestures beyond the duality of gender or other dominant modes of organization. I return to this discussion in much greater depth in Chapters 3 and 5, where I examine more closely breaking's conventions, how they are practiced in Sydney's scene, and their larger potentiality for social transformation.

My examination on how corporeal potential is regulated in breaking through broader socio-cultural forces in this thesis focuses on the *gendering* of the body. This is not only due to the prominence of gender in breaking culture, as outlined above, but also because my position as a female breaker gives me the greatest insight into how bodies are signified this way. This focus, however, means that there are significant limitations to my analysis, and in the next section I want to outline the areas of enquiry that cannot be given justice in this thesis – they demand attention in a different forum.

Limitations

My focus on gender does not aim to discount other axes that mark the body, and throughout this thesis I take into account the way in which this 'difference' interlocks with other markings of 'difference' – such as racialized and classed bodies – in regulating creative expression. These significations of difference can be just as violent, and were central to hip-hop's emergence in the Bronx with disenfranchised African-American and Puerto-Rican youth. Moreover, and in the Australian context, Mitchell has explored hip-hop's political potential as a vehicle for resistance and social transformation, such as his work in Indigenous communities (2006) and with migrant youth (2008b, 2011). My focus on gender in this thesis, and my position as a white scholar, means that I am unable to do race and class justice. I do, however, through my interviews rely on the voices of Sydney breakers from a range of cultural and social backgrounds, and thus I attempt to map how these inequalities intersect and are negotiated on the dance floor in Sydney's breaking scene.

I acknowledge, also, that bodies can be sexualized, and the politics of sexuality in hip-hop culture requires further in-depth research in an Australian context. While homophobia in rap music has been explored at an international level (Chiu 2005; Oware 2010; Riggs 1991), there is room to explore how this transpires in breaking in Australia. For example, burns (mimed moves) in breaking often blur the distinction between the homoerotic and homophobic. Furthermore, the cultures' pervasive gender binary also excludes those who identify as intersex and trans. While I recognise my

own position as a member of the LGBTQI community (though one receiving privileges from being in a heteronormative relationship), I contend that in contrast to other subcultures in which sexuality remains a central site of tension (Clifford-Napoleone 2015), within breaking such tensions are largely eschewed. In saying this, my limited engagement with sexuality in this thesis does not seek to reinforce a heteronormative reading of the culture; rather my analysis of how gender identity is inherently performative may open up the space to question the authoritative logic of heterocentric privilege (Stephens 1999).

Finally, in discussing a dance-based culture there are underlying assumptions about the bodies and 'abilities' of practitioners. These assumptions are the by-products of the same hierarchical mind/body split I analyse in this thesis. While I do not aim to reinforce a particular body as 'ideal', there is insufficient space in this thesis to unpack the politics of disability. Further research, then, could interview the international 'Ill-Abilities' breaking crew who challenge normative assumptions of what we think 'disabled' bodies can do. This research could also utilize Anna Hickey-Moody's (2009) important work that, using a Deleuzean framework, analyses how understandings of 'ability' and dance interlock in the regulation of bodies.

While this thesis cannot do justice to these equally destructive modes of marginalization, the value in using a Deleuze-Guattarian approach, in conjunction with Butler, Bourdieu, Gatens, and Colebrook, facilitates an examination of breaking as an inclusive space that acknowledges and celebrates difference and groups of differences without homogenizing. In saying this, in proposing breaking as a site to deterritorialize gender norms this thesis by no means sets out a 'model' or 'pre-established plan' for a desirable future of egalitarian engagement (Bogue 2012, 106). This is because any such plan or "utopian vision" (Ibid.) cannot account for the future complexities that emerge through present actions. They are, for Deleuzean scholar Ronald Bogue, "by their nature projections of the limitations of the present" (Ibid.). Indeed, deterritorialization may call attention to other modes of difference that are currently repressed in the current structure and representation of breaking culture – representations that I, as a white b-girl in Sydney, may be unaware of. To avoid, then, implicitly reproducing hierarchies of power, throughout this thesis I self-reflect using my autoethnographic methodology and, in doing so, call attention to my limitations and biases. Moreover, I do not limit my analysis of breaking to a particular function, but rather frame it as a site of *potentiality*. Such a view is shared by Deleuze and Guattari, who consider the

possibilities created through processes of deterritorialization to "*summon forth a new earth, a new people*" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 99) that do not currently exist – they are "to come" (Ibid., 109) (see further Bogue 2011). As such, my focus in this thesis is to locate lines of deterritorialization within breaking practice that may, in turn, facilitate the creation of something new. By this I mean new ways of moving, of relating to one another, and in experiencing bodily action. To support this focus, I want to now detail how I will unfold my argument throughout this thesis.

Chapter Outline

To turn a critical lens on the gender politics of the scene, in Chapter 1 I provide a brief literature review of gender and understandings of 'the body' within cultural theory. In doing this, I outline my conceptual framework to analyse the gendered disparity in Sydney's breaking scene, and elaborate on my usage of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of territorialization to locate opportunities to transform normative gendered significations. To enrich this analysis, I also provide a brief outline of empirical methodologies in order to detail the specificities of my autoethnographic approach. In interweaving these disparate frameworks – critical theory and autoethnographic research – I highlight the productive relays that emerge between and across my different methodologies. This contemporaneous space not only further informs my analysis, but also facilitates a multi-faceted approach to my argument that breaking is a productive site to initiate processes of territorialization, and reconstitute and displace gender.

In Chapter 2, I map the masculine construction of breaking and broader hip-hop culture from its origins in the Bronx in New York City to the contemporary Sydney scene. Using autoethnographic research, media analysis, and existing literature on hip-hop, I examine the discourses and practices that support this gendered dominance, and in turn define and structure the scene in a way that privileges male engagement. This analysis importantly outlines, what Butler calls, the 'historical situation' of the breaking body and, in doing so, demonstrates the inequalities b-girls face upon entering the dance floor. Using Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'rhizome', I complicate the dominating masculine narrative of breaking and, in turn, highlight the often ignored or forgotten role of women in hip-hop's history. I argue that the larger consequences of this omission are visible in the gendered disparity of the culture, and in order to move towards a more inclusive space, I propose that a more 'rhizomatic' understanding of the

culture and its histories may productively enable other currently repressed stories and differences to emerge.

Using my autoethnographic research, in Chapter 3 I map how breaking is gendered as masculine, and the ways this gendering interlocks with broader socio-cultural regulations of 'the body'. Specifically, I will show how the gender and body politics of the dance floor are significantly informed by broader ideologies such as the Cartesian dualism and the Protestant work ethic. To further inform the politics of the dance floor, in this chapter I will situate breaking within both academic dance scholarship and also other gender-dominated forms of dance. Not only will this discussion seek to understand the gendered discourses prevalent in Sydney's breaking scene, but will also show how these discourses (re)inscribe gendered barriers to entry. To counter the way dance is often used to naturalize the separation of dichotomously opposed subjects, Chapter 3 will also suggest a Deleuze-Guattarian reading of the dancing body as a means to re-open the potential of breaking and facilitate the space to examine the new connections, relationships and assemblages that emerge beyond dominant modes of thought.

Chapter 4 situates Sydney's breaking scene within the broader Australian cultural assemblage to examine how the specificities of the dance interlock with normative constructions of masculinity (for example, through strength and sporting prowess). Using my autoethnographic material, I will analyse the discourses of Sydney's breaking culture that not only construct breaking bodies into dichotomously opposed subjects, but also support biologically determinist assumptions that men and women are 'naturally' skilful at different tasks and activities. This shaping of bodily capacities manifests through breaking's alignment with 'extreme sports' in Australia, as well as through breakers' clothing, as b-girls are expected to maintain normative feminine stylizations of the body. In this chapter, I will therefore also introduce some of the ways b-girls negotiate, appropriate, and thus deterritorialize normative gendered significations in Sydney's breaking scene.

In Chapter 5, I locate Sydney's breaking scene within the broader global breaking culture in order to examine the gendered contradictions and contestations that emerge within 'b-girl culture'. That is, I demonstrate how gendered norms are simultaneously reproduced and displaced, perpetuated and transgressed, and deterritorialized and reterritorialized through breaking. I support this argument through analysing not only key case studies in Australia, but also events overseas that have

garnered ‘mainstream’ attention. In addition to these case studies, I also interrogate the underlying feminist debates around gendered segregation in the breaking scene in order to reveal how masculinist structures are often tacitly reproduced. Through examining the role of online technologies in breaking culture, I show how local displacements of gender can garner exposure in the broader Australian media and even the global culture. This chapter thus establishes the larger potential of contemporary breaking in facilitating transformations of gender norms *outside* of Sydney’s breaking scene.

My final chapter closely examines how specific conventions in breaking enable dancers to set in motion processes of deterritorialization. Through focusing on the conventions of originality and foundation, and the practices of improvisation and ‘the cypher’, I call attention to how breaking is open to creative experimentation and ‘difference’, and thus can reopen the potential of the body beyond dominant modes of thought. In particular, I argue that these practices are conducive to lines of deterritorializations in the way that they embrace a more process-based aesthetic. Without the restrictions of narrativizing and dualistic structures, in this chapter I argue that the breaking body operates as an ‘assemblage’ because it is always in the process of creating new connections and relationships between and across other bodies, times, and spaces.

I conclude this thesis by looking to the future and examining the potentiality of breaking practice in Sydney. I discuss what deterritorializations of gender might mean for Australian gender politics and global breaking culture. I question: how might the transgressive practices of b-girls be used as an example in other male-dominated domains? In closing this thesis, I highlight the benefits to a more creative and fluid understanding of gender and bodily ‘difference’. Not only may such a conceptual shift enable a more inclusive space for other omitted expressions and identities, but it will also facilitate the space to examine transgressive practices in other gender-dominated domains.

Conclusion

In this introduction to my thesis, I outlined how I began this research project and what experiences led me to formulate my underlying research question: why are there so few b-girls in Sydney’s breaking culture? And further, can gender be deterritorialized? Asking this question not only uncovered how access to breaking’s dance floor is

regulated through broader cultural assumptions about bodies, but also revealed the tacit gendered hierarchy within breaking's codes and conventions. My aim in this thesis is to address this question, and to test my early gendered assumptions about breaking. Rather than reinforce gendered identities and significations in this thesis, I attempt instead to explore the creative potential of breaking, and argue that breaking is indeed a site through which to reconfigure, displace, and deterritorialize gender.

In the next chapter, I outline in greater detail my theoretical and empirical approach that I use to support my argument. This includes contextualizing my autoethnographic approach, as well as outlining the details of my participation in Sydney's breaking scene. I also elaborate on key terminologies – such as habitus, performativity, territorialization, and assemblage – which I proceed to deploy throughout this thesis in my analysis of breaking. These concepts productively shed light on how gender is performed, negotiated, and deterritorialized through breaking in Sydney.

Chapter 1 – Analysing the Breaking 'body' in Sydney

Introduction

In this chapter, I want to elaborate on my methodological and theoretical frameworks I use to support my argument that breaking is a site to deterritorialize gender. In particular, I want to outline the cultural and gender theory that sheds light on how the body is gendered in Sydney's breaking scene while at the same time give an overview of the literature in the field of breaking. This theoretical framework is productive in locating opportunities to displace and reconfigure gender in breaking and, as such, is integral to the analysis that follows in subsequent chapters. In addition to my theoretical framework, in this chapter I want to detail the specifics of my autoethnographic research, which includes my own breaking practice, my participation in Sydney's scene, as well as interviews I have conducted with key breakers. My multi-faceted approach to analysing gender in Sydney's breaking scene aims to highlight how both the personal and cultural theory are mutually informing in the production of knowledge. The practical and theoretical are interwoven throughout this thesis as not only a means of thinking 'differently' about breaking and gender, but it is also a way to demonstrate how theory can in itself be a form of deterritorialization, and how theory and ethnography and practice (in)form each other.

Conceptual Framework

To examine the gendered codes and conventions of Sydney's breaking scene, and why there are so few female breakers, we need to firstly examine the structures that shape the understandings of bodies and gender. To this end, my aim is to utilize a number of post-structuralist, feminist, embodiment, and cultural theories to demonstrate, first, how the 'body' as a socio-cultural construct has long become commonplace across the humanities, second, how the body's habitualized movement is learnt and reproduced according to imposed roles and the rules of particular social milieus, and third, how identity is a 'process' rather than 'essential' and fixed across time and place. The 'body' of work that can be drawn on to show this is too extensive for this thesis, and therefore there are some theorists or philosophers that are inevitably not discussed (such as Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, and Irigaray). The theorists I do focus on, such as

Mauss, Merleau-Ponty, Goffman, Bourdieu, Foucault, Butler, Colebrook, Deleuze and Guattari, Grosz, Gatens, Diprose, and Lloyd, have been chosen because they provide the means to identify the dynamic nature of bodies before they are overlaid with representation, such as gender. Some of these theorists, such as Gatens, Lloyd and Diprose provide a Spinozist understanding of the body which productively views bodily 'difference' as prolific and creative, and can be useful in rethinking the classic binary of gender and sex, and man and woman, which are powerful remnants of the Cartesian dualism. Utilizing these theorists then, in the following sections, I explain seminal understandings of the body, and elucidate their value in analysing the breaking body in Sydney's breaking scene. As these sections are overviews of understanding the body and dance, I will be deepening the literature as we progress through the thesis.

Techniques of the Body

Rather than simply look at the gendered body as an 'end product', we need to make sense of the techniques that politicize bodies and the methods of what Elizabeth Grosz (1994) eloquently terms 'inscription'. In reference to the 'etching' of the body, Grosz discusses how the body is always a product of the history from which it emerges: "Every body is marked by the history and specificity of its existence" (1994, 142). The performance of gender roles is no different, and through time we are able to see them as a set of accumulated bodily techniques. Sociologist Marcel Mauss (1973) is well-known for his development of this approach to the social formation of bodies (first published in 1936). By framing the constitution of the body as a set of 'learned techniques', Mauss (1973) enabled conceptions of the body to move away from being anchored to an inherent essentialism. Instead, we could begin to conceive of how different social milieus can shape bodily movements and practices in specific ways. For Mauss (1973) these 'techniques' (for example, 'table manners') are learned and refined over time and reflect culturally and historically specific social protocols. He argues, "[the] things we find natural are [actually] historical" (Ibid., 82). The range of cultivated bodily movements he lists includes even the most pedestrian of acts, such as walking and resting, which are in fact "laboriously acquired" (Ibid., 81). Mastery of such techniques consequently dictates relative social mobility, as he writes: "in every society, everyone knows and has to know and learn what he has to do in all conditions" (Ibid., 85).

Yet these conditions can affect different bodies in different ways, and Mauss

argues that the techniques of the body are divided by three categories: sex, age and efficiency (the latter a result of education and training) (Ibid., 76–78). Classifications of sex, he argues, not only impact upon ways of moving, but also upon what movements are learnt in the first place. The practicality of Mauss's work lies in the way it introduces the body as a productive site for sociological inquiry, and highlights the relationship between the techniques of pedestrian acts and different social statues (such as gender, class, and so on).

Despite the ground-breaking nature of Mauss's work, his argument problematically leaves no room for individual agency regarding how bodily knowledge is used or even transformed in everyday interactions (see Crossley 1995; Thomas 2003). Moreover, it does not take into account the *effect* of the ongoing reproduction of such bodily techniques. For Nick Crossley (1995, 136), such shortcomings are most notably addressed in the work of Erving Goffman (1959, 1972) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1965) who examine how culturally acquired techniques are transformed into action (I return to Merleau-Ponty in my discussion of gender below). As a point of departure from Mauss, Goffman's (1959, 1972) work examines how individuals direct their actions and display 'techniques of the body' according to the demands, constraints, or even goals of the present social situation. Importantly, Goffman's framework incorporates opportunities for transgression, displacement, even configuration of gender and gender norms. Understanding how breakers negotiate, or even knowingly reproduce, the masculinity of the scene will help inform why women may feel sidelined in Sydney. These feelings were revealed in my interviews with Sydney b-girls, as well as the frustrations they experience in their participation.[1]

While Mauss views this contextual information as peripheral to the body's learned techniques, thus taking a more historically-deterministic standpoint, in contrast Goffman (1959, 1972) considers them key to the *sociality* of bodily techniques. This shift importantly opens up the space to examine how individuals knowingly reproduce and negotiate imposed roles, such as gender.[2] Goffman (1959) analyses these negotiations through dramaturgy, viewing individuals as 'actors' that, through adjusting their behaviour, appearance, and mannerisms to suit a specific social 'situation',

[1] While I include quotes from these interviews throughout this thesis, as an example, b-girl Sass explains, "because there are so few b-girls [in the scene] it's hard to get a name for yourself" (interview, October 24, 2014).

[2] In characterizing the hold of gender over the body's motility, Goffman famously wrote, "[g]ender, not religion, is the opiate of the masses" (1977, 315).

consistently attempt to direct the way others (or an 'audience') view them. This results in two types of "sign activity" that manifest in any given social interaction, including the expression that an individual "gives" or presents, and also the expression that an individual "gives off" or is interpreted (Goffman 1959, 2). Thus the individual is constantly manoeuvring between the historically and socially determined way of moving (such as gender normativity), their own desires, and how this expression might be, or is, received.

Like Mauss, Goffman's theory emphasizes everyday interactions; however it productively reframes my initial assumptions about breaking. While I interpreted the scene as overwhelmingly masculine, this does not mean that the individual breakers were passively reproducing masculine significations. A closer look may reveal fleeting transgressions and displacements of gender. A similar conclusion is made by Hanna (1988) in her pioneering work *Dance, Sex, and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire*. In her research on choreographed and theatre dance, Hanna employs Goffman's approach in her analysis of different dance performances, and reviews of dance by performers, audiences and critics (1988, 39). This multi-faceted qualitative research not only attempts to locate why men and women move differently, and how this is understood by performers, but also how hierarchies of dominance are reproduced through these different ways of moving. Unlike Hanna's focus on choreographed dance *performances*, however, breaking extends beyond the stage or formalized competition, as it is also a *culture*. As such, it demands specific knowledge, tastes, styles and histories that individuals must learn, indeed *embody*, in order to participate. Such conditions are productively conceptualized through Bourdieu's (1990) notion of 'habitus', which is then an important concept to understand how the specificities of Sydney's breaking scene are 'inscribed' onto its breaking bodies.[3]

For Bourdieu (1990), 'habitus' refers to the habits, knowledge, styles, tastes and ways of thinking that are internalized through their ongoing (mostly unconscious) repetition. They are those "structuring structures" (1990, 53) that co-ordinate the milieus we inhabit, giving it consistency through their repetition. Importantly, though, Bourdieu highlights that these structures "can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor" (1990, 53). So while habitus may not be strictly reducible to prescribed or formal rules, it constrains the protocols of

[3] See further Hubrich (2015) for an in-depth discussion of the relationship between Goffman and Bourdieu.

certain cultural spaces, or 'fields', by enabling entry into a specific milieu. As Bourdieu writes, "persons are personifications of the requirements of the field" (1996, 314–315). This significant component of habitus has made it popular in a diverse array of academic texts, such as explorations of Australian hip-hop (Maxwell 2003; Mitchell 2007), circuit-training (Crossley 2004), contemporary lindy hop (Wade 2011), mixed-martial arts (Spencer 2009), as well as the formation of a 'scholarly habitus' within Australian schooling (Watkins & Noble, 2013a, 2013b). Since the habitus develops in context, individuals develop a set of practices appropriate to their circumstances. In this way, social structural hierarchy becomes embedded in bodies, and it is here that habitus becomes particularly productive in understanding the embodiment, and performance, of gender.

Gender

Gender is one facet of social life that the habitus helps us understand. Alongside other influences on our habitus, we develop an unconscious habitualized body language with which we enact masculinity and femininity. Gender, Bourdieu writes, is "laid down in the form of permanent stances, gaits and postures which are the realization, or rather, the naturalization of an ethic" (2001, 27). As we will see, in a similar vein Butler (1990, 206) would also argue that not only does the repetition of these bodily movements lead to the realization of gender, but it also gives the effect of gender as naturally-occurring. This effect, for Moira Gatens (1996, xi), is reinforced through the absence of history that could contextualize these habitualized movements, and thus contributes to the way our social institutions seem resilient to change. Consequently, the concept of the 'habitus' can expose how structures and practices that co-ordinate social spaces are both learnt by, and internalized through, the body. Indeed, the value in habitus lies in how it undermines understandings of the body as 'natural' or pre-existing, and instead sees bodies as *produced* through the values of the social milieus they inhabit. As such, in conceptualizing how the habitus develops in Sydney's breaking scene, I have previously argued, "[h]abitus expedites the rules of social engagement even as it impedes the flow of bodily movement according to its gendered conventions" (Gunn & Scannell 2013, 54).

Despite the value in Bourdieu's work, there are significant problems in his theorization of habitus that need to be explicated. For Greg Noble and Megan Watkins, a key problem with habitus is its over-emphasis on determinism, in that one's agency

and disposition become the *effect* of structure (2003, 524). While habitus seemingly contains a generative capacity, according to Noble and Watkins, Bourdieu does not articulate how habitus is *acquired*, placing prominence, instead, on the power relations that shape bodily capacities (Ibid.). Therefore, without taking into account the 'dynamism' of habitus, for Noble and Watkins, "habitus tends to be a static entity" (Ibid.). Emphasizing the inertia of habitus, and the simultaneous role of the unconscious in its development, problematically situates Bourdieu within the binary logic contingent on Cartesian authority. Indeed, through viewing the body as the site of knowledge, as Noble and Watkins argue, Bourdieu promotes an *inverted* mind/body dualism (Ibid., 526).

In extending Bourdieu's theory, Noble and Watkins advocate for a Spinozist reading of habitus, which encompasses a more open and dynamic conceptualization of the formation and modification of its dispositions. In doing this, they examine the dialectic that emerges between consciousness and habituation in the formation of habitus, thus positing the mind and body as one and the same substance, akin to Spinoza's monism (that I discuss in more detail later in the chapter). As such, Noble and Watkins's revision of Bourdieu's habitus into 'habituation' is particularly productive in analyses of physical activity, as they also demonstrated in their example of sports training. They write, "[a]s a category that captures temporal duration, habituation could allow us to explore the links between mimicry, repetition, experimentation, appropriation and so on in the formation of habituated capacities, the modalities of consciousness and the relations between multiple mind-bodies" (Ibid., 536). Through neither privileging the conscious nor unconscious, habituation encompasses the process of refining and recalibrating technique through conscious intervention and, through repetition, its progression into habitus and unconscious bodily movement.

Like Bourdieu, Butler (1990, 206) emphasizes the ritualistic dimensions of gender performance, through performance based on *iteration* (in the Derridean sense).[4] Rather than viewing masculinity and femininity as cultural expressions of materiality – a framework limited to essentialist and biologically-determinist understandings of identity – Butler (1990) instead views gender as *performative*. As Butler writes, "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly

[4] Butler (1990, 206) acknowledges that this ritual dimension of performativity allies with Bourdieu's habitus.

rigid regulatory frame" (Ibid., 45). Here, the always-already and ongoing reproduction of stylized gestures and movements constitute the *effect* of a naturally occurring, stable gendered self. This 'self', however, is contextually specific, as Butler views performativity as (re)producing existing gender and historical directives.[5] Indeed, the body, for Butler (1988, 521), is a 'historical situation', and thus its capacities, techniques, and broader construction are conducive to the specific histories and discourses of its context.

The notion of the body as a 'historical situation' is productive for a number of reasons. Not only does it disrupt understandings of the body as both fixed and unified, but it also exposes how culture is constructed on and through the body. Particular cultural norms, social inequalities, and traditional alignments are thus reproduced through the body via its performativity and modes of embodiment. This approach to the body is valuable in not only locating the gendered origins of dance, but also how dance reproduces particular values and ideals. Using a Butlerian approach, Anna Aalten (1997, 55) argues that the 'historical situation' of ballet is both a product, and reflective, of nineteenth-century ideals of femininity, as seen through the dancers' practices to reshape their body to fit these ideals. Through discussing ballet dancers' obsession with weight, and the differences between male and female vocabularies in ballet, Aalten (1997) examines how the dancers live their bodies, as well as negotiate and reconstitute gender norms – I return to this discussion in Chapter 3.

Integral to Butler's theory is that the performance of gender is not an individual occurrence; rather, it is a regulated organization of performances and an ongoing *process* of reproduction (1990, xv). She explains, "the effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Ibid., 191). This illusion contributes to the representation of gender as a 'natural' outcome of sex, which safeguards it from being undermined.[6] For Butler (1990), gender is constituted through a ritualistic performativity that resides

[5] There has been much debate within feminist theory (such as Bray & Colebrook 1998; Cheah 1996, Fraser 2002) and more recently within new materialist scholarship (such as Barad 2008; Hekman 2010) regarding Butler's theorization of the body, particularly in her work *Bodies That Matter* (1993). These critiques highlight the complicated tension regarding the division of representation and materiality within Butler's work, a tension that, unfortunately, lies outside the scope of this thesis due to my focus on Butler's theory of 'performativity' (for a discussion of this tension, see Ahmed 2008; Bruining 2013).

[6] Importantly, Butler does not separate 'gender' from 'sex'; rather sees gender as producing sex as a discursive given. Indeed, she considers both gender and sex as effects of discourse (1993, 22).

in the constant repetition of *correct* behaviours – I elaborate on this emphasis below.

Bringing Butler and Bourdieu together to analyse Sydney's breaking scene highlights how a distinct gendered performativity is not only reflective of its cultural norms, but also enables access into this particular social milieu. While there is limited research on Sydney's hip-hop culture, the seminal work by Ian Maxwell provides useful background to Sydney's breaking scene. For Maxwell the world of Sydney's hip-hop culture in the 1990s was "for the boyz, a masculinized, even phallocentric, world" (2003, 33), and this hip-hop culture was not only populated by men, but also, and more important to this discussion, it was *performed* as masculine. He argues, "young men performed, rapped, breaked, boasted, *bombed*, leaving their *phat* tags to mark their presence, hung out, strutted, posed with their legs thrust out and their hands hooked in low-slung pockets, fingers brushing their groins" (Ibid.). The prominence and repetition of distinctly gendered signifiers (fingers brushing groins, legs thrust out, so on), and their connection to specific bodies – the 'boyz' – give this hip-hop culture the *effect* of an inherent masculinity. Maxwell goes on to tie this distinctly gendered performativity to "*their* [men's] Community, Culture, Nation" (Ibid.). Thus the Sydney hip-hop habitus, and its emphasis on a distinctly masculine performativity, works to legitimize the inclusion and exclusion of specific bodies according to gendered signifiers – I return to breaking's distinct performativity in Chapters 3 and 4.

This is not to say that there is such thing as a stable gendered subject, the illusion of which is central to the work of Butler. Indeed, Butler (1990) argues that the perfection of gender performance cannot be ultimately maintained, as we each fail to repeat it in some small manner. This failure in our repetition not only displays the artificiality of the gendered self, but it also highlights the accidental, even *inevitably* of resistance to the gendered norms (Ibid., xv). While Butler's discussion focuses on the 'everyday' performativity of gender (in addition to her contentious example of 'drag'), her work enables us to think about how to displace or reconstitute gender norms, and their 'naturalization', and how this might transpire through specific social practices, particularly dance. By breaking away from the 'ritualism' of the gendered body, and experimenting with different movements and roles, dance itself can draw attention to the instability and illusion of gender and the gendered identity. This is instrumental to my overall argument, as it demonstrates the inherent performance of gender.

Through learning different ways of moving, dance highlights that anything that is learned, can then be unlearned. It is unsurprising, then, that there has been a

proliferation of studies in the last two decades that explore dance as a mode of social transformation (such as Aalten 1997; Claid 2006; Colebrook 2005; Desmond 1997b; Foster 1996a, 1997; Gilbert & Pearson 2002; Lepecki 2004; Markula 2006a, 2006c; Osumare 2002; Wade 2011). Of particular interest to this thesis is Halifu Osumare's (2002) work on what she terms the 'intercultural body' in global breaking culture. Using Butler's framework of performativity, Osumare (2002) examines how bodily habits and movements in breaking are learnt across the global scene, but then are also negotiated to allow for local expressions and cross-cultural exchanges. The concept of performativity is then productive in analysing how individuals in specific contexts negotiate cultural norms – I examine this further via my discussion of the Sydney scene in Chapters 4 and 5.

Instructive to my own development of dance as an interface for social transformation, is cultural critic and sociologist Lisa Wade's 'The Emancipatory Promise of the Habitus: Lindy Hop, the Body, and Social Change' (2011). In her study of contemporary lindy hop dancers, Wade (2011) shows that as they become increasingly skilled, the group of 'lindy hoppers', of which she was a member, would (through the dance) begin to question and re-fashion the social construction of the gendered body. In contrast to many other partner dances where the male always 'leads' and his female partner always 'follows', Wade (2011) explains how contemporary lindy hop disengages the gender specificity in the lead/follow model. Thus a woman can 'lead' a man, or even a woman can 'lead' another woman, or a man can 'lead' another man. In order to be able to switch roles spontaneously, all lindy hoppers learn *both* the lead and follow roles, making this transition and thus challenge to the entrenched gendered roles sometimes seamless and even unnoticeable to the untrained eye. Through the teaching, learning, and practicing of lindy hop, these conventions allow for a renegotiation of a patriarchal habitus (Ibid., 225).

Unlike lindy hop, though, any such renegotiations in hip-hop culture are located within a distinct hierarchization of gendered expression. For example, Maxwell observes how women in Sydney's hip-hop culture gained 'respect' through adopting a masculine habitus that in other contexts would be seen as 'tomboys' (2003, 35). Maxwell's observations, here, are not dissimilar to those of Nancy Macdonald in her research of the graffiti subculture in London and New York, as she describes that when female participants are treated as 'one of the boys', it is when they have diminished their feminine distinctions and adopted masculine behaviours (2001, 131). While I

elaborate on this further in Chapter 4, we can begin to see how respect in hip-hop culture, then, is received upon the 'correct' performance and embodiment of *masculine* aesthetics. As I have argued elsewhere, the effect of this structure on female participants' creativity, or "capacity for cultivating style and skill is always regulated through the lens of an overwhelmingly male-dominated hip-hop habitus" (Gunn & Scannell 2013, 55). Thus, while an activity such as breaking can (and does) offer much potential for bodily expression *in general*, the codes and conventions of the scene mean that it is hardly 'anything goes'. Underscoring the facade of free movement and participation are myriad cultural problems that need further discussion. Specifically, the reliance upon traditions and the performance of a particular 'masculine' habitus in broader hip-hop culture disputes the dance's creative freedom, and I elaborate on this discussion in Chapters 2 and 3.

While the future doesn't look bright for female breakers, through a Butlerian lens, they are not without agency in negotiating this asymmetrical terrain. While the Butlerian body is a product of its specific 'historical situation', so, too, is its *possibilities*, and in taking this view Butler incorporates an element of agency within her model of performativity. She explains:

> [T]he body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materializing* of possibilities. One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well. (Butler 1988, 521)

For Butler, who develops this framework through drawing on Merleau-Ponty (1962) and de Beauvoir (1974), the body is an active processing of embodying possibilities that are circumscribed by historical directives. In clarifying how this takes place through the body's interactions, Merleau-Ponty (1962, 122) views motility as key to the actualization of possibilities whereby our motor 'memory' is vital in responding to the demands of the present (see further Diprose 1994; Diprose & Reynolds 2014). In a similar way to Bourdieu's habitus, the body's motility is circumscribed through corporeal schema (habits, gestures and so on that are embodied over time), and in a similar way to Goffman, governed through the task at hand.

As I analyse these foundations for gender-based enquiry and discussion, it leads me to redefine my own aims in this thesis. Specifically, investigating the possibility to undermine naturalized performances of gender that do not simply open up the masculine boundaries of the breaking milieu, but also rethinks breaking as a dynamic and productive space of 'difference'. We can see this through Deleuze and Guattari, who examine how dominant systems of power constitute the body and individual and, in doing so, regulate its capacities and desires. Before I elaborate on their theory, I want to first outline my ethnographic approach to Sydney's breaking scene, which will not only foreground my engagement with the scene, but also contextualize my analysis. In doing this, I will also provide a brief literature review of ethnographic methodologies and detail how I'm conducting my qualitative analysis. Following this summary, I will return to theory to demonstrate my conceptualization of this gendered space, and then examine the critical 'relay' that emerges between and across these methodological platforms.

Empirical Approach

Figure 1 – B-girl Raygun (author). *Freestyle Sessions:* Australian Qualifier. February 2, 2013. David Tang.

I was haunted with needing to understand why women in breaking felt sidelined, and did not actively participate in this dance space. I wanted to test the boundaries of this gendered construction for myself, and so I started to learn breaking (see Figure 1). This began with initially attending dance classes at the various 'street dance' studios around Sydney,[7] and then becoming a member of a local 'crew' – '143 Liverpool Street Familia' ('143'). I battled in my first competition in 2012 (see Appendix A for details), four years after first attending a practice session with my boyfriend. My closeness to the scene through Sam and our friends gave me insight into its politics, codes and conventions, which gave me more of an understanding about the inclusivity of women; although the question remained over what defined this male-dominated dance. This embedded exclusion, which jarred with the scene's supportive nature, needed to be examined more rigorously in order to address my driving question: Why are there so few b-girls in Sydney's breaking scene?

Ethnography is a methodology long-favoured in the research of lived cultures (Lewis 1992), and was the methodology of choice in Maxwell's (2003) seminal study of Sydney's hip-hop culture in the 1990s. In contrast to Maxwell, though, I was both learning how to perform my studied hip-hop practice, as well as becoming an active participant of the scene. My experiences thus resonated more closely with Loïc Wacquant's approach in his ethnographic study on boxing, *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer* (2004), where he immerses himself in what he describes as 'pugilistic' culture. The point of distinction in Wacquant's methodology lies in the way he reverses the 'participant-observation' approach well-established in ethnographic research through deploying what he terms 'observant participation' (Ibid., 6). This approach saw him, among other things, train with fellow boxers, as well as attend tournaments and social events. For Wacquant, this immersion in pugilistic culture thus pre-empts the 'ecological fallacy'[8] that can affect accounts of 'the Manly art' (though one could argue *any* art). In other words, none of his observations was explicitly solicited, as he was not positioned as an 'outsider'. Wacquant viewed his extensive and in-depth exposure of the 'ins and outs' of the culture through his participation as giving those he studied greater agency in how they were to be presented.

[7] 'Street dance' studios in the City of Sydney include *Dancekool*, *Crossover Dance Studios*, which are both near Town Hall Station, and previously *ACE Studios* that was near Central Station.
[8] Sociologist Aaron Cicourel (1982) first described the 'ecological fallacy' that can be present in studies of lived cultures.

This ‘insider’ approach, or what Wacquant calls ‘embodied ethnography’, is highly productive in analyses of the body. Dance demands a complete awareness of how the body moves – in some cases automatically – in order to reproduce and refine the body’s movement into what is desired. In my experience, learning a new dance style led to an added depth to *knowing* my body, including an awareness of my bodily techniques, strengths and weaknesses. Through breaking, I became aware of my body’s conditioning to a specific, ‘feminine’, way of moving, perhaps reinforced through my previous experience in female-dominated dance styles. This awareness also assisted in my transition to, and negotiation of, breaking’s ‘masculine’ aesthetic; a transition I detail further in Chapter 4.

Foster observes that in dance, and over years of study, repetitive training, or ‘drilling’ is required, “because the aim is nothing less than *creating the body*” (1997, 239). Here, bodily practices and habits are relearnt, with the body’s structure and capacities reconfigured in-line with the dance’s stylistic requirements. Indeed, *through* dance, the body is reshaped in order to reproduce the stylistic ‘ideal’ body, and I elaborate on this further in later chapters. As such, my body was my primary and most immediate source of data as, similar to Wacquant, I “deploy[ed] the body as a tool of inquiry and vector of knowledge” (Wacquant, 2004, viii). Perhaps this is why Wade (2011) drew on Wacquant’s approach in her study of contemporary lindy hop culture, using her ‘insider’ knowledge to examine how dancers negotiated and challenged the gender-based roles.

In order to develop this ‘vector of knowledge’, my participation in Sydney’s breaking community was varied and extensive,[9] and in 2011 I began my autoethnographic inquiry, which informs much of the critical considerations in this thesis. Since 2011, I regularly participated in the ‘143’ training sessions that, from Monday to Thursday were held outside The Downing Centre Courts at 143-147 Liverpool Street, and on Fridays in the *Dancekool* studio. I trained an average of three sessions a week alongside local and international breakers, (other) amateurs, and professionals – all who were predominantly male. Quite often I was the only female training in a session, the size of which ranged from around five to thirty breakers. While, at first, this difference was deeply intimidating, the friendships that I formed at ‘143’ soon diminished this intimidation and I was quickly treated as ‘one of the boys’, a

[9] See Appendix A for a full list of breaking events I attended and competed in, and Appendix B for the workshops and classes I took.

gendered acceptance I unpack in Chapter 4. It was typically when I left the space of '143' to compete that I was reminded of my status as a woman, an experience I elaborate on throughout the thesis.

In 2012, I became a member of the crew '143' and began 'representing' at local and national competitions and jams that were typically held in dance studios and community halls. Similar to Wacquant's (2004) extensive participation in his field, following in the wake of my crew-mates I took part in over sixty events in the roles of supporter, cheer squad, competitor (including on my own, as the only female in a crew of b-boys, and in a crew of b-girls), counsellor, confidant, promoter, tour guide and as an 'extra pair of hands on the day' in setting and packing up events (see Appendix A for details). These latter roles were due to the many events that fellow '143' b-boy J-One organized, a friendship that exposed me to the 'behind-the-scenes' of event organizing in Australia. Attendance at some of these events also saw me accompany the crew 'on the road' as we travelled interstate to competitions organized in Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth. Learning breaking, then, gave me unique access to the various practices and conventions in Sydney's breaking community.

During competitions, training and other social events I learnt the specificities of breaking culture – both spoken and unspoken. Like Wacquant, I "gradually absorbed the categories of judgement" under the guidance of my crewmates (2004, 5). During battles I saw how my crewmates reacted – including how to react to what and when. This is a marker of being 'in the know' (Thornton 1995) and demarcates the 'outsiders' from the 'insiders' in a subcultural exchange.[10] During and after the battles, the performances of the competitors were analysed, including their style, moves (were they 'original'?), and how they responded to their opponents and the music. The decisions of the judges were also scrutinized – if we agreed with them, who we would have voted for and who, potentially, would have been a better choice of judge. And finally the music was reviewed, including picking apart music choices and discussing whether the deejay produced a good 'vibe' for the jam. Such discussions often opened up the space to compare with past events, and also events overseas. Not only were all these competitions significantly male-dominated, such as one competition where I was the only female out of over sixty competitors, but also all the deejays, emcees, and judges

[10] I am drawing on Thornton's (1995) theory of 'subcultural capital', which is an extension of Bourdieu's (1990) cultural capital through its application to subcultural formations. Here, the demonstration of the appropriate tastes and knowledges of the subculture's forms and practices operate as a mode of distinction.

were male. My participation in the community productively enriched my understanding of the culture's practices and traditions, and exposed me to the ways women in the scene had to constantly assert themselves – as they were often without role models.

To extend Wacquant's (2004) approach, my knowledge gained through my participation in Sydney's breaking scene not only served the purpose of this project, but also equipped me in my growing status within the scene. Despite the clear end date to my project, I already knew that I was not going to 'leave' or stop learning breaking, even upon the completion of my 'fieldwork'. Moreover, the friendships I gained through my involvement in the scene needed additional methodological analysis. This shift in position to my fieldwork thus demanded a change to my methodological framework, and Jodie Taylor (2011) extends the well-known 'insider research' method to what she terms 'intimate insider research'. She defines this latter approach as when the researcher is working within a space in which they have consistent and continuing contact, when their personal relationships are immersed within the field, and "where one's quotidian interactions and performances of identity are made visible; where the researcher has been and remains a key social actor within the field and thus becomes engaged in a process of self-interpretation to some degree" (Ibid., 9).

The 'intimate insider research' approach has distinct advantages to studying lived cultures; advantages that extend beyond the 'ecological fallacy' mentioned above. This includes, for Taylor (Ibid.), the researcher being cognizant of undocumented historical knowledge of the people and phenomenon being studied. This 'intimate insider' knowledge transpires through years of friendships and a higher level of trust between the researcher and those being researched. As a result, there are definitive ethical considerations to take into account when conducting this mode of research. While I elaborate on this further below, for Taylor this intimacy demands 'self-interpretation', such as rigorous self-reflexivity of the experiences, relationships, and observations of the field (Ibid., 9). It is this self-reflexive component of 'intimate insider research', as well as the emphasis on the researcher's experiences, that resonates with the more established methodology of 'autoethnography'.

The proliferation of studies utilizing autoethnography is testament to how it can make broader social issues accessible, through the lens of the personal. Not only a method, but also a body of diverse interdisciplinary practices (Reed-Danahay 1997; Spry 2001), autoethnography is most prominently advocated by Carolyn Ellis and her work on the narrative voice (Ellis 1997, 2004; Ellis & Flaherty 1992). When I began

this project, there was very little academic research on breaking, and even less from the perspective of a female breaker. As was one of three actively competing b-girls in Sydney, I harnessed my personal insight into the scene to address the questions over gender that still remained. These questions were both reflective, and a product, of broader gender disparities that existed. Autoethnography then facilitated the space to contribute to wider discussions of gender, the body, and Australian culture.

Autoethnography, however, is not without its problems. In response to the proliferation of papers and dedicated journals to autoethnography (such as *Qualitative Inquiry*), Sara Delamont considers the method as "essentially lazy – literally lazy and intellectually lazy" (2007, 2). Viewing autoethnographic "studies" (her quotation marks) as in danger of not only maintaining the focus on those in positions of power, but also as abuses of the sociologist's privilege and power (Ibid.), Delamont (2007, 2009) outlines her many objections to the method. These include "1. It cannot fight familiarity 2. It cannot be published ethically 3. It is experiential not analytic" and, she continues, "4. It focuses on the wrong side of the power divide" (2007, 3) rather than "the powerless to whom we should be directing our sociological gaze" (Ibid., 2).

It is worth remembering, however, that it is this 'gaze' that initially brought about autoethnography, as a way to avoid the researcher's powerful gaze toward 'the other'. Tami Spry (2001) maps autoethnography's roots as a revolutionary reaction to the 'crisis of representation' in anthropological writing, as well as realist agendas in sociology and ethnography that, for Norman K. Denzin, "privilege the researcher over the subject, method over subject matter, and maintain commitments to outmoded conceptions of validity, truth, and generalizability" (1992, 20). Spry goes on to highlight the ethical advantages of autoethnographic research, as it "resists Grand Theorizing and the facade of objective research that decontextualizes subjects and searches for singular truth" (2001, 710). Through viewing the self as a site of knowledge, and an implicitly biased one, autoethnography breaks down the entrenched, asymmetrical binaries of researcher versus 'other', and I explain how I negotiate this in my own research below.

While Delamont (2007, 2009) raises important ethical considerations for anyone departing on autoethnographic research, her argument has limitations. First, autoethnography also provides the much needed specificity and productive insight gained through 'insider' knowledge, as Taylor (2011) articulates above. Moreover, Delamont's call to arms that sociologists must not study themselves but the 'social',

problematically removes the researcher from the very same power structures that marginalize the 'powerless'. This viewpoint is by no means new, as feminist theory has long acknowledged research is never fully objective or devoid of power relations (see, for example, Harding 1986; Haraway 1988). With this in mind, researchers must be aware of not only their privilege, but also their place in reproducing power relations through their research. In grounding my analysis in my own experience and utilizing an autoethnographic approach, I am attempting to respect the individuals within the culture, and lend integrity and understanding to its formation. In this way, my critical lens of exposing the gendered problems within the scene is ethically situated. I am not trying to critically rip the scene apart with no consideration of its historical, local or global context, but instead attempting to work from within its structures to enable political gendered transformation in and through deterritorializations.

Moreover, my analysis is fine-tuned through the specificity of my research question: I am not researching what it is to *be* a breaker in Sydney; rather I am examining why there are so few b-girls. This is a significant point of departure from Wacquant's (2004) study, as his position as a white, French-native man in his ethnography of a predominantly black boxing gym in Chicago's ghetto prevents him not only from *full* immersion into the culture, but also from being able to understand what it means to be a black man in that black community. In short, he does not face the same, ongoing structural inequalities as the majority of his counterparts. Such problems are similarly highlighted by Crawley, who acknowledges that while his "embeddedness in the field is an exemplar for fieldwork" (2012, 155), his position as researcher and ethnographer means he can leave 'the field' as he chooses. Though one could argue my own analysis of breaking is akin to the same methodological problems as Wacquant, since breaking emerged from the African-American and Puerto-Rican ghettos in New York City, and indeed was a response against larger structural and social inequalities, as I have highlighted above there has been much discussion around the global and diasporic manifestation of the culture since its development in the 1970s (Condry 2006, 2007; Fernandes 2011; Harrison 2008; Mitchell 2001). Unlike Wacquant, however, I am not portraying breaking as a distinctly 'black' or even racialized community with the aim of understanding how that identity is embodied; but rather the driving question in this thesis is an assumption about gender. In contrast to Wacquant (2004), then, I cannot separate myself from my research focus, such as my 'female-ness', and am attempting to understand how I might deterritorialize the politics that 'other' me in

Sydney's breaking scene and broader Australian culture. So while Wacquant's (2004) approach to 'the field' using 'embodied ethnography' is valuable in reflecting on a practice-based area of research, his approach differs from my own in important ways.

Analytic-Autoethnography

In negotiating the fraught terrain of autoethnography, I encountered Leon Anderson's (2006) work on what he terms *analytic* autoethnography, which seems to address Delamont's objections that autoethnography "is noticeably lacking any *analytic* outcome" (2007, 2). In contrast to other types of autoethnography (such as 'performance' and 'evocative' autoethnography), analytic autoethnography moves *beyond* the autobiographical to consider theoretical explanations for lived experiences (Crawley, 2012) and, as such, should be considered a valid focus of autobiographical writing (Anderson 2006). This manifests, for Heewon Chang (2007), in the reflective, interpretive, and analytical stages of writing that move beyond autobiographical field notes. It is also through maintaining "intent of gaining a cultural understanding of self that is intimately connected to others in the society" (Ibid., 212). The value in analytic autoethnography, then, lays in its commitment to the theoretical analysis of personal experiences – experiences that may intersect with the experiences of others – that, in doing so, expose how the *personal* can both inform and contribute to cultural theory (Anderson 2006; Crawley 2012).

Analytic autoethnography is highly interdisciplinary, and for Crawley (2012) (in contrast to Anderson (2006)) there is no single way to define or practice the method. Crawley (2012) does locate, however, the epistemological and methodological basis of autoethnography as 'active interviewing', drawing on the work of Ken Plummer, and feminist standpoint theory. First, 'active interviewing' views the interview as a site of "joint action" (Plummer 2001, 399) and co-production of knowledge between the interviewer (particularly 'native-as-interviewer', such as myself) and interviewee. Second, feminist standpoint theory emphasizes the body and lived experience as a site of knowledge. While I discuss both of these foundational components further below, together they view the researcher and participants as complementary in the production of knowledge (Crawley 2012).

Feminist standpoint theory – as first expounded by Sandra G. Harding (1986) – rejects any universalizing 'truths' or notion of objectivity, instead viewing researchers as intimately biased and produced through specific histories, power, and knowledge.

Resonating with other feminist thinking, such as Donna Haraway's (1988) discussion of 'situated knowledge' and 'partial perspective', feminist standpoint theory values personal testimony in an attempt to demythologize the objectivity of the researcher and its associated hierarchizations. Black feminist thought in particular questions the relationship between the researcher and those researched, and rather than hierarchizing academic knowledge over lived experience, finds them both mutually informing (such as Collins 1990; McClaurin 2001; Simmonds 1999). In arguing for the significance of a feminist approach to research, Haraway clarifies:

> I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. (1988, 589)

Haraway's argument, here, opposes the classic dichotomy between researcher and the researched, and the way it is often coupled with 'pure' objectivity. She instead advocates for grounding research through the self, as it is not 'universal' but 'partial' and thus a more ethical approach to analysis. However opposing partiality against universality might be oversimplified, as the problems with universals, as Haraway perhaps points to, is when they are viewed as transcendent: never changing across time and space. As such, a dynamic research space might engage *both* the partiality and the universal.

This discussion has been touched upon by Gatens (1996), who maps the ways feminist theory has navigated both advocating for women while simultaneously resisting uniting the experiences of *all* women for a singular purpose. She writes:

> Given the history, and the discourses surrounding the history, of the modern body politic it is necessary for feminists to exert a strong counterforce to the explicit and implicit masculinity of that body. This counterforce will necessarily involve the assertion of a certain homogeneity in the specific situations of women. This seems to be a necessary initial response to a substantive historical fact about society. But this response must be viewed as based in tactical *nous*

> rather than in an ontological truth about women that is closed to history. It is necessary for feminist theory to develop an open-ended ontology capable of resisting entrenchment in the romanticism which so often accompanies the 'underdog' position. (1996, 56)

Thus the 'universal' and the 'particular' may not necessarily be binary oppositions but could, in fact, inform one another (Anderson 2012). Indeed, it could be argued that a focus on particularity prevents opportunities to politically advocate for the inclusion of women, or for women more generally. Thus, *not* taking a universal approach could be unethical for all women at all times. Since an underlying question of this thesis is trying to understand why, and how, women are marginalized in Sydney's breaking scene, I will therefore attempt to navigate this tricky terrain by arguing that it is *through* the particular that change, or deterritorializations, can be effected on a universal level. Indeed, doing both is itself a type of deterritorialization of the binary of dominant thought. As Gatens continues, "[i]t is an unavoidable (and welcome) consequence of constructing an *embodied* ethics that ethics would no longer pretend to be universal" (Ibid.).

As such, the use of feminist standpoint theory to critically investigate lived experiences does not aim to generalize by presenting the experience of one individual as representative of a community; rather, it aims to expose the inherent limitations of an ethnographic project. Indeed, Crawley views analytic autoethnography's foundations in feminist thinking as a more ethical examination into the effects of identity categories, and summarizes:

> [S]exuality and gender identity are long-term productions of identity that are written on and felt through the body (as are experiences of race, ethnicity, and class, which is not to say that they are not inflexible), not fleeting dalliances to be tried out by a researcher entering 'the field'. (2012, 156)

Indeed, there is much analytic autoethnographic work that critically examines the politics that are "written on and felt through the body" (Ibid.) (such as Crawley 2002; Crawley, Foley, & Shehan 2008; Taber 2005). Moreover, it is not surprising that a number of studies on dance – by dancers – have utilized autoethnographic

methodologies due to the way it both values and emphasizes the body and self as valuable sites of knowledge (Barbour 2012; Hanna 2010; Picart 2002).

In contrast to Crawley (2012), Anderson (2006) outlines five characteristics of analytic autoethnography, including: "(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis" (2006, 378). Within my own research, my 'complete member research status' was addressed through my extensive participation in Sydney's breaking scene, including competing in local events, attending classes and workshops, regularly training, and my membership in the Sydney crew '143'. Analytic reflexivity and narrative visibility of the researcher's self manifested through writing field notes on my experiences and observations, including these experiences throughout the thesis, and analysing them with post-structural and cultural theory, and I will elaborate on my analytical framework below. In particular, I observed how my body adapted to the new techniques of the dance, how my style of dress changed and also led to a different bodily comportment, and also how my active participation in the scene was received by those inside the scene, as well as my family and friends. Through my engagement in the online community, I also noted the underlying feminist debates regarding gendered segregation in both training and competition. Therefore, and due to the varied nature of my involvement, I include most of my observations and experiences in this thesis alongside my theoretical analysis in a way that both enriches and grounds the cultural theory. In Chapter 4, however, I include an in-depth story of my experiences battling in a local Sydney competition. Occurring when I was over two years into the PhD project, and during a time when my observations transitioned from the position of a spectator to an active and frequent competitor, this experience was a catalyst moment in the process of my research.

Since, in comparison to some of the other Sydney b-girls, I was comparatively new to the breaking scene when I began this project, I wanted to shed light on my own observations and further inform my analysis. I conducted nine semi-structured in-depth interviews with (who I saw as) prominent Sydney breakers. Indeed, I drew on my 'insider' knowledge to make culturally informed decisions regarding the selection of the participants. I selected them based on when they were involved in the scene (from the late 1970s onwards), their additional roles in the scene (emcee, organizer), and any Sydney b-girl I could locate, both active and inactive (total of four) – see Appendix C for further detail on interview participants. That the experience of my interviewees

spanned an extensive period of participation in the scene, and I was already knowledgeable of the conventions, practices, and key events in Sydney's history through my own participation, the 'joint action' (Plummer 2001, 399) that consequently transpired through my interviews facilitated a distinctly valuable co-production of knowledge about gender in Sydney's breaking scene. I audio-recorded the interviews, transcribed them, and conducted qualitative analysis of the observations and insights that were shared.

My analysis of these interviews is included throughout the thesis in a way that augments my own observations of, and experiences in, the culture, as well as further informing how I unfold my argument. For example, through conducting these interviews I realized I was not alone in questioning why there are so few b-girls, and that this was an issue many of my participants had at least thought about, if not sought to address. Moreover, hearing the stories of other Sydney b-girls, made me realize I was not alone in my gendered assumptions. For example, upon first seeing breaking, b-girl Sass initially thought "girls can't do that" (interview, October 24, 2014), and many of them, like me, had to learn to negotiate the male-dominance of the scene. Consequently, much of my analysis of gender in Sydney's breaking scene relies on the co-production of knowledge that emerged through my interviews.

While my friendship with some of my interview participants led to greater depth in exploring my research question; a side effect also noted by Taylor (2011), it also raised ethical concerns regarding the way in which I presented or omitted the insights they shared – a concern also raised by Taylor (Ibid.). To navigate these concerns, Taylor (Ibid.) suggests including a greater level of self-reflexivity and context to the interviews and interview participants. Similarly, it is important in 'active interviewing' for the researcher to also investigate their relationship to the 'field' (Crawley 2012). With this in mind, I have detailed in Appendix C my relationship to these participants, and the context in which the interviews were conducted. In addition, self-reflexivity is interspersed throughout this thesis in an effort to make transparent the ways in which I developed my analysis of gender in Sydney's breaking scene.

Autoethnography is thus a productive framework for my analysis of Sydney's breaking scene due to the way it turns a critical lens on everyday experiences and views the personal as a valuable contributor to cultural theory. Notwithstanding this value of autoethnographic research, the methodology fell short on explaining why my first assumptions of the scene were about gender. In a way, autoethnography is almost *too*

grounded in the particular to address my driving question: Why there are so few female breakers in Sydney? I needed to examine my experiences through the lens of cultural theory, which would not only inform these early assumptions, but also provide the tools to explore possible opportunities to displace and negotiate these dominant classifications that limit bodily expression.

Since this thesis is driven by a concern to address the larger structural inequalities that subordinate Sydney b-girls, I have chosen to augment my autoethnographic findings with cultural theory as a way to ground my analysis in the universal. Indeed, bringing together the universal and particular, theory and practice in a contemporaneous space enriches my analysis of breaking as a site for deterritorializations. My interviews and experiences thus drove me further into my research, as I sought to uncover the possibilities within breaking.

For the reasons just outlined, then, in the next section I want to turn to post-structuralist and feminist philosophers to help understand why there is such an inequality of bodies participating in Sydney's breaking scene, and also what opportunities are available to move *beyond* gendered representation. I will then discuss the value of incorporating theory with practice, and provide a brief overview of this recent shift in Deleuzean scholarship.

Analytical approach

For Deleuze and Guattari, underpinning our social order are great binary aggregates that 'steal' our bodies from us "in order to fabricate opposable organisms" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 305). These oppositions – such as man/woman, masculine/feminine, mind/body, rational/irrational – are pervasive remnants of the Cartesian dualism that influence the way we understand bodily expressions and capacities. For gender theorists Gatens (1996) and Lloyd (2002), it is not merely that these 'organisms' (or unified subjects) are opposable, but more importantly they are authoritatively hierarchized. Indeed, the way we understand bodies and subjects – and their associated capacities and desires – can be largely attributed to the Cartesian legacy.

Deleuze and Guattari (2004) title these binaries of organization as 'molar categories', and these are constituted on what they term the 'plane of organization and development'. For Deleuze and Guattari, 'molar' categories are the unified, clear-cut binaries of identity that are most prominently brought to the fore through Western

philosophical thought, such as the Cartesian dualism. For example, the 'molar' category of women is "defined by her form, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject" (2004, 304). This construction of 'woman' that gives prominence to the 'organs' will be explored further in Chapter 3, when we will unpack the pervasive authority of the Cartesian dualism that imbues the body with a set of gendered capacities and assumptions.[11]

The 'molar' organization of the individual occurs through one of the layers or segments of the strata. These layers on the plane of organization "consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy" (Ibid., 45) and, in doing so, regulate expression and capacities within a rigid binary. Indeed, this rigid binary underscores Western metaphysics in the way it both hierarchizes and gives logical form to thought. Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) see these reproducing systems of the strata as that which *produce* the subject, as they 'imprison' the body's expression (for instance through a gendered lens), and hierarchically organize its capacities in-line with normative politics (for example, men are 'naturally' stronger). Deleuze and Guattari (2004, 176) go on to identify the 'three great layers' of the strata – organism, signification, and subjectification – that hierarchically organize bodies into unified, categorizable subjects. One way this categorization manifests is through creating dichotomously opposed bodies – male and female – with 'gender', which is then seen as the socio-cultural outcome of sexual difference. As Lloyd writes, "[t]he contemporary distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' itself reflects the influence of the Cartesian dualism" (2002, xv), and this distinction further grounds the body and corresponding subject as fixed and ideologically appropriate.

Importantly, though, this is not to say that the strata pre-exists us. Despite there being an organization of sorts, I want to clarify that there is no *founding* organization of the strata. Rather, the strata are 'rhizomatic', to use another Deleuze-Guattarian (2004) concept, in that there is no beginning or end to the organization, and it contains myriad relationships and connections. Situated on the plane of organization and development, the strata are types of segments or 'sedimentary beds' made from "things and words, from seeing and speaking, from visible and the sayable, from bands of visibility and

[11] Importantly, and as we will explore in more depth later in the thesis, it is not 'the organs' that are the site of spoliation for Deleuze and Guattari (2004), but rather what they term the 'organism', that is the biological or scientific organization of the body that gives prominence to the organs.

field of readability, from contents and expressions" (Deleuze 2006, 41). Therefore, the concept of the 'strata' is a way to conceptualize how individuals are constituted through systems of power, and how bodies are organized into forms we know and understand. For Deleuze and Guattari, though, and through a post-structural lens more broadly, our perspective of 'what the body *is*' is not simply informed by any 'natural' or 'privileged' position', rather it is informed by the force that dominates within that particular context, such as, for example, the Cartesian (or mind/body) dualism. What a body *is* typically goes hand in hand with what a body is *not*, and it is broadly acknowledged within feminist literature that rather than being measured against their own 'ideal', women have been 'naturally' constructed in opposition to men (Gatens 1996; Grosz 1994; Lloyd 2002; Shildrick 2015). As we will see in Chapter 2, binary logic is inextricably tied to arborescent structures, whereby lines of thought are segmented or 'striated', developing through a derivative process (to the 'One'). The lines of the strata thus order and develop thought in a logical manner and, as such, reduce the possibilities and relationships that emerge if one was to take into account the fluidity and complexities of life.

While the remnants of Cartesian dualism remain with us, a prominent philosopher of dissent was Baruch Spinoza (who was born during Descartes lifetime,[12] and subsequently drawn on by some of the modern feminist and post-structuralist philosophers I discuss in this thesis). Spinoza's model of 'monism' bypasses the dualistic modes of thinking so entrenched in Western philosophical thought by positing the world as an expression of a single substance. The "great theoretical thesis of Spinozism", Deleuze writes: "[is] a single substance having an infinity of attributes" (1988, 17). This understanding is emblematic of post-structural abstraction, in other words, substance contains no 'essential' characteristics or inner 'truths'. Instead, individuals are merely passing or provisional determinations of self-subsistence, and thus, in Spinozist terms, the capacities of the body are both productive and creative.

According to Gatens, the Spinozist body "does not have a 'truth' or a 'true nature' since it is a process and its meaning and capacities will vary according to its context" (1988, 68). Consequently, the limits, powers, and capacities of this body are unknown, and "can only be revealed in the ongoing interactions of the body and its

[12] This contextual information demonstrates that resistance to Descartes or Cartesian logic more broadly is not necessarily a modern or post-structuralist position, but also occurred at the same time as Descartes' writing.

environment" (Gatens 1988, 69). This is most evident when Spinoza declares, "[w]e do not know what the body can do" (Spinoza quoted in Deleuze 1988, 17). This provocative statement around what the body can do is both a cornerstone of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the body (similarly noted by Buchanan 1997) and an underlying question in this thesis. This is because it implicitly asks us to consider how the capacities of the body are limited through social organization, impacted as they are by regimes of subordination, objectification, and control. By bringing these influences to our attention, we can begin to perceive how the body itself is subordinated to the social formations that regulate its actual affective capacities. Indeed, a Deleuze-Guattarian understanding presents the body not so much as an essential physical thing with inherent features, but as instead produced through its affective interactions. As Ian Buchanan explains, "[b]y making the question of what a body can do constitutive, what Deleuze and Guattari effectively do is reconfigure the body as the sum of its capacities, which is not the same as reducing it to its functions as some seem to think" (1997, 75). This framework attempts to rethink the body as not tethered to preordained functions, such as organs, but rather its capacities are only realized through the unfolding of the present. Indeed, Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook advocate for an emphasis on bodily *activity*, as facilitating a more open and dynamic space for analysis. This is because "[t]he body is a negotiation with images, but it is also a negotiation with pleasures, pains, other bodies, space, visibility, and medical practice: no single event in this field can act as a general ground for determining the status of the body" (Bray & Colebrook 1998, 43). By leaving the status of the body open, and rethinking it as a site created and negotiated in the moment of its action, enables us to examine its powers and capacities.

What the works of Deleuze and Guattari, Butler, Grosz, and Gatens have in common (and why they are being utilized for this thesis) is recognition of the fluidity of the forces, energies, flows, and potential sites of connection that make up the body. Coupled with that recognition is a critical resistance to the limiting subjectification of humanist understandings of the body. Through this gesture, the "dilemma of Cartesian dualism – how the will (which is not extended) can move the body (which is extended) and how the body informs the will of its needs – is displaced" (Grosz 1994, 11).[13] It is not surprising then, that prominent Australian feminist scholars have utilized Spinoza's

[13] In his reproach of dualism, Deleuze (1988) describes how Spinoza's theses were denigrated as immoral, atheist and materialist because he denounced the humanist (and Christian) doctrines.

theory in their discussion of the 'body' and 'gender' (as we have seen with Gatens 1996, 2009; and Lloyd 2002), the value of which has been outlined by Colebrook (2000a).

Deleuze and Guattari (2004) extend Spinoza's theory by viewing the 'layers' of imprisonment, such as sex or gender, as sites of creativity and perpetual variation. Deleuze and Guattari write:

> For the two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant, etc.: a thousand tiny sexes. (2004, 235)

This more open-ended examination disrupts the organization of the body through taking into account how elements may connect and form relationships with one another. In this framework, the 'woman' is no fixed subject or body, but rather is a standalone intensity that is expressed in the moment it 'affects' or initiates a relation.

For Colebrook, Deleuze and Guattari's examination of difference through a Spinozist lens must be viewed as "creative, positive, and productive" (2003, 189) and thus prolific in order to undermine the dominance of binary thought. She writes, "a species of perceived sameness is really the result of the observer's incapacity to see life as a proliferation of difference, creating ever-different bodies, with each body being an affirmation of difference, not the repetition of the same" (Ibid.). This difference is, as Grosz articulates, 'pure' (1990, 124) because it is untethered to the gender binary. Indeed, it is untethered to any dominant understandings of the world, as Colebrook argues "you have to begin by seeing the *problem* of Deleuze's work: whether we can *think* difference and becoming without relying on common sense notions of identity, reason, the human subject or even 'being'" (2002a, 4). While such a task may be difficult, it is necessary, because as Gatens argues, "to accept this dualism uncritically is merely to perpetuate relations whose construction is not fully understood" (1996, 56).

Rethinking 'Difference' in Breaking

Simply arguing that through 'difference' we can destroy the gender binary consequently ignores the histories of marginalization and subordination produced through patriarchal organizations. Furthermore, there are ethical considerations that arise in discussions of 'difference' that are grounded in analysing lived experiences. For example, the consequences of disenfranchisement are still lived and felt, and were

even described in my interviews with Sydney b-girls, as evident with b-girl Catwmn who recounted how after accepting a job to do a paid performance with a large promotional agency, "they called me a few hours afterwards, after I had received the call asking me to do it, [and said] that they only wanted boys – they only wanted b-boys now – and that they didn't want a girl" (interview, October 24, 2014). Catwmn's experience, and disappointment, with the minimal opportunities for b-girls highlights the importance of continuing to recognize the asymmetrical power relations in which Sydney b-girls are situated. I thus see myself bound to an ethical duty as not only a researcher, but also an 'intimate insider' and practitioner, to ensure the omissions, frustrations, subordinations and marginalization facing Sydney b-girls are acknowledged.

In exploring the 'ethics of difference', and in turn providing a framework for navigating discussions of 'difference', Gatens (1996) claims that we can question the traditional alignments within a particular context without disavowing the histories and discourses that support them. There is an important conceptual shift here, as rather than examining how the social and political orientations of a milieu are passively embodied and reproduced, we can look to what *possibilities* are available. In this way, Gatens (1996) views the body as constructed through representation and discourse, for Bray and Colebrook, however, this conceptualization inevitably remains gendered, as it is constituted through body image (1998, 40). What Bray and Colebrook suggest, instead, is 'positive difference' whereby "the body itself might have effects and modes of being *not reducible to its status as image*" (Ibid., 41). They argue that using the conceptual tools offered by Deleuze and Guattari facilitates a notion of the body that is "more than the limit, negation or other of representation" (Ibid., 39), and thus more open to possibilities.

Through the concept of deterritorialization, we can examine the possibilities and opportunities enabled through breaking and still acknowledge the existing structures and representations that may marginalize breakers. Importantly, in processes of deterritorialization, the notion of the 'territory' functions as a point of reference. It is not tethered to physicality, such as a specific place, but rather is an idea that is both open and yet specific. Deleuze and Guattari (2004) distinguish between types of deterritorialization, with 'relative' deterritorialization coinciding with reterritorialization, while 'absolute' deterritorialization inducing a 'plane of immanence' (also referred to as the 'plane of consistency'). This plane is central to

Deleuze and Guattari's theory due to the way it decries Classical philosophy's preoccupation with 'transcendence'. Not unlike Spinoza's 'substance', Deleuze's conception of immanence opposes the preeminent, and the overarching structure, and, instead, denotes the embedded, the grounded, and what is immanent to itself. In describing the plane of immanence, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> Here, there are no longer any forms or developments of forms; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects. There is no structure, any more than there is genesis. There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules, and particles of all kinds. There are only haecceities, affects, subjectless individuations that constitute collective assemblages. (2004, 293–294)

Unlike the plane of organization, the plane of immanence, then, is without an imposing pre-existing structure or original genesis, but manifests itself in the movements, speeds, directions, latitudes and longitudes that constitute the unfolding of the present. An investigation into the deterritorialization of gender is grounded in the immanent by taking into account the structures that lead to marginalization. Moreover, deterritorialization also locates possible lines for transformation and, in turn, may reorganize the territory of Sydney breaking as dynamic and productive.

Significant to Deleuze and Guattari's theory is that meaning is never lost, as we can never be free of the strata's stronghold; we can (and should), however, push its limits and facilitate transformations of the regulations that 'imprison' us (2004, 178). This important standpoint is best reflected within their concept of 'assemblage', which is valuable in *locating* possible sites for territorialization within a cultural space. That is, by 'territorialization' I am referring to the sites of power within an assemblage through which a reorganizing of functions and regrouping of elements might take place. This process refers to deterritorialization and reterritorialization and their respective 'decoding' and 'overcoding' of an assemblage (Ibid., 243). Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of assemblage has been widely used in academic research to analyse how things enter into relations with one another (see, for example, Currier 2003; Legg 2011; Ringrose 2011; Tampio 2009; Turetsky 2004). Simply put, an assemblage is any number of elements that are contained within a single context – it is an organization of

things. This is not to say that its organization is fixed, or produces any singular meaning; rather, for Deleuze and Guattari, it is "a question of *consistency*: the 'holding together' of heterogeneous elements" (2004, 357). These elements – brought into a specific gathering through the assemblage – can produce a multiplicity of effects. This conceptualization of cultural organizations enables a more open-ended approach to analysing Sydney's breaking scene. By not demarcating the territory of the scene, but rather using the *idea* of the territory as a reference point, helps to prevent placing my own limitations onto the potentials of Sydney breaking that, in doing so, would hinder the unfolding of capacities.

To conceptualize how elements are 'held together' within the assemblage and how to locate sites for change, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) outline key 'lines' that characterize assemblages and inform their relationship with the world. They term these lines the 'molar', 'molecular', and the 'line of flight'. That is, by 'line' Deleuze and Guattari refer to the 'markings' that limit, or entry points that open onto, territorializations. While I elaborate on these concepts throughout the thesis, I want to provide a brief overview of them for introductory purposes. The 'molar' line of any assemblage is characterized by "rigid and clear-cut segmentarity" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 218). It is the easiest line to identify, as it enforces the "pregiven" (Ibid., 226) arborescent and binary structures that occupy and pervade our lives. Within Sydney's breaking scene, the molar line could be conceived as the prevailing masculinity of the scene, the gendered articulation of bodies and ways of moving, and even the importance placed on 'individuality'.

In contrast to the 'molar' line, the 'molecular' line is more 'supple', "the segments of which are like quanta of deterritorialization" (Ibid., 217). Operating through 'micromovements', the molecular line can enable ephemeral reterritorializations, but are often "propelled toward a rigid segmentarity" (Ibid.). The transgressions on this line are transitory, and are often violently secured back into normative politics, but they still *happened*: they are clandestine victories. For example, this is the line of transgression I see the b-girl located on, whereby her actions transgress normative assumptions of what the female body 'can do', yet are simultaneously regressive as she is frequently policed and re-stratified into 'just a girl'. The third line is the 'line of flight', which significantly differentiates from the molar and molecular lines. This is because it "no longer tolerates segments; rather, it is like an exploding of the two segmentary series" (Ibid., 218). This is the line of rupture, where

"it is no longer possible for anything to stand for anything else" (Ibid., 219). This is not to confuse the line of flight with an imaginary or symbolic line, as "there is nothing more active than a line of flight" (Ibid., 225); rather this line underpins the other lines: "*it does not come afterward*; it is there from the beginning, even if it awaits its hour, and waits for the others to explode" (Ibid., 226). This is the always-underlying potentiality for change that marks Deleuze and Guattari's work. It is here I see the *possibility* in breaking, particularly in its conventions of 'originality' and 'style', in facilitating deterritorializations of gender.

Importantly, these lines are not separate, but continually crisscross, intermingle, intersect, and entangle. The 'molar' line is not only present in "all the other lines", but also it "always seems to prevail in the end" (Ibid., 216). This is not because of some imposing organization, but rather that we can never be without organization, as that would be chaos. Instead, perhaps the incessant presence of the molar line is because the line of flight and molar line are co-dependent. The line of flight must have a point of departure for what it will 'explode' and, in doing so, may reinforce the rigid segmentarity of the molar line. Yet as the lines drift into one another, something happens that didn't belong (Ibid., 224). Something new. For example, the molecular line sways between the other two lines – the transgressive line of flight and the regressive molar rigidity – and "such is its ambiguity" (Ibid., 226). Yet their 'mutual immanence' is also their downfall – "[s]upple segmentarity continually dismantles the concretions of rigid segmentarity, but everything that it dismantles it reassembles on its own level" (Ibid., 227). Transgressive deterritorializations are reterritorialized into a modified organization – a slight deviation from the original politics of the molar line, yet enough to remain familiar and authoritative. These types of deterritorializations are 'relative' due to the way they coincide with reterritorializations. Importantly, they are still deterritorializations in and of themselves due to the way they mark the potential, indeed capacity, for change. My analysis in Chapter 5 will call attention to the levels of deterritorializations that occur within and across the global and online breaking scene.

Mapping these lines locates the change immanent within an assemblage, and thus facilitates an examination of how breaking enables opportunities to displace and reconstitute gender and bodily expression. Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) 'assemblage' plays an important role in capturing the fragile equilibrium of power and resistance. It compels us to think of this balance, tension and strain concomitantly. It describes a form that has both consistency and fuzzy borders, which desires deterritorialization but

proceeds with caution (as de-stratification that is too sudden can be 'suicidal' [Ibid., 178]). This equipoise plays an important role as, Nicholas Tampio concludes, "[o]rder emerges out of chaos through assemblages" (2009, 394). Through the assemblage, we can see how meaning is singularized, as temporal and fluid as this meaning may be.

Relay between Theory and Practice

It is important to foreground that this thesis is not an exposition of Deleuze and Guattari theory, or post-structural theory more broadly. Rather I am employing these concepts as part of my analytical framework to think through my research question – why are there so few b-girls in Sydney's breaking scene? – and as a means to critically analyse my autoethnographic research and existing scholarship on gender and 'the body'. Importantly, I see the dual constituents of theory and practice as facilitating a contemporaneous space that both enriches and extends critical examination. Specifically, my autoethnographic work critically questions my theoretical framework, such as what agency I have in challenging normative gendered assumptions, and what possibility there is to deterritorialize gender within Sydney's breaking scene.

The notion of integrating theory and practice is by no means a new phenomenon, and is central to 'autoethnography', 'practice-led-research' and 'practice-as-research' methodologies, which are used and debated across the fields of anthropology and performance studies. Indeed, the use of Deleuze-Guattarian theory has become more prevalent in critically thinking about transgressive practices in a range of dance, performance, and physical training spaces (Coffey 2013; Cull 2009; Gilbert 2004; Jordan 1995; LaMothe 2012; Lawrence 2011; Markula 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Turetsky 2004). Moreover, while the recently edited collection *Deleuze and Research Methodologies* (Coleman & Ringrose 2013) does not specifically reference autoethnographic scholarship, it productively showcases the value in using Deleuzean frameworks to analyse empirical research, as it allows for the analysis of cultural spaces in a way that is both open and mobile. Such a move resonates with Deleuze's view of practice and theory, as he views the relationship between the two as more than a mere mirroring or totalizing application. In fact, Deleuze views practice as essential, inseparable even, to the construction of theory. In conversation with Foucault, Deleuze reflects:

At one time, practice was considered an application of theory, a consequence; at

> other times, it had an opposite sense and it was thought to inspire theory, to be indispensable for the creation of future theoretical forms. In any event, their relationship was understood in terms of a process of totalization. For us, however, the question is seen in a different light. The relationships between theory and practice are far more partial and fragmentary. (Deleuze quoted in Foucault 1977b, 205)

For Deleuze, theory is not applied to practice, nor should practice be a "resemblance" (Ibid., 206) of theory. It should not merely be a mould into which practice fits; rather "[i]t must be useful. It must function", as "theory is exactly like a box of tools" (Ibid., 208). Conceptualizing theory in this way thus demands a *doing* component in research. Without this, theory becomes "worthless" (Ibid.).

In moving theory into its "proper domain", Deleuze warns of the "obstacles, walls, and blockages" (Ibid., 206) that emerge. These obstructions necessitate its 'relay' by an additional form of discourse – such as practice – which enables it to move to another, different, domain, thus expanding and extending its critical capacity. He summarizes:

> Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall. […] Representation no longer exists; there's only action-theoretical action and practical action which [sic] serve as relays and form networks. (Ibid., 206–207)

For Deleuze, no theory will ever encapsulate the convolutedness of life, and he views practice as essential in not only exposing the limits of theory, but also its reconstruction. Importantly, he *invites* us to test his theory, and, in doing so, extend it as it moves into a new domain. It is with this invitation in mind that I move the concepts of the territorialization into the Sydney breaking community, using it as a tool to critically examine the socio-cultural forces that regulate creative expression.

Throughout this thesis, then, I examine the relay that emerges between and across my different methodological platforms – post-structural cultural theory, my own dance practice and cultural participation through autoethnographic research. This multi-faceted analysis of how creative potential is regulated within Sydney's breaking scene

is employed to support my argument that gender can be deterritorialized through breaking.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to demonstrate how my methodological frameworks productively test my assumptions about gender in breaking. After applying empirical data, analytic autoethnography, and cultural theory to my question – why are there so few b-girls? – my argument that I will unfold in this thesis is that breaking can enable deterritorializations of gender. Specifically, I outlined how autoethnographic research enables a distinct and valuable insight into the gendered codes and conventions of Sydney's breaking scene, while the theories of Gatens, Colebrook, Butler, Bourdieu, Deleuze and Guattari provide the theoretical tools to examine the potentiality of breaking. This potential manifests itself through the ways breaking's cultural practices deterritorialize the gender binary – the limitations of which regulate corporeal capacity – and opens up the space for a more fluid understanding of gender. Using these methodologies together will provide a multi-layered analysis of how breaking is a space through which to negotiate, reconfigure, and displace normative gendered significations.

In the next chapter, I situate breaking in a broader genealogical context to further understand and complicate the gendered codes and conventions of Sydney's breaking scene. Drawing on literature in the field of hip-hop culture (including its respective 'four elements'), I outline the conditions that produced breaking's distinct cultural practices in New York throughout the 1970s. My focus in this chapter is to examine how breaking and by extension hip-hop culture is defined, structured, and represented. I examine the discourses and practices that support the masculine alignment of the scene, and, in turn, the obstacles facing women entering hip-hop that may account for the scarce number of b-girls in Sydney's scene.

Chapter 2 – Mapping the Hip-Hop Assemblage

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I elaborated on my theoretical and empirical methodologies that I employ in this thesis to not only unpack the gendered codes and conventions of Sydney's breaking scene, but to also examine the potential within breaking to deterritorialize gender. I now want to contextualize the gender politics that regulate access to the dance floor in Sydney through examining hip-hop 'history'; specifically the *role* of history in both informing and legitimizing current practices and conventions in Sydney. My contextualization is framed through exposing *who* has power over its protocols, and thus how the larger "structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1990, 53) of history intersect with regulating opportunities to deterritorialize gender.

My autoethnographic research will reveal the many ways through which historical events of 'back in the day' are brought into the present and used to both justify and normalize breaking's masculine dominance. Indeed, my experiences and knowledge gained through participating in Sydney's breaking scene sets me apart from most authors of academic texts on hip-hop,[1] as I have experienced first-hand how dominant historical narratives either omit or discourage female participation. A prevalent narrative, supported in both academic texts and alternative or 'community' media, emphasizes hip-hop's emergence from street gang culture, and, in doing so, intersects with biologically-determinist discourses that see 'confrontation' and 'aggression' as distinctly masculinist practices, thus operating to naturalize hip-hop as a male-only terrain.

While mapping the discourses and practices that support breaking's masculine alignment will show how women have historically had less power over its conventions, the theory of Deleuze and Guattari will productively complicate the 'telling' of history as 'truth'. Specifically, Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) concept of the 'rhizome' problematizes dominant historical narratives through opening up the space for other stories, connections, and experiences to emerge. The rhizome's structure operates by

[1] Many of authors of academic texts on breaking are neither breakers themselves or involved personally in the scene, including Osumare (2002, 2008), and in Australia Mitchell (2003, 2007) and also Maxwell, who even prefaced his book with stating, "I am not a fan of rap music" (2003, 11).

"variation and expansion" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 23), and thus productively avoids the organization of relationships and expressions into linear and hierarchical structures. Through 'mapping' assemblages we can locate the productive lines of flight that are not shut down through the rigid patriarchal structure of the scene. While women have always been present in breaking and hip-hop culture, their history and contributions are, in Pough's words, continuously 'lost' or 'erased' (2004, 8). As such, a rhizomatic account of history might facilitate a more egalitarian historical narrative, or open up the space for other currently repressed stories to emerge, such as the diasporic manifestation of the culture. In this chapter, then, I will examine the ways in which lines of flight in the hip-hop assemblage are hierarchized to maintain the constitution of the breaking body as normatively masculine. In doing so, this chapter contextualizes how the body is gendered and regulated in Sydney's breaking scene, productively informing the analysis of the dancing body in the following chapter.

'Know Your History!'

Before proceeding, I want to underscore that I use the word 'history' tentatively, because I am aware that the notion of history can be marked by onto-teleological determinations that normativize identities, classes, genders, and bodies, and thus marginalizes some groups over others. I also use it tentatively because conducting a Deleuze-Guattarian analysis of hip-hop's history may seem contrary to their canon of work, indeed Deleuzean thought and 'history' are not often seen to go together, with much debate within academic literature around Deleuze's approach to history (such as Bell & Colebrook 2009; Lampert 2006; Lundy 2012). In much of the secondary literature, 'history' is frequently situated as oppositional to 'becoming', because for Deleuze and Guattari the notion of 'becoming' is an expression of, and experimentation with, difference. They write, "[becoming] constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a no-man's land, a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two distant or contiguous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other" (2004, 323). It is the 'in-between' and the 'middle', and a way of thinking rather than as an end in itself – one does not conclude 'becoming' by finishing with a representation, but rather is the *process* of producing an effect of difference. As Colebrook explains, "[b]ecoming is a

direct connection, where the self that contemplates *is* nothing other than the singularities it perceives" (2002b, 155).[2]

Yet despite Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'becoming', which undermines the very notion of binary oppositions, the perceivable binary between 'history' and 'becoming' can still be seen in various secondary literatures on Deleuze and Guattari, for instance, in *The Deleuze Dictionary* (Parr 2010).[3] Indeed, throughout Deleuze's canon history is positioned as derivative to the conditions required for becoming, and is considered illustrative of a tradition that obscures 'difference'. For example, Deleuze writes "becoming isn't a part of history; history amounts only [to] the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to 'become', that is, to create something new" (1995, 171). Deleuze refutes 'history' due to the way it places limitations on the possibilities of the present and, in doing so, opposes the open-ended potentiality of becoming. Moreover, history is often overly focused with grand narratives and causation. That is, history focuses on how ideas and events emerge and the conditions that lead to their emergence. The problem with these approaches, and why they often oppose Deleuze-Guattarian thinking, is that they consequently limit the opportunities to see where connections and points of difference might transpire.

In her introduction to *Deleuze and History*, Colebrook productively explicates this complex terrain in Deleuze and Guattari's work, and explains that the problems with 'history' emerge when they take a single, fixed unit as their point of departure, or indeed as their unit of measurement. She writes,

> A history that took any object – man, society, organisms, language, laws, the family, totalitarianism – as its point of departure would not be truly historical; it would have taken time as a process of genuine becoming and mapped that time according to one static unit. (2009, 9)

[2] While I return to 'becoming' in Chapter 4 where it is used to examine how breaking might facilitate experimentations with difference, I want to highlight that there is much scholarship that has not only interrogated 'becoming' with regard to materiality (Braidotti 2002; Colebrook 2000, 2008, 2013), but has also used it to analyse a range of practices, such as music (Gilbert 2004), graffiti (Scannell 2002), 'body work' (Coffey 2013), and dance (Hickey-Moody 2009; LaMothe 2012).

[3] For example, Watson states, "revolution is a-historical because it is a molecular minoritarian becoming, whereas history is a molar majoritarian state apparatus" (2010, 174), while Message explains that Deleuze and Guattari, "[i]n their preference for lines of flight and becoming, they critique history for being a tool of the unitary State apparatus" (2010, 280).

Instead, history must account for the formation of the subject, though, importantly, also not be reduced to the subject. As Colebrook writes, we "need a notion of history that is not one of unfolding development from a single human viewpoint" (2002a, 8).

This approach to history resonates with Deleuzean scholar Lundy, who advocates for the role of history in contextualizing 'becomings'. Early in his book, Lundy writes, "it is often forgotten that history has a critical role to play in the act of transformation and the process by which something new emerges" (2012, 1). In this way, understanding the forces (that is, conditions and movements) that affect bodies can enable locating the lines of flight that facilitate new becomings. Through mapping the conditions that emerge in the past we can grow informed of how difference emanates. This is not an examination of causation, but rather an examination into transformation. Returning to Colebrook, this approach is illustrative of Deleuze's commitment to 'vitalism', whereby:

> [O]ne ought not to accept any already given and actualised form but should ask how such a form emerged, what that emergence can tell us about the life from which any actuality has taken shape, and how such a life – beyond its already created possibilities – might yield other potentials. (Ibid.)

Discussions of history are only productive insofar that they remain open to examining the potentialities of life. As Colebrook argues "[h]istory takes the form of co-existing lines, 'plateaus' or divergent series of becomings" (2002a, 8). As I will attempt to demonstrate through this chapter, it is not a 'history' of hip-hop that I am hoping to produce, but rather an examination into the specific formations of power that simultaneously enable and shut down emergences of lines of flight.

Similar to Lundy, then, I argue that history is a necessary component in understanding the forces that both affect bodies and facilitate becomings. Thus my aim, here, is to render visible the social forces that structure and organize the hip-hop assemblage. I do not choose any particular site as my point of departure, or indeed privilege voices in history's (re)construction, but rather through this chapter I will show the different perspectives and stories that emerge upon going beyond the constructed 'truth' of hip-hop history. Indeed, taking a more 'rhizomatic' approach to history exposes events to new relationships and ways of thinking beyond the specific 'historical' context.

Thus my approach to history – and the way it structures the present – resonates with Deleuze's framing of history, as my aim is to both avoid the 'Grand Narrativizing' and fixities that often coincide with historical accounts, and instead, interrogate the 'truth' of hip-hop in order to open up the potentiality of the breaking body. Examining the dominant historical accounts within hip-hop culture will not only help clarify the 'historical situation' of the breaking body, thus exposing what kinds of discourses and practices support the regulation of its capacities, but also locate what possibilities are available to deterritorialize gender in Sydney's breaking scene.

(Re)Tracing My Steps

I choose the word 'tracing' to explain my experiences of learning hip-hop and breaking knowing how it is problematized within Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) work. Before I unpack 'tracing', though, I want to first discuss the importance of 'knowing your history' in hip-hop culture through elucidating my autoethnographic experiences in Sydney's breaking scene. Specifically, these observations were gained through the process of learning the dance in classes, workshops, and '143' training sessions. By revealing the ways by which the history of hip-hop culture and the dancing 'body' are inextricably connected, indeed homologous, in breaking culture, in this section I want to show how history is itself an organizing line of the hip-hop assemblage that constitutes the body in specific ways. Moreover, and as I will attempt to demonstrate, this 'striated space' of the assemblage both delimits potentiality for deterritorializations through containing it within a hierarchized, gendered binary, and thus shutting down the openness and 'difference' of bodily expression. Through beginning this chapter with some of my observations, then, I aim to foreground my Deleuze-Guattarian analysis of not only the structure of hip-hop history, but also the larger ramifications of dominant historical narratives.

It is by no means a new observation that demonstrating knowledge of breaking and hip-hop history is required to both participate in the culture and perform the dance (Maxwell 2003; Schloss 2009). To be 'original' and gain respect in the culture, breakers need to know and understand their 'foundation', which are the key steps, techniques, and ways of moving that are "grounded in the tradition" (Schloss 2009, 51) and thus effectively territorialize the dance floor as a site of breaking (this will be elaborated further in Chapter 6). As mentioned in the previous chapter, breaking is not the first dance style I have learnt; yet unlike other dance classes – jazz, ballroom, and

tap, for example – in my earliest breaking classes learning the dance's history formed part of the lesson. As well as learning *how* to perform key steps and movements, I also learnt their history, such as the name of the step, who created it and what crew they were in, who made what variations to them when, and so on.

For example, 'C.C.' is the name of a foundational step done at the front of footwork (in the squat position). Repeated on both sides, the right leg is straightened outwards, the upper body turns to right as the right hand (or both hands) reach and are placed on the ground next to right hip. At the end of this turn, the left leg kicks forward and it is repeated on the left side. C.C.'s train the feet to be appropriately and consistently placed under one's body, helping to develop good balance, while also training the upper body to 'whip' to each side and to control the body's weight during movement. This technique then assists in performing more complex steps that require those skills; such as the power move 'swipes' that also demands a strong and fast upper body whip. The fairly simplistic structure of C.C.'s also allows for innumerable variations to evolve, which can help breakers experiment with new steps and to develop their own style (further explored in Chapter 6). Beyond the importance of its technique, C.C.'s name is an acronym for the crew 'Crazy Commandos', who are accredited with first performing this step, and naming steps after breakers or crews is fairly common in breaking culture. For example, the 'Zulu spin' is a spinning footwork move that the crew 'Zulu Nation' created and performed, and 'Icey-Ice' is a particular power move b-boy Icey-Ice performed at the end of the film *Beat Street* (1984).

As I became more skilled and participated in workshops of internationally accomplished breakers (see Appendix B for details), often the instructor would ask the class what they knew about the history of key moves, and if the class's answers were lacking, would both express their disappointment and also highlight the need to 'know your history'. These experiences communicated to me very early on in my practice that I needed to, as the instructors would call it, 'know my history' or 'know my foundation'.[4] It was as though my now affirmed participation in the culture bestowed me with some ownership over, or positioning within, hip-hop's history. This was a privilege – I was now also a caretaker – and it was something I learnt I needed to respect.

[4] This phrasing is similarly used in Schloss's chapter 'Getting Your Foundation' (2009, 40) in his book *Foundation: B-boys, b-girls, and hip-hop culture in New York*.

The importance of 'knowing my history' was reinforced when I became a member of '143' in 2012. Now with an adequate knowledge of foundation, I was exposed to the frequent discussions of past events – specific battles, breakers, and crews – locally, nationally, and internationally that were considered to be catalysts in shaping the contemporary dance and culture. In these catalyst moments, breakers did something 'new' – whether that is pushing the boundaries of what we thought 'the body could do' or creating new forms of bodily expression within the territory of breaking. (An example of a catalyst moment happened in 2002, when South Korean b-boy Hong10's distinct freeze combinations were performed in time with the music (with his crew 'Expression') at the *Battle of the Year* final.)[5] I realized, also, that in order to expand my knowledge of the breaking repertoire, I had to learn other breakers' 'signature moves' – their well-known original creations. This would enable me to further understand the codes of breaking during a battle, such as being able to distinguish between 'foundation', 'original' moves, and 'bites' (copied moves), and the way in which I learnt to distinguish between these moves will be elaborated in Chapter 6.

During these discussions with my crew, if I did not know a particular history or catalyst moment, my older crewmembers would locate it (either via the relevant DVD of the event or look it up on *YouTube*), and we would (re)watch the event together. I needed to *know* this history so that I could trace the emergence and lineage of particular moves. As Schloss writes, "the b-boy educational system not only offers a traceable educational lineage, but often a strong, accomplished mentor" (2009, 52). Indeed, it is up to the older crewmembers to mentor the younger breakers in this 'traceable' history. I soon realized that my constant questions about breaking history and practices were not uncommon, as, like Schloss, many of my crewmates forgot I was researching the breaking scene in Sydney.[6] As Schloss writes, "[a]pparently, my constant inquiries about dance history and aesthetics were not significantly different from those that Buz had heard from others" (Ibid., 41). That Schloss's many questions regarding breaking

[5] Hong10 is so renowned in breaking culture that he was featured in an online editorial titled 'Stuff bboys like arguing about' (Calvin 2010). Other breakers widely regarded as impactful to the development of the dance include: b-boys Ken Swift and Crazy Legs who came to fame via the 'Rock Steady Crew' in New York, b-boys PoeOne, Remind and Crumbs from 'Style Elements' crew in Los Angeles, and Storm from 'Battle Squad' crew in Germany.

[6] While I acknowledge that I rely heavily on Schloss (2009) for discussions of breaking, this is due to the limited research *on* breaking *by* breakers. In many ways, his observations and analyses of cultural practices and conventions mirror my own, demonstrating the globalized manifestation of the culture.

history were not dissimilar to the other breakers in the New York scene demonstrates both the prevalence and importance of learning history in breaking culture. In other words, regardless of whether they are doing a research project or not, *everyone* should 'know their history'.

Yet the collective manner of this memorializing with my crew, or what Mary Fogarty terms "collective histories" (2006, 73), appeared overtly hierarchized. Certain battles and breakers were more remembered than others, if at all. For example, there are myriad *YouTube* tribute clips that celebrate the most seminal breakers of particular eras, and it is not uncommon for these breakers to be all men.[7] Despite feeling sidelined as a woman, as there was little precedent for my engagement, I understood that knowledge of these moments was integral to my participation in the culture. Indeed, *without* this knowledge I was excluded from the collective reminiscing and memorializing of hip-hop's past. Even though I *wasn't there* for these events, I needed to go back and watch those battles, study those breakers, understand how moves were developed, and slowly retrace my steps through 'my history', and I unpack my use of the word 'trace' in the next section.

Understanding Hip-Hop's 'Roots'

For Deleuze and Guattari (2004), the act of 'tracing' is inextricably connected with arborescent models of thought. By arborescent, they mean "hierarchical systems with centers of significance and subjectification, central automata like organized memories" (Ibid., 18), and they characterize the dominant philosophical tradition as representative of such models.[8] According to Rosi Braidotti, this is because Deleuze considers this philosophical tradition as "being a monumental, intimidating machine that makes us all feel inadequate" (2002, 66), and also that which promoted "negative, resentful, Oedipalized feelings" (Ibid.). Arborescent models of thought are striated, that is, they are highly regulated and organized on the plane of organization and development. Here, models of thought develop in a logical and organized manner, as the 'lines' or markings of striated space are rigid, hierarchical, and regulated. They write, "[t]he space it constitutes is one of striation; the countable multiplicity it constitutes remains

[7] See, for example, *YouTube* video 'the 30 greatest bboys of the 1990s' (koreanrockin 2012) and online editorial 'The Top Bboys of the 2000s' (Calvin 2009).

[8] In his translator's foreword, Brian Massumi elucidates Deleuze and Guattari's criticism of this type of representational philosophical thinking, or as they term 'state philosophy', that has characterized Western metaphysics since Plato and until the emergence of Derrida, Foucault and post-structural thinking more broadly (2004, xi).

subordinated to the One in an always superior or supplementary dimension. Lines of this type are molar, and form a segmentary, circular, binary, arborescent system" (2004, 556). Here, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the 'molar' lines that, as we saw earlier in the thesis, constitute representative, polarised categories (such as 'woman').

To describe the inherent limitations of arborescent structures, Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of the 'tree'. Here, a foundational 'root' both supports the whole tree, so that even when roots or branches shoot out in different directions they remain grounded through the principle root. Arborescent structures are thus inherently derivative, and Deleuze and Guattari's disdain for them can be seen in their reflections: "We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics" (2004, 17). Through this metaphor, we can see how, for Deleuze and Guattari, all ways of thinking within the dominant philosophical tradition are positioned as deriving from a principle, underlying 'truth'. This replicative characteristic of 'arborescent culture' intersects with binary structures, or what they term the 'One-Two' (Ibid., 18), whereby each representation, signification or phenomenon gains logic through the base unit, the 'One' or the 'root'.[9] We can see this logic at work in the dualistic categories of identities, such as man/woman, masculine/feminine, white/black, upper/lower class, and even self/other. As highlighted above, these prevailing and pervasive binaries are entitled 'molar categories' within Deleuze and Guattari's thought, and they are assigned through the modes of stratification we saw in Chapter 1. There is much more to unpack here in terms of how binary logic orders the way we perceive the world, and will be dealt with in greater depth in the following chapter when we discuss the prevailing authority of the Cartesian dualism. Importantly, though new modes of thought might appear to proliferate within arborescent structures, for Deleuze and Guattari they are "fake multiplicities" (Ibid.), as, "[t]he tree and root inspire a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or segmented higher unity" (Ibid.).

Consequently, there are inherent limitations to the possibilities enabled through tracing, as Deleuze and Guattari use 'root-tree' as a metaphor for fixed hierarchical structures. Indeed Deleuze and Guattari connect the root-tree with Oedipal structures, semiotic systems (Ibid., 16), and dichotomous thought (Ibid., 10). It is the following of

[9] Deleuze and Guattari write, "[b]inary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree" (2004, 5).

a pregiven path, as, for example, "[a]ccounting and bureaucracy proceed by tracings" (Ibid., 16). Indeed, the 'trace' might be conceptualized as a type of historical tracing, such as tracing the lineage of a family tree that makes direct teleological linear connections. We can begin to see, then, how retracing my steps through 'my history', that is, in following the set pathways and structures laid out for me, ends up inevitably privileging the patriarchal trace and tree of hip-hop.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the set limitations and modes of tracing through the tree are in contrast to the 'mapping' and open-ended structure of the 'rhizome'. This difference between the two structures is clear when they write, "[a] map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back 'to the same'" (Ibid., 14). Through mirroring the structure of the rhizomatic plant – the subterranean stems of a plant where roots and shoots continuously extend in multiple directions – the rhizome as a concept productively avoids any linear and hierarchical organization. Rather than being bound by 'totalizing roots', such as the arborescent structures that underpin Classical philosophy, the rhizome has "no beginning or end; it is always in the middle" (Ibid., 27). Just as the stems of the rhizomatic plant extend and heterogeneously connect to others, the concept of the rhizome "establishes a logic of the AND" (Ibid., 28) and, in doing so, is itself a type of line of flight rupturing the very stronghold of Oedipal thought. That is, by 'line of flight' Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize the entry point for territorializations and the markings of a new assemblage. By processes of territorializations I mean the 'decoding' of an assemblage through deterritorialization and its 'overcoding' through reterritorialization (Ibid., 243).

While Deleuze and Guattari oppose tracing with mapping, as we saw above, the relationship between the two modes is more complex than it might first appear. While they acknowledge the stronghold of binary and Oedipal thought, they do not position the rhizome as a transcendental concept that exists beyond any kind of ontological or metaphysical framework. Rather, they suggest it is a way to facilitate deterritorializations even within the most hierarchized of structures. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari even propose the rhizome as a concept that deconstructs all pre-existing oppositional thinking (Ibid., 23). This is because the de-centralized structure of the rhizome constantly searches for new connections by "operat[ing] by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots" (Ibid., 23), and yet remains open to possibilities as it is always "susceptible to constant modification" (Ibid., 13). Situated on 'smooth' space (in contrast to the striated space above), there is no unifying shape or

linear organization, and, as such, elements connect with one another in multiple ways. In doing so, the rhizome as a concept disrupts the very basis of binary thinking, as Deleuze and Guattari write,

> There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and bad. (Ibid., 10)

The rhizome is that which connects all – lines of flight, segmentary structures, molecular politics, stratifications, significations, and singularities – through an open-ended 'smooth' structure. As there is no fixed, unified shape in the rhizome, heterogeneous elements are held together through consolidations and consistencies. In doing so, lines of thought productively remain open to development, formation, and becomings. We can begin to see, then, how the non-hierarchical structure of the 'rhizome' might complicate and unpack the historical 'truths' of hip-hop through opening up hip-hop's narrative to multiple connections, entry points and exits. In this way, we can rethink hip-hop history as not one singular and linear narrative, but rather a consolidation of heterogeneous elements that give the *effect* of isolated consistency. That is, they privilege some connections (such as masculinist narratives) over others.

In summary, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) overtly connect modes of tracing with structures like Chomsky's 'tree' and psychoanalysis, whereby all manifestations hierarchically branch out from a base root. They write, "[t]he tree articulates and hierarchizes tracings; tracings are like the leaves of a tree" (Ibid., 13). The problems with these arborescent models are that any potentiality or possibilities for difference are limited to the capacities of the base structure, and unfold through a set hierarchy. In discussing the example of psychoanalysis, whereby an underlying unconscious prescribes contemporary actions and behaviours, Deleuze and Guattari argue: "It consists of tracing, on the basis of an overcoding structure or supporting axis, something that comes ready-made" (Ibid.).

This understanding of the ready-made and 'always coming back to the same' resonates with my learning of hip-hop history, as I had to 'trace' these "collective histories" (Fogarty 2006, 73). So to apply Deleuze and Guattari here, I would argue that the historical aspect of the hip-hop assemblage constitutes what Deleuze and Guattari

call the ‘molar’ line, in and through which historical events are not only materialized through present interactions, but also work to organize the scene. As mentioned above, the ‘molar’ line of any assemblage is, for Deleuze and Guattari, characterized by “rigid and clear-cut segmentarity” (2004, 218), and, as such, is the easiest line to identify, as it enforces the “pregiven” (2004, 226) arborescent and binary structures that order the way we make sense of the world (and will be explored in the following chapter in the discussion of the Cartesian dualism).

Upon entering the scene, this history – while now also ‘mine’ – was pregiven. As I will demonstrate, I could not modify it nor reverse it (or even *question* it), as would be the case for rhizomatic becomings, rather I had to *trace* my position within it. This position appeared both clear-cut and rigid – I was ‘other’ – as there was very little ‘history’ of female participation. This is why I use the term ‘tracing’ rather than ‘mapping’, as the history I needed to learn was structured, hierarchized, and representational. Thus the ‘history’ and ‘foundation’ of breaking culture is instrumental in setting the parameters of the breaking assemblage, and, in turn, both hierarchizing and delineating potential lines of flight.

The ‘Standard Narrative’ of Hip-hop

The ‘standard narrative’ of hip-hop history is a term taken from Maxwell’s (2003) work, and I use it here because it encapsulates not only the prevalence of a particular discourse (‘standard’), but also the inherent constructed-ness of historicized accounts (‘narrative’). In his examination of the ‘standard narrative’ of hip-hop history in Sydney, Maxwell distinguishes that this historical endeavour is not so much concerned with what ‘actually happened’ in hip-hop’s origins, than with “what is generally held, by the ‘community of investigators,’ to have happened” (2003, 57). Importantly, these ‘investigators’ gain the requisite power to recount ‘what happened’ through two ways: having ‘been there’, that is a claim to first-hand knowledge of how events transpired, or, as Maxwell describes, where “one’s current practice ad-equates to, or is consistent with, that history” (Ibid.), as in being present in the culture long enough to attain the level of authoritative knowledge.

With little record or documentation of events, hip-hop culture relies on oral accounts of history, as we will see later in the chapter. Thus the subjectiveness of these claims is often irrelevant. As a result, ‘being there’ is the pinnacle of authority, through

which accounts are accepted and, central to examining a rhizomatic history, not *questioned* (manifesting through, for example, 'how would you know? You weren't there!'). The room for new stories and connections to emerge are thus confined through a specific community of authority, and this can make it difficult for b-girls' voices to be heard. Despite women always participating in breaking culture (Kramer 2008; Monteyne 2013), there are gendered barriers to gaining this sort of authority, as those with 'authority' are predominantly men. As it can be harder for women to remain 'in' and active in the culture, b-girls are often without local female role models, and with often less years of experience, they must accept the tacit privileging of masculine voices and histories.

I want to begin this section with briefly highlighting the unquestioning authority held by hip-hop's 'community of investigators', or 'pioneers', in order to reveal the gendered ramifications of this system of power.

Respecting the 'Pioneers'

The authoritative reach of pioneers can be seen in what esteemed hip-hop scholar Murray Forman (2002) terms the emergent 'canon' (2002, 36) of hip-hop scholarship. For Forman, this scholarship "do[es] not provide externalized objective views" from the confines of academic research, but is in fact located *within* the culture as they constitute "internally significant facets of what today is recognized as hip-hop culture" (Ibid.). We can understand these 'internally significant facets' as the pioneers or 'historians' that, for Schloss (2009), are made explicit through hip-hop's vernacular.

Hip-hop's authoritative 'investigators' are underscored within the culture through the application of subjective terms, though used 'objectively', to demarcate validity (Schloss 2009, 128). As Schloss writes, "[t]he question of whether a b-boy is a 'pioneer,' whether a graffiti writer is 'all-city' or a 'king,' or whether a deejay is a 'grandmaster' is not a matter of opinion. They either are or they aren't" (Ibid.). As Schloss highlights, specific members of the community are imbued with unquestioning authority that is made explicit through titles.[10] The gendered language of these titles – such as 'king' – is particularly telling of how positions of power in hip-hop culture are inordinately masculine. Indeed, this gendering of authority is further evidenced in Schloss's list of prominent figures, as he states, "within b-boy culture, the most

[10] Often these titles preface the names of individuals, such as 'Pioneer B-boy Ken Swift', and manifest in a range of settings including academic literature, community forums, event posters, and interviews.

prominent scholars tend to be historians, such as PopMaster Fabel, Thomas 'T-Bopper' Guzman-Sanchez, Alien Ness, Ken Swift, Trac 2, and Mr. Wiggles" (Ibid., 126). While this list is fairly small, and consists of primarily first-generation hip-hoppers (breakers, hip-hop dancers and poppers), it also communicates the weight of those who were 'there' from the beginning.

Showing respect to those who were 'there' takes many forms, but perhaps most importantly, questioning or disagreeing with the assertions of a pioneer is a highly political undertaking. This is because, as Schloss observes, "it would be considered disrespectful to question the assertions of any individual elder" (2009, 130). Maxwell, too, notes such 'disrespect', observing that a particular event in Sydney's hip-hop community "was understood, from quarters, as a usurpation, as being not sufficiently respectful to those who had 'been there' from the beginning" (2003, 58). Showing respect extends beyond listening to their views, and seeps into constructions of 'truths', which I will unpack below. In other ways, respect is shown through inviting pioneers to teach workshops and judge competitions worldwide. For example, in 2013 Mr. Wiggles was invited to Sydney to judge the popping battles for *Destructive Steps*, and part of this trip he taught a number of workshops at Sydney's *Crossover Dance Studios*. The opportunity to learn from a pioneer is both rare and treasured in such a geographically distanced community as Sydney. Despite the time and distance that separates the contemporary Sydney scene from the competing days of these pioneers, they continue to hold much weight and authority.[11]

The often-unquestioned authority, and far-reaching platform, enjoyed by the pioneers can be seen in the writings of PopMaster Fabel (also known as Jorge Pabon). For example, in his chapter 'Physical Graffiti: The History of Hip-Hop Dance' he authoritatively states:

> [I]t is safe to say that there are authentic facts, proven by sound testimony and evidence, regarding hip-hop history. These truths, unanimously agreed upon by

[11] This is also evident in the number of educational *Facebook* pages in Sydney with 'pinned' or 'saved' posts from pioneers. These groups include 'Bboy/Bgirl Education for the new and old' (www.facebook.com/groups/213575192010235/), 'Footwork Laboratory' (www.facebook.com/groups/142756735805971/), and 'Top Rock City' (www.facebook.com/groups/toprockcity/). In addition, the local podcast on *SoundCloud* 'The S.C.J. Show', which features prominent Sydney breakers often discuss recent online posts by pioneers. For example, Mr. Wiggles advocated for the inclusion of breaking within the title (and thus larger dance camps) of 'hip-hop dance' ("Breaking is Hip Hop" 2016), and in one episode they also discussed the importance of 'knowing history' in breaking culture ("Voltron!" 2016).

> the pioneers of the culture, should constitute the 'hip-hop gospel,' whereas the questionable theories should remain as footnotes until proven to be fact. (Pabon 2006, 18)

Pabon thus views hip-hop history as told by the pioneers as a singular, fixed narrative or 'gospel'. This authority held by the pioneers that manifests not only in the culture, but also academic literature, demonstrates their power to hierarchize particular narratives and modes of engagement. Specifically, that no woman is regarded with the same level of authority in both hip-hop and breaking culture illustrates the "structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1990, 53) of hip-hop's history in maintaining a masculine habitus. Within post-structural theory, however, 'truths' are not seen as 'pure' facts, but rather as constructions that are both historically and culturally produced. The notion of 'genealogy', explicated by Nietzsche and then later developed by Foucault (1977a), is a productive framework through which to unpack 'history' and 'truths', and I will further unpack their arguments below after I have examined the emphasis on hip-hop's origins.

Originalism: Hip-hop's 'beginnings'

I quickly learnt that the most important history to know was hip-hop's 'origin' story, an observation similar to Maxwell (2003, 41). This 'standard narrative' of hip-hop's 'origins' was often discussed in workshops, used as a way to explain particular moves or stylizations, and was also raised by a number of my interviewees, despite not specifically asking them about hip-hop history. Imani Perry conceptualizes this emphasis on the origins of hip-hop within academic research as 'originalism', which she views "a fixation on who made the first records or created the first dances and what ethnic groups they came from" (2004, 11). While discussing origins is functional for historical acknowledgement, or as it is known in hip-hop culture 'giving credit where credit is due', as Perry notes they tend to overlook an art form as a 'cultural project' (Ibid.). That is, acknowledging the larger ways through which an art form enables the identification of a particular cultural identity. Consequently, Perry's work frames hip-hop as a distinctly black cultural form, though in a way that attempts to resist essentialist arguments.

However Perry is not the only hip-hop scholar to criticize emphases on 'origins'. Esteemed cultural critic Paul Gilroy notes the problems with relying of such frameworks, arguing:

> No straight or unbroken line of descent through either gendered line can establish plausible genealogical relations between current forms and moods and their fixed, identifiable and authentic origins. It is rather that the forbidding density of the processes of conquest, accommodation, mediation, and interpenetration that helps to define colonial cultures also demands that we re-conceptualize the whole problematic of origins. (1995, 15)

As a way to navigate this complex terrain, Gilroy analyses hip-hop through the lens of what he terms the 'Black Atlantic' (also the title of his 1993 book). That is, a transcontinental flow of beliefs, ideas, materials and peoples that shapes contemporary black subjectivity. Gilroy posits this framework as a response to the African-American and English views of cultural studies that problematically share an overly nationalistic focus that is "antithetical to the rhizomatic, fractal structure of the transcultural and international formation of the transcultural, international formation I call the Black Atlantic" (1993, 4). Consequently, attempts to explain current practices through a traceable historical narrative or starting point places limitations upon the potential stories and connections that may emerge through a rhizomatic analysis. Indeed, they can omit the 'diasporic' – even rhizomatic – nature of global hip-hop culture.

The value in Gilroy's work can be seen through George Lipsitz's analysis of the renowned hip-hop deejay Afrika Bambaataa, and his 'diasporic intimacy' (1994, 27) with the Black Atlantic world. This relationship can be seen, for example, through Bambaataa's establishment of the 'Zulu Nation' (discussed below), amalgamation of German electronica (such as Kraftwerk), and perhaps aptly titled album *Planet Rock* (Afrika Bambaataa & Soulsonic Force 1986). While acknowledging the African and Caribbean influences in American hip-hop is important, Lipsitz highlights the limitations of over-emphases, arguing:

> [T]hese claims place value on origins that distort the nature of Black Atlantic culture. The flow of information and ideas among diasporic people has not been solely from Africa outward to Europe and the Americas, but rather has been a reciprocal self-renewing dialogue in communities characterized by upheaval and change. (1994, 39)

As Lipsitz highlights, here, there is no fixed pathway or hierarchy that can explain the transmission and formation of cultural forms. Moreover, considerations of 'originalist' sentiments of hip-hop extend beyond conceptualizing a specific national community, and reveal the inherent reductiveness to 'traceable' histories.

The problems with over-emphases on the 'origins' of a phenomenon are explicated most productively in the work of Nietzsche and Foucault, who view knowledge as neither 'final' nor existing 'purely' outside its historical formation. Through the concept of 'genealogy', Friedrich Nietzsche critiques the pursuit of the 'origin', viewing it as no more than "a metaphysical extension which arises from the belief that things are most precious and essential at the moment of birth" (Nietzsche quoted in Foucault 1977b, 143). The 'origin' is seen as the truest point, the exact essence and purist manifestation of a phenomenon. In extending this understanding, Foucault's reading of Nietzsche's genealogy helps us to see the relationship between histories and bodies. Specifically, how history affects bodies – as the interface between bodies and knowledges – and how knowledges are extracted from and in their turn help to form bodies. As Foucault writes:

> The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the processes of history's destruction of the body. (1977b, 148)

The genealogical method thus involves an interrogation of the history of the various events that lead up to or make possible various struggles in the present. Breaking culture, as we will see, is hardly exempt from such historical conditioning. Like much of hip-hop culture, there is a tendency to discuss the 'true' origin of dance moves or events in breaking culture, which is why a genealogy is vital to comprehend the forces that shape and constituted the breaking body.

The genealogical method has similarly been used to interrogate how the underlying categories of sex and gender are constituted through specific structures of power. In the work of Butler, genealogy is useful in moving away from uncovering a true essence or origin of gendered identity, and instead exposes how gender is both

produced and naturalized through specific discourses, practices and formations of power. She writes:

> A genealogical critique refuses to search for the origins of gender, the inner truth of female desire, a genuine or authentic sexual identity that repression has kept from view; rather, genealogy investigates the political stakes in designating an *origin* and *cause* those identity categories that are in fact the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin. The task of this inquiry is to center on – and decenter – such defining institutions: phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality. (1990, xxxi)

Applying Butler's understanding, here, to the historical (re)formation of hip-hop culture exposes how the naturalization of the contemporary breaking body as distinctly 'masculine' is not the product of any kind of true origin, but rather is reiteratively produced through the institution of hip-hop. As I will attempt to show throughout this chapter, this foundation of hip-hop conforms to molar patriarchal politics in the way it privileges specific (masculinized) narratives and, in doing so, shuts down potential lines of flight. The result of this ongoing process is the maintenance and naturalization of a specific gendered *effect*.

As a global scene, maintaining a specific narrative of origins connects and unifies contemporary breakers through the same territorializations. Following Deleuze and Guattari, we can see it as the 'refrain' that gives consistency to the culture. The refrain is "any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 356). It is the expressive component of the territory, and is that which gives the territory consistency. By 'territory', Deleuze and Guattari are referring to a malleable and mobile site of passage between assemblages (though is also a type of assemblage itself). The territory is both a specific point in time and space that is marked by a localizable centre or vector, such as the 'refrain'. In hip-hop culture, these narrative motifs mark out the breaking assemblage in the way they both consolidate and give legitimacy to contemporary practices and aesthetics.

As previously outlined, hip-hop has permeated into disparate communities worldwide, and Mitchell's edited collection *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA* (2001) is testament to the culture's versatility. An underlying historical

narrative is functional in that it may operate to territorialize and express individual sites as breaking. Yet there are limitations to its function, as the prevalence of, and importance placed upon, hip-hop's origins might explain why, internationally, breaking communities are male-dominated. Specifically, the representation that underscores hip-hop's historical narrative – as emergent from street gangs in the Bronx – structures and defines the culture as an aggressively masculine territory. This is not to downplay the structural inequalities facing early hip-hoppers, and their creativity in producing something 'new', but rather to illustrate how a very specific historical account might limit capacities to 'become' in Sydney's breaking scene. Indeed, and as I will attempt to demonstrate, some pioneers argue *against* preserving specific practices and aesthetics that were prevalent 'back in the day', such as CrazyLegs who in a commentary posted to *YouTube* (titled 'CrazyLegs on the Future of Breaking'), advocates, instead, for contemporary breakers to "character-wise, inspiration-wise […] create their own lane" (2013).

From Gangs to Hip-Hop

I want to begin with a brief historical overview of hip-hop's emergence from the gang filled ghettos of New York City and, in doing so, highlight how this 'standard narrative' is supported through myriad discourses and practices. Utilizing my interview material, I will illustrate how these historical representations are used to both justify and legitimize particular masculinized aesthetics. As we will see, hip-hop history thus functions as a type of masculine preserve, both structuring the lens through which hip-hop is perceived, and supporting the boundaries to entry contemporarily. To examine how representations of hip-hop – such as its history or 'origins' – limit possibilities to deterritorialize gender, I want to now discuss what I see as the 'standard narrative' of hip-hop as that which positions hip-hop and breaking as both a successor to gang culture and inextricably tied to 'the street'.

While I do not detail the conditions of the Bronx in-depth here, as there is insufficient space to do it justice, there is much work that has already explored the structural inequalities that disenfranchised the Bronx communities, as well as the history of gang politics with regard to hip-hop's development.[12] To gain a picture of the

[12] For an in-depth discussion of the Bronx's transition from a lively working-class neighbourhood to one of poverty and devastation, particularly through Robert Moses's building projects that were legitimized through racialized and classed discourses, see further Caro (1975), Rose (1994), Jonnes (2002), as well its documentation in *The New York Times* by Dembart (1977), Fried (1977), Severo (1977), Quindlen

Bronx during this time, Rose describes how, "city leaders and the popular press had literally and figuratively condemned the South Bronx neighbourhoods and their inhabitants" (1994, 34), and this is evident in the way it was positioned as a 'symbol of America's woes' (Severo 1977), as all that was 'wrong with urban America' (Ibid.), and a space which even the police avoided (*Rubble Kings* 2010). To understand how the conditions of the Bronx changed to facilitate the entry of something 'new', that is the development of hip-hop culture and its respective practices, there are several catalyst moments to consider: the inter-gang 'Peace Treaty', the development of the Zulu Nation, and Herc's original block party. I will locate these events as different lines of the Bronx assemblage in order to map the reterritorialization of the Bronx.

As a result of widespread unemployment, lack of affordable housing, and inadequate social services, throughout the 1960s the Bronx was plagued with poverty and geopolitical devastation, enabling gang rivalry and violence to take hold of the community (J. Chang 2007; Ogg & Upshal 1999; Rose 1994; *Rubble Kings* 2010). Culturally and racially segregated, gangs demarcated the Bronx with turf lines that were often fatal if crossed, underscoring the environment with anticipated violence and tension (J. Chang 2007; *Rubble Kings* 2010). To perhaps gain a picture of the Bronx during this time, Afrika Bambaataa, a Bronx resident and key figure in hip-hop culture, explains, "[t]he Bronx was declared one of the most destructive places in America. It was infested by a lot of drugs, a lot of street gang activity" (quoted in Ogg and Upshal 1999, 23).

First, the inter-gang Peace Treaty of 1971 is acknowledged as enabling the long-awaited 'peace' the system had neglected to produce (J. Chang 2007; *Rubble Kings* 2010). Through the efforts of the 'Ghetto Brothers' gang who, rather than go to war over the murder of their own member 'Black Benji', unified the Bronx gangs under a Peace Treaty.[13] While prior to the Treaty the Ghetto Brothers were already hosting

(1981) and Sedensky (2001). Rose (1994) and J. Chang (2007) also map the effects of post-industrialization on the Bronx, which disproportionately saw working-class African-American and Puerto-Rican men unemployed. Additionally, these authors discuss key events that contributed to the particular damaging representation of the Bronx, including the black out and consequent riots of the Bronx, and President Carter's visit to the Bronx (both in 1977). Following these events, Rose (1994) documents how the Bronx was exploited through its use as a scenic backdrop for films. For an in-depth discussion of the gang history in the Bronx, and its relationship with hip-hop culture, see further J. Chang (2007) and the documentary *Rubble Kings* (2010), which features interviews with a number of ex-gang members.

[13] While the peacekeeping efforts of the Ghetto Brothers reduced some inter-gang wars, the murder of the Ghetto Brothers' own 'Peace Ambassador', 'Black Benji', was the catalyst for change (J. Chang 2007; *Rubble Kings* 2010). Rather than going to war with Black Benji's murderers, with the support of

block parties and jams each week centered on music and dancing, the Peace Treaty opened up the space for members from all different gangs to attend without threat or fear of violence, thus rupturing the ongoing cycle of violence that plagued the Bronx (J. Chang 2007; *Rubble Kings* 2010). An ex-gang member recounts, "after [the Treaty] you could talk to all these girls you couldn't before – a black guy could talk to a Puerto-Rican girl. That wouldn't happen before, you wouldn't live to tell it!" (quoted in *Rubble Kings* 2010). As such, it may be valuable to examine the Peace Treaty as a line of flight that reterritorialized the widespread tension of the Bronx, breaking down the racial and cultural barriers between African-American and Puerto-Rican youths.

While the Peace Treaty facilitated peace for some time, some tensions did re-emerge, and it is here that Bambaataa is broadly acknowledged as a key ambassador for change in the Bronx's reterritorialization (J. Chang 2007; Fernandes 2011; *The Freshest Kids* 2002). A member of the notorious Spades gang, Bambaataa was renowned for being unafraid to cross gang turfs and forged relationships with members of all different gangs (J. Chang 2007; *The Freshest Kids* 2002; Ogg and Upshal 1999). As such, Bambaataa had the distinct capacity to meet with gang leaders and preach a new type of competitive arena – the emerging hip-hop culture (J. Chang 2007; Ogg & Upshal 1999). Consequently, pioneer Fab Five Freddy credits Bambaataa more than anyone for transforming the energy of the Bronx, recounting: "Bambaataa had the inspiration to stop this gangbanging nonsense, stop killing each other and let's get creative. So he turned one of the most violent street gangs [the Black Spades] into one of the most influential cultural organisations" (Fab Five Freddy quoted in Ogg and Upshal 1999, 33). This cultural organization was the Universal Zulu Nation founded in 1973 (Fernandes 2011, 1), and by preaching "Peace, Love, Unity and Having Fun" (J. Chang 2007, 105; *The Freshest Kids* 2002) the Zulu Nation encouraged youth to redirect their conflict and aggression into the creative 'elements' of hip-hop culture.[14] Consequently, as Chang describes: "Zulu chapters proliferated throughout the tri-state area as quickly as had the Black Spades. To be down with the Zulus conferred street power and respect, but perhaps just as important, the promise of good times" (J. Chang 2007, 105). The parties and the creativity of what would be later called 'hip-hop' functioned as a new assemblage that destabilized the 'totalizing roots' of street gang

many of the Bronx gangs, the Ghetto Brothers used this opportunity to unite them under a 'Peace Treaty'.

[14] Bambaataa was recently removed from the 'Zulu Nation' due to the emergence of multiple allegations of child sexual abuse over the past few decades.

culture in facilitating the space for reterritorializations. While this was, importantly, a gradual process, and in some areas the stronghold of gang culture never left (*The Freshest Kids* 2002), Bambaataa recounts, "[p]eople were trying to bring a different type of vibration, frequency, to their community" (*Rubble Kings* 2010). This desire for a new 'frequency' saw a greater emphasis on creative expression, and for the deejay to become 'king' of this new Bronx assemblage.

Regarded as the 'Godfather of hip-hop' (*The Freshest Kids* 2002), deejay Kool Herc reterritorialized the Bronx with his big sound systems, house parties, and park jams.[15] At these parties, Herc noticed the dancers would eagerly anticipate the 'breakdowns' in the tracks he played, a discovery that led him to experiment with a technique he called 'the Merry-Go-Round' (J. Chang 2007). In this practice, Herc would work two copies of the same record: as one record reached the end of the break he would back-cue the other to the beginning of the same break, thus extending a breakdown of five seconds to, potentially, however long he wanted and inevitably changed the possibilities of deejaying (Ibid.). Chang elucidates the significance of this discovery, stating:

> It was an insight as profound as Ruddy Redwood's dub discovery. The moment when the dancers really got wild was in a song's short instrumental break, when the band would drop out and the rhythm section would get elemental. Forget melody, chorus, songs – it was all about the groove, building it, keeping it going. Like a string theorist, Herc zeroed in on the fundamental vibrating loop at the heart of the record, the break. (Ibid., 79)

As Kool Herc recounts, "once they heard that, that was it, wasn't no turning back… [sic] They always wanted to hear breaks after breaks after breaks after breaks" (Herc quoted in J. Chang 2007, 79). The significance of the break in facilitating the space to not only 'groove', but to also embrace a more process-based aesthetic – ideal for entering into becomings – is significant, and the larger potential of which is explored in

[15] In a recent article in *The Guardian*, Angus Batey positions Herc's original party as the 'number 1' key event in the history of R&B and hip-hop (out of 50). This party was a 'Back to school jam' to raise money for the school term and to celebrate his sister's birthday, and was held on 13 August 1973. Describing Herc "as the architect of an entirely new music", Batey explains how the original location of Herc's parties, 1520 Sedgwick Avenue (Bronx, New York), is now officially recognized as hip-hop's birthplace (Ibid.).

Chapter 6 where we examine the possibilities to conceptualize the breaking body beyond dominant modes of thought.

Beyond the experience of 'good times' and keeping 'the groove' going that manifested through these parties, I want to highlight how these emergent cultural formations were reconstituted on the molecular line of the Bronx assemblage. While the molecular line is functional in introducing rhizomatic segmentations that facilitate new connections and possibilities, these possibilities are often regulated back into the molar politics of the assemblage. For hip-hop, these new creative reterritorializations were realigned to the rigid segments of street gang culture, as much of significations of gangs – such as colours, conventions, aesthetics and, importantly, *masculinity* – were built into hip-hop. Hip-hop was thus not a complete line of flight, but rather, also, a product of the environment in which it emerged. In this way, the deterritorializations enabled were 'relative', rather than 'absolute', as they coincided with molecular reterritorializations. As Ogg and Upshal note, "hip-hop was built block by block over several years, devouring its immediate past rather than ridiculing it" (1999, 18).

Now that I have provided a brief historical overview of how the conditions of the Bronx were reterritorialized to foster the burgeoning hip-hop culture, I want to further highlight how hip-hop's relationship with, and emergence from, the gang culture of the Bronx is constituted through the molecular line of the Bronx assemblage in its alignment with patriarchal politics. My aim is to demonstrate how this relationship continues to not only legitimize contemporary codes and conventions in Sydney's breaking scene, but to also normalize the masculinist lens of breaking culture. That is, by 'masculinist lens' I am referring to how bodily capacities are always-already mediated by patriarchal structures. Bodily expression is thus not only binarized, but also hierarchized. We can thus not examine the body as a 'pure' site of difference when gender, indeed masculinity, is the 'One' through which all other expression is compared against. In my continued use of this phrase throughout this thesis, I am referring to how bodily expression is reiteratively limited within the confines of masculinist representations and structures.

'Ghettocentricity'

To further support my argument, I want to first demonstrate the prevalence of this narrative as a historical consistency within hip-hop culture. This is most clearly demonstrated in Forman's comments: "The story of rap's rise from the black ghettoes

of America has by now become a familiar tale, diffused through a range of sources that include academic publishing and both mainstream and minor media" (2002, 37). Forman's reference to 'minor media' may include the *Red Bull BC One* breaking blog, which in one posted states: "Hip Hop has become the common definition of peace that has settled rival gang disputes and brought tribes at war together while connecting the Bronx to Finland, Africa to Switzerland, Azerbaijan to South Korea and beyond" (2015e). As this post highlights, this particular narrative of hip-hop functions to unify disparate cultures and scenes worldwide, yet this unification transpires specifically through gang conventions. Gang history and conventions, then, are that which lend consistency to hip-hop cultures worldwide.

While Forman conceptualizes hip-hop's origins in the '*black* ghettoes', there has been work that unpacks the more complex arena in which hip-hop emerged. Importantly, in contrast to hip-hop's musical practices, such as rap and deejaying, Puerto-Rican youth had a more substantial role in developing graffiti and breaking.[16] This history of Puerto-Rican involvement in hip-hop has most prominently come to light through the work of Latino scholars, such as Flores (1988; 1994; 1996), del Barco (1996), as well as more recently Rivera (2001; 2003). These works call attention to the long history of interaction between Puerto-Rican and African-American communities in New York City, confirming, "Puerto Ricans have been involved in hip hop since the beginning" (Flores 1994, 90). While the history of Puerto-Rican engagement may be acknowledged in these canonical hip-hop texts, it is more often than not a side note. I want to suggest that this is perhaps indicative of the hierarchization of lines of flight that replicates an omission of *other* cultures' and peoples' roles developing breaking. For example, Fernandes notes the "uneasy place of Asians in the Global Hip Hop Nation" (2011, 13), continuing, "[i]n some ways hip hop has been both global and diasporic since its beginnings" (Ibid., 20). Indeed, Mitchell's edited collection of hip-hop scenes outside the USA demonstrates the complex arena in which contemporary hip-hop culture finds itself, and I return to this diasporic component of breaking in the subsequent chapter.

Returning to the discussion of what Forman articulates as the '*black* ghettoes', there is a larger emphasis on 'blackness' in the demonstration of authenticity across

[16] By 1978 breaking among black youth had become unpopular as they instead focused their energies on deejaying, while Puerto-Rican youth, who began breaking later, are credited with rejuvenating the form and extending its longevity (Harrison 2008, 1788; Hazzard-Donald 2004, 510; Osumare 2008, 50; *The Freshest Kids* 2002).

academic research. For example, for Kembrew McLeod (1999, 139), 'blackness' is a key tenet of hip-hop authenticity, along with being 'from the street', 'staying true to yourself' and 'being underground', the latter two of which are also examined in Maxwell's (2003) work. Importantly for McLeod, these tenets of hip-hop authenticity are not authoritative 'truths' but rather discursive claims, evidenced through his analysis of how hip-hop is talked about by fans, artists, and the press (1999, 139). In discussing McLeod's observations, Anthony Kwame Harrison notes that in this way, breaking, graffiti, and more recently deejaying, are able to maintain their 'authentic' constructions through the way they remain 'underground', a positioning sustained through "multiracial communities of practitioners" (2008, 1788). As such, as Harrison summarizes, much of the recent hip-hop scholarship is "rooted in the understanding that hip hop authenticity involves a dialogic construction of identity" (Ibid., 1790). Yet in the US context, Forman considers:

> [T]he conflation of the ghetto as a privileged socio-spatial site and an idealized image of black authenticity within hip-hop discourse has continually threatened to override other possible images of lived cultural space among the hip-hop generation, regardless of one's racial identity. (2002, 61)

The pervasive representation of the 'ghetto' in hip-hop thus hierarchizes and limits modes of engagement within the culture, and also regulates possibilities for creative expression. Indeed, Forman's 'privileged sociospatial site' was reproduced in Sydney in what Maxwell (2003) labels the 'West Side' phenomenon. Maxwell claims this project was "grounded in discourses of 'the urban' borrowed from those circulating throughout African-American Hip Hop, and has, necessarily, socioeconomic dimensions" (2003, 54). The emphasis placed on racial oppression in academic scholarship is pervasive, as highlighted above, yet Maxwell also found the 'racial link', between racialized minorities in Sydney and oppressed African-Americans in North America superficial and exclusive, instead positing that "hip hop stands as sort of a reservoir catching the misfits of (schoolyard) society", and thus appealing to "disaffected youth" (2003, 46). This sort of appeal of hip-hop culture was similarly observed in my interview with J-One. In reflecting on why hip-hop, particularly breaking, is so popular with youth of Asian heritage, J-One explains:

> [W]hen I think back on it, I always think that maybe there are a fraction of people that perceive the world differently because they haven't had an upbringing that is as assimilative as all the others, as we have sort of all grown up to know about, you know the American Dream or the Australian Dream and all that spiel, and I think perhaps having a different upbringing or a different maybe not so uh stereotypical upbringing can sort of open people up at a young age to different things, and because hip-hop is not *ingrained* into Australian culture, and it was brought *over* from America, as it's adapted into other countries like it was here, people that thought differently as they were brought up differently probably were more *open* to that idea. (interview, October 24, 2014)

We can begin to see, then, how it is not necessarily a racialized essence that marks hip-hop participation, nor should it be, but rather a 'different' mode of engaging with the world. In the following chapter I examine how discussions of breaking in academic scholarship are often analysed through the lens of the 'Africanist aesthetic', which can also work to reduce bodily expression in-line with a pre-ordained cultural narrative. Moreover, I return to how the contextual disjuncture between Sydney participants and hip-hop's origins was negotiated, according to Maxwell, in my discussion of media later in the chapter.

I want to emphasize, then, that the normalized relationship with hip-hop's street gang past has gendered ramifications, as the discourses and practices of gang life interlock with myriad normative significations of masculinity. For example, in her discussion of ghetto-centric narratives of the 1990s, Pough analyses their female characters, writing:

> [T]he ghetto girl is denied a fullness of womanhood, and societal influences, such as systemic and intersecting oppressions and the implications of these for her life, are not taken into consideration. Therefore representations of the money-hungry and sexually promiscuous black woman living in a poor urban area are given as unproblematized truths to humorous stereotyped caricatures. (2004, 128)

The violence and confrontation, aggression and intimidation, as well as the harshness of the street thus reinforce hip-hop's 'roots' as a distinctly male territory (i.e. the sex-gender conflation).

Moreover, and as I will attempt to highlight, *female* presence in gang culture is notably absent, including often-cited texts in the breaking community including Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop* (2007) and the documentaries *The Freshest Kids* (2002), and *Fresh Dressed* (2015).[17] Indeed, the connection made between hip-hop and gangs is furthered in the genre of gangsta rap, and the distinct stereotyping of women further represents hip-hop as a male-only space. This can be seen in the many hip-hop biopics that disproportionately feature male rap artists and, in turn, sideline or omit women. For example, the more recent N.W.A. film *Straight Outta Compton* (2015) maps the emergence of the genre gangsta rap, and the minimal contribution, indeed *presence*, of women in the film further normalizes male participation in hip-hop.

Within breaking culture, the sidelining of women manifests not only through attitudinal differences regarding the capacities of the female breaker, as we will see in Chapter 4, but also in the way women are positioned as inextricably 'other' to breaking culture. As I will continue to highlight in this thesis, the privileging of masculinity in breaking culture denies the feminized body from full, indeed equal, participation. This can be seen, for example, in the popular satirical *YouTube* video titled 'When a Girl Comes to Practice' (DevilUpComedy 2013). Beyond portraying breaking as a male-only terrain, this video also positions bourgeoning female breakers as initiating animalistic masculine rivalry. After learning a few steps, the female complains: "this is *hard*, I don't know if breakdancing is for me" (Ibid.). Widely shared in my own social circles, in the context of this video the female breaker is positioned as so 'rare', that upon a series of 'cock blocks' between the competing primal males, the narrator states: "the female leaves, and the drought continues", thus (re)inscribing the masculinist space of breaking culture.

As we can begin to see, the patriarchal line of the hip-hop assemblage cuts across and aligns with the gender politics of the broader 'Western' cultural assemblage: one that positions women as 'other' and more generally subjects them to the male gaze. This is broadly acknowledged within academic research on gender, particularly via work of Mulvey (2001) (first published in 1975), and can be seen in the myriad video

[17] In the Sydney podcast 'The S.C.J. Show', they have encouraged their listeners to both watch these documentaries and read J. Chang's (2007) book ("Voltron!" 2015).

clips and hip-hop films that both privilege male action and objectify women through the male gaze. Indeed, such characterizations occur in the biopics of Ol' Dirty Bastard in *Dirty: Platinum Edition* (2013), Biggie Smalls (Notorious B.I.G.) in *Notorious* (2009), 50 Cent's *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* (2005), Eminem's *8 Mile* (2002), and *Too Legit: The MC Hammer Story* (2001). These are merely a selection of male hip-hop biopics, in comparison to the few of female rap artists – such as, *Aaliyah: The Princess of R&B* (2014) and *CrazySexyCool: The TLC Story* (2013). I want to emphasize, here, that the popularity of male hip-hop artist biopics at mainstream cinemas is both a product, and reflective, of the privileging and legitimization of men in hip-hop (and is a trend that continues into popular music, see Strong 2011). This portrayal, or even lack thereof, of women in hip-hop perpetuated in mainstream media, extends into academia (such as George 2005a) – an oversight most notably addressed by Pough (2004) – and that I discuss in depth later in the chapter.

As such, with gangs presented as a male-only terrain hip-hop's male-dominance can be seen to be a *natural* development, and this reiterative relationship with gang roots thus gives hip-hop the effect of containing a naturally-occurring masculinity. Through a Butlerian lens, this could be framed as the 'historical situation' of hip-hop culture, in that it shapes and conditions the contemporary breaking body. Butler explains:

> As an intentionally organized materiality, the body is always an embodying *of* possibilities both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention. In other words, the body *is* a historical situation, as Beauvoir has claimed, and is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and *reproducing* a historical situation. (1988, 521)

Applying Butler's argument, here, we can see how particular aesthetics and knowledges constructed as 'truths' in hip-hop not only condition the body, but also regulate its possibilities. In what follows, I unpack this argument through examining the role of hip-hop's dominant historical narrative in regulating the possibilities and interactions in the Sydney breaking scene, while also showing how the Sydney breaking body is a product of the Bronx's 'historical situation'.

From the Bronx to Sydney: (Re)negotiating Hip-hop

In developing this argument, my aim is not to dispute that hip-hop grew out of gang culture, nor to undermine the disenfranchised African-American and Puerto-Rican youths in the Bronx who created what we now understand as 'hip-hop'. Rather, I want to unpack the ramifications of the frequent and normalized connection with this history in Sydney's contemporary breaking culture to examine how it shapes the breaking body in specific ways. For Deleuze and Guattari, "[t]ales must contain haecceities that are not simply emplacements, but concrete individuations that have a status of their own and direct the metamorphosis of things and subjects" (2004, 288). In this way, hip-hop history can be seen to have both a status of its own and direct the ways in which things transform, develop and enter into deterritorializations. A discussion of history in Sydney's breaking scene will thus help to understand its guiding forces that direct the ways by which bodies might enter into new becomings. Through providing an overview of the history of breaking, my aim is to reveal two main arguments. First, the deterritorializations that always already occur in the scene, despite the masculinist discourses; and secondly, how Deleuze and Guattari's notion of deterritorialization is valuable in both undermining gender construction, and also opening up the body to new connections.

Cos that's how it was 'back in the day'

The parties of the Bronx are often reviewed through the masculinist lens of gang culture, and in this section I want to argue that this can work to render invisible female, indeed feminized, presence. As Fab Five Freddy Love recounts: "Everybody would be at a party in the park in the summer, jamming. Guys would get together and dance with each other, sort of a macho thing where they would show each other who could do the best moves" (quoted in Banes 1994, 122).[18] This 'macho-ness' similarly manifests in my interviews with Sydney breakers. In response to why he thought breaking was so male-dominated b-boy J-One explained:

> [B]ack in the 70s, if you think about it when hip-hop started, it would've been a lot of young kids, most of them guys that were trying to impress girls, or were

[18] Yet Hazzard-Donald (2004) perceives this male-dominance as a result of the threat of growing numbers of female-headed households. As such, hip-hop's affiliation with gang culture was functional in the production of a tough and superior masculinity, as "[e]ven in its early stages, hip hop dancing aggressively asserted male dominance" (Ibid., 509).

> getting some of that testosterone out of their system, and fighting or you know trying to be very macho. (interview, October 24, 2014)

J-One here explicitly connects gangs and battling with being 'macho', 'testosterone', and impressing girls. This depiction of early breaking culture as being functional in releasing 'testosterone' and to 'pick up girls' is an example of how the historical narrative of hip-hop's emergence is often used to legitimize the male-dominance of the culture, and, in doing so, exclude women. Scot Doo Rok similarly noted the function of breaking for breakers to "pick up girls as well" (interview, November 6, 2014). This is by no means an uncommon view of hip-hop's practices, as participants in Maxwell's study, for example, observed that "boys only got into to rapping to attract girls" and that the main benefits of being a 'bomber' is that whenever you went to a club "you'd always pick up […] you know how girls go for the rebellious ones" (2003, 55). Not only are these heteronormative narratives limiting of bodily potential, but they also work to exclude particular bodies access to the dance floor and the reterritorializing potential of breaking. In other words, through these heteronormative narratives, or what Ringrose (2011) might describe as 'heterosexually striated space', women are denied connection and movement within breaking's discourse and history.

Hip-hop's perceived inheritance of conventions and aesthetics from gang culture further structures and defines breaking as a masculine terrain. Specifically, aesthetics such as intensity, intimidation, and aggression are recurring descriptors that appear throughout academic discussions of hip-hop, as well as my own interviews. For example, Fab Five Freddy saw battling as vital to channel Bronx youths' aggression: "the battling aspect that's what makes it fun… I mean it also helps the males to get off some of that testosterone, cos if not somebody might be hitting somebody else upside their head" (quoted in *The Freshest Kids* 2002).[19] Additionally, Rose writes, "the youngest generation of South Bronx exiles were [sic] building creative and aggressive outlets for expression and identification" (1994, 33). This 'aggression' is directly tied to naturalizing hip-hop's appeal to males, although Scot Doo Rok acknowledges that there would have been early b-girls 'back in the day', he goes on to highlight:

> [I]t's so aggressive, why would a girl wanna do it you know, back then as well, so you'd have to look at the motivations on why would a girl enter this really

[19] All quotations from documentaries are transcribed by the author.

> aggressive dance, I know that the rock dance, like people would get stabbed and things like that still, so in knowing that that people were like dying and getting stabbed and things like that, like in general, female energy just in general is much more calmer and in general they can be more kinder and compassionate and things like that, whereas that energy for breaking was quite frantic and so I can see why it appealed to males more than females. (interview, November 6, 2014)

Scot Doo Rok's description of normative qualities of gender further reinforces the gendered barriers to entry that surround hip-hop culture, and I see history, here, as merely one constituent. This is not to say that Scot Doo Rok, or any of the other Sydney breakers, are deliberately trying to exclude women;[20] rather I want to emphasize that the way these dominant narratives of hip-hop's history are taken for granted and reinforced, without realizing their ramifications for gendered engagement. Moreover, viewing breaking as an answer to masculine frustration is in danger of reinforcing biological-determinist arguments – that men are naturally predisposed to violence – and can intersect with discourses of sanctioning male violence.[21]

For many hip-hop pioneers, as well as Sydney breakers, the transition from gangs to hip-hop crews is seen as a natural progression. As b-boy Jo-Jo from the 'Rock Steady Crew' explains, "our aggression *was* breakdancing, *was* b-boying, towards another crew, cos you know, before that came it *was* gangs" (as quoted in *The Freshest Kids* 2002). This gendered language – of referring to breaking as 'b-boying' – is perhaps inclusive of girls, though we cannot be sure (I explain this usage and terminologies further below). This gendered language is also prevalent in Popmaster Fable's recollections:

> The intensity of b-boying, and then just the intensity of our situation in the ghetto, all of that piled into one, when you look at b-boying it makes sense, it's like ok I can see where this is coming from – it's a lot deeper than just, well this is fun. (quoted in *The Freshest Kids* 2002)

[20] In fact, Scot Doo Rok is known for being supportive of the minority of b-girls, as he hosted the first ever b-girl battle in Australia in 2006 as part of the *Australian B-boy Championships*.

[21] Yeates' critiques the prevalence of biological-determinist arguments in Australian football, arguing, "[t]he only begetter of this view is social biologism, where male violence is seen as intrinsic to the physical makeup of the male […] the institution of Rugby League holds pride of place as one of the last refuges of sanctioned male violence" (1995, 39–40)

The positioning of 'b-boying' alongside 'ghetto' and 'intensity' naturalizes the gendered conventions of hip-hop culture. Moreover, this "ghettocentricity" of hip-hop's image (Forman 2002; Mitchell 2003) has been used to explain its popularity with disenfranchised youth worldwide (Elflein 1998; Kopytko 1986; Mitchell 2008b). We can begin to see, then, how the (re)construction of a particular 'historical situation' that hip-hop emerged from, indeed 'roots', can work to regulate bodily expression into a normative gendered framework. That is, the intensity of the 'situation' naturalizes the masculinity and male-dominance of contemporary hip-hop culture.

Hip-hop's gang history is also used to legitimize current practices, particularly 'battling'. As American artist, Sanford Biggers,[22] recounts, "it was always posed as an alternative to gang violence. Instead of fighting, people were battling and deciding it on the floor, deciding it on the wall, deciding it on the mic, or deciding it on the tables" (quoted in Chang 2006a, 146). The emergence of battles as an *alternative* to gang violence was raised in a number of my interviews with Sydney breakers. For example, when asked about the contemporary importance of 'battling', b-boy Willlastr8 replies with a brief historical overview:

> Battles started because gangs back in the day (and this is a sweeping statement but I'll just keep it simple) would break and battle as a means to avoid punching on, you know resorting to violence, it was an altercation that no one got hurt […] You know if they had beef, and no doubt they had beef ('beef' – you know 'disagreement'), and they would solve it through the dance, and […] and battle it out. […] But in a nutshell that's the origin of the breaking battle and now you know you have dance battles everywhere. (interview, December 22, 2014)

In legitimizing contemporary battles as altercations to violence and a way to settle disputes on someone's turf, hip-hop's origin narrative in the Bronx reinforces the contemporary Sydney scene as a male-only terrain.

My interviews with Sydney breakers thus further exposed the tacit link between hip-hop's gang origins with contemporary gender politics, however it was not a link they were always explicitly aware of. For example, and similar to J-One's reply above, when asked why he thought so few women break, b-boy Scot Doo Rok replied:

[22] Biggers is an interdisciplinary American artist whose work frequently references hip-hop music. This quote was taken from a round table discussion at the Bronx Museum of Arts in 2005.

> [Y]ou gotta understand the energy and the history of it, so at that time it was a thing for young boys, that's what it was, young boys like in those areas like in the Bronx and things like that, it came from a lot of gangs, like originally the older generations with the rock dance […] and so guys were using it for settling disputes (interview, November 6, 2014)

This connection made by my interviewees – between gangs and normative masculine significations – is extremely telling, as it demonstrates how this dominant narrative of gangs can work to not only exclude women from the dance floor, but also *legitimize* their exclusion. This is despite *not* specifically asking them about history or the origins of breaking, but rather in discussing contemporary practices and the lack of b-girls in the culture. The 'historical situation' of early breaking bodies, as Butler would argue, is thus (re)constituted as the situation for contemporary participants. In this way, it continues to shape the breaking bodies capacities, and regulate possibilities through this 'ghettocentric' lens.

We can thus see how historical narratives shape contemporary views and practices in the Sydney scene, and also how these narratives account for the shutting down of potential deterritorializations. This is best illustrated in J-One's comments, as he continues,

> I think at that time probably the girls felt maybe a bit, you know, I wouldn't say intimidated but maybe felt like society would frown upon them breaking, and frown upon them for showing such macho sort of [pause] macho-ness in their lives, whether it be through dance or anything and rap, so I think from the inception and start out of the socio-economic situation *in* New York in the Bronx, it was probably already set in stone that it was gonna *be* that way. (interview, October 24, 2014)

J-One highlights that the origins of hip-hop may determine the structure of contemporary manifestations of the culture. It might be worthwhile to view, then, gang aesthetics and conventions as the apparatus that organizes hip-hop culture, as it gives meaning to particular practices and conventions. More simply, breakers battle now because that's what hip-hop emerged from, and few women break now because that's how hip-hop started. The 'roots' of hip-hop thus organize Sydney's breaking

assemblage in the way that it privileges, indeed hierarchizes, specific modes of engagement.

Yet, and as J-One continues, these early gender politics were not unique to hip-hop culture, as he states, "society itself is very uh chauvinistic, and even today really, women still get paid less than men for the same job, so I'm not sure how far we've really come". While it is important to acknowledge how hip-hop intersects with broader patriarchal politics, it is similarly imperative to understand how these patriarchal structures and regulations are tacitly reproduced through historical 'truths'. To further examine this intersection, I turn to the construction of hip-hop and breaking as a distinctly 'street' phenomenon.

'Born on the Streets'

The aggression of hip-hop dance, and its representation as a *successor* to gangs, is also reinforced by the harshness of the environment from which it emerged – 'the street'. For example, Danny Hoch writes, "[t]he urge to get all cute and John Travolta was lessened if you were dancing outdoors on asphalt and concrete" (2006, 353).[23] Chang's connection, here, with the aesthetics of hip-hop as a product of the conditions of the street is demonstrative of the different ways the masculine construction of the dance is reinforced. This environment, moreover, conditioned the 'intensity' of hip-hop's 'situation' (as Popmaster Fable described above), and thus shaped cultural conventions such as 'style' and battling. As Fab Five Freddy explains,

> You make a new style. That's what life on the street is all about. What's at stake is honor and position on the street. That's what makes it so important, that's what makes it feel so good – that pressure on you to be the best. Or try to be the best. To develop a new style nobody can deal with. (quoted in George, Banes, Flinker, & Romanowski 1985, 111)

Here, 'hip-hop' and 'the street' are portrayed as one and the same place, and this construction continues to define the dance today. For example, Katrina Hazzard-Donald writes, "hip hop postures and presentation are born of the African-derived core culture

[23] This statement resonates with Fab Five Freddy's assertion that hip-hop became a "cultural alternative to disco" (Ogg & Upshal 1999, 18).

of the street, and they are still used to negotiate a place there" (2004, 513).[24] I want to argue that by defining hip-hop in this way, the perceived male-dominance of street gang culture enables hip-hop to maintain its male-dominance. This is because 'the street' interlocks with larger conceptualizations of gendered bodies and the different social sanctions that enable them to participate in particular activities (I return to this shortly).

Hip-hop culture's connection with 'the street' extends beyond the historical images of gangs, and is further extenuated in popular 'street' dance films and music video clips. Indeed, hip-hop as a 'street' culture' and breaking as a 'street' dance is broadly accepted and perpetuated within academic and what Forman (2002, 37) described as 'minor media'. Indeed for McLeod, being 'from the street' is a key tenet of authenticity in hip-hop (1999, 139).[25] This is demonstrated in the documentary *History and concept of hip-hop dance: the street culture that became a global expression* (2010), and in Sydney, it is prominent in the title of the hip-hop community youth centre 'Street University', as well as descriptions of hip-hop dance classes and workshops. These examples are indicative of how contemporary examinations (and manifestations) of hip-hop are examined through the lens of hip-hop's roots from the 'street'.

In this section, I want to continue my line of argument in this chapter that in order to locate ways to deterritorialize gender through breaking, we need to first examine the discourses and practices that structure, define and represent hip-hop as a male-only space. Importantly, hip-hop is (re)presented as distinctly masculine assemblage through featuring only male breakers in popular media, and the frequent use of a 'street' location. As I analyse these texts, I also want to highlight their role in inspiring participation in hip-hop – both internationally and locally – and their use as templates for learning the dance. The way hip-hop is presented in these media texts, then, is vital in shaping localized manifestations of the culture. Before I begin, it is important to understand that the majority of these texts emerged in the early to mid-1980s, and then again from the late 1990s onwards. This significant historical gap is due the initial 'craze' surrounding breaking and hip-hop that suddenly ended in the

[24] Hazzard-Donald (2004) positions hip-hop as a type of 'African-derived' culture, which interlocks with broader conceptualizations of hip-hop as containing an 'Africanist aesthetic', a framing I unpack in the following chapter.

[25] McLeod lists other key tenets of hip-hop to include an emphasis on 'blackness', 'underground', and staying 'true to yourself' (1999, 139).

mid-1980s, to gradually come back over a decade later. I elaborate on these changes further in Chapter 4.

Flashdance (1983) is recognized as the first film to propagate breaking to international audiences (Banes 1994; J. Chang 2007; *The Freshest Kids* 2002). While it only featured approximately two minutes of breaking in its entirety, the excitement generated around the dancing saw excerpts of these scenes featured in the film's official trailer. The famous scene features b-boys from the 'Rock Steady Crew' break on cardboard in a back alley on the streets of Pittsburgh. Set to the sound track of Jimmy Castor Bunch's 'It's Just Begun' (1972), a now 'canonical' (Schloss 2006; 2009) track due to its popularity at breaking jams and battles worldwide. The catalyst of the protagonists' exposure to this 'street' dancing is highlighted in the film's conclusion, where she performs a 'backspin' during her big audition.[26] The widespread popularity of this film has been credited with both introducing breaking to international audiences and also inspiring many now prominent breakers to learn the dance (*The Freshest Kids* 2002).[27]

Flashdance (1983) received "unexpected success", and consequently "Hollywood decided to cash in" on this new winning formula of dance films (J. Chang 2007, 192). The next two hip-hop movies to be released were *Breakin'* (1984) (released in Australia and New Zealand as *Breakdance*, and I discuss further below) and *Beat Street* (1984), which were also the most successful 'street' dance films of this era. In our interview, Mistery recounts

> [W]e'd been dabbling, but it wasn't until *Beat Street* put the whole culture into perspective with the other elements that I started breaking. And back in my era it was sort of like assumed that if you breaked that you *also* did graffiti and you *also* rapped and you did it *all*. So that's why a lot of the older generations we sort of do everything, it was the norm. (interview, November 1, 2014)

[26] Additionally, for the protagonist's final audition some of the moves she saw on the street, such as a backspin, are integrated into her performance. Yet to do this, she relies upon a 'Rock Steady Crew' member, b-boy CrazyLegs, as a body double. Jennifer Beals also used a dance double, the French actress Marine Jahan, throughout the film.

[27] *The Freshest Kids* (2002) specifically credits the film with introducing breaking to America's West Coast, which already had a prominent hip-hop dance scene through the development of 'locking' and 'popping' dance styles. This film also credits West Coast dancers with developing more of the power moves of breaking.

As *Beat Street* presented the elements of hip-hop culture as a unified package, much of the older generations engaged in each element. According to Maxwell, this is key to the 'standard narrative' of Sydney hip-hop, whereby "Australia got all three [elements] as a 'package deal'" (2003, 50) (in contrast to, according to Rose (1994), the elements emerging at different times in New York).[28] As Maxwell explains:

> The development and maintenance of a hip-hop community down under relied (and, to an extent, continues to rely) upon the efforts of various social agents to reinscribe their own social work with logics, truths, actions, and interpretations that arrived in Australia […] predominantly through (mass-)mediated channels: television, radio, and imported fanzines and recordings. (2001, 260)

Upon being asked if he learnt breaking through these films, Mistery replied:

> Yeah, and [the dancing] was terrible [laughs], because DVDs and videos did not exist, you know only rich kids had a video player […] for us to learn how to b-boy and that we'd have to go to the actual cinema and watch the movie repeatedly, you know. So how it'd work, you'd go to the cinema and there'd be all these guys with headbands on waiting out the front with baggy jeans tucked into their socks, and then we'd watch the movie, and then we'd all rush out and start battling each other, like out the front of the cinema, which was dope. (interview, November 1, 2014)

Mistery's recollections expose how the film became the starting point for local manifestations of hip-hop culture.[29] The two famous battle scenes in *Beat Street* – one in the Roxy nightclub and the other in the subway – were then mimicked by youths who were otherwise geographically separated. Importantly, this template for the

[28] Specifically, Rose documents graffiti as the first element to emerge in the late 1960s, followed by breaking in the mid-1970s "at the height of disco's popularity" (1994, 47), and rapping as "the last element to emerge in hip hop" around 1979 (Ibid., 51).

[29] Miguel d'Souza and Kurt Iveson similarly describe this practice in Sydney, quoting from one of their interview subjects: "Hoyts [cinema] used to be across the road from Burwood Park. They used to have *Breakdance* there, so everyone used to break in the park, after a while it turned into a big meeting place, and everything would happen there. Especially Thursday nights, everyone was there [late-night shopping happened on Thursdays], and if you were outer west and you were in town, you'd come to Burwood. All the people I know always say Burwood's the home of hip hop in Australia, even though it isn't now and there's no-one there really rapping or doing anything, that's where it all stemmed from for sure. All the people that used to break and rap were from those areas, as far as Bankstown and around the whole area" (1999, 58).

development of local hip-hop cultures was a distinctly masculine, and male-dominated, phenomenon, as Kimberly Monteyne observes:

> The majority of breakdancing crews and solo performers who experienced brief commercial success in the 1980s, such as *Beat Street*'s Robert Taylor, the New York City Breakers, and the Rock Steady Crew, were predominantly young men, and the dance form itself is considered a masculine mode of expression. (2013, 132)

With this defining image of hip-hop and breaking in mind, these hip-hop dance films were instrumental in inspiring participants and cultures worldwide, as there is much academic research that acknowledges how these films appeal to disenfranchised, predominantly male youth. For example, earlier work includes Donna Deyhle's (1986) study on how the films' 'role models' and 'fairy story' narrative device (1986, 121) appealed to Navajo and Ute youth in North America, and Tania Kopytko's (1986) investigation of marginalized Maori youth in Palmerston North (New Zealand) who identified with the images of African-American kids onscreen. Later research includes Dietmar Elflein's examination disenfranchised Turkish youth in Germany, as "[t]he New York hip hop films mentioned above outlined the close social ties that are characteristic of male-dominated groups living in restricted urban areas – the 'hood' or neighbourhood […] which could lead to a valorisation of their own marginal situation, irrespective of the fact that there were enormous differences between the two immigrant groups" (1998, 262). Discussing Australian hip-hop, Mitchell stresses, "this 'reterritorialisation' of hip hop from a black American vernacular expression into an often 'non-white' migrant Australian context parallels similar appropriations in other parts of the world" (2008a, 243). Perhaps this is due to what Osumare labels the global "connective marginalities" in hip-hop culture, which refer to the "social resonances between black expressive culture within its contextual political history and similar dynamics in other nations" (2008, 172). Throughout these geographically and culturally disparate cultures, however, the structure of hip-hop and breaking as a masculine activity were continued. They were, to use a concept from Deleuze and Guattari (2004), a type of 'consistency' that held together the heterogeneous elements of hip-hop across these different settings.

In examining how hip-hop films shaped the hip-hop scene in Montreal, Lys Stevens (2006) highlights how many of the films follow the same 'stock narrative', which intersects with politics of race, class and gender. This argument extends Angela McRobbie's earlier work on the 'narrative tension' around the 'classical/pop divide' (1997, 216) in dance films, such as *Flashdance* and its many cinematic iterations that continue today. Here, a rivalry is established between the 'street' dance and more institutionalized dance forms that is then resolved at the film's conclusion (as in *Flashdance* described above). This observation is similarly noted by Chang, who writes, "*Breakin'* expanded Rock Steady's *Flashdance* cameo into a full-length feature: aspiring female dancer finds herself and love via a journey through the scary, streetwise–but not too scary or streetwise–postindustrial Los Angeles pop-locking scene" (J. Chang 2007, 192). For Monteyne, however, this dynamic was explicitly tied to performances of gender:

> When breakdancing made its debut in feature films women were rarely featured as breakdancers, although a handful of examples (including *Flashdance*, *Breakin'*, and *Breakin' 2*) portray female dancers whose sexual power and performance skills are directly linked to their interactions with urban street dance. (2013, 133)

In these films, women conform to the more classically trained, institutionalized, 'feminine' dance styles, such as jazz or lyrical hip-hop, while men perform any of the hip-hop dances, such as breaking, popping, locking, and krumping.

These trends continue in the films of the 1980s, as well as from the 2000s, and the emphasis on the 'street' is a recurrent trope. From the sequel to *Breakin'*, *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo* (1984), to the more recent films *Save the Last Dance* (2001), *Honey* (2003), *You Got Served* (2004) and many of the *Step Up* film series (2006; 2008; 2010; 2012; 2014) (for a more in-depth discussion of dance films, see further Borelli 2014; Boyd 2004; Evans & Fogarty 2016). Moreover, these *Step Up* films further reinforce hip-hop as a 'street dance' phenomenon, either through the movie posters, or through battles and training occurring on the street. This is particularly reinforced in the second film, titled *Step Up 2: The Streets* (2008).[30]

[30] The rare exception here is the lesser known, and much less popular, film *B-girl* (2009), though the protagonist is still connected to street culture.

While b-girl Catwmn noted how popular street dance movies contributed to her bourgeoning interest, she couldn't recall which ones (simply stating instead: "*You Got Served* kind of movies" (interview, October 24, 2014)). Despite many of these films catering to a female audience, through what McRobbie terms 'fantasies of achievement' (1997), the way they structure and present hip-hop omits potential female participation. As b-girl Sass highlights:

> [Y]ou think about the dance movies that have come out, when you look at those movies the boys are doing the breaking and the girls are doing the street hip-hop, lyrical, jazz. You rarely ever see the girls breaking in those movies. (interview, October 24, 2014)

The positioning of women on film has a direct correlation to how women showing an interest in breaking are often perceived. For example, in my own experiences it has been automatically assumed that – due to my hip-hop attire – I am a lyrical hip-hop dancer. Moreover on one occasion, while waiting for a breaking class to begin, a male peer asked why I wasn't in 'there' with the other girls doing lyrical hip-hop. Upon explaining that I break, on many occasions I have then been encouraged to do more 'feminine' dance styles.

The gendered characterization in these films is thus important in defining and presenting hip-hop in a specific way. Indeed, the limitation of breaking to male bodies – and thus normative masculine significations – was functional in (re)constructing dance as a masculine activity, a view shared by Kopytko (1986) and Monteyne (2013) (and a construction I map in the following chapters). Despite these broader aims, the consistent gendered characterization in these films, expressed through the styles of dance performed, homogenize the creative expression of breaking bodies as one limited to normative gendered signifiers. Sass continues,

> [N]owadays even with thousands of b-girls all around the world, girls still see what's on those movies and the video clips and they don't really see girls breaking much, you just don't see it, I mean you don't see breaking much *in general* in those things but when you *do* see it, it tends to always be a male, so I think that can be misleading and not very encouraging for girls. (interview, October 24, 2014)

The perpetual construction of dancing gendered bodies thus results in a double logic: the occlusion of female dancers consequentially discourages further female participation.

Moreover, female participation is not only discouraged through the films' characterizations, but also via its perpetual connection with 'the street'. This can be seen in the lesser known hip-hop films: *Body Rock* (1984), *Krush Groove* (1985), *Fast Forward* (1985), *Delivery Boys* (1985), *Rappin'* (1985), and the graffiti film *Turk 182* (1985). Throughout these films there is an emphasis on the 'urban' and street terrain, with predominantly male protagonists who are active in hip-hop culture. The latest breaking film – *Battle of the Year* (2013) – the name taken from a famous international breaking competition, further emphasizes breaking's male-dominance and the dance's relationship with the street. Specifically, all the competing breakers are male, and the film's trailer even begins with 'Born on the streets' in large lettering as a way to assert the 'ghettocentric' image of this contemporary breaking scene.

The street, however, is distinctly gendered as a masculine space, interlocking with the broader social norms of public and private spheres. In histories of subcultural engagement, these Cartesian politics often saw women relegated to the privatized 'bedroom cultures' of the home (see further McRobbie 1991). This is because the patriarchal restrictions on girls inhibit their access to a variety of cultures and activities (widely noted within the field of subcultural studies: Gottlieb & Wald 2006; Lincoln 2004; McRobbie & Garber 1977; McRobbie 1991, 1993; Wald 1998). Unlike boys, girls are subject to greater parental control, domestic apprenticeship within the home, as well as taboos around being on the street at night (Gottlieb & Wald 2006; McRobbie & Garber 1977; McRobbie 1991), and these restrictions consequently regulate what bodies 'can do' within particular social milieus. Consequently, any subcultural participation that is not only situated outside the home, but presented as such, privileges male engagement. For example, in discussing the male-dominance of the rock scene, McRobbie observes:

> It has always been on the street that most subcultural activity takes place (save perhaps for the more middle-class oriented hippies): it both proclaims the publicisation of the group and at the same time ensures its male dominance. For the street remains in some ways taboo for women (think of the unambiguous connotations of the term 'street walker'). (1991, 39)

Despite the age of McRobbie's article, her work continues to be relevant in contemporary examinations of female participation (such as Gottlieb & Wald 2006). As patriarchal restrictions hinder girls' access to subcultural engagement outside the home, and as social taboos hinder women's engagement on the street, hip-hop's perpetual representation as 'born on the streets' is instrumental in defining and structuring the culture as exclusively male.

Unsurprisingly, out of all the hip-hop 'elements', breaking and graffiti are more often connected with the street, and this connection continues throughout contemporary iterations of the culture. As Banes writes, " [i]f graffiti is a way of 'publishing,' of winning fame by spreading your tag all over the city, breaking is a way of claiming the streets with physical presence, using your body to publicly inscribe your identity on the surfaces of the city" (1994, 145). The masculinity of these two practices – respectively noted by Monteyne (2013) and Macdonald (2001) – is perhaps a direct correlation to their relationship with public space and the street. This relationship, mind you, is also constitutive of their transgressive and rebellious appeal due to the way they challenge 'common-sense' uses of public space (see Ferrell 1996; Flores 1988; Gunn 2014).

The use of the street to enhance hip-hop's rebellious appeal can also be seen in music video clips.[31] For Maxwell (2003), the 'standard narrative' of Sydney hip-hop considers Malcolm McLaren's music video clip 'Buffalo Gals' (1983; single released in 1982) as a central influence. In our interview, Mistery recalls these texts, commenting, "around the same time the video clip 'Buffalo Gals' from Malcolm McLaren was on TV and it had Rock Steady Crew on it breaking" (interview, November 1, 2014). Indeed, its influence on Australian hip-hoppers is well-documented within hip-hop scholarship (d'Souza & Iveson 1999; Maxwell 2003; Mitchell 2006, 2008a), and for hip-hop participant Blaze, Maxwell writes, "[t]he 'otherness' of this vision of the Bronx put together by McLaren had instant appeal" (2003, 52).[32]

[31] Another music video clip of significance is for the single '(Hey You) The Rock Steady Crew' (1983), the first, and most popular, single by the breaking crew 'Rock Steady Crew'. The video clip's traits, including location and characterization, acted as important aesthetic cues for geographically separated youth. Specifically, street scenes with graffiti backdrops were intermixed with breaking, popping and locking in dance studios and nightclubs. 'Rock Steady Crew's 'authentic' image through their world tours, legitimized this early representation of hip-hop culture.

[32] Maxwell details that Blaze grew up in the affluent, middle-class suburbs of Sydney – the Lower North Shore – and attended an all-boys private Catholic school (2003, 52).

This ‘otherness’ may be located through the way McLaren’s video clip is centred on the ‘urban’. Featuring footage of skyscrapers, city streets with close-ups of gutters and rubbish bins, street signs, barbed wire fence and police cars, these scenes are punctuated with close-ups of hip-hop practices, such as writing (graffiti), scratching (deejaying) as well as breaking, popping and locking. This dancing takes place at a street party, specifically the ‘Rock Steady Park’ (the training site of the ‘Rock Steady Crew’), and is primarily performed by African-American and Puerto-Rican male youth.[33] This popularity is by no means unique to Australia, as Kopytko (1986) notes the significant impact of video clips, such as McLaren’s as well as Michael Jackson’s, in cementing the burgeoning hip-hop scene in Palmerston North (New Zealand) that was introduced through neighbouring American Samoa.

It was not until the 1990s that breaking experienced resurgence, and video clips were vital in renewing interest in the dance. As Scot Doo Rok recounts, “Run DMC brought it back into their clips – breaking – and KRS-One brought it back into his clips, and I think, for me that was the main catalyst that would’ve done it” (interview, November 6, 2014). Indeed, Run DMC and Jason Nevin’s remix ‘It’s Like That’ (1999) was broadly acknowledged by second and third generation Sydney breakers as instrumental to their exposure to the dance. Set in an abandoned warehouse, this video clip features a crew of male hip-hop dancers battle a crew of female hip-hop dancers, and thus is a rare example of egalitarian engagement in hip-hop culture. This egalitarianism manifests not only through equal numbers of male and female dancers, but also through the two genders showing respect for each other by coming together to ‘show and prove’ themselves in battle. While in this way the video clip is more egalitarian, the divide or dichotomy between male and female is still perpetuated, particularly because each team is organized by gender.

While already breaking prior to this clip, Mistery recounts the renewed interest in the dance and hip-hop culture:

> [B]ecause people had seen [breaking] in the Jason Nevins video, they were curious cos they’d never really seen it in real life, so young kids would come by

[33] Throughout this dancing, however, McLaren does not participate and rather is projected on a separate large screen above. This positioning of McLaren sets up an asymmetrical power relationship between himself and the ‘authentic’ hip-hop practitioners below. His magnified gaze not only reinforces his status as an authoritative force over the so-called exotic practices, but also reinforces their construction as a ‘spectacle’.

> and go 'Oh this stuff we've seen on that video, how do you do it?', so we just started teaching like this new generation! (interview, November 1, 2014)

Mistery's recollections, here, demonstrate how hip-hop was presented on screen instigated both interest and participation in the culture. This was integral for Catwmn, who commented, "was really intriguing to see that people could do that" and, more importantly, that it "wasn't specific to any kind of genders" (interview, October 24, 2014). One might argue, then, that this clip was a relative deterritorialization of hip-hop's male-dominance, and allowed for a more egalitarian engagement to manifest. Indeed, it was 'relative' as its seeming gender equality is merely one in comparison to the many male-dominated representations of hip-hop.

Other music video clips cited by my interviewees as influences included were Bombfunk MC's 'Freestyler' (1999), and Limp Bizkit's 'Rollin' (2000), two music video clips that feature male dancers and rely on the urban 'street' terrain. As b-boy Don recounts,

> [T]his is on the record, the rest of the crew can attest to this, our crew was branded as biters for a long time, because [laughs] that's what we had, no one told us anything, we had videos, and that's all we had so we copied everything, we'd watch bloody Freestyler music clip over and over and over just to copy snippets of moves, all of us tried to do Kujo's flare–head track–double halo, no one succeeded [laughs]. (interview, February 23, 2015)

What I want to highlight here, is that hip-hop's relationship with the street is extremely prevalent, and is featured in the majority of texts that go on to introduce new participants to the dance. Hip-hop's history thus organizes the structures of the contemporary culture, and, in doing so, maintains the consistency of its normative masculine construction. As b-girl Sass observes, "people on the outside world cos of what they *see* and because they don't really understand the culture and they just see […] what's on TV and in the movies they'll say 'yep it's, it's definitely *made* for boys'" (interview, October 24, 2014).

'B-boys' and 'B-girls'

The importance of history in breaking culture, as well as its pervasive presence in the contemporary scene, can be seen in the choices in terminology to describe the culture

and its dancers. For example, Imani Kai Johnson describes the "more 'authentic'"[34] (2009, 16) terms to use are 'b-boy' and 'b-girl', as they were originally the names given to the dancers that would drop to the ground during the break beat of a record (J. Chang 2007; Fogarty 2012; Johnson 2009; Pabon 2006; Schloss 2009).[35] What the 'b' stands for is widely contested,[36] however it is accepted that these terms refer to male and female breakers respectively. Predominantly coupled with breaker's names (such as 'B-girl Ill-FX' and 'B-boy Don') these titles are often detailed on competition posters and custom-made clothing, which I discuss shortly. While the emphasis placed on articulating dancers through these gendered prefixes has broader consequences in reinforcing cultural assumptions – a point I discuss further in the following chapter – using these terms is also functional due to how they not only acknowledge the history of breaking, but also reaffirm the contemporary scene's connection with its origins. Indeed, for Schloss, using 'b-boy' and 'b-girl' is coextensive with "a sense of pride in the culture and community from which the dance emerged" (2009, 66). Before I unpack this statement, I want to highlight that these terms are not situated on equal terrain.

'B-boy' and 'b-girl' are hierarchized along power relations that privilege the '*b-boy*', as 'b-boying' is considered "in the community as a generic term that includes women" (Ibid., 15). Indeed, 'b-boy' is regarded as inclusive of both male and female dancers, and 'b-boying' is used to refer to the dance performed by both genders. When the term 'b-boy' is spoken, it is a male body that is signified, which not only omits the female presence but also can work discourage women from participating.[37] Unlike b-

[34] Johnson (2009) uses the problematic term 'authenticity', and while there is potential for a great deal of empirical research on how the Sydney scene manages and negotiates claims on authenticity, I do not explore it in this thesis. Maxwell's (2003) discussion of the Sydney hip-hop scene in the 1990s can, however, provide a detailed account of how authenticity is managed and negotiated.

[35] Johnson (2009) considers 'breaker' as the diplomatic middle ground. The term 'breaker' is also preferential due to its age and gender neutrality, which is why in this thesis I primarily refer to the dance as 'breaking', and practitioners as 'breakers'.

[36] What 'b' stands for is quite contentious in hip-hop culture. Chang (2007) and b-boys in *The Freshest Kids* (2002) agree that Herc created the name 'break-boy' for the youths that danced to the breakdown in his music. Yet in an interview with Schloss (2009), b-boy Trac 2 proposes various expressions from which 'b-boy' could have been derived from, none of which are 'break-boy', stating: "There's only three terminologies that I would accept. 'Bronx-boy,' because that's where we come from. 'Battle-boy,' because that's what we were. Or a 'beat-boy,' because that's what moved us" (quoted in Schloss 2009, 59). Trac 2 goes on to convincingly argue that 'beat-boy' is the 'true' origin, since, unlike 'break-boy', if you say 'beat-boy' twenty times fast it begins to sound like 'b-boy' (Ibid.).

[37] The preference for the male descriptor has a long history, and in her seminal work *Man Made Language* (1980), Australian feminist scholar Dale Spender scrutinizes the use of 'he' and 'man' to refer to both men and women, as she writes: "[Women] were required to ascertain to whom this symbol referred, whereas no such problem existed for males who can never be ambiguous in such structures." (Ibid., 146). Because "people think *male* when they use the term *man*" (Ibid., 151), this terminology promotes the "primacy of males" (Ibid., 153) whilst simultaneously rendering women invisible.

boys, b-girls must consistently question whether they are included. Yet preference for the term 'b-boy' communicates an awareness of history, as Schloss observes, "the community in general overwhelmingly feels that b-boying is the original term" (Ibid., 63). 'Knowing your history', demonstrated through preferred terminologies, is coextensive with reinforcing a masculine articulation of the culture.

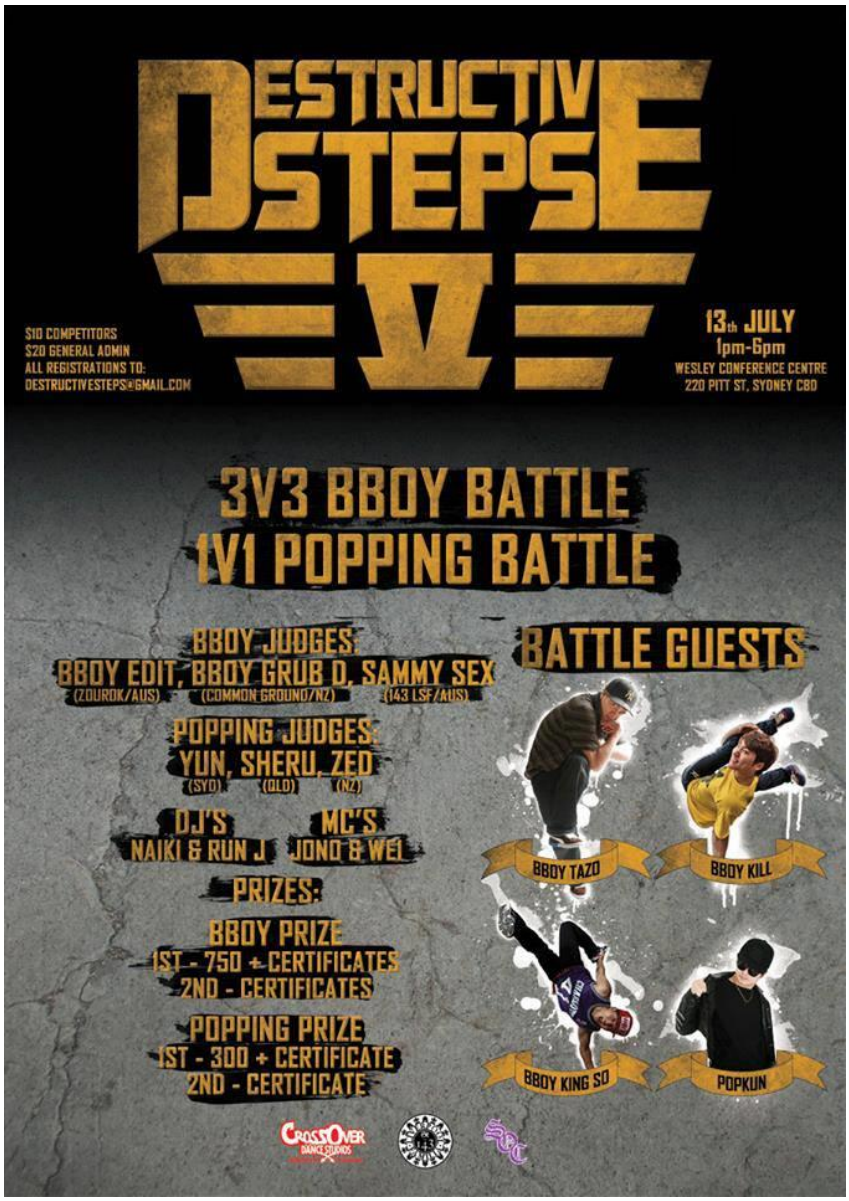

Figure 2 – Official Poster for *Destructive Steps V*. July 13, 2013.

The preference for the term 'b-boy' as 'inclusive' of women is evidenced in competition titles, battle formats, and media (see Figure 2). Indeed, and as we can see in the poster above, competitions are often advertised as 'b-boy' battles, though both male and female breakers can enter. For example, the *UK B-boy Champs* is an

international competition with qualifiers all over the world (including Australia in 2005 and 2007), and of course the *Australian B-boy Championships*.[38] It is also the b-*boy* that hegemonizes media, such as popular online stores (selling male and female breaking gear) and breaking forums: *Bboy World* (http://www.bboyworld.com) and *The Bboy Spot* (http://www.thebboyspot.com), the global rankings site *Bboy Rankingz* (https://bboyrankingz.com), and the more locally (though not so active anymore): *Ozbboy.com*. Additionally, the documentaries *Planet B-boy* (2008), which follows crews from France, Japan, South Korea and the USA as they prepare for, and enter in, the global competition *Battle of the Year*, as well as *The Freshest Kids: A History of the B-boy* (2002), which contextualizes the emergence of breaking, with a particular emphasis on the role of the famous 'Rock Steady Crew'. As per their titles, these documentaries give alarmingly little attention to the contribution of 'b-girls'. With the significance presence of the b-*boy*, it is almost not surprising that 'b-boying' interlocks with hierarchized participation, as evidenced in what I often heard in my research: 'you're not a real b-boy unless…' (for example, you battle).

That 'b-boying' is the prominent name for the dance and culture, and used as 'inclusive' of female participants, exposes how the culture is both structured and defined in a way that privileges male participation. Through being 'included' as 'b-*boys*', female breakers are subsumed into the dominant masculine discourse and associated habitus of breaking culture. Yet, and as Gatens would argue, patriarchal structure is not simply about the privileging of male bodies, but rather operates through gender and gender discourses that can also be used and appropriated by women. As such, it is necessary to examine not only how women are positioned through these discourses, but also how they negotiate and reconfigure these gendered significations and structures, and in Chapters 3 and 4 we will examine how Sydney b-girls adopt breaking's masculinist discourses and gestures in order to challenge and displace its gendered connotations.

This 'inclusive' representation of 'b-boy' can work to exclude female participants, as b-girl Sass highlighted in our interview, "I'll still want people to say 'yeah she's a dope b-*girl*' you know cos some people refer to us [and] they just say 'b-boys'" (interview, October 24, 2014). While not all female breakers share this stance

[38] The *Australian B-boy Championships* ran from 2004 to 2012. This labelling is not unusual, as competitions may detail that the battle format as '3v3' or '3on3' b-boy. Also, in preparation for battles emcees will often shout into the microphone, 'B-boys are you ready?'; though it is likely that b-girls are included.

(see further Schloss 2009), it is important to note that male breakers would *never* refer to themselves as 'b-girls', or to their dance as 'b-girling' (Ibid.). This underlying preference situates 'b-girling' – the verb for women breaking – as subordinate to the more 'original' b-boying'. In this way, 'b-boying' is the 'One' of which all expressions are derivative. As Schloss observes, the usage of 'b-boy' as inclusive "suggests not only that the term b-boying is normative, but that so is the projection of masculinity itself" (Ibid., 65).

Despite women participating, the vernacular of the culture can work to occlude their contributions. Indeed it was not until the publication (by women) of the book *We B*Girlz* (Kramer 2008) that b-girls worldwide were celebrated. This is not to say the culture is deliberately malicious, with b-girl-only competitions testament to the encouragement they are given in the community; but rather to highlight how the discourses within breaking work to perpetuate the masculine construction of the scene. This creates further difficulties in trying to portray breaking as a dance inclusive of, and attractive to, women. For example, in our interview b-boy Don explained how he navigates the terminologies when advertising dance classes:

> [E]ven just the name 'b-boying' – it's very masculine straight away […] and if I advertise my class as *'b-boy'* classes girls aren't gonna come in, so I have to advertise it as 'b-boy' *or* 'b-girl' classes or 'breaking' class with brackets 'breakdance', just so you guys [women] know it's not *just* for boys. (interview, February 23, 2015)

The preference for 'b-boying' thus has broader implications for creating equal access to the scene. Indeed, in my own practice I have observed that the workshops with the most female participants were taught by b-girls and even advertised as 'b-girl workshops'.[39] However, accessibility issues still surround positions of authority and leave fewer women in positions of power, and I discuss this further below.

In contrast, the term 'breakdancing' emerged as a media term that described various hip-hop styles (including breaking, and the West Coast styles of 'popping' and 'locking') in the early 1980s (Fogarty 2012; Johnson 2009; Schloss 2009; *The Freshest*

[39] This includes the internationally accomplished b-girls JK-47 from Canada, Bonita from the USA, and Ayumi from Japan – see Appendix D for further details. I discuss b-girl Ayumi in more detail in Chapter 5, as her international accomplishments not only within b-girl competitions, but also in competitions against b-boys transgress the normative image of b-girling as 'subordinate'.

Kids 2002). Due to this misrepresentation of the dances and culture during this time, Schloss describes how one of the first lessons is to never refer to the dance as 'breakdancing' (2009, 58) and for Johnson, "a 'breakdancer' is someone deemed unschooled in the history" (2009, 16). Learning breaking's history, then, is interlocked with learning the dance, and is communicated to burgeoning breakers as early as possible. In an interview with Schloss, b-girl Seoulsonyk highlights the distinction between the terms 'b-boying' and 'breakdancing', where respectively "one is loaded with all these symbols and history. And one is just movement" (quoted in Schloss 2009, 61). In other words, 'b-boying' is a culturally and historically-charged practice, and 'breakdancing' is merely steps. In our interview, b-boy J-One summarizes:

> I think plenty of documentaries will definitely easily dictate to you that in the beginning they called it 'breaking', and people that broke were called 'b-boys' and 'b-girls'. Then when it blew up in the mainstream in the 80s it became 'breakdance'. (interview, October 24, 2014)

J-One illustrates how documentaries facilitate the space to 'dictate' hip-hop knowledge. He also calls attention to the sensitivities around the exploitation of breaking that accompany the term's distinction, a sentiment similarly noted by Schloss (2009, 61). This 'era of exploitation' in the 1980s (*The Freshest Kids* 2002), 'breaksploitation' movies (Schloss 2009, 5), and general obfuscation of the distinct differences between the dance styles showcased a disregard for the culture that is still vehemently felt. Schloss writes, "most feel that the term was part of a larger attempt by the mass media to recast their raw street dance as a nonthreatening form of musical acrobatics" (Ibid., 58).[40] This process of re-labelling and 're-definition' of (sub)cultural practices is defined by Dick Hebdige as 'recuperation' (2002, 94) (first published 1979), and was a process directly felt in Sydney. Upon being questioned how the scene responded to the label of 'breakdancers', Rap Attack replied:

> [Laughs.] Well breakdancer is the media term, I remember when I first heard that I was *cringing*. We just went out of our way wherever we were to correct people, but it was *really* difficult because the media repeatedly kept going on,

[40] In breaking culture, the media's 'recuperation' of the dance is still so starkly felt that the term 'breakdancing' is associated with financial motives and a lack of respect for, and commitment to, the culture (Johnson 2009; Schloss 2009).

> breakdancers did this breakdancers did that, be careful: breakdancing breaks your neck. (interview, November 4, 2014)

Here, Rap Attack alludes to a loss of control in how the dance was portrayed, as beyond the obfuscation of different dance styles breaking was also represented as dangerous. As we will see in Chapter 4, the construction of breaking as 'dangerous', particularly in Australia where it is aligned with 'extreme sports', interlocks with normative gendered assumptions and, in doing so, normalizes the gendered barriers to entry in Sydney's breaking scene.

Telling Hip-hop 'History': Barriers to Authority

I now want to examine how women's lack of representation is also the product of asymmetrical power relations that regulate access to this cultural space. This approach is developed from the work of Gatens and her discussion of the political realm, where she proposes:

> [I]n this context it may be profitable to explore the idea that it is not so much that women are biologically unsuited to political participation, as that political participation has been structured and defined in such a way that it excludes women's bodies. (1996, 50)

Rather than targeting women as the site of transformation, this approach examines the way the space is structured in order to rethink how the space *itself* could be transformed to be more inclusive. To understand my driving question of why are there so few b-girls, then, it is worthwhile exploring how Sydney's breaking scene "has been structured and defined in such a way that it excludes women's bodies" (Ibid.). By examining the histories, practices and discourses that support the masculine alignments of breaking in Sydney, we can see the more insidious ways power is constituted through the body.

Before I conduct a rhizomatic analysis of hip-hop's history, I want to first demonstrate the way hip-hop 'authority' is aligned with molar patriarchal politics. Examining the conditions produced through history, and the telling of history, will contextualize the lines of flight in the hip-hop assemblage, specifically where they might enter, and what they may productively rupture. Indeed, a more rhizomatic account of history will not only render visible the segmented alignments of the

assemblage, such as the way in which a patriarchal organization is sustained, but also locate potential entry points for deterritorializations and potential 'modifications'. As I will demonstrate, how history is re-told, and by *whom*, can affect those same possibilities for deterritorializations. Specifically, to '*be* there' and thus gain the requisite 'authority' is via a pathway that, through larger social structures, inhibit access for the female members of the community.

Gaining 'Authority'

As highlighted above, those with authority or deemed as pioneers are those who have 'been there' from the beginning. In this section I want to highlight how this presence, however, is the consequence of very different social sanctions that not only regulate access to the dance floor, but also affect how long participants can continue 'being there' such as remaining active in the scene. In Maxwell's study, for example, a female informant by the name of Heidi, "suggested that girls involved in the scene tended to get pregnant and were unable to maintain their commitment to the scene" (2003, 55). Using Maxwell's insights, here, I want to highlight how 'authority' is not the result of equal access to the culture. To put it simply, if there *were* equal access, there would be more egalitarian representation.

In order to participate, and demonstrate the requisite knowledge, much of the necessary skills and knowledge of hip-hop culture are learnt informally via shared local networks, and the male-dominance of these networks continues to privilege male participation. For example, Rose (1994) notes how (male) rapper Red Alert gained interest and familiarity with hip-hop's electronic equipment through his male neighbour. Yet, she writes, "[f]or social, sexual, and cultural reasons young women would be much less likely to be permitted or feel comfortable spending such extended time in a male neighbour's home" (Ibid., 57–58). The social sanctions on girls prohibit their access to these informal networks where they can gain the requisite knowledge to participate, and these gendered politics are vital in continuing more male participation.

Like hip-hop's electronic equipment, as Schloss writes, "b-boying is almost always learned through personal interaction" (2009, 40), and this often manifests through crew membership and mentors. In this way I was fortunate, as my access to breaking culture, such as learning its history and conventions through my male-dominated crew, were mitigated through my boyfriend. This entry to breaking culture is by no means uncommon for b-girls, and I have found that many get their start in

breaking through their b-boying boyfriend. This was a similar experience for b-girl Sass, who highlights that having a boyfriend "was like an 'in' into the scene", she explains: "for girls back then it was kind of shied upon, I didn't feel like I could walk up to them and say 'what's this? I wanna do this'" (interview, October 24, 2014). Here Sass is referring to the breaking scene in Christchurch (New Zealand), where she was introduced to the scene before she moved to Sydney. Her experiences are telling, as they highlight how the male-dominance of the scene can not only be overwhelming for those girls interested in participating, but also a social impropriety. In addition to these factors, the male-dominance of the scene can become comfortable for many b-boys, and Sass continues:

> [B]eing a girl when you first start breaking, or just breaking in general, a lot of guys are shy and may not know how to associate themselves with you or talk to you, whereas a guy, if it's another guy, might find it easier to talk to that guy and kind of be like 'yeah bro you should come and do this' and practice, but if it's a girl it's like 'oh she's a girl, how do I, what do I say to her'. (Ibid.)

There are not only social factors that can prohibit girls from entering this male-dominated space, but also that could hinder b-boys from ensuring this space is welcoming. This is not to put a conscious blame on b-boys, but rather to highlight the different pathways to entry facing b-boys and b-girls.

I therefore see a range of asymmetrical power relations that, through gendered assumptions and expectations, prohibit women in hip-hop from receiving the same start as their male counterparts. For those that are fortunate enough to get beyond those social sanctions, however, this is merely *one* obstacle in eventually gaining authority within the community. The next obstacle is the different expectations placed upon the contributions of men and women. As Sass explained, "people didn't know whether I was taking it seriously or not, they'd kind of brush you off a bit" (Ibid.). Women have more to prove than their men counterparts, and this has been widely noted across hip-hop, and even perpetuated in academia. Indeed, the important work of Gwendolyn D. Pough (2004, 2007) has called attention to how key hip-hop scholarship omits and neglects women's contributions.

According to "some self-proclaimed Hip-Hop historians", she writes, "there were no significant women in Hip-Hop's history" (Pough 2004, 8). Here, Pough directs

much of her criticism towards music critic Nelson George, a filmmaker and prolific writer on hip-hop, soul and R&B (such as George 2003, 2005a, 2005b). This is because George problematically claims that: "there are no women who have contributed profoundly to rap's artistic growth" (2005a, 184). Despite listing seminal female emcees (such as Salt-N-Pepa, Queen Latifah, and Lil' Kim), George concludes: "I would argue that if none of these female artists had ever made a record, hip hop's development would have been no different" (Ibid.). This is a hierarchization of hip-hop history that interlocks with broader patriarchal assumptions of gendered capacities. Thus, hip-hop's refrain – as the historical narrative that unifies the transnational culture – is only articulated through male bodies. Even though women were present from the beginning, they do not constitute part of this collective reminiscing. Perhaps, here, male-dominance continues to privilege male memorialization, as men continue to identify with their male predecessors.

Not only does Pough's work seek to address these significantly false claims, and in doing so further renders visible the ground-breaking work of female emcees, but also she undermines these "misguided statements" (2004, 9) by highlighting how male emcees are not placed under the same scrutiny. She writes, "[w]hile George may be right in noting that Salt-N-Pepa will never be the Supremes, it's equally true that no male rap will ever be the Temptations" (Pough Ibid., 10). What Pough points towards, here, is the different levels of scrutiny facing women in their contributions to hip-hop culture, and thus, in extension, what is deemed worth remembering.

This is by no means a unique phenomenon in hip-hop culture, and in fact has a long history. In Maxwell's study, for example, he describes how "[w]omen were often present, but silent" (2003, 35). Additionally, world famous breaker Ken Swift recounts how women were perceived in early breaking culture: they took on the identities of "girlfriends", "they knew they weren't really competition, serious b-girlz" and when "it was time for the boys to do their thing". Swift goes on to say, "We had a bunch of girls in Rock Steady, but they were there for support" (Swift quoted in Kramer 2008, 16). In fact, he states, "you didn't hear the term b-girl at all. Breaking was a very macho thing" (Ibid.) (despite much support for the historical presence of the term 'b-girl'). While I do not want to specifically single out Swift, as in other ways he has been very supportive of b-girls, his biased recollections highlight the stronghold of masculinity within the history and representation of hip-hop and breaking. Moreover, his crewmate b-girl

BabyLove (who toured internationally with the famous 'Rock Steady Crew'), has a very different recollection of this time:

> It was hard to be the only b-girl with them! I wanted to be treated as an equal, but because I was a girl it wasn't always possible. […] As the only girl, you want to prove yourself all the time, but for them it was never enough and that was a hard thing for me to acknowledge. (BabyLove quoted in Kramer 2008, 16)

The difference in their perceptions of this time breaking together highlights the tacit inequalities that permeate breaking and hip-hop culture, and which I see as integral to understanding why there are so few b-girls in breaking culture.

The unequal evaluation of women's' worth in hip-hop culture has also been noted in graffiti. As Macdonald notes, "[m]ale writers work to prove they are 'men', but female writers must work to prove they are not 'women'" (2001, 130). What Macdonald highlights, here, is they asymmetrical power relations that regulate access and participation within the graffiti subculture. Indeed she concludes: "The female writer still has a lot more to prove. She may dress, behave and paint like one of the boys, but she remains 'just a girl' until she shows that she is 100 per cent 'down for' or dedicated to graffiti" (Ibid., 131). Thus, despite female writers doing the same things as the male writers, she must still do *more*. She still has more to *prove*. She continues, "[u]nlike male writers, she comes into this subculture laden down with the baggage of her gender" (Ibid., 193). The baggage of femininity is not merely an inequality individual female participants experience, but rather a homogenized category that interlocks with gendered assumptions. In a comment she posted on a *YouTube* video (titled 'Ken Swift On Bgirls'), b-girl cledasmurf writes, "a wack [unskilled] new bboy will easily be forgotten if he's just flopping around not doing anything, but a wack new bgirl has to live up to the pressure of representing 'all girls', not just herself" (bjhiphopcollective 2009). There is added pressure, then, for b-girls to attempt to challenge this homogenized assumption of women's incapacity.

Despite hip-hop built upon 'giving credit where credit's due', these additional gender-based barriers to equality have broader ramifications for not only documenting the contribution of women in hip-hop history, but also for women reaching a position of 'authority'. Pough writes: "Hip-Hop may be a uniquely testosterone-filled space, but to say that women have not contributed significantly to its development is false.

Women have always been a part of Hip-Hop culture and a significant part of rap music" (2004, 9). Here, I'm trying to establish ways to render visible female participation, and create the means "to claim a space in a culture that constantly tries to deny women voice" (Ibid., 11). Indeed it took a book that focused on women in breaking – *We B*Girlz* (Kramer 2008) – to expose how important women in breaking have been, and that they've always been there, and thus destabilizes totalizing 'roots' of hip-hop's history.

'History' as Rhizomatic

To return now to Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome is an important tool that facilitates (re)mapping of assemblages, and it has been used to analyse the multi-dimensional relationships within media and culture (Pisters & Lord 2001), gender (Linstead & Pullen 2006), young people's engagement with social networking sites (Ringrose 2011), the interrelationship between bodies and technologies (Currier 2003), as well as breaking 'cyphers' (Johnson 2009). As Deleuze and Guattari explain, "the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 23). Their use of the word 'must', here, highlights the need to actively seek out the connections between and across assemblages. I must, then, construct and produce the map of the hip-hop assemblage, in order to expose where it can be modified and to locate its entryways and exits. This will enable an understanding of its lines of flights – both where they can enter and *what* they rupture.

While the dominant narratives of hip-hop's history are pervasive and engrained into the institutions of breaking, their perceived 'truth' is problematic due to hip-hop culture's reliance upon oral recounts. This is primarily because the conditions that produced hip-hop were not conducive to archiving. The lack of economic capital needed to access recording technology (such as cameras) means there is little documentation that can verify hip-hop's development. As such, 'being there' confers validity in itself.[41] Moreover, as Schloss explains:

[41] This mode of validation is then reproduced in contemporary breaking culture, as the credibility of knowledge is dependent on the duration of active participation in the culture (and subsequent status within the culture). As such, breakers are frequently asked: 'How long have you been breaking?'. While explicitly this question may seem simple, implicitly it can be read as: 'How much do you know about breaking? How much credibility should I give your version of history? How much force do you hold in the culture?'. The exchange is thus premised on the appropriate positioning in the subcultural hierarchy.

> [M]ost innovators were far more concerned with the moves they were going to debut *next* Saturday night than archiving the previous Saturday night for posterity. (If you won a battle, everyone who needed to know already knew; why would you be concerned with what some stranger would think in 30 years?) (2009, 125–126)

As a result of this little documentation, Kugelberg describes early hip-hop history as "a riddle wrapped inside an enigma stuffed inside a mystery hidden in a sock. The more you read, the more people you talk to, the more likely you are to run into contradictions" (2007, 140).

Indeed, this 'gospel' (Pabon 2006, 18) is not straightforward, as the epistemological battleground of hip-hop's history makes any singular account highly contentious. Schloss explains:

> [T]he bboy community's model of historical inquiry is itself a kind of battle, based on the same principles as the actual dance battle: respect, personal honor, and giving credit where credit is due (as opposed to the kind of broad social analysis that one might find in an academic study). (2009, 14)

In a meritocratic culture, the practice of 'giving credit where credit is due' is vital in maintaining its longevity, as well as showing respect to those who initiated this now global phenomenon. This practice, however, has its limitations, as Kugelberg highlights there are "those Grandmaster Caz refers to as the 'lie-oneers' of hip hop: there are guys walking around uptown taking credit for what other people did" (2007, 140–141). Since there is no strict, standardized curriculum, hip-hop knowledge is shared through apprenticeship, as described above.

Any contradictions to these dominant narratives can, in some cases, threaten the very fabric of the culture, and this further supports the role of hip-hop history as a type of 'tree-root' that structures contemporary manifestations of the culture. For example, one particular account discussed at length by Schloss attributes 'uprocking' as the main predecessor to breaking.[42] The ramifications of such a history is forewarned to Schloss by a contemporary Brooklyn rocker who states, "[i]f breaking comes out of uprock,

[42] 'Uprocking' is a separate style to breaking, though characteristics of uprocking are often incorporated into a breaker's toprock. Uprocking is discussed further in Chapter 5 when we examine how b-girls' appropriate and displace masculinist significations through breaking.

then hip-hop didn't start in the Bronx" (quoted in Schloss 2009, 132). This rhizomatic connection powerfully undermines the 'totalizing roots' of the Bronx as the 'birthplace of hip-hop' and, in doing so, de-legitimizes the 'pilgrimage' taken by contemporary breakers to hip-hop's origins: the Bronx. For Fogarty, "[t]his journey is called a 'pilgrimage' by the dancers that have travelled to New York (or the USA in general) because of the nature of the experience that they have there" (2006, 67). Fogarty found that "the reason they travelled was to see the original styles from New York City and also to learn the early history of the dance" (Ibid.).

While New York is broadly credited as the 'home of hip-hop', for Johnson New York is merely "part of the story" (2009, 72), and this undermines much of the dominant narrative of the Bronx outlined above. She writes, "[t]he culture, like its repertoire, has multiple origins and can carry different histories" and goes on to use Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'rhizome', as it facilitates "insight into a notion of community that cannot be reduced to a single people, bloodline, or even place to account for the whole" (Ibid.). Fernandes draws a similar connection, arguing that since the beginning hip-hop has been both not only global, but also 'diasporic', highlighting, for example, the influence of Kung Fu films and Jamaican practices on its development (2011, 20). What I want to highlight, here, is that if the origins of hip-hop could be disputed, perhaps the male-dominance of the scene be disputed as well. Indeed, what's at stake in that kind of egalitarian history?

Indeed, despite my extensive research on hip-hop's origins, it was not until I watched *Rubble Kings* (2010) that my own gendered assumptions of gang culture were challenged. First, gang membership was widespread throughout the Bronx, as stated in *Rubble Kings* (2010), there were no "civilians", as the block of your residency determined your gang membership, if not, then you were automatically a "victim". The rhizomatic nature of this membership undermines the molar line of gang culture's male-dominance, as the simplicity of this narrative omits the complexity of the Bronx assemblage. In this documentary, multiple interviews with gang members expose how vital women were in this gang culture.

As an ex-gang member recounts, "girls had major roles, cos back then there were no police women, so we [women] carried the guns, which was a big issue because if the cops stopped you they'd tell the women 'keep it moving' and would search the guys" (as quoted in *Rubble Kings* 2010). Furthermore, "women played a big part in it, there were always girls around, black spades had girls, once you talked to the girls then

you knew it was safe" (Ibid.). The women then were *instrumental* to street gang culture, both in carrying weapons and being the first point of contact for gangs. Yet they were not only the carriers of weapons, but were actively involved in the violence and wars of street gang life. One female ex-gang member goes on to state, "we bore their babies, we fought alongside them *not* behind them, although many of us did fight in front of them, but we were hand in hand" (as quoted in *Rubble Kings* 2010). Their presence, finally acknowledged through these interviews, thus ruptures 'totalizing roots' of the male-dominating gang and hip-hop history.

This molecular line in the Bronx assemblage encompasses a reterritorializing capacity in terms of challenging hegemonic assumptions of female bodily capacities. Capacities that, as Scot Doo Rok highlighted, are more normative aligned with 'calmness'. This molecular line, however, was only ephemeral, as women's contributions have often been omitted to preserve the patriarchal narrative of hip-hop. As discussed above, Pough's (2004; 2007) work, as well as other key writers such as Joan Morgan (2000), is important in rendering visible female presence and thus challenging this standard narrative. Moreover, for b-girl Sass, the connection with gang violence is only one perspective. She states; "I think a lot of people don't understand that that's the awesome thing about hip-hop that there is so much love, and it's misleading in the media again because people think it's about gangs" (interview, October 24, 2014). Yet the dominant narrative of hip-hop as a site of gangs – and its normative connection with aggressive assertions of masculinity – both marginalize the role of women, and discourages them from entering the culture. It shuts down the lines of flight that may emerge in the present actions of the participants. J-One concludes:

> [N]ot that I think women haven't had a good say in the direction of hip-hop because there are a lot of really powerful women figures, female figures *in* hip-hop who *definitely*, you know they weren't given no easy props, especially in the 70s and 80s, it was pretty rough to come up in a society like that, so I think it's more it was ingrained in the culture before even hip-hop could really get a grassroots things going and it was already sort of set in stone how it was gonna be, and I think it does change, hip-hop is probably a lot more evened out for female representation that I would say other cultures are, but it's still *far* from equal. (interview, October 24, 2014)

Indeed, it is still far from equal, and in Chapter 5 I will discuss the underlying feminist debates (though not articulated in those terms) within the global breaking culture regarding gendered segregation in battling and training, as well as examine how b-girls negotiate and challenge the normative codes and conventions of the breaking assemblage.

In concluding this chapter, I want to also highlight the contradictions that are beginning to emerge regarding the preservation of particular historicized conventions and aesthetics in hip-hop. Specifically, the preservation of an aggressive or 'thug' persona has been criticized by some pioneers in the community as de-politicizing a once necessary characteristic and turning it into a novelty. In an interview posted on *YouTube* (titled 'CrazyLegs on the Future of Breaking'), pioneer b-boy CrazyLegs (who came to fame with the renowned 'Rock Steady Crew') puts the impetus on contemporary breakers to find their *own* avenue of expression, rather than trying to reproduce practices that emerged from a different environment. He states,

> You know people trying to portray themselves and the b-boy style as if it is supposed to be of *gangsta-ism* – it's something that we grew *away* from, we evolved. Now there are certain people that are trying to make it *regress* and go backwards because they think that you have to have a persona of intimidation, and be a threat. The only thing that should be threatening is your skills. There's no room for talk if your skills are that dope. (2013)

What CrazyLegs points to here, are the aesthetic limitations within contemporary breaking. That is, only breaking as one character (gangsta) or through one mode of expression (intimidation). CrazyLegs goes on to describe this mode as "theatrical thuggery", which betrays the hardship of the environment in which breaking emerged.[43] Rap Attack, who is also the interviewee with the longest involvement in Sydney's hip-hop culture (though one not previously interviewed in academic texts), shares CrazyLegs's view. Beginning breaking in the late 1970s, when the 'street dance' scene primarily consisted of 'true street people' (her terms),[44] Rap Attack emphasizes the importance of not reproducing a specific (gangsta) persona:

[43] As CrazyLegs (2013) explains, many of the breakers back then *were* thugs, "and if you *did* that there was a definite fight. It wasn't about dancing anymore."

[44] Rap Attack describes how the people who first started in Sydney's 'street dance' scene were "true street people", describing, "[o]ften a lot of the people were runaways, um, come from broken families,

> I keep saying to people, don't emulate something that you don't live, street culture is street culture, don't try to copy people in movies and be a gangster when you're not! You know, just be *you*. If you live at home with Mummy and Daddy and you have a nice life, that's all *good*, if you appreciate hip-hop and you wanna do one of the elements or several, go right ahead and enjoy, but don't *talk* like a gangster and don't *act* like one when you're *not*. You know, *that* life, anybody from my generation, we wanna leave that shit behind, that's negative, and it's not part of our life anymore. (interview, November 4, 2014)

We can begin to see, then, how maintaining a particular historicized aesthetic, while on the surface perhaps an attempt to be 'real' or 'true' to the origins of the dance, may also de-politicize or indeed taint this particular necessary aesthetic. Rather than fixing breaking expression to that which emerged in a particular context, b-boy CrazyLegs advocates, instead, for contemporary dancers to find new avenues for inspiration, stating:

> I'm not one of these people that try to see it as, it's always gotta be how it was when I first started, because I grew up in a different reality, a different social economic times, and my environment was different. So I don't feel like kids should be responding or trying to be something that they're not character-wise, inspiration-wise. They have to find, I think they should create their own lane. (2013)

The intent of preserving tradition, then, is coextensive with placing limitations upon the possibilities of the present. Indeed, these comments from pioneers in the community productively disrupt hip-hop's 'ghettocentric' totalizing roots and, in doing so, facilitate *new* modes of expression to enter and develop into consistencies on the dance floor. As Rap Attack states, "relax! Have a good *time* for goodness' sake" (interview, November 4, 2014), as a reminder that at the end of the day, we are dancing.

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drugs, criminal stuff […] psychologically most of us were in a very bad space, we were angry people, we were total dickheads, um there were murderers amongst us" (interview, November 4, 2014).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I contextualized the politics that regulate access to the dance floor in Sydney's breaking scene by examining hip-hop's dominant historical narratives. Using Deleuze-Guattarian theory, I analysed how hip-hop's 'standard narrative' is an 'arborescent' structure due to the way it hierarchizes and organizes contemporary practices and politics through this defining lineage. While hip-hop's 'roots' in the 'ghetto', 'street', and with 'gangs' is functional in that it acknowledges the hardship from which hip-hop emerged, as well as the creativity of these largely disenfranchised youths, it also has consequences for those who are situated outside of this defining masculine structure. Indeed, female presence is often omitted or sidelined in these accounts, thus demonstrating how the tracing of hip-hop's history, that new participants reproduce, works to maintain the specific gender politics of hip-hop's 'roots'. Indeed, this 'historical situation' of hip-hop not only shapes bodies in particular ways, through normalizing conventions of aggression for example, but can also limit the possibilities for deterritorializations in Sydney's contemporary breaking scene.

In the next chapter, I will further contextualize the politics that regulate access to the breaking dance floor in Sydney through examining the systems of power and ideologies that construct gendered bodies in specific ways. In particular, I will analyse the metaphysical considerations of the body, such as the Cartesian dualism, in an attempt to show how they regulate opportunities for creative expression in Sydney's breaking scene.

Chapter 3 – The Politics of Dancing Bodies

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I mapped how hip-hop's dominant historical narratives structure and define contemporary breaking culture as a male-only terrain. I argued that these narratives reinforce hip-hop's masculine representation as naturally occurring, and, as such, hierarchize and even shut down potential lines of deterritorializations. In this chapter, I want to build on the work in Chapter 2 by arguing that the masculine representation as naturally-occurring, and thus the gendered constructions arising from this, is in turn a result of the way in which the body has been constructed and perceived. In other words, in what follows I argue, first, how systems of power organize the breaking body. In particular I attempt to demonstrate that the gender and body politics of the dance floor are significantly informed by broader ideologies such as Cartesian dualism and the Protestant work ethic. These metaphysical structures not only situate the body and the mind in opposition to one another, but also hierarchize them, and this hierarchization is instrumental in an analysis of dance. This is because the elevation of rationalism interlocks with a subordination of not only bodily knowledge and pleasures, but also with understandings of gender. Using Butler's theory of gender performance, I will thus demonstrate in this chapter how these dualist considerations of the body produce the gendered subject and regulate opportunities for creative expression, which consequently shut down potential lines of deterritorializations in Sydney's breaking scene. If systems of power shape, organize, and form the body more broadly and the dancing and breaking body in particular, then second, I argue that the value in a Deleuze-Guattarian analysis of breaking can help us move away from the dualist structures of Western metaphysics to instead productively facilitate spaces to examine the potentiality in Sydney's breaking scene and the body more generally.

Cartesian Dualism

Western Classical Philosophy has much to answer for in the way we view, and treat, the body. Predominantly concerned with 'ideas', 'reason', 'concepts' and 'judgments', this philosophy privileges language that excludes considerations of the body and

privileges the rational faculties of the mind. In this section, I briefly map this hierarchization through Plato, Descartes, the Age of Enlightenment, Christianity, as well as the emergence of apparatuses of power that optimize the body through systems of 'normalization', in order to demonstrate the ossified subordination of the body. Moreover, and as I will attempt to demonstrate, this hierarchy interlocks with understandings of gender, and it is widely acknowledged in feminist literature the role of the Cartesian dualism in shaping contemporary considerations of gendered bodies and their capacities. Consequently, in this section I draw on key feminist thinkers, including Grosz, Lloyd, Shildrick, Gatens, and Colebrook, to demonstrate the ongoing regulatory power of the Cartesian dualism.

Gender and the Subordination of 'the Body'

The earliest denigrations of the body can be mapped to Plato (Colebrook 2003; Grosz 1994), who, in the book of *Phaedo* (c428–347 BC), declared, "the body confuses the soul and does not allow it to acquire truth and wisdom" (1997, 57). Indeed, according to Plato, in order to observe truth and be closest to knowledge, "we must escape from the body" (Ibid., 58). Consequently, the mind became elevated as a disembodied term that was viewed as 'pure' and aligned with wisdom and spiritual transcendence. In contrast, the body became a signification of sin, where bodily expressions, needs, and desires should be contained through the authority of the mind.

This hierarchization of mind over body was further inspired by René Descartes' (1998) (originally published 1637) famous rationalist, Cartesian system of philosophy. Descartes concluded that, on the basis of innate ideas, God and the immaterial soul are both better known than objects of the senses, i.e. the physical body. His famous words "I think, therefore I am [*cogito ergo sum*]" (1998, 18), emphasized the *thinking* of the self as the origin of all experience and knowledge. Indeed, Descartes' definition of the self through the concept of 'reason' was foundational to Enlightenment philosophy, which emphasized rationality and the idea of moral and social betterment through philosophy and scientific progress (Grosz 1994). These broader ideological movements, which were symptomatic of deference to the transcendental, further devalued both the body and bodily knowledge as subordinate to the mind.

The subordination of the body within the Cartesian dualism became further problematic when it was singularly associated with 'femaleness' (Gatens 1996; Grosz

1994; Lloyd 1999, 2002; Seidler 1989; Shildrick 2015). This positioning of women with the body can be mapped to Plato's early denigrations of the body:

> While we live, we shall be closest to knowledge if we refrain as much as possible from association with the body and do not join with it more than we must, if we are not infected with its nature but purify ourselves from it until the god himself frees us. (1997, 58)

The way in which Plato opposes 'knowledge' to 'nature', here, shows us the emergence of gendered distinctions. Coupled with the separation of the mind from the body was a hierarchy on ways of being that situated women within asymmetrical power relations. Subordinated through discourses of 'nature' and 'nurture', women were tethered to the perceived limitations of the body. That is, as Margrit Shildrick puts it, "women are deemed to live their bodies in ways that men are not" (2015, 168) (originally published 1997), and through the constant reminders of their reproductive capacities, femaleness became perceived as constraint to transcendence. Rather than being measured against their own 'ideal', women were 'naturally' constructed in opposition to men (Seidler 1989, 14; Shildrick 2015, 147). As Victor J. Seidler writes, "[t]he experiences of women, children and animals have been closely identified as lacking reason, and being closer to nature. Women were forced to subordinate themselves to men to anchor themselves in the new world of reason and science" (1989, 14).

The subordination of the feminized body was therefore coextensive with the alignment of maleness with 'rationalism', as the transcendent universal subject of Western philosophy was produced through masculinized characteristics. As Shildrick writes, "the humanist moral subject, theorised as an ideal, abstract, quasi-transcendent, non-gendered 'person', is in practice invariably gendered as male" (2015, 146).[1] Indeed, this gendering of the transcendent can be seen in Plato's gendered language above, 'himself', which is also viewed in opposition to nature. Moreover, Plato writes, "[t]he body keeps us busy in a thousand ways because of its need for nurture" (1997, 57) and "makes for confusion and fear, so that it prevents us from seeing the truth" (Ibid., 58). In this way, the body and its nurturing demand not only confuse knowledge, but also distract us from 'truth'. The transcendence of the body is similarly noted by Lloyd, who

[1] This masculinizing of philosophy both worked to, and normalized, the exclusion of femininity (and ultimately women) from philosophical practices (Gatens 1996; Lloyd 2002).

explains, "[r]ational knowledge has been construed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind" (2002, 2). The 'two-tier system' that privileges the mind, reason, spirit and intellect over the material, subordinates women through their ostensible binding to their (reproductive) bodies, as the perception of the very condition of women's *embodied* femininity worked to "disqualify them from full subjectivity" (Ibid.).[2] While we can see the emergence of Cartesian Dualism in the work of Plato, as we saw above it was through Descartes that the philosophy was segmented. While Lloyd explains that this opposition between maleness and femaleness that manifested through Cartesian dualism "happened in some ways despite Descartes's explicit intentions" (1999, 71), it consequently led to the emergence of a hierarchized binary of gendered assumptions, which I return to below.

Meanwhile, the pervasiveness of the constructed binary opposition of man and woman can be seen in the work of Bourdieu. Viewing the difference between the sexes as an "embodied social programme of perception", which is structured through "sexually defining principles of vision and division" (2001, 11), Bourdieu highlights how they organize social reality. He writes:

> It is this programme which constructs the difference between the biological sexes in conformity with the principles of a mythic vision of the world rooted in the arbitrary relationship of domination of men over women, itself inscribed, with the division of labour, in the reality of the social order. (Ibid.)

What Bourdieu points to, here, is that the binary between male/female and its connection to the mind/body binary is not simply isolated, but rather is situated in, and reflective of, larger binary structures throughout Western thought (Cixous 1981; Colebrook 2003). Hélène Cixous (1981) famously calls attention to the pervasiveness of binary structures in Western thinking, and how they organize how we perceive, and engage, with the world. Beyond the ones I have pointed to so far in this chapter – mind/body, man/woman – Cixous presents binary logic to extend to activity/passivity, culture/nature, head/heart, intelligible/sensible, day/night, sun/moon, and so on (Ibid.,

[2] This position is similar to that argued by many 'egalitarian feminists' (a label Grosz (1994) uses), such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir and Shulamith Firestone, who share a view of the specificities of the female body as inherently limiting women's access to the privileges and rights afforded to men in patriarchal culture.

90). In positioning the gendered binary among a whole range of other values, Cixous's list suggests, for Colebrook that "one cannot think the opposition between nature and culture, or reason and the body *innocently*, for these distinctions are already associated with maleness and femaleness and a host of other values" (2003, 48). The questions that emerge from Cixous's work here are many, and for Colebrook this includes whether gender is merely one opposition amid others and is possibly constitutive of a 'mutually-defining series' (Ibid.), or if the gender binary is that which grounds all other binaries, or, importantly, whether dualist structures are, in fact, necessary (Ibid.).

Within the scope of this research project, the question that emerges from Cixous's list is whether it is possible to rethink bodily capacity without falling prey to binary logic. With gender tied to the most foundational categories of nature and culture, "tackling gender requires tackling an entire conceptual apparatus" (Colebrook 2003, 48). Indeed, we cannot begin to think of the body's potentiality while still firmly situated within a dualist structure of thought. Not only are binary frameworks overly reductive of the complexities of life, but they also work through a pre-supposing logic – the 'One-two'. As Deleuze and Guattari explain with regards to arborescent modes of thought, "the countable multiplicity it constitutes remains subordinated to the One in an always superior or supplementary dimension" (2004, 556). I deal with these questions of how to conceptualize the body beyond these dominant modes of thinking in much greater depth in Chapters 5 and 6, where we will be examining the body as an 'assemblage'.

Through a set of simplistic binary oppositions, such as the emotional, passive woman versus the rational, and active man, the Cartesian legacy legitimated the segregation of societal roles, as well as the gendering of behaviours and bodily capacities. Indeed, for Lloyd, the Cartesian dualism "proved crucial for the development of stereotypes of maleness and femaleness" (1999, 71), and thus biologically-determined assumptions worked to maintain patriarchal dominance. Moreover, the gendered binary was further naturalized through the institutional apparatuses of the scientific disciplines, constitutive of much discussion in the work of Foucault and feminist writers (such as Lloyd, Gatens, Shildrick, Grosz, and Colebrook), and can be seen in the emergence of biological-determinist discourses. Moreover, this position aligns with the larger traditions of sociology and anthropology, which are informed by structuralist thinking (Colebrook 2003, 48). While I discuss Foucault in more detail below, I want to highlight that perceived biological differences between

men and women not only accentuate sex in the categorization of bodies, but also, in doing so, ossify their gendering.[3] In mapping the ways by which biological difference supports masculine domination, Bourdieu calls attention to the 'circularity' of the relationship between biology and gender:

> Because the social principle of vision constructs the anatomical difference and because this socially constructed difference becomes the basis and apparently natural justification of the social vision which founds it, there is thus a relationship of circular causality which confines thought within the self-evidence of relations of domination inscribed both in objectivity, in the form of objective divisions, and in subjectivity, in the form of cognitive schemes which, being organized in accordance with these divisions, organize the perception of these objective divisions. (2001, 11–12)

In this circularity, gender differences are neither imposed nor caused. With regard to Bourdieu's theory, here, Colebrook argues, "a biological difference that leads to masculine domination is both justified by, and used to represent, social relations" (2003, 50).

Gendered stereotypes, or biological-determinist views, were, according to Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell (2005), a popular view held up until the 1970s.[4] Emblematic of such attitudes: "[w]e inherit our masculine genes tendencies [sic] to aggression, family life, competitiveness, political power, hierarchy, territoriality, promiscuity and forming men's clubs" (Connell 2005, 46), and such views are often used explain why men are 'naturally' better at certain activities than women. In doing so, biologically-determinist views work to regulate bodily capacities and potential in-line with Cartesian authority. This is pervasive throughout our social life, as Bourdieu writes:

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[3] The stereotypes or 'ideals' of gender identities – as constituted by sexual difference – are both historically and culturally-specific. Even so, as Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitszimmons, and Kathleen Lennon conclude, "[r]ecurring themes concern greater aggression and competitiveness in men and nurturing qualities in women; greater spatial and abstract reasoning abilities in men and greater linguistic skills in women" (2002, 18). While characteristics may slightly differ according to time and place, the importance is in how the gender binary operates to organize bodies.

[4] For example, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (1973), by Steven Goldberg famously claimed that in contrast to women, men have a greater tendency to dominate. This tendency, according to Goldberg (1973), is the consequence of male hormones, specifically testosterone, which was considered to cause long-lasting effects in brain mechanisms.

> The division between the sexes appears to be 'in the order of things', as people sometimes say to refer to what is normal, natural, to the point of being inevitable: it is present both – in the objectified state – in things (in the house, for example, every part of which is 'sexed'), in the whole social world, and in the embodied state – in the habitus of the agents, functioning as systems of schemes of perception, thought and action. (2001, 8)

As Bourdieu highlights here, the division between the sexes is thus naturalized through discourses, structures, and is even embodied, and thus influences how we perceive the world, through habitus.

Thus the stereotypes of 'maleness' and 'femaleness' continue to regulate participation in particular social milieus. That some forms of dance – or even physical pursuits – are considered masculine and others feminine calls attention to how the segregation of physical activity maintains the normative organization of the body, and regulates entry through 'biopolitical' discourses (I discuss 'biopolitics' below). Indeed, any discussion of Cartesian understandings can inform how particular spaces are 'naturally' divided through gendered assumptions. For example, in my own autoethnographic research, I observed how my body was often (re)constructed through these Cartesian assumptions, such as its perceived fragility, weakness, or the appropriateness of more 'lyrical' (softer) dance styles for me to learn in contrast to breaking, and I elaborate on these experiences throughout the thesis. Consequently, these assumptions are particularly pervasive in discussions of physical pursuits, whereby biological-determinist discourses are used to both justify and legitimize the inequality of bodies presented. Indeed, this gendered division can be seen in the comments of Mitchell, who writes:

> [G]iven the degree of danger graffiti involves, it is not surprising it remains a male-dominated activity […] A similar case could be put for the demanding physical skills required for breakdancing and the exacting technical skills required for DJing, both of which activities tend to attract few women. (2003, 8)

Here, the descriptions of normative masculine qualities (danger, physicality and technical skills) are used to both reinforce hip-hop's male-dominance, and also exclude

women through 'natural', biologically-determinist discourses.[5]

For Bourdieu, this masculine dominance would not be unique to hip-hop, as he sees 'masculine domination' as the primary structuring principle that organizes social spaces (though, in historically and culturally specific ways (2001, 108)). He writes, "[b]eing included, as man or woman, in the object that we are trying to comprehend, we have embodied the historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation" (Ibid., 5). The power of these schemes of perception is so pervasive, that, as Bourdieu continues, "[w]hen we try to understand masculine domination we are therefore likely to resort to modes of thought that are the product of domination" (Ibid.). For Bourdieu, we need to approach gender in a way that encapsulates the dynamism of social relations. As Colebrook points out, however, there are still problems within Bourdieu's approach to gender, as he argues that in order to transform the system of 'masculine domination', we must see gender as grounded in biology (Ibid., 103). Therefore, while Bourdieu's approach attempts to avoid reductionist views, Colebrook states there is "a clearly marked difference between biology/anatomy and the social field" (Colebrook 2003, 50). In other words, and what Colebrook means here, is that the relationship between biological difference and masculine domination for Bourdieu subsequently reinforces a dichotomy between matter and form.

It is here that the work of Butler is particularly valuable, as unlike Bourdieu, she argues that *both* gender and sex are products of discourse. Rather than seeing gender as the cultural manifestation of the sexed body, Butler considers the notion of the sexed or gendered subject as always-already discursively produced because they are framed by gendered meanings and cultural assumptions. She states:

> The task of distinguishing sex from gender becomes all the more difficult once we understand that gendered meanings frame the hypothesis and the reasoning of those biomedical inquiries that seek to establish 'sex' for us as it is prior to the meanings that it acquires. Indeed, the task is even more complicated when we realize that the language of biology participates in other kinds of languages

[5] Rose has noted the difficulties facing female hip-hop producers due to the masculinity of the space of production studios, as "young women were not especially welcome in male social spaces where technological knowledge is shared" (1994, 58). She writes, "[t]oday's studios are extremely male-dominated spaces where technological discourse merges with a culture of male bonding that inordinately problematizes female apprenticeship. Both of these factors have had a serious impact on the contributions of women in contemporary rap music production" (Ibid.).

> and reproduces that cultural sedimentation in the objects it purports to discover and neutrally describe. (1990, 148–149)

For Butler, the gendered body is produced through the intersection of multiple structures of power, such as biomedical inquiries, the Cartesian dualism, and of course the 'heterosexual matrix', and these systems sustain the ongoing fabrication of an internal substance or core. She continues, further elaborating on how these systems of power intersect, "acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality" (Ibid., 185–186). Importantly, for Butler gender identity is not the *result* of these systems, but rather is the naturalized *effect* produced. They concomitantly fabricate the subject through discursive means and corporeal signs.

Given this, Butler views gender as performatively constituted through 'corporeal signifiers', that is acts, expressions, gestures, enactments, and 'linguistic structures', such as discourse. Consequently, there is no pre-existing or a priori subject that then is constructed as gendered, nor is there any such 'pure' surface of the body that is inscribed with gendered significations. Rather, the structure of gender is constituted through the underlying organizing principle of the subject that, at the same time, is never revealed. She writes:

> If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity. (Ibid., 136)

Within Butler's account, then, there is no such 'true gender' or even another system for bodily expression beyond the 'law', as any such account is always-already installed through these systems of power. What this points to, however, is the possibility to parody gender. That is, to 'act' gender in ways that call attention to its inherent construction, and I explore this further with regard to b-girling later in the thesis.

Consequently, I consider a discussion of Cartesian-inspired assumptions instrumental to understanding why there are so few b-girls in Sydney's breaking scene, and examine these assumptions in much greater detail in my analysis of breaking in the

following chapter. First, I want to contextualize the politics of the body in order to highlight how the regulations of the body are coextensive with a politicization of the dance floor.

Efficiency versus Pleasure: The Politics of Dancing

In the Age of Enlightenment, control of the self through control of 'bodily urges' saw the body become the object, and product, of power. In his genealogy, Foucault (1977a) maps the shift in the distribution of power in Western history from a primarily sovereign ruling – with the punishment of bodies as 'spectacle' – to its de-centralization into apparatuses of power. As a brief overview, this shift in the distribution of power led to a more efficient means of controlling the populace through systems of normalization.[6] These systems manifested through the institutionalized and individualized surveillance and regulation of bodies, or what Foucault labels 'disciplinary' power and 'biopolitics' (or 'biopower'). These latter manifestations of power are both 'technologies of the body', with one seeing the body individualized and regulated with capacities (disciplinary), and the other replacing the body with general biological processes (Foucault 2004, 249). Importantly, the consequent internalization of power is deemed 'natural', as it is hidden behind a veil of normalization. While my interrogation of Foucault's genealogy here is brief, my aim is to contextualize the politics of the body. Indeed, understanding how the body is constructed through discourses of functions, and how its capacities are organized into specific forces, is necessary to examine how opportunities for creative expressions and deterritorializations of gender are regulated.

Foucault (1977a) credits Descartes with initiating the discussion of the body on the 'anatomico-metaphysical register' (subsequently taken up by philosophers and physicians), and the 'technico-political register', which was constituted by a whole set of regulations and empirical and calculated methods, or 'mechanics of power' that were acted on and produced through the body (Foucault 1977a, 138).[7] While the 'anatomico-metaphysical register' and 'technico-political register' are distinct in the way they view the body – analysis and submission versus function and manipulability, respectively –

[6] For Foucault, the body "is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions" (Foucault 1977a, 11), and much of his work (Foucault 1977a, 1977b, 1978, 2001, 2004) examines the different mechanisms of power that organize our bodies so that we are constituted as ideologically appropriate subjects.

[7] Here Foucault mentions the "great book of Man-the-Machine" (1977a, 136).

their amalgamation produces what Foucault labels the 'docile' body. This body is "one that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Ibid., 136). This 'improvement' occurs through "a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour" (Ibid.).

Through these registers, then, and as Foucault articulates, bodily capacities are both regulated and optimized through apparatuses of power, such as schools, prisons, medical institutions, which reinforce the perception of the body as an 'object' to be controlled. Moreover, these regulations and methods were used for both controlling and disciplining the operations of the body, as "discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)" (Ibid.). Foucault continues this examination in his discussion of disciplinary power in *The History of Sexuality* (1978), where he argues that the institutional effect of power is, "centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls" (Ibid., 139). The body as constructed in accordance to 'usefulness', and 'optimized' capacities sheds light on the politics of the dancing body, and its blatant exploration of creative expression. Indeed, as we will later see, viewing the body as an object to be controlled and its capacities optimized through the faculties of the mind permeated into the aesthetics of dance.

The fraught politicization of the body in the machine age was further propagated by the emergence of the Protestant work ethic. As a reflection of the mind/body split, the Protestant work ethic regulated the body through a political framework that either optimized or condemned certain bodily capacities in relation to a transcendental end. As discussed in Max Weber's seminal *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1971) (originally published in 1930), rather than merely accumulating good deeds, Weber claims that the ethic saw salvation placed in the hands of the individual who must enact 'systematic self-control', as "[u]nwillingness to work is symptomatic of the lack of grace" (1971, 159). This 'unwillingness' could manifest itself in 'time-wasting' activities that provide leisure and enjoyment (such as dancing pursuits, which I discuss further below), and also through a lack of asceticism.[8] As such, in this philosophy, as dance theorist Brenda Dixon Gottschild writes, "the body is

[8] In this text, Weber (1971) argues that this ideology was central to the emergence, and consequent success, of capitalism.

regarded as the site of original sin and must be controlled in order for the spirit to be ascendant, or even for daily work to be accomplished efficiently" (1996, 9). Importantly, this was not merely a metaphorical association, as it further extended the doctrine of Christianity from the Middle Ages whereby the body was considered a corporeal signifier of sin (Gottschild 1996; Grosz 1994; Weber 1971).[9]

The emphasis on 'efficiency' through the Protestant work ethic led to a denunciation of 'pleasurable' activities, as both dedication and productivity within work was viewed as a *spiritual* end. Consequently, pleasures of the body, dancing or otherwise were kept strictly controlled, if not forbidden altogether.[10] As Barbara Ehrenreich writes, "[o]ne of the goals of the crackdown within Europe was to instill [sic] the work ethic into the lower classes and apply the time 'wasted' in festivities to productive labor" (2007, 160). This saw a repression of the 'carnival' in Europe, and, as such, was inextricably connected to broader hierarchies of class (Ibid.). She continues, "the European lower classes had an important part to play: as soldiers in the mass armies of absolute monarchs, and as workers in manufacturing enterprises. Their fate was to be disciplined, not necessarily to die" (Ibid., 161). Naturalized through industrial and spiritual discourses, and an overt emphasis on 'output', bodily capacities were highly regulated, and limited opportunities for the more joyful pleasures of life, such as music and dancing.

For Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson (2002), the devaluation of bodily pleasures and sensuality was inextricably tied to music. They map this position through Plato, Socrates, Rousseau, Kant, and even Adorno, because in these authoritative traditions music was understood: "as being problematic in its capacity to affect us in ways which seem to bypass the *acceptable* channels of language, reason and contemplation" (2002, 42; emphasis added). While Gilbert and Pearson (2002) note that within German philosophy the status of music was later reconsidered, music still needed to be both constrained and controlled in its affective potential. As such, performances in the European music tradition were at the mercy of the singular authority of the conductor, which was indicative of a hierarchical structuring of the

[9] According to Grosz (1994, 5) physical sickness was viewed as a symptom of spiritual deficiency, and, as such, assortments of physiological disorders were given moral characteristics.

[10] In *The Sacred Dance: A Study in Comparative Folklore*, W.O.E. Oesterley writes that when someone converted to Christianity, the Namaquas of South Africa would say, "he has given up dancing" (1923, 80).

orchestra (Attali 1985; Gilbert 2004).[11] Gilbert writes, "[t]he emergence of the conductor and the composer as the key figures at the pinnacle of this pyramid prefigures and typifies the emergence of a society dominated by the bourgeois as individual, as entrepreneur, as social authority, as leader" (2004, 127). With this in mind, we can see how the emphasis on the *self* both in knowledge and salvation was reflected into the arts, and enforced constraints upon the body and bodily pleasures.

The European tradition of how music was received – in a dark hall with a seated audience – appropriately enabled contemplation (Gilbert & Pearson 2002), and thus was indicative of the prevailing rationalist authority. This is because the dangers with music lie in its "apparent physicality, its status as a source of physical pleasure" (Ibid., 42). Consequently, any music that affected bodies into movement and pleasure was a source of denigration, such as improvised music (see Bailey 1992; Gilbert 2004). Indeed, Gilbert and Pearson (2002) map the continued devaluation of music into the more contemporary panics around house music and rave cultures. They write, "to devalorize musics precisely because they offer their listeners *too much pleasure*, is simply to replicate the terms of the dominant musical discourse absolutely insofar as it itself replicates western metaphysics' suspicion of bodily pleasure" (Ibid., 77). As I will later argue, often dances that assert the body *too much* are similarly devalorized within academic discourse.

These constraints upon the body, which were legitimized through broader ideological forces, thus had significant ramifications for dance. This is because, for Gilbert and Pearson, dance is "always the most obvious indicator of music's physicality", and making it not surprising that it "also underwent a radical cultural *de*valuation at this time" (Ibid., 43). This devaluation was further entrenched through the French and Industrial revolutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as pleasures of the body were seen to contribute to broader political failures (Hanna 1988). While previously the terrain of the noble, with men dancing both male and female parts, male dancing became seen as an obstruction to economic productivity and thus a distraction from more appropriately capitalist-aligned goals.[12] Thus, dance transitioned

[11] Specifically, the orchestra's consequent "deliberate synchrony" (Jones 1959, 193) both reflected and was "a metaphor for a hierarchically stratified society" (Gilbert 2004, 127). Indeed, Gilbert goes on to suggest, "[a]dvocates of improvised music decry the sedimented nineteenth-century ideal of the musician as a mere neutral channel for the creative will of the composer, mediated by the individual authority of the conductor" (Ibid.).

[12] According to Hanna (1988), women used dance as both a vocation and a means of social mobility, despite the pejorative use of the term 'ballet girl'.

"from the epitome of royal male performance to the nadir of 'inferior' female performance" (Hanna 1988, 123) (I return to gender below). This had broader political consequences, as Hanna writes, "the emergent French bourgeoisie attributed the collapse of the French monarchy in part to moral laxity, they transformed the body from an instrument of pleasure into one of production", and as such, "[s]elf-control meant control of the body" (Ibid., 124).[13] Yet 'self-control' was situated in asymmetrical power relations on the Cartesian dualism, which saw women more explicitly tied to 'the body'. Women, then, were thus denied access to the same level of 'self-control'.

With this connection in mind, classical forms of dance (such as ballet) reinforce the view of the body as a site to be trained and controlled through the discipline of the mind (see Aalten 1997). Indeed, we could argue that these dominant ideologies and discourses manifested into the *aesthetics* of this type of dance. The vertical alignment of the body is considered a product of the Christian (especially Protestant) philosophy described above, which not only separates the mind and/or spirit from the body, but also views the body as an object to control (Gottschild 1996).[14] As Gottschild writes:

> In traditional European dance aesthetics, the torso must be held upright for correct, classic form; the erect spine is the center – the hierarchical ruler – from which all movement is generated. It functions as a single unit. The straight, uninflected torso indicates elegance or royalty and acts as the absolute monarch, dominating the dancing body. This vertically aligned spine is the first principle of Europeanist dance, with arm and leg movements emanating from it and returning to it. (1996, 8)[15]

The strict training regime required of ballet dancers is reflective of optimizing bodily capacities through the authoritative discipline of the mind – reinforcing the privileging

[13] Indeed, 'Jazzing' was one such moral panic in the twentieth century in Australia, and the 'jazzing woman' was held to be responsible for every 'evil' from sexual license to communism (see Johnson 2011).

[14] Indeed, in her seminal book *Dancing in the Streets* (2007), Ehrenreich explains, quoting Jean Comaroff, "Dance was 'particularly distasteful to the Europeans, not only for its 'salacious[ness],' Comaroff writes, but because of the sheer 'vitality of the system it represents,' a vitality that directly defied the aims of the white exploiters." (Comaroff 1985, 151 cited in Ehrenreich 2007, 163).

[15] Gottschild (1996) goes on to view this structural principle of the European dancing body as connected with core European values, as the centered spine from which all movements arise from is indicative of the worldview prevalent in post-Renaissance, colonialist society – a view that saw Europe assert itself as the center of the world that controlled and defined everything else.

of rationalism. Aalten also notes this connection, and in her discussion of ballet she observes, "Western body politics are reflected in the standardization of the technique and in the belief that the body is an object, a thing that can be moulded [sic] and shaped" (1997, 55). Yet this shaping of the body could also be seen as a way for female performers – who now dominated the tradition – to compensate for their ostensible 'lack' of control of their bodies. Thus control was carefully exercised with grace and poise, and perhaps was even a form of overcompensation, in that it allowed women an idealized feminine notion of some type of 'freedom'.

While the body continued to be seen as a site to control through the mind, Jane Desmond attributes the shift in attitudes towards dance to the 'physical culture' movement and new trends in leisure activities that saw the emergence of the 'dance hall', writing:

> [T]he rapid industrialization and class realignments that took place during the latter half of the century, giving rise to new ideas about the division between leisure and work, between men and women, and toward time and physicality, are played out in the dance halls. (1997a, 33)

The 'dance hall' facilitated the space for new connections and assemblages – with other bodies and music – as new avenues for pleasure were enabled. This relationship between dance and pleasure is simply captured by Andrew H. Ward, who writes, "social events where dancing takes place are generally understood as having a particular potential for pleasure maximization. Commonsensically, then, dance both produces and indicates pleasure" (1995, 17). The spontaneity of dancing – doing what feels *good* – goes against the strict appropriation of the body as both a temple for salvation and also economic efficiency, as the distinct corporeality of pleasure opposes the highly optimized capacities of the docile body (see McRobbie 1993).

Moreover, the undercurrents of the pleasures of dancing incorporate dangerous possibilities for sexual expression, and were particularly intimated in the dance halls. As Simon Frith notes, "the most obvious feature of dancing as an activity is its sexuality – institutionalised dancing […] is redolent with sexual tensions and possibilities, as private desires get public display as repressed needs are proudly shared" (1983, 19). The proud and public display of that which is *repressed* thus has broader ramifications in challenging the apparatuses of power that hierarchically

organize bodies through systems of normalization. Dance is not only inextricably connected with 'the body', but also the *unexpected*, and thus is a powerful means to transgress the docility of disciplinary power, and facilitate the space for deterritorializations.

The dance hall, however, was by no means a 'free' space to unleash bodily energies. With the prevailing authority of Protestant and Cartesian discourses, social dancing remained under a strict regime of control through enforcing 'proper' and 'improper' ways of dancing with members of the opposite sex (see Desmond 1997a, 32). These hierarchies of expression that also interlocked with class and race realigned dance, and by extension pleasure, so that it served a social utility. Dance still needed to be *functional*, and now I want to examine the different approaches to dance in academic scholarship. Not only will this discussion situate my analysis of breaking within larger histories of dance, but it will also call attention to what I perceive as the limitations within approaches to both breaking and also male-dominated dance styles. To address these gaps, I will then propose a Deleuze-Guattarian reading of the dancing body as productively opening up the space for the emergence of lines of flight.

Dance and Culture

In outlining Cartesian dualism in the previous section we are now in a position, in this section, to better understand how the gendered discourses prevalent in Sydney's current breaking scene operate to further enforce gendered barriers to entry. And to demonstrate this, in what follows I contextualize the breaking scene by referring to academic dance studies scholarship and other dance forms (for instance, ballet) in order to situate it in relation to dance more broadly. I argue that dance can be in danger of placing limitations on future deterritorializations by continuing to naturalize the separation of men and women into dichotomously opposed subjects. That is, from this biologically determinist position, male and female bodies are represented as 'naturally' skilful at different tasks and activities.

Analysing Dance

Discourses surrounding 'the body' in Western culture have not only shaped everyday attitudes towards dance, but have also meant little attention has been given to the activity in academic literature (similarly noted by, to name a few: Brabazon 2011; Desmond 1993; Huntington 2007; McRobbie 1997; Ward 1995). For example,

Desmond argues that dance has been a "greatly undervalued and under-theorized arena of bodily discourse. Its practice and its scholarship are, with rare exception, marginalized within the academy" (1993, 34), and she attributes this marginalization to dance's relationship to, in a Euro-American context, physicality rather than mentality. Similarly, Ward argues that the broader preference for rationalism in Western thought has seen academic research favour text-based or object-based research, whereby there is also greater ease of accessing a standardized text or score.[16] For dance however, as Ward notes, there is no 'universally accepted system' for recording dance practices, and its fluidity can make dance traditions difficult to 'grasp' (1995, 17).

While Ward points to the openness of dance, it is Colebrook (2005) who articulates the potentiality of dance to express the vitality of life. It is not merely through the unexpected that dance can facilitate deterritorializations, but also through its ephemerality. She writes, "dance is associated with the differential power of light, a power to differ and bring into being nothing more than the power to appear, a power that has no permanent being outside its effects" (2005, 9–10). As Colebrook highlights, the process-based aesthetic that is inherent in dance thus demands an ongoing evaluation of the possibilities of the present, without being bound to or orientated by a permanent being or determined outcome. Indeed, it is this aesthetic within dance that distinguishes it from most creative practices where the focus is on the 'final product', and thus a pre-determined end.

Despite the privileging of text and object-based research within academia, dance studies have emerged as a significant field. In particular, Foster's (1986) early research, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*, was seminal in the way it highlighted the value of post-structuralist theory in analysing dance. However there still remains a larger preference for classical or theatrical works, perhaps due to a greater ease in which to study this type of dance – often relying on a repertoire of movements and choreographed routines – as well as, perhaps, broader political and ideological reasons. Indeed, the preference for the study of classical dance may be due to the way it works towards a removal of 'the body'. In this tradition, and as I demonstrated above, dance is not created to be pleasurable, but rather to illustrate control, and thus reinforces the authority of the mind and the privileging of rationalism. Thus, and continuing Gilbert and Pearson's (2002) argument regarding music above, I

[16] Desmond (1993, 34) lists these areas of research to include film, literary, art, and even verbal-based texts.

want to suggest that perhaps some dances are denigrated due to the way they offer 'too much pleasure' or even assert the presence of the body 'too much', thus duplicating the structures of dominant music discourses that are themselves a product of the denigration of bodily pleasure in western metaphysics.

This denigration on the types of dances that powerfully assert the body can be seen in McRobbie's (1984) 'Dance and Social Fantasy'. While this work was seminal in highlighting the value in dance practices of the 'everyday' people, despite being published during the peak of hip-hop's popularity, it excluded hip-hop dance forms (such as breaking, popping and locking), which have been widely acknowledged as asserting the physicality of the body (see Osumare 2008). While McRobbie (1984) contends these hip-hop styles were not dance practices of 'everyday people' of whom she wanted to study, Fogarty (2006) views this exclusion as reflective of early trends in dance academia, and attributing it to the dances' marginal non-white and predominantly male make-up. Indeed, Desmond goes on to attributes dance's unpopularity within academic literature to its linkage of 'the body' with 'non-dominant' classes, races, nationalities and gender (1993, 35).

Yet studying dance and dance practices can be a productive way to understand how cultural identities are both constructed and performed. For Foster, this research may manifest through "a more meat-and-bones approach to the body based on an analysis of discourses or practices that *instruct* it" (1997, 235). She initially suggests Foucault's work on the organization of bodies, which maintain the disciplinary alignments of culture, as valuable in analysing the construction of the dancing body. Yet, she claims, these theories "hardly suffice, though, when one considers what might be done towards studying methods of cultivating the body – whole disciplines through which it is molded, shaped, transformed, and in essence created" (Ibid., 236) physical pursuits, sports, etiquette, and so on. In response to this perceived methodological gap in the scholarship, Foster argues that the perceived body and 'ideal' body work in tandem to (re)map the body, transform its organization, and optimize its capacities. Grounding her analysis in both representation and materiality, Foster's framework for analysing the dancing body will be productive for my examination of the breaking body's construction in Sydney.

As such, there is much work that raises issues of dancing histories being inscribed on the body (see, for example, Aalten 1997; Claid 2006; Foster 1996a, 1997). This is why, in Aalten's (1997) research, she analyses ballet as both a product of, and

reflective on, idealized notions of femininity. Extending this line of argument, I want to examine how breaking is both reflective and a product of normative masculine stylizations of the body. Sharing this view of the importance of studying bodily texts, Desmond writes:

> [W]e can further our understandings of how social identities are signaled, formed, and negotiated through bodily movement. We can analyze how social identities are codified in performance styles and how the use of the body in dance is related to, duplicates, contests, amplifies, or exceeds norms of non-dance bodily expression within specific historical contexts. (1993, 34)

As Desmond highlights, through analysing dance we can examine the contestations, transgressions, and replications of bodily norms and codes that manifest on the dance floor.

Dance, however, is by no means a completely 'free' space where the body can move however it chooses. Indeed, as I have demonstrated, dance is aligned with a specific social milieu that regulates bodily movement. As Ted Polhemus highlights, "[d]ance – the distillation of culture into its most metaphysical form – always embodies and identifies this gender-generated division of cultural realities" (1995, 11). As such, through analysing dance we can understand how gendered identities and historical restraints are codified and amplified, and through examining the gendered performativity of dance, we can see the conditions that regulate entry.

For Gilbert and Pearson, however, much of the research on dancing and dance practices are analysed through the lens of its functionality. This includes ritualism, community engagement, and heteronormative desires or objectives (2002, 15). As highlighted in the previous chapter, often breaking is seen as a means to 'pick up girls', or it is analysed through the lens of the 'Africanist aesthetic', which can function to 'reinvent' a marginalized identity. Yet an emphasis on *function* places limitations on the possibilities of the present. It reduces affective expression to a sole purpose.

Analysing Breaking

The preference for text or score-based research extends into hip-hop literature, as many of the texts on 'hip-hop' are, in fact, limited in their scope to rap music. For example, volumes one and two of the edited collection *Icons of Hip Hop: An Encyclopedia of the*

Movement, Music, and Culture (Hess 2007a; 2007b) includes only rap and deejay icons. More locally, while in his article 'Partying, Politics and Getting Paid – hip hop and national identity in Australia', Kurt Iveson acknowledges that "[h]ip hop is more than just rap music" (1997, 40), the article's focus is still limited to rap music. The prevalence of rap's prominence in texts on hip-hop can be seen in the introduction to Jeff Chang's (2006c) edited collection on the art and aesthetics of hip-hop. He begins with: "What you hold in your hands is *not* another book about rap music. This is about hip-hop. To most people, hip-hop signifies rap" (2006b, ix). While these are merely some examples of a larger tradition, I want to highlight that by working under the assumption of rap's extensive prominence can obscure the specificities of the other practices.[17]

What little scholarship of breaking that has emerged is almost always analysed through the lens of the 'Africanist aesthetic', albeit some more than others (see, for example, DeFrantz 2004; Hazzard-Donald 2004; Huntington 2007; Johnson 2009; Osumare 2008; Schloss 2009; Stevens 2006).[18] In drawing on the work of Robert Farris Thompson (1966; 1973; 1999; 2011), Gottschild labels the 'Africanist aesthetic' (1996; 2003) as visible in the body's relationship with polymetric rhythms – a 'traditional' aspect of Pan-African music.[19] Here, complex layers of rhythmic motion are actualized through, what Gottschild (1996) labels, a 'democratization' of the body (which she starkly contrasts with European traditions described above).[20] Barbara Browning (1995) also uses the 'Africanist aesthetic' in her work on samba, so does Cheryl Willis (1996) in tap dance, and more recently in Cristina Rosa (2012) to analyse capoeira. I want to suggest that the use of the aesthetic to analyse a range of styles, and in such disparate

[17] In contrast, literature on other hip-hop practices often specifies the non-rap element under examination, such as Schloss's *Foundation: B-boys, B-girls and Hip-hop Culture in New York* (2009), and Macdonald's *The Graffiti Subculture: Youth, Masculinity and Identity in London and New York* (2001).

[18] Katrina Hazzard-Donald considers the "competitive one-upmanship" (2004, 509) of hip-hop battles to draw from concepts in African American dance, music and verbal art history, such as street rhymes to the sacred context of the African American sermon.

[19] Kariamu Welsh Asante (1996; 2001) has discussed this aesthetic in her work on African dances.

[20] Gottschild provides rich detail of the Africanist aesthetic, and so I include a lengthy quote from her here: "Africanist dance idioms show a democratic equality of body parts. The spine is just one of many possible movement centers; it rarely remains static. The Africanist dancing body is polycentric. One part of the body is played against another, and movements may simultaneously originate from more than one focal point (the head and the pelvis, for example). It is also polyrhythmic (different body parts moving to two or more rhythms simultaneously), and privileges flexible, bent-legged postures that reaffirm contact with the earth (sometimes called a 'get-down' stance). The component and auxiliary parts of the torso – shoulders, chest, rib cage, waist, pelvis – can be independently moved or articulated in different directions (forward, backward, sideward, or in circles) and in different rhythms." (1996, 8–9) Thus, the polycentric body is seen to be much more grounded and 'democratic' than European traditions and is seemingly lacking restraint in its creative expression.

settings, could be more harmful than productive, as relying on specific historicized characteristics of the African diaspora may be reductive and homogenizing of the potentiality of the body. It is worth noting, also, that aspects of the aesthetic are similarly present in experimental forms of contemporary dance (see Foster 1997).

Moreover, analysing dance through the lens of the 'Africanist aesthetic' provides these dances with a *function*, ranging from asserting the presence of marginalized bodies, giving them a 'voice', or facilitating some sort of social rupture. For example, Browning (1995) argues that the syncopation in samba music (the 'suppression' of the 'strong' beat and the accentuation of the 'weak' beat) compels the body to 'fill the silence with motion', and this is a response to broader racial, political and cultural 'suppression'. Denied access to 'proper' avenues of expression, "[t]he body says what cannot be spoken" (Ibid., 9). She summarizes: "Samba narrates a story of racial contact, conflict, and resistance, not just mimetically across a span of musical time but also synchronically, in the depth of a single measure" (Ibid., 2). Through this lens, samba serves a purpose; it is not simply 'pleasurable', but it interlocks with replying to larger systems of oppression.

This 'function' of dance legitimized through the aesthetics of the African diaspora is also present in breaking literature. For example, in discussing how bodily movement can be a productive site for 'the encoding of identity', Osumare writes, "[t]he b-boy circle in a hip-hop club, like the *bantaba* dance/drumming circle in a Mande village about which Drewal theorizes, is also a site of social and cultural enactments that simultaneously contain reinventive, reflective, and subversive elements" (2008, 50). Referring, here, to Africanist performance studies scholar Margaret Drewal (1991) and her discussion of a West African village, Osumare (2008) re-situates contemporary hip-hop practices within broader histories of black movements, using them to legitimize or enrich contemporary practices.[21]

While Osumare clarifies that her discussion of a specific cultural aesthetic in global hip-hop is "not a black racial essence" (2008, 31), attempting to re-address this through what she terms the 'Intercultural Body',[22] this dynamic and multi-faceted

[21] Osumare (2008) maps the Africanist aesthetic in global hip-hop (also the title of her book), and views the 'cypher', improvisation, polyrhythms, and a democratization of body parts in dance as key components of the Africanist aesthetic.

[22] The 'Intercultural body' both 'transcends nation-states' and also performs local and indigenous cultural identities through the convention of 'keeping it real'. This body, however, does not take into account gender, which is surprising considering the vast amount of literature that acknowledges the influence of gender on 'ways of moving'.

embodiment of both 'the local' and 'the global' in hip-hop is, however, only (re)facilitated through Africanist aesthetics. Specifically, she claims, "polyrhythmic isolations, narrative gesture, signifying, and most importantly improvisation that facilitates the movement-by-movement mix of local and global embodiments" (Ibid., 58). While breaking may or may not display such aesthetics and share these histories, I want to highlight that utilizing such a framework can essentialize the body's expressionist capacities. Specifically, they reduce the expression of black bodies to what is limited to certain historical conventions, thus overlaying bodily potential with a pre-existing narrative.

Moreover, applying the Africanist aesthetic to global breaking culture omits its diasporic manifestation. Indeed, breaking has drawn on influences from martial arts, particularly Kung Fu (Banes 1994; Holman 2004; *The Freshest Kids* 2002; Johnson 2009; Kato 2012; Ness 2008; Pabon 2006; Schloss 2009),[23] popular culture (Banes 1994; Holman 2004; Pabon 2006; Schloss 2009; *The Freshest Kids* 2002),[24] Native American dances (Pabon 2006, 20),[25] and Russian dance styles (Holman 2004, 34).[26] Additionally, and as I will demonstrate, European, Korean, and even Australian breakers have had a central role in further developing the dance from the 1990s onwards. As Mistery states in our interview:

> People don't realize how much of an impact Australia had in that regard, mainly Rapid Fire, B-boy All-Stars. I mean like man, in South Africa, there just happened to be numerous times that, one time I was painting a wall in like ghettos of South Africa, and it's pretty full on, and I'm just by myself, and this dude just jumps out of the car and starts walking towards me […] and then he

[23] The influence of Kung Fu has been attributed to the popularity of Hong Kong action films throughout the 1970s and 1980s (and the consequent popularity in learning martial arts). Schloss (2009, 52) details that in New York, the films were shown at many movie theatres in Time Square and were also regularly featured in the 'Drive-In-Movie' programming on Saturday afternoons on independent television station WNEW (now WNYW through its affiliation with Fox) between 1981 and 1988.

[24] Popular cultural influences have been described to include poses of pin-up girls (Banes 1994), James Brown's 'good foot' (Pabon 2006, 20), and the Harlem Globe Trotters, who would put their hand on the floor while dribbling around in a circle (*The Freshest Kids* 2002).

[25] A key foundational toprock step is called 'Indian step', and during my classes and workshops I was told this name and step was inspired by a Native Indian dance move.

[26] Holman maps the influence of Russian dance to the 'vaudeville years', whereby Dewey Weinglass – a black tap dancer – saw the Russian dancer Ivan Bankoff perform on Broadway. After this performance, Weinglass "started experimenting with Russian steps. He borrowed moves like drops, squats, sweeps, splits, tumbles, and flips and added them to his dance routines" (2004, 34). Holman then goes on to state that "[t]he first Black American collaborators with Russian dance had definite connections with top rocking, drops, footwork, and a lot of other gymnastic style moves in breaking!" (Ibid.).

> goes 'I heard you're from Australia' and I'm like 'yeah' and he goes 'do you know b-boy All Stars?' and I was like 'yeah, I actually do know em', and he's like 'man I learned like everything from their tapes', and that happened on numerous occasions in South Africa, and even people I met in Europe were like 'yeah man I had all these tapes' and we had the same with Storm's stuff, so yeah a similar thing. (interview, November 1, 2014)

Refers to Australia's famous Queensland crew, the 'B-boy All Stars', Mistery's experiences highlight the importance of VHS tapes made by non-American breakers during the 1990s in maintaining connections across geographically isolated scenes (similarly noted by Fogarty 2012).

The popularity and success of Australian crew 'Bboy All-Stars', as well as other scenes outside the USA, such as Germany and South Africa, undermines the 'totalizing roots' of hip-hop's American-centricism (for a discussion of hip-hop scenes outside the USA see Mitchell 2001). Reflecting on the culture in the 1990s, Mistery recounts:

> [I]t was mainly guys in Europe and Africa, and so there was guys like Tuff Tim Twist in the UK, Black Noise and Prophets of Da City in South Africa, Storm in Germany, and Air Force Crew in LA, that was about it, we'd heard very little from New York at that time. (interview, November 1, 2014)

Mistery's recollections here illustrate how breaking was deterritorialized from the New York assemblage, and maintained and cultivated in perhaps unexpected locations such as Australia, South Africa,[27] and Germany. Fogarty (2006, 2011), too, notes the influence of b-boy Storm from Germany in the global breaking scene. In her interviews with dancers from Los Angeles and Toronto, Fogarty found that many considered "Storm as a major influence in their development as dancers" (2006, 102).[28] More specifically, she writes, "[t]he European dancers, especially a dancer named Storm from Germany, were acknowledged by North American dancers for taking power moves to a whole different level of difficulty and prowess" (2006, 69).

[27] See Ariefdien & Abrahams (2006) and Charry (2012, 59) for a discussion on the South African breaking crews Mistery listed.

[28] Additionally, the instructional breaking DVD, *Storm's Footwork Fundamentals* (2006), is not only widely popular, but also considered a vital text to assist in the development of good footwork technique.

Moreover, entering the 2000s, the success of Korean and Japanese breakers at European competitions such as *B-Boy Summit*, is widely acknowledged within breaking circles (also see Fernandes 2011; Higgins 2009, 34). For example, in our interview b-boy Don recounts his trip to South Korea, "I've always been a Korean b-boy fan, I grew up as that, and being there with the big names, seeing the big names, I'm like 'wow they're incredible'" (interview, February 23, 2015).[29] Additionally, Sujatha Fernandes acknowledges how the Korean breakers added "greater dexterity and athleticism to the form" (2011, 12). Despite the widely acknowledged contribution of Japanese and Korean breakers within the breaking community, in addition to the work of anthropologist Ian Condry on the hip-hop culture in Japan (from as early as 1986), Fernandes notes that the debate around Japanese hip-hop fans consuming the music without understanding its black history further highlights the 'uneasy' positioning of Asian fans within hip-hop (2011, 13).

Analysing a diasporic and global dance such as breaking through the lens of a particular, racialized aesthetic is therefore in danger of both limiting and essentializing the body's affective capacity. My aim, here, is not to reduce the potentiality of dance, nor to omit the contributions of particular bodies and cultures, but rather to suggest a reframing of dance through a Deleuze-Guattarian lens in order to creatively open up its potentiality. Before I discuss this further, I want to contextualize male bodies on the dance floor and extend my above examination of Cartesian authority.

Dancing Men: Masculine Performativities on the Dance Floor

In this section, I want to suggest that dance's normative construction as 'feminine' is key in not only sidelining feminine expression, but also structuring and defining the breaking dance floor as overtly masculine. I want to continue my mapping of the breaking assemblage in order to examine the molar segmentarity that realigns bodily expression into masculine norms. To do this, I will begin with contextualizing male

[29] In the *Pro Breaking Tour* blog, b-boy Dyzee, from the renowned crew 'Supernaturalz' and organizer of international competition *R16*, outlines the media explosions in the global breaking scene: "Breakin', in the blink of an eye, exploded around the world through the media in the early 80's. In the UK, it was estimated that there were one million people who had some experience with breaking. Even the smallest little towns had their own B-Boy crews, who would travel to the other towns and battle the hometown heroes. […] By the mid 80's, it completely died and our culture went into the dark ages. Then in the mid 2000's, another media explosion came. […] Korean B-Boys who won international battles became overnight national heroes, not only to Korea, but also became heroes in the international worldwide B-Boy community as well" (Dyzee Supernaturalz 2014).

bodies on the dance floor, and referring to Butler's theory of performativity to examine how these sites produce the *effect* of a naturally-occurring masculinity.

As I outlined above, up until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries dancing was the arena of royal males (Hanna 1988). However, the optimization of the body for economic output saw dancing positioned alongside other subordinated categories within binary logic – the body, femininity, sensuality, and so on. Gilbert and Pearson similarly draw this conclusion, as they write:

> It is not simply the case that dance is considered a feminine activity, and so, therefore, it is mostly women who dance. Rather, it is that within the imagination of western modernity, 'dance' and 'femininity' seem to belong to the same set of terms. (2002, 96)

In examining ways to deterritorialize gender in Sydney's breaking scene, then, we thus need to reconceptualize *dance itself* due to the way it is inextricably connected with femininity.

The example of ballet is a productive case study not only due to its female dominance, but also, and as Aalten (1997) demonstrates, how it is aligned the archetypal performances of femininity. While these particular 'performativities', that is gestures and enactments, are naturalized for ballerinas, I want to show how it becomes more complicated when it is a male performer. Foster (1997), for example, has described the 'moral panics' around the initial emergence of male ballet dancers. These panics were the result of not only men *dancing*, but also because they learning and performing 'feminine' ways of moving. These panics thus interlocked with concerns of maintaining heteronormativity and patriarchal dominance, as well as the notion of a stable gendered self. Indeed, through learning normatively feminine gestures and enactments, male ballet dancers undermine and disrupt the systems that constitute the subject in specific ways – systems that separate male and female bodies through the respective performativities of masculinity and femininity.

Yet Ann Daly explains that male dancing rose to prominence during the seventies, and it is here that male ballet stars were discursively (re)constructed to reflect masculine norms, as they were "hyped as strong, virile, and athletic stars" (1997, 115). Discursively producing the male ballet dancers in this way thus sustains the larger systems of power that constitute the subject. Indeed, a further extension, or perhaps

reflection, of the binary logic of Western thought, this construction of male classical dancers worked on a 'discourse of difference', as Daly explains:

> The fervor with which apologists invoked the rhetoric of difference in order to assert male dominance in ballet ironically echoed the very rhetoric – that some activities are 'masculine' and others are 'feminine' – which had contributed to the 'emasculation' of the art form as a whole. The profession will never be truly destigmatized for men (or women) as long as the masculine-feminine difference is maintained, because it is due to this polarity that dance was dubbed 'effeminate' in the first place. And yet an extreme version of this argument was used in the seventies to 'upgrade' the status of men dancers (masculine = big money = sports = motivation = action = dance). (Ibid.)

Ironically, discourses of 'difference' both supported and reinforced dichotomous Cartesian logic: Male/female, action/display, strong/delicate, rational/emotional, culture/nature, and so on. As we will see in the following chapter, breaking similarly relies on such 'extreme' 'upgrades' as it developed a relationship with sport and sporting practices in Australia. This can also be seen in breaking's relationship with martial arts and other 'fighting' styles, which I discuss below. Importantly, this discourse of difference constitutes the dancers into polarized gendered subjects, and as Butler would argue, thus produces the effect of being naturally-occurring.

The discourse of difference that separate men and women through dance are not limited to the level of discourse or representation, as it is also *embodied*. In her discussion of learning dance, and 'creating the body', Foster (1997) describes the three types of bodies that emerge: the perceived body, the ideal body, and the demonstrative body. These three bodies work to correct the perceived body, realigning its form, optimizing its capacities so that it conforms to the 'ideal' body. I will elaborate on Foster's framework in more detail over the following chapters, as I want to now examine the ways by which these discourses regulate how bodies engage with the dance floor. Indeed, this normative, or idealized, gendered performativity in dance is particularly potent in ballet. In a captivating description of the difference in movement vocabulary, Foster writes:

> And these two bodies, because of their distinctly gendered behaviour, dance out

> a specific kind of relationship between masculine and feminine. They do more than create an alert, assertive, solicitous manliness and a gracious, agile, vibrant womanliness. Their repeated rushes of desire – the horizontal attraction of bodies, the vertical fusion of bodies – do more than create unified sculptural wholes that emblematize the perfect union of male and female roles. *He* and *she* do not participate equally in their choreographic coming together. *She* and *he* do not carry equal valence. *She* is persistently put forward, the object of his adoration. *She* never reaches out and grabs him but is only ever impelled towards him, arms streaming behind in order to signal her possession by a greater force. […] *She* is attraction itself which *he* presents for all the world to see. (1996b, 1-2)

We can begin to see, then, how constructions of dance and the dancing body are coextensive with larger constructions of gender. Moreover, maintaining the 'rigid segmentarity' of the gendered performativities works to give the effect of these roles and performativities as naturally-occurring. They work to sustain the gender binary, and also larger metaphysical structures that constitute an 'essential' core. In analysing how male and female ballet stars were posited as 'equal' on stage, Daly criticizes Lincoln Kirstein's comments, "[m]ale dancers make girls more feminine and vice versa" (cited in Daly 1997, 114), which, for Daly, "[m]ale and female – "power" and "fragility" – are "equal" only insofar as they maintain the asymmetrical *equilibrium* of patriarchy – which does not offer equality at all" (Ibid.). Indeed, femininity is seen to be 'equal' through characteristics marginalized within the hierarchization of bodily expression.

As another example, the division in movement vocabulary and roles is similarly present in social partnered dancing, which, for Polhemus (1995), reflects patriarchal structures. He concludes:

> Whether 'slow' or 'fast' these dance steps and the macho behavioural activities which framed dance movement per se had one thing in common: the male led. […] The male determined the rhythm and the style of their relationship in time and space. The female – as in 'real life' – followed his lead. (1995, 12)

Not only does partner dancing extend the discourses of difference, but the terminologies to describe the roles – 'lead' and 'follow' – work in a circulatory relationship with gendered roles beyond the dance floor. They both reflect and reinforce the hierarchization of gender roles in social reality.[30] For Butler, these roles that are enacted and produced through partner dancing, or as we will see dancing more broadly, is the re-experiencing of already established social meanings. That is, women 'following' and men 'leading' are not the results of the binary organization of bodies, but rather interlock with the systems that constitute, indeed *naturalize*, gendered bodies. It is through the ritualized repetition of these roles and corporeal signifiers that consolidates their legitimacy. Importantly, this process is not specific to the personal or particular, but rather is always-already produced through the larger social order. She writes:

> Although there are individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this 'action' is a public action. There are temporal and collective dimensions to these actions, and their public character is not inconsequential; indeed, the performance is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame–an aim that cannot be attributed to a subject, but, rather, must be understood to found and consolidate the subject. (1990, 191)

Applying Butler's theory, here, highlights the ways by which the specific stylization of the body interlocks with larger systems that not only maintain their binary construction, but also consolidate and naturalize them.

Unlike partnered styles, and as Monteyne (2013) highlights, hip-hop dancing moved away from the strict roles of partner dancing. As such, hip-hop dancing could be seen as a way to deterritorialize the patriarchal structures that were entrenched in these styles of dancing and, in doing so, open up new territories of participation for the female breaker. Indeed, moving away from these historicized 'male' and 'female' roles facilitated new avenues of expression and dynamics between gendered bodies. Yet this is not to say that male and female breakers are perceived on the same terms, as there remains a perceived difference in the dance styles of 'b-boying' and 'b-girling'. As we

[30] Moreover, the popularity and prevalence of this style of partner dancing, such as taught in schools and typically performed at formal social functions, emphasizes their relevance in contextualizing male bodies on the breaking dance floor.

will see in the following chapter, the discourses of ‘b-boy’ and ‘b-girl’ are coupled with different ‘ways of moving’ that consolidate normative performativities of gendered bodies and, in significant ways, depoliticize the b-girl’s transgressions.

Yet hip-hop was not the first popular male-only dance, as Ward maps its emergence in the Euro-American context through reggae, hip-hop and, most significantly, disco (1995, 23), arguing these styles were important in “challenging the view that boys have been traditionally or categorically absent or reluctant dancers” (Ibid., 24). This ‘reluctant-ness’ may be due to the dominant feminine construction of dance, which can be seen in Kopytko’s (1986) study of breaking in New Zealand in the 1980s. Observing the underlying gendered tension in male participation in this dance style, she writes:

> There was a strong element of male ownership of the form. Many of the older boys (sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds) were very aware of dance in general being associated with women or as an activity for ‘poofters’ (men with effeminate characteristics). Certainly they regarded ballet this way (1986, 22)

In addition to the offensiveness of Kopytko’s choice of words (or perhaps her interview subjects), her observations reveal the underlying fear of the (ef)feminine breaking body. Dance’s normative feminine construction might work as an overarching signifier, or ‘ideal’ to extend Foster’s (1997) framework, that male bodies are always actively in the process of de-signifying perhaps even de-naturalizing. In my interview with b-girl Sass, I asked why she thought breaking was so popular with men, and she replied,

> people do it because it’s a creative outlet and it’s a dance, boys wanna be able to dance but a lot of boys would say ‘oh you know I don't wanna go to ballet classes’ but they see breaking and they see that it’s not gay in any way […] Or they might just wanna do it as a social thing like ‘I wanna hang out with those people and I wanna be in that scene’ so that’s why they start (interview, October 24, 2014).

What Sass’s and Kopytko’s observations point towards is a type of binary logic inherent in the gendered constructions of the dance – breaking is masculine *because* it is not (ef)feminine, and we can perhaps see this effect in play in Figure 3 on the following page.

The overt and normalized masculinity of breaking has even been used to strategically amplify the masculinity of male ballet dancers. In her discussion of hip-hop dance films, Monteyne reveals, "dance producers and promoters attempted to cull breakdance 'from the street' and introduce it into the academy in order to 're-masculinize' public perceptions of the male ballet star" (2013, 132). The tensions surrounding performances of gender, here, thus required characterizations that reinforced normative stylizations of the body, which were reliant on overtly masculine discourses and histories ('from the street'). It might even be worthwhile to suggest that breaking's terminology for engaging on the dance floor is another way to (re)signify the practice as masculine. Not 'talent show', 'tournament', or 'contest', but *battle*, which is inextricably tied to significations of aggression and confrontation and thus assuredly defines the space as a display of masculine prowess. Hoch even lists "gang fighting (battling)" as a key 'b-boy aesthetic' (2006, 353). One could argue, then, that dance's normative association with femininity might explain breaking's overt performances of masculinity. Moreover, these normative masculine significations operate to sustain the consolidation of masculine dominance.

Figure 3 – B-boy Willastr8. *R16*: Oceania Qualifier. May 3, 2014. JNY Photography.

What I want to avoid here is framing breaking as limited to this particular purpose. While my analysis attempts to understand *how* breaking is constructed as masculine, and the ways by which this construction is naturalized, I want to avoid adding to the many functionalist discussions of dance. This is *especially* rife in male-dominated dances, whereby the critical focus is limited to its display of male bravado and means to attract female partners (such as Polhemus 1995; Walsh 1995). In doing this, men's' dancing becomes realigned with molar heteronormative and patriarchal structures. Moreover, dancing becomes a 'natural' pastime for men, and this can be seen to maintain a specific consolidation of masculine and heterosexual meanings (along biologically-determinist lines). That is, it is understandable that men dance as they are doing so in order to attract a female mate. For example, Polhemus views, "[t]he men's dance style is a crystallization of what it means to be a male member of their culture" (1995, 11-12). Drawing on Polhemus's logic would reduce breaking to a 'crystallization' of masculine domination, which would not allow for an examination of the set of conditions in breaking that enable lines of deterritorialization to emerge. These critiques of male-dominated dance practices is similarly present in Gilbert and Pearson (2002), particularly their seething criticism of David Walsh's (1995) analysis of disco dancing, which they claim "echoes Polhemus' assessment of the retrograde sexual politics of disco, and describes the various practices of masculine 'display' and mating ritual now permitted by the popularity of dancing as if he were describing peacocks or monkeys" (2002, 15). Such biologically-determinist understanding of the *function* of male-only dances not only reinforces the stereotypes of gendered bodies, but also, in doing so, *de*legitimizes women's access to the dance floor. Moreover, these views intersect with larger systems of power that constitute the masculine subject in specific ways, ensuring their access to this space under the guise of a natural order. In this way, these discourses are co-dependent upon the prevalence of *male bodies*, and as we will see in the following chapters, female participation in breaking both undermines and disrupts these logics. Indeed, the simple act of a female entering the dance floor to break calls attention to their very construction.

To further illustrate how breaking is often portrayed as displaying male bravado and prowess, or, as Banes articulates "a celebration of the flexibility and budding sexuality of the gangly male adolescent body" (1994, 122), I want to highlight how it is not a history of *dance* that breaking relies on to legitimize this performance. Such a history would rest too strongly on feminized discourses and stylizations of the body.

Rather it is through an amalgamation of histories of similarly male-dominated forms that breaking sustains its masculine illusion. Importantly, in breakings' coalescence of different traditions and ways of moving, at no point do female-dominated dance styles – or even female bodies – enter the fold. As broad as the range of influences is, I will limit my focus to capoeira and Kung Fu, as their influences are not only well-documented in the literature, but they are also exemplary of how these histories of masculine stylizations of the body enrich *masculine* performances on the breaking dance floor. Though hip-hop culture relies on the discourses and practices of gang fighting, this is up to the point of *actual* fighting (in most cases), rather an underlying tension must be present, 'a balance in imbalance' as Maxwell (2003, 233) describes, and it is here that breaking becomes situated alongside martial arts. For example, Banes views breaking as "a ritual combat that transmutes aggression into art […] Inside the ritual frame, burgeoning adolescent anxieties, hostilities, and powers are symbolically manipulated and controlled" (1994, 123). Framing breaking in this way, that is, by reading the gestures and stylizations of the dance through the lens of fighting, discursively maintains the effect of an inherent masculinity, one that is similarly maintained through the overt domination of male bodies. This is central to sustaining the illusion of the gendered subject, as Butler elucidates:

> Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. (1990, 190)

With this in mind, we can see how the various acts within breaking, in addition to the various acts *aligned* with breaking, create the idea of the masculine identity, indeed the idea of the b-*boy*.

Beyond the representation of breaking, the 'discourses and practices that instruct' the breaking body are also framed through similarly masculine-dominated histories. For example, the "idolization of Bruce Lee" (Johnson 2009, 115) in breaking culture is not only evident in the approach to creativity and incorporation of a diversity of styles (see Banes 1994; Holman 2004; Johnson 2009; Schloss 2009), but also in breaking's pedagogy. As Schloss writes, "[Lee] developed fighting strategies that are directly applicable to b-boying, and he represents an attitude toward apprenticeship that

is respectful without being subservient" (2009, 52). One could suggest, here, that in modelling pedagogy on a highly male-dominated system in a way further sustains breaking's male-dominance. This is not simply because, as we saw in the previous chapter, it is more difficult for women to access these networks, but also because the apprenticeship model is itself a masculinized structure.

In addition to Kung Fu, there has been much commentary on the relationship between breaking and capoeira (Banes 1994; Browning 2001; J. Chang 2007; Dossar 1988; Fernandes 2011; Flores 1988; Johnson 2009; Maxwell 2003; Mitchell 2003; Pabon 2006; Schloss 2009; *The Freshest Kids* 2002; Thompson 1987; 1988).[31] Often these texts emphasize perceived similarities between moves and practices, while others attempt to see a shared history, however unlike the research presented thus far, I want to highlight the gendered ramifications for such a relationship, and the way it can, consequently, shut down potential lines of flight. For example, Kenneth Dossar summarizes the similitude between breaking and capoeira, as he writes: "Both started as male challenge dances and have a relationship with fighting" (1988, 42). In pinpointing the origin of these styles, as 'male challenge dances', Dossar enforces a particular innate gendered history. As we saw in the previous chapter, the 'origin' is often seen as the purest point of a phenomenon, and in this way stabilizes the masculine effect produced through their contemporary stylizations.

Similarly, Banes attributes the likeness between the two forms to their shared origins and a blurring of genres, as demonstrated in her comments, "the two dance/sport/fight forms have the same roots" (1994, 150). This is not the first time capoeira has been described as a 'blurred genre' (Downey 2002, 490; Lewis 1992, 1),[32] and, for Greg Downey, this arises from its synthesis of elements of "dance, folklore, martial art, sport, ritual, and training for unarmed (and sometimes armed) fighting" (2002, 490). Indeed this 'blurring' of boundaries is most clearly visible in Thompson's (1988) article on capoeira, titled 'Tough guys do dance', and this connection with

[31] While Pabon claims that it was not until the 1990s that capoeira became visible in the Bronx jams, he does acknowledge its similarity with certain breaking moves (2006, 20). Moreover, many renowned breakers in *The Freshest Kids* (2002) are adamant that influences from capoeira 'somehow ended up in there', yet they claim it was not a conscious process. Perhaps they were exposed to some of the capoeira exhibitions that were held in New York, as Dossar (1988, 42) details how, from around 1975, two mestres from Bahia, Jelon and Lorimel Machado, began teaching capoeira and Afro-Brazilian dance throughout New York.

[32] John Lowell Lewis (1992) adapts the term from Clifford Geertz (1983) in order to, according to Downey (2002), counteract issues of indefinite genre categorization. Describing the form as 'blurred' enables a more open-ended approach to researching human movement.

fighting, 'toughness', martial arts and so forth culturally enriches breaking's practices with histories and representations of masculine performativities. Moreover, the repetitive alignment of breaking with these masculinized practices sustains the signification of that which occurs on the dance floor as naturally and inherently masculine.

The amalgamation of disparate physical techniques in capoeira works toward what John Lowell Lewis (1992) labels 'strategic ambiguity'. Lewis (1992) borrows this term from Thomas Kochman (1986) to describe when, in a capoeira game, the boundaries between play and fight are deliberately pushed. This 'strategic ambiguity' is important in analysing breaking's gendered construction, as it highlights how capoeira is never quite fully articulated as a dance, but rather fluctuates between and across these spaces. In his ethnography of capoeira, Downey writes, "at the same time, they balance aggression with a need to demonstrate dexterity, creativity, and artistic flair in response to changes in music" (2008, 204). In this way, dexterity and artistic flair are resignified through the masculine aesthetic of aggression, and for Maxwell, this practice of balancing creativity with aggression informs some of the tenets of breaking. He writes:

> This preparatory moment is familiar: a curious blending of the extraordinarily tense, with a kind of strutting languidness. It is almost the break dancer's equivalent to the *capoeira ginga* [sic], that series of movements with which the *capoierista* [sic] prepares himself for the sudden movement to come, establishing a kind of balance in imbalance. (2003, 233)

The tension that emerges both in capoeira and breaking is not only a masculinized stylization, but also maintains in the present the systems that produce it. As Butler writes, "[g]ender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis" (1990, 190).

Thus, similar to the function of 'the street' and gang fighting that I discussed in the previous chapter, breaking's masculinity is often legitimized and maintained through its alignment with histories and acts across martial arts, and as we will see in the following chapter, in the Australian context this is further sustained through breaking's alignment with sport. While one could argue this is merely a metaphorical link, the underlying potential for fighting correlates directly with another of breaking's

influences: rocking, which I discuss in the following chapter in the context of b-girls' transgressive practices.

Potentiality of Dance

Regardless of how fixed or conservative a particular scene might appear, no organization is ever completely static, with the rate of change dependent on the regulation of difference. At its best, dance helps us to reconsider naturalized forms of bodily movement and through providing us the means to move differently, it offers a type of threshold moment, between moments of habitus and what Deleuze and Guattari label 'singularity'. The 'singularity' offers a point of solace beyond regulations, even in contexts where dancers must labor under acquiring a particular 'ideal', encapsulating the underlying potential for individuation. Indeed, situated beyond the 'everyday' and within the creative realm, dance is exemplary of such solace points. Guattari, too, has noted this distinct potential, as he writes of dance, "these complexes actually offer people diverse possibilities for recomposing their existential corporeality, to get out of their repetitive impasses and, in a certain way, to resingularise themselves" (Guattari 1995, 7).

Emerging in both Deleuze's work and in his collaborations with Guattari, the 'singularity' encapsulates the virtual potential and capacity for change within an organization, emerging in relation to the forces that actualize it. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze explains: "[s]ingularities are turning points and points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and centers; points of fusion and condensation, and boiling; points of tears and joy, sickness and health, hope and anxiety, 'sensitive' points" (1990, 52).[33] Bodies react to such affective states and, through processes of individuation, become *individualized*. As the emergence of a unique event, or the point at which a change of state occurs, the singularity forms part of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of 'becoming', which I discuss below.

Despite Deleuze and Guattari not explicitly referencing the dance floor in their canon of work, many studies on dance and dance practices have subsequently employed their concepts and terminologies in their analysis (such as Colebrook 2005; Gilbert & Pearson 2002; Hickey-Moody 2009; Jordan 1995; LaMothe 2012; Lawrence 2011; Lepecki 2007a, 2007b; Markula 2006a, 2006c; Rothfield 2010). What is

[33] An oft-cited example used to understand 'singularities' is the process of heating of water that, at a specific temperature, singularizes into steam.

consistent in these dance studies is the refusal to limit dance to serving a single purpose, and to, instead, examine its broader potentiality. For example, André Lepecki (2007b) uses the concept of singularity as a framework to highlight dance's capacity to facilitate reterritorializations of subjectification. In discussing the way group choreography enables the reorganization of bodies, Lepecki writes, "[n]o other art form in modernity has been responsible for physically creating a cohort of "I's" as much as choreography – an "I" so absolute that it becomes transcendental, as in the traditional *corps de ballet*" (Ibid., 120). Through group choreography the singular body is reconfigured, as individual movements *across* bodies, such as the actions of each hand, arm, leg and head, become part of one great collective entity enveloped within its greater fluidity of movement. He continues, "quite tellingly, its anonymous members, relegated to the forces of a collective body where no one can be differentiated, i.e., no one can dance in his or her name" (Ibid.)

Lepecki explores how Deleuze aligns ethics with 'ethology', considering this alignment "as a project of affirming life–as a desire to activate powers (*pouissance*) and affects that are not bound to organizational tyrannies or majoritarian imperatives on how to live one's life" (Ibid., 119). While Lepecki's argument reveals classical ballet's potentiality to realize 'the affirmation of life' through its removal of the singular 'I', its strength to this project is lessened due to our discussion of a dance seemingly *grounded* in the 'I'. Grounded through the conventions of 'representing' and 'keeping it real', breaking culture *celebrates* the 'individual', and in this way potentially hinders possible reconceptualization of the body. However, in struggling with the stronghold of identity in hip-hop culture, I am reminded of Colebrook who writes: "It is in dance that the body presents itself as at once the most resistant of media -- not pure act and fully realising potential, but the ongoing experience of one's own bodily life as subject to the weight of existence" (2005, 12). Inspired by Colebrook, the problem posed above will be dealt with in Chapter 6 when we explore the breaking body as an assemblage, and how dance practices initiate both a reconfiguration of the body and an opening up of its parts.

My focus, here, then, is to foreground new ways of thinking about dance beyond its entrenched gendered significations. Simply, situated beyond the 'everyday', dance is an extremely effective way to increase the limited repertoire of corporeal expression, and thus may be a productive mode of social transformation. This is because through dance there is also potential, as Philipa Rothfield argues, to 'shape', or

one could argue, to make an impact:

> Dance is embedded within social and cultural milieus, according to which bodily practices are thought and bodies think. These practices form the unconscious of the thinking; they shape the working thoughts of the dancer. […] In Nietzsche's thought, this is signified through the notion of training and selection. Dance is a form of culture in this Nietzschean sense. It is shaped and it shapes. (2010, 206)

To analyse dance, then, we need to understand how it is 'shaped', and through what systems of power. As Deleuze and Guattari say: "Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization" (2004, 178). While not a Deleuze-Guattarian analysis, as I introduced in Chapter 1, Wade's (2011) discussion of contemporary lindy hop productively illustrates how dance can be used to challenge masculine domination. Through *learning* and *practicing* the lindy hop habitus, and thus 'lodging' themselves on a stratum, lindy hop participants were able to locate and facilitate deterritorializations that undermined the patriarchal dominance and history of the dance form. Thus despite the rigid segmentarity of Sydney's breaking scene that entrenches its masculine construction, there is perhaps room to 'experiment' on this particular stratum, and through this experimentation we can hope to locate potential lines of deterritorialization.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have mapped some of the politics that regulate the access to the dance floor, such as Cartesian gender discourses, and the Protestant work ethic, and attempted to demonstrate how these dominant ideologies structure and define the body in a particular way – economically and 'docile' – that works to limit opportunities for creative expression. I have also situated breaking in a broader history of male-dominated dances in order to show how their illusion of an inherent masculinized aesthetic is sustained through specific discourses. These discourses privilege biologically-determinist and Cartesian-inspired assumptions in order to consolidate both the masculinity and heteronormativity of the breaking dance floor. Through this binary logic, I attempted to demonstrate how these histories and representations are not

only co-dependent upon the prevalence of male bodies, but also work to omit the feminine. This fabrication of the gendered body is both concealed and maintained through the ongoing repetition of these discourses and acts.

In the next chapter, I discuss in more detail the gendered codes and conventions of the Sydney scene and also start to explore the deterritorializing-potential of breaking. I do this through examining the ways b-girls both negotiate gender norms, and (re)appropriate masculine significations in Sydney. Despite the many obstacles facing b-girls' entry to the dance floor, their participation and learning of the masculine codes of the dance productively call attention to the inherent performativity of gendered identity.

Chapter 4 – ‘Just a (b-)girl’: Policing Gendered Transgressions

Introduction

In this chapter, I want to continue my discussion of the ways by which normative gendered assumptions tangibly regulates participation in physical pursuits and, in doing so, shapes and invests the body with specific capacities. I will highlight how breaking’s affiliation with sport is often used to justify its male-dominance, and in a sporting nation like Australia, this construction attempts to re-align breaking with sport’s immanent gender politics. Using my autoethnographic material, analysed through the theory of Butler, I will demonstrate how this association results in constructing the bodily capacities of b-girls as ‘inferior’ to b-*boys*, thus supporting the larger systems of binary logic that shut down potential lines of deterritorializations. Moreover, despite overcoming the gendered barriers to entry, even when b-girls *enter* the dance floor, their feminized body is seen as an unwavering impediment to the ‘show and prove’ convention of breaking culture.

I begin this chapter with an excerpt from my field notes that recounts my experiences battling in a local breaking competition in Sydney. I include these field notes here, in Chapter 4, as within my chronology of autoethnographic research this event occurred later in the research process. Moreover, it was a significant catalyst in my reconceptualization of gendered bodies in Sydney’s breaking scene. Consequently, my experiences in this event drove me deeper into cultural theory in order to understand what possibilities are available to move beyond gendered significations. This is because these experiences exemplify how gender norms constrain my bodily potential, even *prior* to stepping out on the dance floor.

‘Just a girl’: Sydney, October, 2013

> The music is cut and the emcee announces the semi-finals are about to start. I’m up. I grab my water bottle, Red Bull, ‘spin jacket’, and beanie, and head to the open area in front of the three judges, emcee and deejay. I stand with my crew as we start to hype each other up and discuss tactics.

I check, again, that my shoes are double-knotted. I readjust my kneepads. I ensure my undershirt is tucked into my pants and that my shoelace belt is tight enough, so that when I roll around on the floor or hold a move upside down my back and chest aren't exposed. I surreptitiously wiggle in my sports bra and jump around a bit ensuring that my bits are secured. I tuck my long plaited hair in my bra strap so that it doesn't get in the way of my moves. I secure my beanie, ensuring the shoelace tied around my head is hidden in the beanie's fold, and hope this prevents it from falling off before I need it.

While I'm checking my gear is in order, I go through my set in my head and remember my training: do that new 'toprock' move you learnt last week at Liverpool Street, but make your arms big – don't be a 'T-Rex' (the name I'm frequently given due to the positioning of my arms during toprock), feel the music, do that old drop, but make it unexpected, exaggerate your movements, do those couple of footwork moves you learnt in PoeOne's workshop, don't forget to move your hips during footwork, and don't rush – enjoy it!, then set up your freeze – ensure its facing your opponent (otherwise they'll probably laugh and point in the direction you're facing) but also ensure the judges can see it, and then bam! – that's the freeze – hold it, then spin up confidently and look your opponents in the eye. Come on Raygun, I say to myself, you've got this.

A b-boy in the other crew comes into the circle – the battle has begun. I volunteer to go first for our crew because I like this song. My crewmates assure me, 'You got this!', 'Don't worry – you can take him!', in an effort to psych me up and quell my fears. The b-boy spins up and gestures to our crew with a 'come on, what you got?'. I step out all nonchalant and grooving to the music – thank god it's still a good beat. I start toprocking and look my opponents in the eye. There are six guys in front of me, and five guys behind me. I can tell who will be battling next in the opposing crew – they're standing in the middle and slightly in front of the rest of them and eyeing me predatorily. One of their crewmates, also watching me carefully, moves closer to the one battling next and, like my own crewmates did moments before, offers words of encouragement. These words, though, surprise me: 'Don't worry, it's just a girl.'

These field notes exemplify the ways by which gender norms both articulate and limit my corporeal potential in Sydney's breaking community *prior* to stepping out on the dance floor. That I was denied the opportunity to 'show' and 'prove' my skills and style was a catalyst in this research project that facilitated a, as Deleuze would say, further "relay" into my examination of critical theory. With this experience haunting me every time I stepped out on the dance floor, I wanted to understand how I could move *beyond* being reduced to gendered signifiers. To do this, it is necessary to further examine how bodily capacities are shaped and invested in Sydney's breaking scene before we can locate ways to deterritorialize gender.

Gendered Assumptions: The Structure of Sydney's Breaking Scene

In Chapter 2, I unpacked the ramifications for gendered engagement around breaking's construction as 'aggressive', I now want to extend this discussion as I demonstrate how breaking's descriptors of 'physicality', 'athleticism', and even 'dangerous' are used to justify, and naturalize, breaking's male-dominance. While these particular stylizations of the body are more normatively associated with masculinity, and thus might work to further naturalize the masculinity of the male dancing body, emphasizing these characteristics of breaking interlocks with the gendered constructions of sport, and in a sporting nation such as Australia, these constructions are invariably masculine.

The 'Extreme' Sport of Breaking

> [T]he athleticism that's required is reminiscent of high-level athletes, but you know we're not playing a sport, we're dancing! (Willastr8, interview, December 22, 2014)

While there has been much literature on how sports in Australia works to further naturalize gendered assumptions (see, for example, Burgess, Edwards, & Skinner 2003; Kirk 2000; Yeates 1995), this has not been explored with reference to breaking, despite breaking's pervasive comparison with sport. In this section, I want to emphasize that breaking's relationship with sport not only supports the alignment of hip-hop as masculine, as entrenched through the discourses and practices of street gang culture, but also, in doing so, further sidelines and discourages female participation, and this

connection often was made by my interview subjects. For example, in response to why he 'battles' in breaking culture, b-boy Scot Doo Rok replied:

> [I]t's always different reasons like sometimes in the early years its egos, wanting to impress, wanting to pick up girls, other times its being competitive and wanting that instinct like how a lot of us are brought up being competitive, and you know wanting to *beat* people and be better than people, but the next person, which you can say is healthy in some ways otherwise we probably wouldn't have as many great b-boys and sporting personalities as we do (interview, November 6, 2014)

As highlighted by Scot Doo Rok, the competitiveness of breaking – central to Australia's sporting culture – fits into the broader masculine conventions and discourses of breaking culture, such as impressing and 'picking up' girls. Importantly, in recounting the reasons why he battles, Scot Doo Rok implicitly reinforces the masculinity of the practice. Thus, even when women *do* participate, they are subject to additional barriers to entry as a result of these gendered histories.

At an institutional level in New South Wales, breaking is considered too 'dangerous' to teach in schools and thus classed as an 'inappropriate activity'. This was first brought to my attention in my interview with b-boy J-One, who taught breaking as part of school sport at his local high school for almost a year. He recounts:

> [H]alfway through the principal called me in one day and said 'listen I really like what you're doing with this class', you know it's almost poetic that there were all these sorts of bad behaviour kids in the class, who had never been so attentive as the teachers so described, but 'breakdance', as it was called, was in the actual Board of Education syllabus as a sport not to be taught in New South Wales schools, along with rodeo, rock fishing and some other, there was about six or seven sports there, and I don't think I'll ever forget rodeo, that was pretty interesting. So after that we renamed it 'urban dance', but I still taught the same thing. The kids were never in any danger because they never reached a level where they could try moves that would be particularly harmful to them, and they never pushed to that boundary, they just wanted to have fun, and I think for that reason it was quite successful. (interview, October 24, 2014)

Indeed, the NSW Department of Education School Sports website lists 'Break Dancing' as a 'banned' activity, positioning it alongside other such dangerous pursuits:

> Currently the following activities must not be undertaken:
>
> Bungee Jumping; Rock Fishing; Tobogganing; Break Dancing; Hang Gliding; Rodeo; Boxing and other 'one on one' Combat Sports. (DET Schools Sports Unit 2013)

As such, breaking is aligned with extremely high-risk activities such as 'Rock Fishing' and 'Rodeo'. Reasons for this exclusion are outlined in the *Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools*, which details:

> For reasons of safety and the incidence of neck, head and spinal injury, tobogganing and break dancing, for example, are not to be undertaken. Rock fishing is also prohibited due to the unacceptable risks associated with the unpredictable nature of the elements. (School Sport Unit 1999, 56)

Breaking is thus considered significantly more dangerous than many popular high impact sports, such as rugby union, as well as other dangerous activities such as gymnastics, diving, horse sports, mountain biking, sailing, surfing, and trampolining (to name merely a few). Despite the large and ever-growing repertoire of moves within breaking (see, for example, Figure 4 on the following page), and the level of training it takes to even *try* these moves (as highlighted by J-One above), the dance is discursively constructed as 'dangerous'.

Constructing breaking in this way intersects with normative gendered categories, as femininity is stereotypically aligned with fragility. Yet, and importantly, this alignment is not merely discursive, as we can see in the seminal work of Iris Marion Young (1980), who explains the ways by which these categories become *embodied* through the learned performativity of being a *woman* in this particular 'historical situation'. While Young's discussion is limited to her perspective as a White, Western, middle-class, heteronormative woman, and her discussion excludes specialized movement such as dance, the astuteness of her observations have led to myriad studies extending her original thesis, particularly in milieus that are both male-dominated and regulated through masculinist discourses (strength, danger, etc.). This is

because Young (1980) not only examines the ramifications of this embodiment for participation in physical pursuits, but also outlines the specificities of typical feminine bodily comportment. For example, in discussing the learned embodiment of 'fragility', Young explains:

> She is told that she must be careful not to get hurt, not to get dirty, not to tear her clothes, that the things she desires to do are dangerous for her […] In assuming herself as a girl, she takes herself up as fragile. (1980, 153)

Indeed, this constructed, though embodied, 'fragility' and 'bodily timidity' interlocks with broader constructions of 'the girl', an identity category well-documented in academic literature.[1]

Figure 4 – B-boy Don. *Freestyle Sessions:* Australian Qualifier. February 2, 2013. David Tang.

It is therefore important to examine sport not only because of its presence in Australia, but also because it calls attention to how the organization of physical activity orders the

[1] There has been much academic literature on 'the girl' to date, including in popular music and subcultural studies (Gottlieb & Wald 2006; Lincoln 2004; McRobbie 1991; McRobbie & Garber 1977; Wald 1998), media studies (Lumby 1997), education (Cockburn & Clarke 2002; Renold & Ringrose 2012), and of course the larger field of 'girlhood' studies.

body. For example, much of the literature on sports has noted the gendered divide in participation, and the gendered assumptions that regulate it. Peter F. Murphy describes of the professional world of sports:

> Despite the impressive growth in the number of women participating in athletics, sports continue to evolve as an expression of a male culture that keeps women in their place even while on the playing field. In many ways sports provide an excellent laboratory-type environment in which women can be allowed free and active involvement within certain prescribed areas. Women run track and field, but they certainly do not play football. (2001, 62)

While Murphy refers here to American football, such a discussion is pertinent to the regulation of Australian physical activities, as women's engagement is also politicized through its prescription. For Mariah Burton Nelson, these prescribed areas of engagement for women interlock with maintaining masculine 'dominance', as she writes, "[a]t times blatantly, at times more subtly, the manly sports culture equates athletic prowess–or even athletic enthusiasm–with not just sex, but dominance" (1994, 86). We need to, then, examine how such constructions of 'prowess' are gendered in Sydney's breaking scene, and through binary logic situate b-girls in asymmetrical power relations.

In Australia the world of sports is largely considered a 'man's game', and Helen L. Yeates (1995) examines how male rugby players are often portrayed in the media as the epitome of Australian manhood. Yeates writes, "gendered masculinity in Australian culture through football and the media is not questioned, for like the media and the game itself, masculinity is seen as the dominant, the natural and the given. All else is minor, unnatural and relative" (1995, 37). The normalization of the sporting body as 'masculine' enforces a hierarchy not dissimilar to the Cartesian authority, as Murphy notes, "professional sports, dominated by large fierce men remind women and children (and smaller or nonaggressive men, for that matter) who holds power" (2000, 61). The hierarchization of bodies through sporting practices and discourses not only supports the Cartesian alignment, but also, in doing so, defines non-male bodies as 'other'.

This hierarchization is inextricably connected to performances of hegemonic masculinity, and Yeates utilizes Connell's seminal work on the competing types of masculinity in Australia. For Connell (1987, 2005), these include 'hegemonic',

‘conservative’, and ‘subordinated’, whereby, “hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women” (Connell 1987, 183). While these relations, and the way we understand gendered identity, are contextually-specific, and thus subject to local, national and global structures, the significance of Connell’s (2005) conceptualization of masculinity lies in the way she theorizes the plurality of masculinities, while also firmly locating them within power relations defined in terms of similarly intersectional identity markers, such as race, class, and sexuality, and so on. Indeed when we’re talking about a specific idealized male body, often this body is *also* white, straight, and middle-class. Yet, and as I have attempted to show, in breaking culture the identity markers of class and race are periphery to the demonstration of skills on the dance floor, perhaps a result of the transnational relationships and interactions across the global culture (Fogarty 2011, 2012; Osumare 2002).

Therefore the alignment of breaking with sports in Australia enforces hegemonic masculine significations, such as athletic prowess, physicality, and the body in ‘action’ (rather than the feminine body that is on display, as highlighted in the previous chapter). For Yeates, the media plays a significant role in supporting these hegemonic masculinity constructions:

> At first glance, it would appear that the Australian media depict and glorify a defiant, unreconstructed form of sporting masculinity, the kind of tough, hegemonic masculinity that brooks no opposition to the celebration of male supremacy through the aggressive body-in-action. (1995, 38)

This ‘aggressive-body-in-action’ is not only (re)presented in breaking culture through the history of gang violence, but also in the way breaking reproduces a genre of the ‘spectacle’, which I return to below. Through the framework of ‘hegemonic’ masculinity, we can see how masculinity is constantly in the process of (re)negotiation in accordance with those identities positioned as ‘other’. Thus, the ‘other’ – female, young, non-white, non-straight, and so on – are vital in the ongoing (re)construction of an essentialized Australian manhood, a fabrication further maintained through its naturalized construction. With b-girls consistently ‘othered’ through the discourses, practices, and conventions of breaking culture, we can begin to see how hegemonic masculinity is, in fact, co-dependent upon this ‘othering’. We can see the theory of

Butler in operation, here, as she writes, "[t]he radical dependency of the masculine subject on the female 'Other' suddenly exposes his autonomy as illusory" (1990, xxx). Indeed, simply calling attention to the interdependent dichotomized relationship between the sexes illustrates its reliance upon myriad cultural norms, practices, and the discourses that work to maintain it. Failing to (re)produce this naturalized effect perhaps opens up the space to intercept and disrupt those systems that support its alignment, even if it is calling attention to their construction.

With the work of Butler in mind, it is important to foreground the cultural (re)construction of gendered identities in our analysis of Sydney's breaking scene, and also call attention to the systems that maintain the perception of an original, essential gendered 'core'. This is because it is *through* this gendered hierarchy – and the performativities that (re)produce it – that masculine superiority is sustained. This gender 'illusion', as Butler often phrases, is always in the process of 'doing'; though, this is not to say that there pre-exists a subject who then 'does' gender, as Butler drawing on Nietzsche writes, "gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (Ibid., 34). Consequently, the constitution of gendered identity relies upon myriad power structures to maintain its naturalized effect. For example, in discussing the (re)construction of masculinity through the case study of a professional American football team, Lisa Disch and Mary Jo Kane explain, "[i]ts fragility consists of the fact that in the locker room, as on the playing field, male physical superiority is not a biological given but an ideological construct that must be produced by ritual performances that promote male narcissism and exclude male vulnerability" (1996, 299). As we are seeing through the work of Butler, though also Bourdieu, ritualized repetition is instrumental in the ongoing articulation of gendered identity, and Butler conceives this articulation as a type of 'imitation'. She writes:

> In the place of an original identification which serves as a determining cause, gender identity might be reconceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self or parody the mechanism of that construction. (1990, 188)

While I will return to gender 'parody' later in the chapter, by applying Butler's understanding, here, we can begin to see how the histories of past gendered performances further legitimize current practices by charging them with a type of naturalized ethic. Specifically, within breaking, the overt ritual of 'battling', and which is considered a successor to gang conflicts, vindicates the performances of masculine superiority within Sydney's breaking scene.

Moreover, these 'rituals' may also be the product of the environment in which the activity is performed, in that they contextualize, even demand, particular spectacularized gendered performances. The space of the sports stadium is one such arena enculturated with performances of hegemonic masculinity, and is further reinforced through the institutionalized popularity of male-dominated sports (see Yeates 1995). What is of significance here, particularly with regards to breaking, is the way that breaking competitions often utilize the same *spaces* as sports (such as stadiums and sports centres), and I want to argue that these usages may duplicate the gendered politics of the spaces. In breaking, this is further reinforced through the language of sports, particularly in competition titles. For example, from 2001 to 2004, the annual *Planet X Summer Games*, which featured *The National Breakdancing Championships* (later called *The Motorola Planet X Breaker Battle Series*), was held across three of Sydney's Olympic facilities at the Superdome, Stadium Australia and the Sydney International Regatta Centre in Penrith. The weekend long events were described as "Australia's leading freestyle sports and lifestyle festival", and framed as a type of "alternative Olympics"; renowned for competitions of 'extreme' sports such as BMX, motor cross, skateboarding, and wakeboarding, the festival expected up to 50,000 spectators and 500 competitors from both Australia and overseas. In his article in the *Sydney Morning Herald,* Steve Meacham describes the inclusion of breaking in the Games as "the sport that will raise most eyebrows" (2001). In quoting a Sydney competitor, 'Def Wish', part of the crew 'Ground Attack', Meacham postulates:

> It may be fun, but is it sport? Yes, [Def Wish] says, insisting it is every bit as valid as gymnastics. Take the routines known as 'air tracks' or 'air flares'. 'Your whole body leaves the ground and spins in the air. Then you capture your hand on the ground again and keep going. I've spoken to an Olympic gymnast who said he doesn't know any professional gymnast who can do that move.' (Meacham 2001)

Not only does the rhetoric, here, accentuate breaking's construction as a 'sport', but it also gives prominence to specific gymnast moves more aligned with masculine performances, see, for example, Figure 5. As a prominent figure in the community (Maxwell 2003), Def Wish's articulation of breaking as a vigorous 'sport', and his attempts to assert its validity in-line with gymnastics, demonstrates how the discourses of breaking rely on a larger range of 'cultural histories', as Butler articulates above.

Figure 5 – B-boy Don. *R16*: Oceania Qualifier. May 3, 2014. JNY Photography.

The *Planet X Games* was merely the beginning of breaking's connection with sports. Many breaking competitions since have been held in sports stadiums and sports centres, and even duplicated the systems of sport. This includes the 2003 regional qualifiers for *Battle of the Year* at the 'State Sports Centre' in Sydney Olympic Park, and more recently *Destructive Steps* held at the UTS Basketball Courts 2014-2015, the Oceania qualifier for *R16* held at Woolloomooloo PCYC (Police Community Youth Centre) in 2014 (pictured in Figure 5), and at the King George Basketball Courts in 2015. In addition, the *Sydney Bboy League*, held from 2012-2014, replicated many of the conventions and practices of a local sports league,[2] and the international competition

[2] With rounds each fortnight and tallied points systems, the *Sydney Bboy League* included the eight main crews across Greater Sydney during this time, including my own crew '143'. While the format replicates

R16, with qualifiers held in Australia, relies on a graded scoring system for judging.[3] Due to the small size of Australia's breaking scene, and minimal support from the broader community (both financially and in terms of spectator numbers), stadiums are rarely used for events. In contrast, international finals held overseas – and streamed live in Australia – are often held in large stadiums and thus contribute to a type of 'spectacle' performance. This is through duplicating the genre of large sports games by featuring half-time shows, live commentary, replays, slow motion, and freeze frames. The environment, scale, additional visual cues, and discursive constructions of these events thus lend themselves to (re)signifying male dancing bodies as part of a *different* history of gendered performance. That is, rather than seeing them 'dancing', the male-dominated histories of the space reframe the male bodies as performing a type of sporting spectacle. This is furthered through the performance of large and powerful moves, perhaps a result of the scale of the event, and thus naturalizes these corporeal actions within the discursive framework of masculine prowess. In our interview, b-boy Willastr8 commented on contemporary breaking events, stating:

> [N]owadays what's crazy cos it's almost a sport. I mean you've got big companies like *Red Bull* and *Monster* and maybe more getting involved, it's very much professionalized, you know these big competitions that get held in stadiums and get packed out, it's a real spectacle, and these b-boys competed it out for you know these championship titles, it's almost like boxing you know what I mean? And it's crazy and, look some people don't like it and some people do, I don't really care, I mean each to their own. (interview, December 22, 2014)

B-boy Willastr8 connects these spectacles of breaking with other male-dominated physical activities such as boxing, and points to the professionalization of breaking overseas. Indeed, as mentioned by Willastr8, *Red Bull* is significantly involved in the international breaking community. They not only have their own international

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local sports leagues, the *Sydney Bboy League* battles were held at a range of venues, including community halls, youth centres, and dance studios.

[3] The *R16* official scoring system, or the 'O.U.R. System', has five judges responsible for scoring a specific category ('Foundation', 'Originality', 'Dynamics', 'Execution', and 'Cypher/Battle'). It should be noted, though, that both the *Sydney Bboy League* and *R16* consciously use the familiarity of sports conventions as a way to make breaking more accessible to non-breaking audiences.

competition, *Red Bull BC One*,[4] but they also sponsor their own international breaking crew, the 'Red Bull BC One All Stars' (2015a). Currently with ten international members (from the USA, Brazil, Italy, South Korea, Japan, French/Algeria, Venezuela), the crew is presented as "showcas[ing] the art of B-Boying in all its many forms" and as "continually challenging and pushing the limits of B-Boying" (Ibid.). Not only is the crew all *male*, but as the description illustrates, the dance is also presented as b-*boy*ing. Moreover, sponsoring high-level athletes – predominantly men – in a range of 'extreme sports' is merely part of *Red Bull*'s larger marketing strategy (Red Bull 2016).[5] Therefore, multiple gendered constructions are intersecting here: notably, the professionalization of sports through team sponsorship and international competitions in stadiums, the coupling of 'art' with 'challenging and pushing the limits of a physical activity, the categorization of breaking alongside other male-dominated and 'extreme' sports, and the linguistic structure of b-*boy*ing. These multiple constructions both inform and reflect one another in constituting the breaking body as a naturally masculinized subject.

Breaking's alignment with other male-dominated and masculine activities is thus not only frequent, but is also used in a way to legitimize its own gendered politics. As Willastr8 continues:

> [B]reaking's not a sport, you know apples and oranges, but for all intents and purposes, rugby's male dominated because it's a high impact sport, a lot of injuries (yes there are female rugby players and I'm sure they're tough as hell, and I wouldn't wanna cross them), mixed martial arts – male dominated, boxing – male dominated. These are not safe sports, you could get hurt, you could get hurt *often*, um, breaking is not a sport, as I've said countless times, but it's very physical, and it's high impact, depending on how you dance, and there's a lot of injuries, again depending on how you dance, some guys do dangerous stuff, um so *maybe* the fact that you know guys get injured a lot, and girls, um that could be, that could be a mild deterrent. (interview, December 22, 2014)

[4] 'BC One' stands for Breakdancing Competition 1v1.

[5] *Red Bull*'s currently sponsored sports range from BMX, Skateboarding, Snowboarding, and Motorsports – all of which are their highest numbers of sponsorship (with at least thirty athletes) – to the lesser known, but perhaps more dangerous activities of cliff diving, parkour, truck racing, wingsuit flying, slacklining (tightrope walking meets gymnastics balance beam). *Red Bull*'s inclusion of breaking alongside these sports, not only reinforces the representation of breaking as an 'extreme sport', but also naturalizes its male-dominance.

As Willastr8 points to here, it depends on *how* you dance, what moves you choose to learn and excel in. By no means are all breakers skilled at the more athletic 'power' moves. They might, for example, be 'footwork heads', meaning they excel in footwork-based moves. Yet these different pathways open to the breaker do not deter the dance's broader definition as 'dangerous', 'high impact', or 'very physical'. While these constructions function to maintain a 'masculine' identity for breaking, they also privilege male bodies that have greater access to particular 'strength-building' sports. As we will see in the following section, the institution of sport is instrumental in shaping not only the breaking body, but also breaking's gendered politics both locally and nationally in Australia.

Shaping Bodily Capacities through Gender Politics

In Australia, physical activity and sports participation has historically been central to meeting the "schools' institutional requirements for social order" (Kirk 2000, 49). It is hardly surprising, then, that sports participation replicates much of the binary logic underpinning the gendered social order. With sports participation compulsory at many Australian schools, Australia's dominant sports environment not only *genders* bodies, but also invests them with a binary of capacities and desires in-line with the Cartesian logic. As Gatens highlights, it is important to take into account the cultural and historical specificity of bodies, as its "capacities are reduced by its sphere of activity and the conditions under which it creates itself" (1996, 57). Indeed, Gatens (1996) considers the dialectic between bodies and their environments instrumental in investing the body with specific capacities, desires and forms.

The institutionalization of gendered capacities through sport is largely examined in academic literature. For example, Yeates notes the "promotion of certain forms of masculinity over others through the institution of sport" (1995, 40), while Burgess, Edwards and Skinner (2003) examine how football in Australian schools is a site of 'controlled masculinity' that shapes 'real' men. Indeed, these latter authors argue that the reiterative emphasis on 'toughness' and violence' in these institutionalized settings do not point to a naturally-occurring and essentialized masculine identity, but rather equates sporting prowess with a specific hierarchized understanding of masculinity. What could be considered, using the work of Connell, a 'hegemonic' masculinity. With this in mind, breaking's alignment with sport could be seen to ensure b-boys enter into

a similarly constructed 'environment'. That is, an environment with interchangeable capacities, forms, and desires as that which is constituted through dominant sports.

Indeed, breaking's physicality has been viewed both an entry point and stepping-stone for athletic youths. For example, Kode Blue a rapper in *Sound Unlimited* and participant in Maxwell's Sydney study, recounts, "[t]he first thing that got me into it was the first time I saw that video for 'Buffalo Gals,' I saw the breaking. I guess just physically, you know, being a kid, being into sports, I straight away picked up on the dance" (Kode Blue quoted in Maxwell 2003, 53). While 'being into sports' not only meant Kode Blue was more physically prepared for breaking than if he had not been physically active, his account also calls attention to breaking's potential inheritance of sporting culture's immanent gender politics. Maxwell draws a similar connection, commenting on Kode Blue's account, "the reference to sporting prowess invokes the specifically masculinized nature of the Hip Hop Culture" (Ibid., 54-55). The discourses surrounding sport, and the way they divide gendered engagement, thus maintain breaking's male-dominance as naturally-occurring. Though this is not unique to breaking culture, and similarly manifests in graffiti, as Macdonald observes:

> Girls enter this subculture and gain an automatic and tainted set of traditional feminine qualities. These construct her as a timid, delicate little thing with absolutely no fear threshold and a tendency to burst into tears at the slightest hint of danger. She faces a hurdle, then, that boys do not. While they start equipped with the male gender that guarantees their acceptance, girls start with one that must be disguised or rejected. (2001, 130)

Like the privileging of these masculinist signifiers in graffiti, the representation of, and discourses surrounding, sport significantly draw attention to broader Cartesian power structures at work. B-*boys* enter the culture with capacities and forms already privileged in the culture, while b-girls must work towards overcoming their feminized bodies, as they are deemed characteristic of the qualities subordinated in the culture. For example, when asked why he thought there were so few b-girls in Sydney's breaking scene, Willastr8 responded:

> [U]sing sport as an example, I mean, women don't compete against the men in rugby, and in the hundred meter sprint final in the Olympics, the men compete

> against the men, the women compete against the women. It's like that in any sport, I mean, the men are always faster than the women, you know that's just how we're made, you know, that's how we're differentially made genetically. Um you know it's not sort of a stereotypical mark, the fastest man in the world is always gonna be faster than the fastest women, the best tennis player, you know, is probably gonna be better than the best *female* tennis player. I'm sure they can give each other a run for their money but, you know, it would be outrageous if females played against men in rugby. (interview, December 22, 2014)

While Willastr8 goes on to note that "female rugby players would knock the *crap* out of me, don't get me wrong" he does highlight the pervasive segregation of bodies – and the gendered assumptions that normalize them – within physical activity. We can begin to see, then, how these differently gendered sporting environments produce and shape bodily capacities through a binary logic, and these capacities are further normalized, indeed naturalized, through the discourses that construct them.

Within discussions of breaking, (not) having the required 'strength' is a recurring characteristic used to explain the gendered disparity within the scene. That men are considered 'stronger' than women naturalizes their participation in breaking in-line with biological assumptions. For example, the importance of strength in demarcating access to the dance floor was highlighted in my interview with Sydney b-girls. For b-girl Sass, lack of strength was the archetypal characteristic preventing women's engagement: "some people say 'oh you know [girl's] bodies might not be made for it', or you know, 'they don't have the strength'" (interview, October 24, 2014). The *belief* that female bodies do not have the required strength to break was also cited by b-girl Ill-FX as a major contributor to bourgeoning b-girls giving up breaking. She explains,

> I think that it comes from getting a bit [...] *discouraged* from when you start to trying to do some of the moves, they take a lot of time, and also women's bodies sometimes take a bit longer to get the strength that you need to do the moves and that's really frustrating cos you see all these guys […] training and they get the stuff quickly but for you it takes longer and you kind of don't think you're ever going to get there and so [girls] kind of give up along the way.

(interview, November 3, 2014)

B-girl Ill-FX's experiences of teaching female breakers highlights that women *do* have the strength, however social sanctions inhibit their capacity to enter the dance floor already having the required strength, like their male counterparts.

As the environment of breaking is considered similar to sport – as highlighted above – and that women are typically discouraged from entering this environment, or are only allowed in 'prescribed areas', upon learning breaking b-girls must transition into a different environment that imbues their bodies with new capacities, and this can be seen as a type of a reterritorialization. Indeed, through learning breaking, b-girls undergo a sort of reterritorializing of the capacities of their bodies. It is a process of reterritorialization because, and in-line with Deleuze and Guattari's thinking, it is both a reorganizing of forces and a regrouping of functions.[6] While this process takes time, it is a reterritorialization nonetheless.

Though it is not merely different environments that imbue the body with different strengths, as the alignment of masculinity with a visibly strong body interlocks with broader patriarchal restrictions. Specifically, the unfeminine association with strength, particularly upper body strength, is widely noted in academic research (see further Hargreaves 1986, 1994; Harris & Clayton 2002; Krane 2001; Scraton & Flintoff 2002; Stevenson 2002), and this is because the aesthetics of a muscular body – particularly upper body – are constructed in opposition to the normative feminine characteristics of fragility and weakness. This is not say that women can't develop strength, as I highlighted above, but rather the female body is reiteratively constructed through the repetition of these discursive structures. Consequently, those women *with* upper body strength and great athletic capability typically face additional social pressures to demonstrate other acceptably feminine stylizations of the body, such as through clothing and make-up, and I explore this further below. With this, however, they risk the trivialization of their skills through an overt focus on their sexuality and 'erotic' appeal (see, for example, the discussion of Anna Kournikova in Harris and Clayton 2002).

What this points to, however, is a discontinuity between the discursive constructions of gender and how they are performed. Through displacing gendered

[6] Deleuze and Guattari explain, "[f]or it is true that a territory has two notable effects: *a reorganization of functions and a regrouping of forces*" (2004, 353).

norms seen to be integral to the feminine subject (that is, weakness and fragility), female athletes and dancers not only reveal their arbitrary constructions, but also deplete their potency. The very figure of the strong female body is a failure to repeat the specific stylizations of the body that is said to constitute the female identity. As Butler explains:

> The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a deformity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction. (1990, 192)

Therefore, and as we will see in more depth in the discussion of b-girling, the possibilities to transform and upset gendered norms manifest through the very site in which they are given consistency. Specifically, the acts, gestures, and enactments that performatively constitute the subject are also the place through which to facilitate deterritorializations.

Importantly, though, despite the larger challenges to gendered norms that manifest through women's participation in these male-dominated arenas, their participation is still subject to significantly different levels of scrutiny to their male counterparts. This can manifest, simply, by assuming they do not understand the distinct politics and knowledges of the sport in question. For example, in Virginia Nightingale's (1992) ethnographic research on Australian rugby league, one participant asserted: "[Women] aren't supporters like us guys are – they support but they don't get involved – I suppose because they can't play football and don't really feel for it the way men do. Football is a man's game" (Ibid., 157). In this way, discourses function to separate the knowledges and experiences of a particular physical activity into gendered binaries. Consequently, even when women *do* participate, they are denied equal or full engagement as their male peers.

The construction of a particular pursuit as a 'man's game' is, unfortunately, not uncommon, and one could similarly argue that breaking is 'a man's dance'. Indeed a comment below a *YouTube* clip on gender equality in breaking culture (titled 'Ken Swift On Bgirls') supports this very construction:

> [P]eople dont [sic] understand that breakin' is a dance of virility. Much like the

> ukrainian [sic] kossack, bboys stomp, jump, and flip to show off their strenghth [sic] and agility. Female dance styles are meant to show off their elegance and grace. Asking a girl to bboy is like asking a guy to bellydance … ladies stay out of the cypher, it's a man's world. stick to ballet (superbambino24 quoted in bjhiphopcollective 2009)

There are a number of key points in this comment that further institutionalize breaking's popularity with b-*boys*, while simultaneously denying b-*girls* the access to the dance floor. First, the justification draws on a number of different practices constructed through masculine performativities (such as capoeira, Kung Fu, and so on), and places them in opposition to styles considered feminine (such as ballet and belly dancing). Moreover these styles are coupled with normative gendered significations produced through binary logic, including virility and strength versus elegance and grace. Finally, the construction of this space as a 'man's world' is further naturalized through the proposed ridiculousness of guys belly dancing. Thus breaking is seen to operate within the binary logic that prescribes differently gendered bodies access to different areas of physical activity.

The relationship between breaking and sport is thus normalized through the constitution of corporeal enactments as masculine (strength, agility, and so on), and this works to conceal breaking's categorization of a dance. As we saw in the previous chapter, in the imagination of western modernity dance is analogous with femininity, as Gilbert and Pearson (2002, 96) highlighted. Therefore, by constructing breaking as a 'sport', particularly in contexts that herald sports participation, breaking overcomes its connection with dance and thus more effeminate 'ways of moving'. This is evident in Kopytko's (1986) research on the emerging breaking culture in New Zealand, a close neighbour of Australia and, as such, a space that contains similar sporting politics. Here, she highlights the culture's possible inheritance of sport's immanent gender politics:

> One breakdancer preferred to call breakdance 'New Zealand's fastest growing *sport*'. He also regarded 'breaking' as more macho than 'bopping'. This was interesting because female breakdancers mainly 'bopped,' as few had the arm and upper body strength to manage the floor moves. Boys generally develop this through their play and sports while girls are discouraged from these

> activities because they are culturally regarded as unfeminine. By staying male-dominated, breakdance continued to fit into the traditional stereotypes of male and female in New Zealand society, particularly working-class stereotypes. (1986, 23)

Here, Kopytko highlights how normative constructions of sport were not only used to justify demarcations of the dance floor, but also 'ways of moving'. We can begin to see, then, how the structure and representation of sport invests bodies with particular assumptions and forms in-line with Cartesian logic.

Of particular significance to Kopytko's observations is how female breakers are perceived differently to their male counterparts, a perception not dissimilar to my field notes with which I began this chapter. Specifically, in Kopytko's comments female bodies performing breaking are denigrated, to the point where they are even denied the descriptor 'breaking' as they are instead referred to as 'bopping'. These differences are inextricably tied to the discourses of breaking, with 'b-boy' and 'b-girl' purporting to express different manifestations of a stable, gendered self. For example, Schloss notes, "[t]he way the term is used seems to imply a sort of gender essentialism–that the dance is, in some fundamental way, an expression of one's gender identity" (2009, 64). In this way, 'b-boy' and 'b-girl' not only constitute differently gendered subjects, but also, and in doing so, express differently gendered performativities. Indeed, coupled with the discourses of 'b-boy' and 'b-girl' are perceptions of different 'ways of moving' and their corresponding hierarchization, as seen in Kopytko's comments above. In our interview Ill-FX explains, "I think if girls break in a masculine way they're still respected […] I think there's more pressure if you break like a *girl* then you get more problems from the guys [laughs]" (interview, November 3, 2014). From Ill-FX's observations, here, we can see how breaking is often classified into two categories based on gender expression and binary logic: b-boying/breaking, or breaking 'like a girl'. Importantly, the gendered expression of 'b-boying' is considered neutral, the dominant and norm, further enforced through its usage as a "generic term that includes women" (Schloss 2009, 15).

In Sydney's breaking scene, the descriptor 'breaking like a girl' is not dissimilar to Kopytko's 'bopping', because it is articulates a less assertive or strong style. This may emerge from the larger organization of physical activities that often prevent b-girls from initially having the same strength entering the culture as b-boys, as I discussed

above. These ‘performative’ characteristics are thus not only a symbol of differently gendered ‘stylizations of the body’, as Butler (1990) would argue, but they also reinforce the underlying hierarchization of gendered ‘performativities’. Indeed, for Butler, the *effect* of a naturally-occurring gendered subject is produced not only through a ritualized repetition of bodily performance, but also via linguistic structures. That is, gendered identities are constituted and constructed by language. She writes, “that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (1990, 185). In this way, gender does not precede language, but rather gender is an ongoing act that brings into being the very identity that it names. Given this, the naming of female expression as ‘bopping’, and the associated denial of even the title of ‘breaking’, discursively structures female bodily expression as both ‘other’ and subordinated to masculine autonomy.

Importantly, these normalized gendered assumptions continue to regulate entry into the scene, as b-girl Sass describes, “that’s what makes it harder for girls to actually get into breaking is because, it’s such a male-dominated sport that it’s kind of more scary” (interview, October 24, 2014). The confrontational aspect of this environment, as in the way it (re)produces the politics of sports, not only naturalizes men’s involvement, but also makes it highly daunting to b-girls. To clarify, it is daunting because the different *environment* that shapes female bodily capacities in Australia’s sporting assemblage greatly contrasts the performances of breaking. Moreover, it is not simply that women are *told* they are not strong enough, but importantly these capacities often become *embodied*.

This process of embodying larger gendered assumptions and structures is famously examined in Young’s (1980) research on moving ‘like a girl’. Specifically, she examines how the particular ‘situation’ of being a woman is embodied, and thus how an analysis of feminine motility will reveal the effects of these structures. To do this, Young (1980) utilizes Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) understanding of the body, which, in contrast to the Cartesian tradition, locates subjectivity in the *body* rather than in the mind or consciousness. In giving the body this ontological status, Young considers it as “the first locus of intentionality, as pure presence to the world and openness upon its possibilities” (1980, 145). The body is thus the first site through which intentions manifest, though also where its influence is shown. For Young, there are recurring trends within typical feminine body motility that reveal this influence, and she characterizes three modalities, explaining, “feminine movement exhibits an *ambiguous*

transcendence, an *inhibited intentionality*, and a *discontinuous unity* with its surroundings" (Ibid.). Of particular interest to this discussion of bodily capacities, Young explains the modality of 'inhibited intentionality':

> Typically, the feminine body underuses its real capacity, both as the potentiality of its physical size and strength and as the real skills and coordination which are available to it. Feminine bodily existence is an *inhibited intentionality*, which simultaneously reaches toward a projected end with an 'I can' and withholds its full bodily commitment to that end in a self-imposed 'I cannot'. (Ibid., 146)

Typical feminine bodily comportment can thus work to discourage and limit the body's capacities. Gendered assumptions are not only *embodied*, and work *against* women, but they also constitute the 'historical situation' of the body's performativity, making them part of what b-girls must work with upon entering the dance floor. Unsurprisingly, then, there has been much academic work on how the stereotype 'like a girl' – and the corresponding assumptions of difference – tangibly inhibits female participation in a range of male-dominated activities, including climbing (Chisholm 2008), ski jumping (Laurendeau & Adams 2010), and athletic endeavours (Hively & El-Alayli 2014). As we will see in the following chapter, despite the codes and conventions of breaking that subordinate feminine expression, and feminized bodies, Sydney b-girls have developed tactics to challenge and displace normative gendered significations.

While the relationship between Young and Butler's theory of gender performance might seem compatible here, in that they both examine how the surface of the body (re)produce gendered norms, Butler does not share Young's view of embodiment. Specifically, for Butler the notion of embodiment is tied to the understanding of an internal subject that then 'does' gender. This view is explicated most visibly in her comments, "[g]ender is also a norm that can never be fully internalized; "the internal" is a surface signification, and gender norms are finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody" (1990, 192). For Butler, gender expressions are not the result of a gendered identity, though this very perception is an example of its ingrained structural naturalization.

The naturalization of the notion of an inherent gendered subject is further enforced through the policing of the body, particular in the moments where it 'fails' to repeat the appropriate gendered enactments. In Aalten's research on ballet, for example,

she noted how ballerinas were limited to moving within certain prescribed ways that conformed to archetypal performances of femininity. Specifically, she observed how an instructor told a young female dancer that she "jumped like a man", and "to not make such strong movements with her arms" (1997, 29). Interestingly, "[o]nce she obeyed she noticed she wasn't jumping nearly as high or as far any more" (Ibid.). This promotion of a particular archaic form of femininity in ballet is coextensive with an implicit promotion of a masculine stylization of the body. Such a directive not only reinforces femininity as 'weak', and in turn masculinity as 'strong', but also works to regulate bodily capacities through constructed sexual differences. Thus even when men and women together are taught the same movements, their bodily capacity is still differently invested in-line with Cartesian assumptions. The regulation and maintenance of these gendered expressions on differently gendered bodies thus constitutes the effect of a coherent unity.

The policing of the body to repeat gendered stylizations also manifests through the different ways the body is *dressed*. Indeed, and as I will attempt to show in the next section, clothing in breaking culture is instrumental in regulating bodily capacities, as tight or loose-fitting clothing are a constituent of gendered identity, though can impact the body's freedom of movement. Moreover, b-girls must learn to perform the masculine enactments or habitus of breaking, while simultaneously articulating a feminine 'self'. Thus, while b-girls call attention to the fabrication of the gendered body in repeating masculine stylizations, they simultaneously reinforce the notion of an internal gendered core.

Desiring the Breaking Body: Dressing its Capacities

In this section, I analyse the fashion of breaking culture, as clothing is integral to the *performance* of breaking through either hindering or enabling the execution of both technique and style. While b-girls' performances of breaking can undermine its naturalized masculine performativity (as we will see in more depth in the following chapter), patriarchal expectations still require they maintain feminine stylizations of the body. As such, b-girls must negotiate this gendered paradox that confronts them on the dance floor: how to embody the masculine habitus, while at the same time adhere to contemporary expectations of normative feminine stylizations of the body. There is thus an added element of negotiation in the choices b-girls face upon entering the dance

floor, and I will show how this negotiation is a simultaneous deterritorialization and reterritorialization of gendered norms. Briefly, while b-girls displace and decode corporeal signifiers from the masculine body, thus exposing the fabrication of the surface of the body, they simultaneously reassert a feminine 'inner' in their expression of feminine styles, thus overcoding gendered transgressions through the maintenance of an inherent gendered identity.

Before I elaborate on this discussion, I want to first highlight that discussions of women's clothing in physical and male-dominated activities are often strategically used to trivialize their athletic achievements and even eroticize their bodies (see Harris & Clayton 2002; Scraton & Flintoff 2002). My discussion of how the body is 'dressed' in Sydney's breaking scene, however, attempts to not only call attention to the tacit (re)construction and privileging of masculinity within the scene, and thus how bodily capacities are shaped, but also to demonstrate how b-girls' participation is policed. This discussion will contextualize the analysis in the following section, where we will examine the different ways b-girls destabilize the gender binary, and explore the potential for larger transformations, indeed deterritorializations, of gender.

Dressing the Breaking Body: 'Militarized' and Masculinized Aesthetic

In the field of subcultural studies, fashion is often viewed as a tool to 'make a statement', communicate rebellion, and demonstrate subcultural participation or knowledge. Yet this often periphery emphasis on fashion coexists with its positioning as replicating a fixed, innate identity. For example, Schloss sees clothing as integral to the definition of a breaker's identity, writing:

> In the case of b-boying, these aesthetic lessons allow the dancers to define various aspects of their identity, develop strategies for integrating that identity into a larger social world, and then actually practice doing so. This is done in a variety of specific areas, including the choice of a name that expresses one's b-boy or b-girl character, the clothing one wears, the way one carries oneself physically, how that attitude is reflected in the way one interacts with a given piece of music, improvisation, and the structure of the dance form. (2009, 69)

For Schloss, clothing is part of a larger system that works to not only produce the subject, but also conjointly express a unified, stable identity. In contrast, Maxwell

connects hip-hoppers' stylistic choices with markers of subcultural capital, and thus is more open to a fluid understanding of identity. He writes: "Certain labels, items and styles are judged as indices of authenticity. For example, wearing a particular brand-name of a sweat shirt (Timberland, or Adidas) references the wearer's awareness of the current state of play in American Hip Hop Culture" (1997, 61). Unlike the music-based elements of hip-hop culture, though, breakers' clothing choices directly affect their 'way of moving', and thus capacity to 'show and prove' in the culture.

In emphasizing clothing as a type of identity marker, often these discussions ignore how hip-hop fashion is *gendered*. Despite there not being an official difference in costuming or uniform (like in sports or other dance styles such as ballroom), the majority of breaking apparel conforms to normative masculine significations – such as oversized clothing and sneakers – and yet b-girls are still pressured to conform to patriarchal expectations of feminine stylizations of the body. While I elaborate on these expectations below, for example b-girls cited the pressures to still appear 'girly' or 'feminine', or not 'too much like a guy' as they learnt to break, and often this manifested through wearing more jewellery, tighter clothing, and having long hair.

For Mitchell (2003, 9), fashion is such an inherent component of hip-hop that it could be the culture's 'fifth element' (adding to hip-hop's well-known 'four elements' of breaking, graffiti, emceeing and deejaying). This does not merely demonstrate the importance of clothing 'style' in hip-hop, but also calls attention to the distinctiveness of hip-hop's fashion, which for Maxwell is directly attributed to breaking culture. As Maxwell writes:

> One of the most significant legacies of breaking has been its influence on Hip Hop fashion. To offer a somewhat functionalist account, the baggy pants, track-suit shell tops, the running shoes and so on facilitate movement, which is not to deny the overdetermination of the fashion/aesthetic systems of valuation in clothing. Within the Hip Hop Community, such clothing is referred to as 'b(reak)-boy' style. (1997, 61)

While Maxwell is wary of being overly functionalist or deterministic in his analysis of hip-hop fashion, there are other debates that see a causal relationship between hip-hop's contemporary style and hip-hop's 'origins'. For example, breakers in *The Freshest Kids* (2002) attribute hip-hop's preference for oversized clothing to the limited capital and

the prevalence of 'hand-me-downs' in the environment of the Bronx. Taking a similarly 'functionalist' approach, Banes writes, "[t]he breakdancer's 'costume' was born of necessity as well as style. T-shirts and net overshirts provide traction on the spins, and sneakers are important to the footwork" (1994, 148), and so too does Mitchell (2003), as he acknowledges the practicality of hip-hop's iconic garments. While I return to Mitchell below, he observes how hip-hop clothing allows for ease of movement and protection in strenuous activities, such as breaking or venturing through the city to graffiti.

Through these accounts, we can start to see the recurring trends of the breaking wardrobe, particularly loose-fitting or over-sized clothing. Indeed, in my own research (Gunn, forthcoming), I describe this wardrobe to consist of various (or, more accurately, *myriad*) sneakers, pants that enable ease of movement through either loose fitting or stretchy fabric, and baggy t-shirts. To also protect the skin from burns or bruises, breakers may wear a 'spin' top, which is a long sleeve crew neck top that slides easily, a beanie, which can also prevent balding from too many headspins, as well as kneepads. In this way, while clothing functions to protect the breaking body, it also operates to enable specific stylistic aesthetics. Rather than indicating a particular 'type' of identity, I want to highlight that certain items enable breakers to literally 'try on' different styles and ways of moving.[7] For example, footwear choice can directly influence a breaker's range and way of moving. Indeed, *Nike*'s Air Max is not only an 'indices of authenticity' as Maxwell highlights above, but also the specificities of the shoes changes the way a breaker dances. Specifically, the thicker and more raised sole of the Air Max can limit the way the foot interacts with the floor, particularly when performing threads or sweeps, but can also facilitate greater power in movement.

Sneakers thus change the way a breaker interacts with the floor, with the movement or aesthetic produced dependent upon its specificities, such as thick or thin sole, flat or raised heel, new or worn in. Indeed, much like the floor a breaker dances on, shoes are vital to executing the techniques of breaking. As Banes observes,

Their critical role in the dance is emphasized by making the feet look gigantic

[7] While 'baggy pants' are more iconic of the hip-hop style, breaking fashion is still subject to trends. For example, tighter jeans and shorts (made with high percentages of elastane to greater movement) have more recently become popular in the scene – possibly a result of fashion changes in broader Sydney culture – and because these pieces can be slightly more limiting of movement, they can thus change the aesthetics of the dancer's style.

> and by nearly fetishizing the shoes with embellishments like wide, bright laces loosely tied so that the tongues stick out. (1994, 148)

Wearing sneakers, particularly large or brightly coloured sneakers, not only draw attention to the feet, but also increase the visibility of complex footwork patterns, and enhances how the dancer uses, and connects with, the floor.

Importantly, the aesthetic of wearing sneakers enhances the masculine performativity of the dance, because the 'environment' of the sneaker encases the foot and, in doing so, provides greater support. This is integral to the overall breaking aesthetic, as the dancer must perform grounded movements, fast and powerful changes in direction, and jumps and kicks. In contrast, these movements using bare feet would not appear as powerful or vigorous. Yet dancing in barefoot is not uncommon in more female-dominated dance styles, or the use of thin ballet flats. Indeed Foster, highlights the gendered nature of footwear in her discussion of male and female ballet stars: "Even when costumed in the most unisex unitards, *she* wears pointe shoes, and *he* wears ballet slippers" (1996b, 1). The gendered differences in ballet shoes thus reveal how they affect different bodily aesthetics. Pointe shoes hinder large powerful leaps, instead *designed* to produce an image of fragility and grace (see Aalten 1997; Foster 1996b).

Beyond the dance floor, feminine footwear normatively consists of heels, sandals, and thin flats. In contrast, wearing sneakers or more 'practical' shoes is much more socially accessible for men. The shift in *environment* – the environment that encases the feet – thus not only constitutes a particular way of moving, but also invests the body with gender-specific forms, and this concurrently supports the illusion of a naturally gendered body and aesthetic. For example, in my own experience and prior to learning breaking I had only worn normative feminine footwear, even while dancing, such as in heels, a special thin dance shoe, or even barefoot. So upon learning breaking, it took me at least six months to even feel *comfortable* wearing sneakers – my feet felt like they were large blocks, and thus impediments to how I wanted to move. I had to adjust my spatial understanding of my body, taking into account the expanded encasings around my feet. During this time, I not only had to overcome a great deal of bodily awkwardness, but also frustration due to seeing my male peers experiencing no hindrance to their movements. Consequently, footwear produces a specific gendered

stylization of the body that, in its ritualized repetition on differently gendered bodies sustain normative gender dynamics (strength versus weak) and expressions.

The importance of sneakers within the breaking outfit extends beyond aesthetics because they also enable dancers to battle in any setting. Unlike other dance styles, a breaker's "costume" is versatile, as breakers typically do not need to change their outfit to be able to 'get down'. For Schloss, this aesthetic is functional in that it communicates an ongoing readiness to battle, explaining: "B-boys should exude preparedness, competence, and confidence. They should not only be prepared to battle at any time, but they should look it" (2009, 84). Regardless of whether or not a breaker is planning to battle or train, breakers should still wear clothes they can 'get down' in so they are ready for 'call outs' (see Appendix D for definition of terms). This 'costume', as Banes (1994) describes above, thus seeps into other settings beyond the designated dance floor. For example, after learning breaking and as I became more involved in the Sydney scene, my own clothing style gradually changed. Previously wearing tight-fitting tops, cardigans, jeans, and either heels or ballet flats, I now typically wear sneakers, baggy t-shirts, loose-fitting jeans, and oversized jumpers or hoodies. This shift was coupled with my family suggesting taking me 'dress shopping'. However the aesthetic of a readiness to battle – particularly on the street – is a distinctly masculine image, additionally reinforced through Schloss's above choice of the apparent gender inclusive b-*boy*. Not only does Schloss's statement further (re)construct breaking as a 'street' activity, but in doing so it also interlocks with the politics of the street that prohibit female participation, as I demonstrated in Chapter 2.[8]

Breaking's connection with the street also manifests through the cohesion of style and symbols, which may be viewed as a reterritorialization of the practices of gang culture. In attempting to map the emergence of hip-hop attire, Mitchell details:

> The baggy oversized pants and loose baseball-style tops which many hip-hop practitioners wear are said to derive from US prison clothes, which are issued in one (very large) size only and hence stigmatise hip-hop's outlaw status. […]

[8] An example of 'street wear' being (re)aligned with masculine norms is in Schloss's history of the hip-hop trend of wearing a baseball cap sideways or backwards. In an interview with Schloss, Richard Santiago, recounts the impracticality of wearing a baseball cap with the brim forward, "[b]ecause if you would get into a fight, all they have to do is drop the brim, and that's it. You couldn't see and then you get a beatdown. So that's why you move the brim to the side and off. To say you were ready to scrap" (quoted in Schloss 2009, 84). Importantly, and what Schloss omits in this historical account, is how both being 'ready to scrap' and even wearing a cap are two normatively masculinized practices.

> The hooded tops and Kangol wollen [sic] beanies which have become something of a cliché in hip-hop fashion circles could both have originated from the need to preserve anonymity when fleeing from the police [….] Consequently much hip-hop clothing appears to have criminal or quasi-criminal origins. (2003, 8)

Continuing Mitchell's line of argument, ex-gang members and hip-hoppers in *Rubble Kings* (2010) describe how gangs attempted to emulate the Hells Angels and other bike clubs, due to how "Angels were rebelling and trying to shock society", and gangs emulated their aesthetic through reappropriating 'outlaw' paraphernalia. This included leather, chains, and gang-specific patches and colours that were seen as 'shields', as members would wear their gang affiliation on their back with honour. This naturalized inheritance of gang culture within hip-hop culture thus further constructs hip-hop's fashion aesthetics as similarly rebelling, confronting, criminalized, and importantly to this discussion, *masculinized*.

We can begin to see, then, the image of 'authority' that is articulated through breaking attire. This image is amplified not only through group numbers, but also through groups of *athletic* male bodies unified through the same symbols. As Banes writes:

> The insignia of the crew, as well as colours and outfits that coordinate with those of fellow crew members, play a part in intensifying group solidarity. And the overall look of militarized athleticism creates an image of power and authority. (Ibid., 148)

The 'insignia of the crew' is magnified through the prevalence of custom-made clothing in breaking culture, such as t-shirts, jackets, and caps that display a crew name or logo. Moreover, designing and purchasing custom-made clothing is now easy, uniform and professional-looking through online webstores, and in battles often crewmembers will all wear the same t-shirt, or even same outfit.[9] In this way, the visible crew logo can work as a refrain, or expression, that gives consistency to

[9] In breaking culture, crews will often design logos that they then print on a variety of clothing, such as t-shirts, caps, jumpers, and jackets. Large orders can be made easily through online services such as *Vista Print*, as breakers can upload their crew logo and individual breaking name on a range of custom items.

geographically separated dancers, unifying them under the same territory (see Gunn 2014).

The 'militarized athleticism' that Banes describes of breakers may not simply be a consequence of gang culture origins, but their symbolism could also be a way to demonstrate a form of 'tribal allegiance' to the broader subculture. In Joanne Cummings's (2006, 75) discussion of Sydney 'festivalgoers', the consumption, and subsequent wearing, of specifically 'vintage t-shirts' (i.e. t-shirts sold at past festivals) is a 'linking image' that unifies participants (Ibid.). Like Cummings, Maxwell (1997), too, examines the significance of wearing 'old school' t-shirts, and lists LL Cool J, Run DMC and 'old Public Enemy' as possible examples. He explains that wearing these t-shirts "command respect, marking the wearer as someone who has 'paid dues', someone who is 'knowledged up', or is 'down with the programme'" (Ibid., 62). This can similarly transpire in breaking culture through wearing older versions of crew t-shirts or limited edition competition t-shirts from past events.[10] Yet, and as I argued in Chapter 2, to have 'paid dues' and thus wear 'old school' t-shirts is the result of asymmetrical power relations that not only regulate access to the dance floor and hip-hop culture, but also disproportionately inhibit women from being able to *stay* in the culture.

Yet breaking fashion is not only recognized through its (masculinized) 'costume', but also through the display of masculinized discourses. For example, when worn particular event t-shirts, such as *UK B-boy Champs*, reinforce the normative breaking body as male, as does the popularity of male rap artists, as listed by Maxwell above. In addition, and more contemporarily, is the emergence of breaking-specific brands. Online stores such as *The Bboy Spot* have custom breaking brands, such as the 'Biggest and Baddest' brand,[11] and the slogan 'Bboy or Die', the texts of which are enlarged across t-shirts, jumpers, and caps. There is a distinct gendered component to this type of clothing, however, as the baggy t-shirt itself is more aligned with masculine

[10] Breaking events will often design and sell limited edition clothing – typically t-shirts – that feature the event's logo and year of event. Yet often breakers are not reliant upon the events' 'official' merchandise and may, in fact, create their own. According to a Sydney informant, *Red Bull* only began creating official custom-made caps for the large international event *Red Bull BC One* in the last few years. Prior to that, all the *Red Bull BC One* caps, which are popularly seen, were 'bootlegs' designed and made by breakers (presumably through online websites). Breaking culture's affinity, then, for designing and producing their own custom-made clothing contends with 'big brand' marketing strategies.

[11] Interestingly an Australian b-girl created the alternative brand 'Smallest and Gooddest' for b-girls, but due to threats of being sued for copyright infringement of 'Biggest and Baddest', had to subsequently dissolve the merchandise.

stylizations, as demonstrated through the later emerging b-girl version of the above slogan – '~~B-boy~~ B-girl or Die' – that only sells in small and medium sized t-shirts. While breakers do not wear form fitting clothes due to the way they can inhibit movement, breaking-specific clothing for women is often still subject to larger gendered norms. In this next section, I explore these gendered difference further, and attempt to show how patriarchal restrictions inhibit b-girls from exerting the same 'power and authority' denoted through breaking's 'costume'.

Negotiating Gendered Stylings: B-girls b-boying & bein' girly

The gendered differences in breaking fashion can be mapped to the 1980s, whereby the representation of breakers in early instructional manuals point to underlying gendered assumptions. In her analysis of these texts, Monteyne (2013) calls attention to the different techniques male and female bodies demonstrated, as well as the dichotomy in clothing choices. Because they are designed for bourgeoning breakers to *learn* about breaking, analysing these manuals may help to untangle the gendered politics of the contemporary breaking scene.

In her analysis of the manual *Breakdance, Electric Boogie, Egyptian, Moonwalk ... Do it* (Nadell & Small 1985), Monteyne noticed that "[a]ll of the more athletic breaking moves are demonstrated through photographs of male dancers" (2013, 134) while in contrast, images of women were used to demonstrate techniques of less physically demanding moves. Also, the manual *Breakdancing: Mr. Fresh and the Supreme Rockers Show You How to Do It!* (Mr. Fresh and the Supreme Rockers 1984), specifies that "breakers need loose clothing so they can move when they do their Floor Rock, Spins, and Windmills" (Ibid., 43). As Monteyne highlights, however, despite the manual claiming that women fully participate in the scene, women are both described and pictured as wearing form-fitting clothes, such as tight jeans.[12] For Monteyne:

> The differences ascribed to men's and women's clothing suggest that women do not need the freedom of movement required by men to participate in breakdancing. This is explained by the gendering of breakdance moves that generally relegated women to the confines of the less physically strenuous electric boogie. It is tempting to naturalize this gender division in terms of the

[12] Female clothing was described as "simple and sleek–no high fashion designer look for them, no long parkas, or knit suits. Just Levi's and Lee jeans–tight–and black short jackets" (Mr. Fresh and the Supreme Rockers 1984, 44).

> sheer upper body strength needed to perform most of the floor work in breakdancing in comparison to the less physically challenging electric boogie. (2013, 134)

In this way, learning to break is coupled with learning a distinct set of gendered assumptions that are presented as fitting for the naturalized capacities of male and female bodies respectively. As Monteyne continues, she connects the differences between the two dance styles as reflecting another set of gendered categories, with electric boogie seen to replicate the movements of nature, and breaking viewed as more chaotic and anti-gravitational. She writes "[t]his seemingly new and innovative dance culture, at least in the manuals, adopts archaic gender distinctions that place women within the realm of the natural, and associate men with technology and anti-nature" (Ibid.). As we saw in the previous chapter, these binary oppositions – nature/culture, woman/man – are informed by the prevailing authority of the Cartesian dualism, and thus work to naturalize the gendered segregation within hip-hop dance. Their duplication here, in breaking manuals, thus not only normalizes these gendered characteristics, but also produce the b-boy and b-girl in dichotomously specific ways, and I return to these constructions later in the chapter.

The privileging of masculinity within breaking might also be supported through the preference of clothing designed for men. Indeed, often feminine clothing is too tight and inhibits the freedom of movement require to perform breaking. Consequently, upon entering the scene, b-girls must not only re-align their body to produce the distinct masculine habitus, but they also must negotiate newly masculine stylings (such as wearing sneakers that I described above). For Rap Attack, this is merely part of learning the dance:

> I think with girls [pause] we fall into that trap of you know the nails, the hair, and the clothes, and it kind of works a bit in opposition to getting down on the floor and spinning around and stuff. But people don't realize that it's not as hard as they think, it's like any *extreme sport* if you wanna call it that, if you go skydiving you're gonna have to wear particular type of clothes, you can't have your false nails and all that shit, it's gonna get in the way. Um and I think girls have a bit of a habit of, you know it's that social thing, like society expects you to be a certain *way* or your boyfriend doesn't want you to be masculine, but let's

> face it girls: b-boys *love b-girls* [laughs] (interview, November 4, 2014)

Rap Attack points to the various social pressures that produce the feminine subject in ways that oppose the requirements of breaking, like any 'extreme sport' to again highlight that association. Yet, disregarding these pressures, for Rap Attack, may result in greater popularity among the other sex. The reinforcement of a heteronormative framework, here, is illustrative of Butler's conceptualization of the gender order, which is inextricably tied to the 'heterosexual matrix'.

Meanwhile, the normalized differences in clothing Monteyne calls attention to above disproportionately increase the difficulties facing the b-girl. Not only is tighter clothing more typical of feminine fashion, while also hindering freedom of movement, but it can also make it easier to grope the body. That is not to say tighter clothing *invites* groping, but rather that in contrast to looser fitting attire, the body, indeed body *parts*, are easier to locate and grab. This issue was revealed in my interview with Rap Attack, who in recounting her experiences battling in early hip-hop culture, and also the misogyny, goes on to describe the functionality to loose fitting clothing. She describes the different tactics of intimidation used during battles:

> Oh yeah, um to intimidate obviously a lot of people, well even boy against boy, they'll try to pretend to grab for genitals and stuff like that, so yep, they'd try to grab for *mine*, and my breasts, umm even legs you know, put your hand up your legs, um you know even though you've got trousers on, it was an intimidating tactic you know to put you off, and it sort of worked for a bit, but then I updated my wardrobe a bit, so I would wear baggier shirts, or I'd bring a baggy shirt, so my breasts weren't like swaying around and attracting attention, so it was a little bit harder to grab em (interview, November 4, 2014)

For Rap Attack, wearing looser clothing thus became more functional in that it helped to avoid being groped in battles and thus from being 'put off' from the dance. She continues: "Yeah, and I was more comfortable anyway, I never really liked, you know, being sexy, because the thing is you're getting down on the floor and you're doing all sorts of things and it's too hard if your bosoms are practically falling out of your top" (Ibid.). While, fortunately, the culture is no longer that intimidating – I do not fear being groped on the dance floor – there remain added difficulties. In particular, for a b-

girl with larger breasts these difficulties are many. For example, it can be painful when performing toprock, especially in performing the 'groove'; your breasts can get in the way of particular freeze techniques that require your elbow to be positioned across your chest to hold your weight, or, as Rap Attack articulated, there is the fear of accidentally exposing yourself.

This fear of exposing the female body interlocks with larger patriarchal restrictions that demand modesty within feminine performances. Consequently, b-girls are often more concerned about exposing their bodies than b-boys. This is not to say that b-boys do not take clothing into consideration, but rather to highlight the distinctly different social pressures facing b-boys and b-girls, particularly regarding exposing their skin. In our interview, b-girl Catwmn explains how the social pressures to conform to femininity directly play into her breaking choices:

> [D]epending on how loose your shirt is sometimes you're like 'ok maybe I should wear something underneath' like make sure that you wear crop top, all that kind of stuff, the right bra, just in case you do any air moves, you know you don't want your shirt falling down or anything like that […] guys don't really think about that, they don't really care. (interview, October 24, 2014)

Due to social norms that prevent women from exposing their chest, b-girls often put more clothes *on* (such as a jumper) to ensure the same smooth transitions. In this way, we can see the molar lines of the Australian patriarchal assemblage not only intersecting with the lived experiences of Sydney b-girls, but also maintaining the 'function' of the category woman. Specifically, sustaining the gendered stylization of modesty can interfere with performing 'b-boying' in an equal way.

Indeed, and continuing my line of argument above, the 'militarized athleticism' of the breaking aesthetic also manifests through the breaker's actual *body*. This is through a visibilized muscularity, wherein b-boys have a tendency to take their shirts off during training or competitions. For 'outsiders' (such as my friends who would come support me at competitions), this is initially confronting. The hordes of men with their shirts off sweating, battling and pushing through one another to gain entrance to the dance floor, is not unlike a type of 'fight club' image, and as a b-girl, it initially adds to the daunting-ness of the task. Yet b-boys' dancing with no shirt on frequently occurs during the summer time in Sydney, where temperatures can reach 45 degrees

Celsius. Removing their shirt is almost a necessity, because excessive sweating through a t-shirt provides too much friction to slide on the ground, thus preventing any kind of travelling or spinning movements in footwork and power.

Consequently, b-girls more often wear additional protective clothing (such as jumpers, beanies, and kneepads) not only for modesty, but to also shield their skin from bruising. This intersects with another gendered construction, because it is not normatively feminine to have bruised knees, particularly visible bruised knees such as when wearing skirts or dresses, as this is a failure to repeat the look of fragility and grace. For example, my family implicitly noted my failure in this construction of fragility, because upon seeing my bruised shoulders and knees they encouraged me to stop breaking or to take greater care in my training. In extreme circumstances they 'had a talking to' my breaking boyfriend to ensure that I was being 'looked after'. This was a distinctly gendered response to my gendered transgressions, because I have not seen the same level of concern for the bruises of my male peers, which, if anything, is also seen as a way to 'pick up' girls in-line with the old idiom 'chicks dig scars'. These differences are, for Butler (1990), the result of the different ways gendered identities are discursively and symbolically constituted through specific formations of power. Indeed, the *effect* of 'woman', and the existence of an internal womanly 'substance' is produced "on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause" (1990, 185). Gender is thus not a 'cause', but rather the effect of the ritualized repetition of actions and enactments that institute the notion of an abiding gendered self. In Sydney's breaking scene, this illusion is discursively maintained through such comments outlined above, whereby I was repeatedly reminded of my body's fragility as though it was a natural concern. Moreover, as Butler continues:

> This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the "integrity" of the subject. (Ibid.)

This 'integrity' of the subject, regulated and sustained through the 'gender border control' manifests in Sydney's breaking scene in the way that b-girls ritualistically

present normative feminine significations. While these fabricate a naturalized gendered essence, they also reinforce the contingency between femininity and the feminized body. This consequence is two-fold when these feminine bodily signs impact upon b-girls' capacity to reproduce the b-boy habitus. Indeed, these consequences can be seen in the comments of b-girl Catwmn, as she explains:

> [W]e're very limited and we don't wanna appear too much as a guy, but at the same time we can't wear stuff that's too girly that gets in the way of dancing: our hair gets in the way, make up–sweating, sounds really difficult right now for us [laughs], accessories–earrings. (interview, October 24, 2014)

In learning breaking, then, there is an implicit policing through social discourses that b-girls do not express masculinity "too much", and for Sydney b-girls this often manifests through maintaining elements of femininity. Yet, and as Catwmn highlights, these elements cannot be "too girly" either, due to the way they may hinder performances and the 'correct embodiments' of the dance. The b-girl thus faces a double-bind of participation, in that if she wants to break, she must situate herself in an imaginary space 'in-between' gendered norms – not 'too much' masculine and not 'too much' feminine.

Perhaps one of the most consistent differences in the gendered stylization of the body in Sydney's breaking scene is how the hair is worn, as Catwmn points to above. While the majority of b-girls have long hair, interestingly all Sydney b-boys have short hair, which is perhaps due to its increased practicality.[13] As Catwmn goes on to highlight, long hair can significantly get in the way of both learning and performing breaking moves:

> [S]ame with our hair getting in the way, making sure we tie our hair, a lot of the times b-girls do wear caps and hats and everything just to hold everything down, and it kind of limits us as well to moves […] it's a bit difficult doing headslides, a lot of the time your hair does get in the way and you can't really do the technique right and you can't do it properly, so it kind of limits you to what moves and your potential in a way, so it's a lot more difficult for girls to find

[13] For a number of years, b-boy Sammy Sex had shoulder-length hair, possibly the only b-boy in the scene; however he cut it short after accidentally ripping some out when it got caught under his hand while breaking.

> their way around it. (Ibid.)

Here, feminine stylizations of the body can thus interrupt learning the masculine performativity, or 'correct embodiments' of the dance, and even limit what moves b-girls might (try to) perform. Indeed, Catwmn's experiences resonate with my own, as evidenced in my above field note (that began this chapter) when I tucked my long plaited hair into my sports bra so that it would not get in the way of my dancing. This action is almost a concomitant constitution of feminine performativity, because not only was I wearing a sports bra (a seeming necessity for sufficient support), but also I *used* it to negotiate another feminine symbol – long hair.

Catwmn's description of the challenges she faces as a b-girl therefore illustrates the paradox of gender performance in Sydney's breaking culture, where b-girls must negotiate a historicized masculine performance – and the development of techniques suited to masculine norms – with contemporary expectations of femininity. The way that this occurs, and through a Butlerian lens, is in the dichotomous discursive constructions of femininity and breaking that, in even *naming* their differences, produces a naturalizing effect of a stable gendered core. This paradox can also be seen in the comments made by b-girl Ill-FX:

> It's more an internal conflict that you want to appear also to be attractive, which is the kind of the pressure that comes from more general society that you're supposed to be girly and feminine, and so you want to be perceived by the guys maybe as a feminine object, but then also want to break well. (interview, November 3, 2014)

In Ill-FX's comments, we can see Butler's theory of the 'interiority' at work where she cites the 'internal conflict' regarding the negotiation of gender identity. In this instance, there is an 'inner' that is attempting to articulate and control the 'outer' or surface of the body, and this process thus creates the illusion of an organizing gender core. Moreover, Ill-FX highlights the perceived irreconcilable tension between maintaining femininity and breaking 'well', which resonates with our earlier discussion regarding the differences between breaking and 'breaking like a girl'. Again, masculinity is considered neutral to the performance of breaking, while femininity, or (b-)*girl*-ness, is intrinsically othered.

As I have attempted to show throughout this section, there is much value in discussing clothing due to the way it is inextricably connected to understandings of 'the body'. That is, the 'surface of the body' not only constitutes the gendered subject through gestures and enactments, but these very gestures and enactments also manifest in the ways the body is dressed. Therefore, clothing not only materially shapes bodies, but also, and in a dance-based culture such as breaking, it articulates the body through gender-specific capacities and aesthetics.

'One of the (B-)Boys' (but do we even want to be?)

In this section, I will focus on the specificities of the breaking dance style in order to show the types of gestures and acts that, in their masculine construction, are both naturalized on b-boying bodies and policed on b-girls. I will complicate the masculine dominance of the scene, and introduce some of the tactics used by Sydney b-girls to negotiate its cultural prominence with those contemporary expectations of feminine performativity discussed above. Sydney b-girls use a range of strategies to navigate this gendered paradox, and with the theory of Butler, Bourdieu, Gatens, Colebrook, and Deleuze and Guattari, I will show how they attempt to displace and deterritorialize the scene's masculine constitution. While some b-girls wear clothing designed for men, and others choose to adorn themselves in hyper-feminine significations, b-girls' participation on the dance floor not only challenges the broader patriarchal assumptions (such as 'their bodies are not made for it'), but also destabilizes the binary logic upon which the organization of bodies are so heavily reliant.

Gendered Enactments of the Breaking Habitus

Women are in really tricky positions in these male-dominated cultures. Not only is entry much more difficult for them, but also once they're *in*, they have to subordinate their own embodied femininities in order to enact the "correct embodiments" (Maxwell 2003, 27) of the hip-hop habitus. In breaking culture, this habitus can be seen in the distinct gait, or 'way of moving', that is developed through training. For example, in Schloss's experiences researching he recounts, "[s]everal of my consultants have attempted to judge my familiarity with b-boying in general by asking whether I was yet able to distinguish b-boys from the general public simply by the way they carry themselves" (2009, 84). Indeed, the changes to a breaker's body through training illustrate how the breaking habitus is not limited to the dance floor, but in fact extends

beyond it into the configuration of a distinctly masculine habitus. And this gendering is further naturalized in the way these enactments are policed on the b-girl's body.

To understand the specificities of the breaking habitus, it may be useful to examine what "discourses or practices *instruct*" (Foster 1997, 235) the breaking body in particular ways. For Schloss, a typical 'set' (performance) demands moves "that announces one's presence", "demonstrate[s] acrobatic ability", "physical strength", and finishes with a "pose [freeze] that punctuates the dancer's statement" (2009, 86), thus confirming the importance of strength and assertiveness in the various components of the dance. Moreover, the normative masculine construction of these characterizations illustrates how male participation is privileged, as it is merely a repetition of the same gendered acts (strength, assertiveness, and so on). While Schloss's description might seem vague to those not familiar with breaking, I want to emphasize the difficulty in describing the dance form and its never-ending repertoire of movements. In addition to Schloss's description, I would add a grounded, relaxed way of moving that is still highly assertive, swift kicks and slides, circular patterns, jumps onto the hands or head, fast level changes, and changes in rhythm and tempo.

In my own training, my focused, repetitive breaking practice worked to 'correct' my habitual ways of moving enforced through my previous dance training, and attempted to reproduce the stylized movements and techniques specific to breaking. As I have attempted to show, these movements and techniques are aligned with masculine norms, and so through learning breaking they were deterritorialized from breaking's norm of the masculine body, and reterritorialized onto my feminized body. This deterritorialization occurred through toprock, where I began to bend my legs more and kept my weight grounded. I also relaxed my arms and coordinated them with the movement of my feet (like in walking), learnt the 'rocking' groove (the chest moves up and down in time with the beat), and took ownership over the dance floor through taking larger steps and exaggerating my movements. This reconfiguration of my feminized body not only transformed my dancing, which was increasingly looking less like awkward stepping, but also affected my everyday movements. In particular, I was more grounded in my walking, began to sit with my legs wide open, and, rather than the individual limb, used the force of my whole body in actions. The reconfiguration of the body through training, specifically the creation of new 'bodily habits (Foster 1997, 239), suggests that breaking is not, in fact, *biologically* or inherently masculine, but is rather discursively constructed as gendered.

Yet as Butler would argue, there is no difference between that which is discursively constructed and that which is biological because they are both products of specific systems of power that form the notion of the subject as essential and natural. She explains:

> The presuppositions that we make about sexed bodies, about them being one or the other, about the meanings that are said to inhere in them or to follow from being sexed in such a way are suddenly and significantly upset by those examples that fail to comply with the categories that naturalize and stabilize that field of bodies for us within the terms of cultural conventions. (1990, 149)

Applying Butler's framework, here, productively calls attention to how female participation in breaking 'upsets' the terms of cultural conventions that stabilize the constitution of bodies. While in one way gendered norms are being reinstituted, in that my body was learning how to repeat masculinized gestures and acts, there is also a deterritorialization occurring. Through learning breaking, gender norms are being deterritorialized, or 'decoded', from the specificities of the male body, and movement of deterritorialization intersects and disrupts the dichotomy of Cartesian structures. Indeed we can begin to see how, through dance training, my normative feminine expression became deterritorialized, and in this way, learning breaking facilitates a line of flight that ruptures and disrupts the logic, or 'terms', of gender norms. In this way, b-girling calls attention to the inherent performativity of gender, and its reiterative construction. As Butler continues: "Hence, the strange, the incoherent, that which falls 'outside,' gives us a way of understanding the taken-for-granted world of sexual categorization as a constructed one, indeed, as one that might well be constructed differently" (Ibid.).

We can begin to see, then, how b-girling might be a site through which to facilitate larger deterritorializations of gender; yet this is not to say the transformation of the feminized body into enacting masculine performativities is without consequences. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, "it is always *on* the most deterritorialized element that reterritorialization takes place" (2004, 243). The line of deterritorialization is always in danger of being realigned through molecular politics. For example, regarding why he thinks there are so few b-girls, in our interview b-boy Don concluded that it's "a masculine thing", and continued, "some girls they *do* look

like dudes when they do it, because they do take on that character of the hunch, so you know once they start doing that hunch it looks a bit dude-ish" (interview, February 23, 2015). Here b-boy Don identifies a characteristic of toprocking that can feature hunched shoulders, and his comment calls attention to how the technique is more aligned with masculinity and thus is more socially accessible to the b-*boy*. Despite disagreeing with b-boy Don regarding the 'dude-ish' aesthetic of this technique, for the purposes of showing what the technique looks like, see Figure 6, as b-girl Sass is extremely skilled at toprock and is renowned for her adeptness of breaking's techniques.

Figure 6 – B-girl Sass. *Sydney Bboy League*. April 4, 2014. JNY Photography.

Indeed, for Bourdieu (2001) habitus is not merely the embodiment of structures, but also affects perceptions and tastes, and thus directly tied to how bodily expression is *perceived*. This perception interlocks with a hierarchization of bodily aesthetics that, in the case of breaking, privilege normative masculine significations. Moreover, this privileging coincides with a specific constitution of the gendered subject, that is, and according to Butler, through words, gestures, acts and desires that are produced on the surface of the body and give the effect of an internal gendered 'core'. The privileging, indeed policing, of the repetition of masculine significations is thus one example of

how the fabrications of gender are discursively (re)produced and maintained in Sydney's breaking scene.

In this way, we can see how the layers of the strata, as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (2004), imbue the body with meaning and constitute the subject in-line with normative politics. While the conventions of self-expression or '*style*' might facilitate creative possibility in breaking beyond the confines of binary thought, as we will explore in Chapter 6, often for b-girls this expression is regulated through the overwhelming masculinity of the hip-hop habitus and is frequently policed upon the b-girl's "correct embodiments" (Maxwell 2003, 27), that is, a body subjectified as female/b-girl. This policing manifests in multiple ways, as female breakers are not only reminded to perform femininity (otherwise they may look 'dude-ish'), but also this femininity is seen as a 'hindrance' to the democratizing space of the dance floor (because they are 'just a girl'). Consequently, the naturalization of gender through reiterative performances is particularly potent in dance, as distinct ways of moving are repeated and conditioned onto all participating bodies; yet only for some is this performance considered 'natural' in relation to gendered expectations and stereotypes. For example, my years learning the more female-dominated dance styles were not populated with comments concerning the effect of the movements on my gender performance. In contrast I, along with many of my female crewmates, have been told upon learning breaking that we now: 'dress like a boy', 'are not ladylike or girly anymore', and for one crewmate that she now 'walked like a man'. In most of these cases, these comments are coupled with suggestions that the dance is 'not for them'. By adopting the discursively constructed masculine aesthetics in order to 'correctly' embody the breaking genre, female practitioners are unfairly reduced to the generality of representation – the 'female', and by extension, 'feminine' body – which consequently impacts upon what we think those gendered bodies can, or even *should*, do within the context of breaking.

The ways by which breaking is constructed as masculine can be mapped to its origins in New York (see J. Chang 2007; Rose 1994; Schloss 2009), as demonstrated in the recollections of famous New York b-boy Ken Swift: "Breaking was a very macho thing" (quoted in Kramer 2008, 16). The 'macho-ness' of breaking is similarly noted in Monteyne's more recent analysis of news articles from the 1980s of b-girl crew 'Lady Rockers' from the South Bronx. For Monteyne, these b-girls were "donning mock

poses of aggressive black masculinity" and were "obviously aware of the significance of violating gender norms and taboos" (2013, 171).[14]

These gender norms and 'taboos' are also highlighted by Ken Swift, who describes the existence of 'taboos' around girls 'jumping out' to break. He recounts, "back in the days it was taboo for the girl to jump out like that" (as quoted in Kramer 2008, 16). Indeed this 'taboo' around 'jumping out' resonates with Young's (1980) discussion of feminine bodily comportment, which demands an 'inhibited intentionality' and fragility in the feminized body. Moreover, Swift's observations resonate with Rap Attack's experiences breaking in Sydney in the 1980s, confirming the similarities between the Australian and American scenes. As the only b-girl during this time (that she can remember), Rap Attack recounts reactions to her breaking, "there was a lot of people that were like, 'no you shouldn't be doing that, you know, women can't do that'" (interview, November 4, 2014). 'Doing that' may include the 'jumping out' Swift mentioned above, or the more typical characteristics of a breaking set above.

Despite the prevalence and normalization of breaking's masculine construction, often there is not much more specificity regarding *how* it is masculine. For example, Hazzard-Donald observes:

> Hip hop dance is clearly masculine in style, with postures assertive in their own right as well as in relation to a female partner. In its early stages, hip hop rejected the partnering ritual between men and women; at a party or dance, hip hop dance was performed between men or by a lone man. (2004, 508)

Like Don and Swift's comments above, Hazzard-Donald's description appears almost commonsensical and without needing further explanation. Here, we could presume that hip-hop dance's masculine style is primarily due to its presence of men and exclusion of women, or that Hazzard-Donald's description of 'assertive postures' is that which ensures its masculine construction. We can see, here, how Butler's performativity is operating within both Sydney's breaking scene and breaking scholarship more broadly, as the discursive construction of breaking's masculinity interlocks with other similarly

[14] Monteyne goes on to connect these poses with the adaption of 'cool pose', which she views as "the refusal of black men to submit to their status as second class citizens, prescribed to them by white-centered American society" (2013, 171). In this way, b-girls appropriations of these 'cool' poses interlock not only with gendered assumptions, but also broader racialized systems of power.

masculine corporeal significations (such as assertiveness), which work to produce the effect of a stable masculinized subject.

Extending Hazzard-Donald's discussion above, while breaking might be masculine or 'dude-ish', it may be worthwhile to suggest this is because most breakers, teachers, judges, are all *men*. Indeed, *male* bodies significantly dominate breaking spaces, within Sydney only one or two b-girls competing (if at all) in comparison to the tens (and tens and tens) of b-boys (see Appendix A, footnote 4). As we saw in Chapter 2, where I noted that breaking 'pioneers' are mostly men, I want to now highlight that this status provides them with greater opportunities to both judge competitions and teach workshops/classes. Indeed, far more b-boys than b-girls have taught me how to break (see Appendix B). One could argue, then, that this male-dominance of positions of power may lead to both a preference and reinforcement of the masculine stylization of the dance. This is because the culture follows a specific trajectory in terms of style – those who judge and win competitions are predominantly men – and thus what becomes most visibilized is a tacit hierarchization of gendered performativities. Moreover, perhaps because men dominated in developing the foundation, in an attempt to perform masculinity, this can explain why much of the techniques and steps are, unsurprisingly, constructed as 'masculine'. While such a statement may be in danger of conforming to binary modes of thought, it does highlight the often-inseparable relationship between sexed bodies – male/female – and their intrinsic gendering – i.e. male bodies = masculinity.

As such, to be promoted beyond the denigrated stereotype of 'just a girl', women must extensively prove they conform to the patriarchal hierarchy. Ascension, then, is through letting go of femininity, and on *male* terms, as Ill-FX highlighted with regards to b-girls breaking in a masculine way, and not 'like a girl', above. Thus, while breaking practices might be transgressive in many ways for the female body, challenging normative assumptions of what those bodies 'can do', they are also *regressive* in that there is a privileging of masculine significations. Indeed, bodily expression is still articulated along asymmetrical power relations, as it is still the b-*boy* that drives and dominates the culture. Yet this privileging of masculinity is by no means unique to breaking culture, as Macdonald observes in graffiti:

> To be treated like 'one of the boys' is a clear sign of achievement. It indicates that the girl has behaved in a 'male' way and has, thus, diminished her

distinction as a female. This is just one step, though, on a long road. (2001, 131)

Indeed, the adopting of masculinist aesthetics was similarly noted by Maxwell, who writes, "women tended to win *respect* through the adoption of specifically masculine embodiments and *habitus*, by becoming what in other contexts would be known as 'tomboys'" (2003, 35).

Moreover, and as I introduced earlier in the thesis, the construction of Sydney's hip-hop culture, or 'Community, Culture, Nation' was not only a space for the 'boyz', but also 'a masculinized, even phallocentric, world' (Maxwell 2003, 33). As Schloss writes, "[t]his can sometimes put b-girls in situations where their dedication to the (often masculine) ideals of b-boying comes into conflict with their identity as women" (2009, 65). Moreover, he even points out the "social ambiguity" of the term 'b-boying', and questions, "to what degree, and in what senses, is a b-girl a kind of b-boy?" (Ibid., 15). Through a Butlerian lens, this very question is a disruption to binary logic through which the constitution of gendered identities is stabilized. In her example of 'drag', she writes, "[h]er/his performance destabilizes the very distinctions between the natural and the artificial, depth and surface, inner and outer through which discourse about genders almost always operates" (1990, xxxi). While b-girls' participation, and repetition of differently gendered enactments, is policed, it is still a type of deterritorialization of binary logic, as it calls into question the order upon which it is founded.

And yet, women never obtain 'full' ascension in hip-hop culture, they are never deemed equal because, as Macdonald phrases, they are "just a girl" (2001, 131). Their entry through the scene is thus always-already "laden down with baggage of [their] gender" (Ibid., 193). For example, during a competition with my crew, a b-boy recounted his experiences battling with higher skilled b-boys. As he was the 'weakest' breaker, his crew mates would always send him out 'against the girl', as that was considered a guaranteed win for the round. Regardless of the specificities of her body, or what she could actually *do*, b-girls are often seen as one and the same – a non-threatening 'other' – even before they can 'show' and 'prove' on the dance floor.

Mimicking the Strata: Deterritorializing the Gender Binary

For Deleuze and Guattari, one way to challenge, even transgress, the influencing forces of the identity is "[m]imic the strata" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 178), and Pirkko Markula (2006c) took up this directive in her research on gender in dance. Through

Markula's (2006c) dance performance, 'mimicking' was attempted through maintaining 'familiar' connotations of feminine identity so that processes of stratification and subject formation are contextualized. In other words, maintaining the strata provides the set of conditions that enable the means to undermine it. Yet Markula is reminded of Deleuze and Guattari's warning that when attempting to undermine the generality of representation, "[y]ou don't do it with a sledgehammer, you use a very fine file" (2004, 177). Importantly, to facilitate change, it is necessary to be able to identify with the problem at hand; if the performer's circumstance is transformed beyond their recognition, that is, if the body can't be made sense of at all, then it is just outright rejected. That is why Markula argues that this mode of political resistance is more effective than taking part in wild de-stratification, as 'empty bodies' can be quickly, and strongly, re-stratified with meaning, such as "you're crazy", "you're weird", "you're shit" and so on. As Deleuze and Guattari caution, "[s]taying stratified – organized, signified, subjected – is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back on us heavier than ever" (2004, 178). In short, if the audience cannot identify (with anything), you will just get them offside and be disregarded completely.

Maintaining such connection with the strata seems to be a common strategy for female members of the Sydney hip-hop culture. While there is not much written on the women of this scene, as I have pointed to throughout this thesis, Maxwell observes how female graffiti artists gained respect through becoming 'tomboys', though he goes on to describe how "[e]ven the most broadly respected female writer coded her own femininity into her graff practice, writing 'Sugar' and 'Spice'" (2003, 35). The coupling of a masculine habitus with feminine codes calls attention to the inherent performativity of gender. Moreover, this so-called "tomboy"-ness could instead be conceived as a becoming, yet one anchored in a represented "femininity" that is similarly attached to layers of the strata. In this way, the graffiti artist, or breaker, can remain in the system in order to embrace the becoming-potential that emerges from it.

Yet the female breaker is still faced with many compromises. Her participation in the dance requires that she adopts certain masculine 'ways of moving', even though a masculine aesthetic enacted on a body subjectified as 'female' is not always received positively. As we saw above, b-girls are considered 'dude-ish' or told they 'walk like a man' – the double bind of female participation. So, to avoid complete alienation from the strata, many b-girls deliberately adopt 'hyper feminine' attributes that are somewhat

out of keeping with normal sartorial preferences: wearing long hair out, painting nails, adding jewellery and make-up, as well as adopting more feminine clothing, such as tight fitting or coloured pink. Indeed, that headspin beanies are sold in hot pink (such as the brand and online store *CypherStyles* [www.cypherstyles.com]) demonstrates the prevalence of this choice. Prior to breaking I never adorned myself in this way (see Figure 7).[15]

Figure 7 – B-girl Raygun (author). *Sydney Bboy League*. April 4, 2014. JNY Photography.

Such overt recourse to feminine signifiers could be viewed as effectively revealing the imitative structure of *all* gendered identities. Indeed, examining b-girls' alignment with feminine significations through the work of Butler calls attention to how these practices undermine the very notion of a stable, gendered subject. In particular, Butler's notion of 'gender parody' is particularly useful here, as it emphasizes the imitative structure of gender performance. That is, the systems that ritualistically constitute, indeed fabricate, their unity. She explains, "[t]he notion of gender parody defended here does not assume that there is an original which such parodic identities imitate. Indeed, the parody *is* of

[15] For example, the iconic clothing of b-girl Terra includes a pink tracksuit with pink headspin beanie, and I discuss Terra in more detail in the following chapter.

the very notion of an original" (1990, 188). In this way, parody is a type of deterritorialization in the way that it destabilizes and interrupts the co-dependency of the surface politics of the body – that is, gendered significations – with an internal gendered self.

To explain how this can manifest in Sydney's breaking scene, I return to my interviews, as b-girl Sass reveals the different ways b-girls negotiate with gendered stylings. She observes:

> I think every b-girl's different in that way, some b-girls you know it doesn't bother them, but I think other b-girls are really *strong* on keeping their girly-self, girly-side when they break, doesn't necessarily mean that in their *moves*, but they still might wanna dance, you know have that *boy style*, and they might wanna dress like boys, but they might just [have] something small that just is about themselves that makes them feel like 'yeah I'm still a girl'. (interview, October 24, 2014)

Here, Sass calls attention to the acceptance of maintaining feminine signifiers through clothing and make-up, or 'something small' that might maintain a connection to a feminine representation. Yet, and as we saw above, for Catwmn and Rap Attack, feminine significations can be hindrances to performing the moves and techniques of breaking, particularly when they are 'too much'. In an analysis of how b-girls might mimic the strata, the insights of b-girl Sass are thus particularly relevant due to the distinct way she navigates, and perceives, gendered significations (she also always wears long earrings, lots of rings, make-up, and curls her long hair). She continues by recounting how she negotiates gendered expectations both within and outside breaking culture:

> I might turn up to a competition or training and I'll have like, you know a baggy top, baggy pants, but I'll always have *something* feminine about me and that's kind of how I juggle it, that's kind of keeping *me* but not changing who I am, it's like you know I'll still wear make-up, I'll still wear my earrings but I'll have baggy clothes on, so I still feel like a female, and people like you know from the outside again say 'oh we don't understand that' (interview, October 24, 2014)

B-girl Sass's insights, here, that people 'don't understand' her fashion choices demonstrate the differences in the conditions of social spaces. While Sass's clothing choices are appropriate, even common, within breaking circles, beyond the dance floor her masculinized (baggy) clothing is not accepted. In this way, breaking could be seen to be more open to deterritorializations than spaces beyond the dance floor.

In their alignment with hyper-feminine representations, b-girls can recontextualize the placement of the representations from a culturally acceptable feminine domain (such as, say, the beauty salon) to a masculine/male-dominated arena. One can't make sense of the new unless they have the old to compare it to, which helps us to understand some b-girls overzealous overtures to feminine identity, such as b-girl Sass above. This does not mean that wearing pink or make-up is some sort of 'cop out'; rather the maintenance of *some* alignment with the strata is *one* possible way to challenge the domination of gendered identity and eventually deterritorialize the masculinity of the hip-hop habitus. Indeed, for Butler it does not matter whether the gendered expressions still gain meaning through dominant culture, as what is significant is how they upset the so-called foundation upon which gender identity is constituted. She explains using her example of drag:

> Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization. As imitations which effectively displace the meaning of the original, they imitate the myth of originality itself. (1990, 188)

Indeed, through breaking, and for example by performing some of the more vigorous power moves, b-girls challenge presumptions of feminine performance, while reminding their peers of their 'femaleness' all the same. It is a parody of the very notion of an 'inner' identity that is produced through the surface of the body. Perhaps, in this way, the homogenized label of 'just a girl' could actually work in b-girls' favour.

Conclusion

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the politics that regulate access to the dance floor are many, and within Australia breaking's constructed parallel to sport imbues

bodies with specifically gendered capacities and desires. Despite b-girls getting past these politics that disproportionately regulate their access to the dance floor, they are still reduced to 'just a girl' upon entry. Not only is this descriptor highly charged, concretizing the subordination of both female participation and feminized bodily aesthetics, but it also reduces bodily potential in-line with Cartesian logic. This is not to say there is no hope in Sydney's breaking scene to deterritorialize gender, and through this chapter I have attempted to show the opportunities to displace, reconfigure, and destabilize the gender binary. Through examining how b-girls negotiate both the masculine habitus of the dance with feminine significations, I argued that this sort of 'parody' gender performance undermines the naturalized constitution of a stable, inherent, gendered self.

Chapter 5 – (De)Locating (De)territorializations in the Breaking Assemblage

Introduction

We saw in the previous chapter how the politics of Sydney's breaking scene construct the b-girl as 'other' before even getting to the dance floor. In order to see how b-girls might negotiate this homogenized construction, in this chapter I turn a Deleuze-Guattarian lens on b-girling to highlight the gendered contestations that emerge within their performance of breaking. My aim is to argue that b-girls' performances of specific masculinized practices in breaking battles has the potential to deterritorialize the binary organization of gender, and thus, as Butler would argue, calls attention to its very construction.

In supporting this argument, I will broaden my scope of analysis of gendered transgressions to examine the achievements of b-girls internationally, which are made accessible through online networks. The increased platforms of encouragement for b-girls, including parallel 'b-girl-only' competitions and online support networks, productively challenge gendered assumptions about what the b-girl's body 'can do' – both locally and internationally. While these platforms and achievements are productive in facilitating deterritorializations of breaking's masculinist construction, I interrogate them to call attention to the limitations of segregated participation and reveal the, at times, reterritorialization of gender norms and binaries. In what follows, then, I attempt to map the deterritorializations and reterritorializations of the gendered politics of b-girls as it exists in the breaking scene. However, before we turn to these politics that I reveal in and through the interviews, I want to begin with returning to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of de- and re- territorialization and the strata, and to Bourdieu's notion of habitus, in order to examine first the use of online technologies to visibilize b-girls and 'rupture' the dominant masculine image from within the culture and second, the debates and politics around the issues of b-girls breaking with b-boys. This interrogation will attempt to show the contradictions that emerge, even as b-girls challenge and undermine the masculinist space of the dance floor.

Rethinking Masculine Dominance

To understand how the breaking body is constituted, and the masculinist structure of the Sydney scene, in what follows I not only continue my application of Butler's theory of performativity, but I also bring together the theories of Deleuze and Guattari and Bourdieu. In particular, I will return to how these theorists understand 'identity' in order to then utilize their frameworks in my analysis of gender in Sydney's breaking scene.

For Deleuze and Guattari, 'identity' refers to "subjects, objects, or form that we know from the outside and recognize from experience, through science, or by habit" (2004, 303). As we saw in Chapter 1, this constitution of the subject occurs on the plane of organization, and is typical of the striated space that regulates and forms the subject in specific ways. Therefore, applying Deleuze and Guattari's definition of identity to the Sydney breaker shows how gendered norms and assumptions – constituted through biological organization and habit – limit possibilities of creative expression, indeed regulating it through the lens of binary logic. Yet, and as Bourdieu highlights, habit is not the only constitution of what he terms 'habitus', but rather intersects with the way we perceive and order the world. To further understand how this operates, I will now explicate Bourdieu's understanding of habitus, and using the examples of Wade and Markula, I will suggest how we might navigate the terrain of 'masculine domination', particularly when attempting to think beyond it.

As I have shown through this thesis, the discourses of breaking culture continuously reconstruct bodies into gendered subjects, or as Deleuze and Guattari would say 'organisms', which are striations that hierarchically organize the body according to specific organs. Moreover, the 'b-boy' and 'b-girl' are constituted through specific gendered performativities, 'female' b-girls must face both learning to repeat, and failure to repeat, the masculine articulation of the breaking style. While such pervasive structures can impact the creativity of any breaker, women might be seen to be inordinately affected, as we have seen so far they have historically had less power over, and access to, the protocols of hip-hop culture. Indeed, 'successful participation' and learning the 'correct embodiments' means not only learning the requisite (masculinized) moves, but also negotiating the social order, and is perhaps why women are less likely to break.

This does not render the b-girl a lost cause, and there are many reasons why b-girls should endure, if even for the simple reason that dancing is fun. Despite the impact of what Bourdieu calls 'habitus' on the capacities of bodies, dance, in all its forms, plays an extremely important role in social transformation. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged in dance research that, situated beyond the 'everyday', dance offers one of the most expedient methods of increasing the limited repertoire of bodily expression (Aalten 1997; Desmond 1997a; Foster 1996b, 1997; Markula 2006c; Wade 2011). Through *learning* dance, new techniques and 'ways of moving' can be assimilated into the body's existing repertoire, showing that whatever is learned can be *un*learned, and thus drawing attention to the fallacy of 'naturalized' forms of bodily movement and its apparent reflection of a stable gendered 'core'.

This potentiality of dance is highlighted in Wade's (2011) research on contemporary lindy hop, a mixed-gender partner dance I introduced in Chapter 1. According to Wade, taking part in lindy hop lessons, which taught dancers (regardless of their gender) how to 'lead' and 'follow' and to even switch these roles spontaneously while dancing, was educational to its participants because it drew attention to the inherent performance of gender. Indeed this convention within contemporary lindy hop demonstrates that, like dance, gender is also learned, and lindy hop thus offers, "a liberatory aesthetic that is used by contemporary dancers to challenge and usurp masculine domination" (Ibid., 225).

While Wade's research points towards dance's broader potential, her view that lindy hop can overthrow masculine domination is in contradistinction to that of Bourdieu (2002), who Wade (2011, 227) claims does not share the view of emancipatory possibility. As Wade argues, "[f]or Bourdieu, one cannot think oneself out of inequality because our unconscious bodily habits will betray our conscious desire for liberation" (Ibid., 226). Through a Bourdieuian lens, the maintenance of gender, including its performance and policing, works at the level of the unconscious and thus is beyond any individual control. In this way, resistance to the 'structuring structures' of masculine dominance will always be largely individualistic. Lois McNay explicates this position productively in her evaluation of Bourdieu's 'habitus' and gendered identity, arguing:

> The lack of a sustained consideration of gendered habitus in relation to the field results in an overemphasis on the alignment that the habitus establishes between

> subjective dispositions and the objective structure of the field with regard to gender identity. Although he is undoubtedly right to stress the ingrained nature of gender norms, he significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions. […] This alignment is regarded as so stable that it leads Bourdieu to claim that the phallonarcissistic view of the world can only be dislodged through complete rejection of the gendered habitus. There is no recognition that apparent complicity can conceal potential dislocation or alienation on the part of individuals. (1999, 107–108)

Applying McNay's framework, here, to the lindy hop body, Wade (2011, 226–227) contends that because dance challenges gendered techniques of the body, which are inextricably connected to the social order (as we saw in Chapter 3 regarding the 'lead' and 'follow' model in traditional partner dancing), dance can thus facilitate broader challenges to patriarchal dominance. Moreover, Wade argues that despite a protracted debate amongst sociologists (such as Sewell 1992, 16–17), reconciling habitus with individual agency (as Noble and Watkins (2003) attempt through their concept of 'habituation') sees a justice-oriented social change that involves a reconceptualization of the social structure itself:

> If society is understood to be monolithic, then the habitus will be as well. However, when we understand that society is not so seamlessly consistent, then we can imagine the habitus to be uneven. Individuals, then, can have a 'versatile' habitus with 'heterogeneous arrays of resources' and are capable of using their habitual tools in strategic ways. (Wade 2011, 226)

Wade's argument here, which is not dissimilar to Colebrook's sentiments,[1] is that if we understand society through the lens of binary logic and as subject to monolithic patriarchal dominance, then we inevitably reduce bodily expression and capacities to binary logic. Indeed it is an argument not dissimilar to Bourdieu's own, in that he considers attempts to understand masculine domination as often resorting to ways of thinking that are, in fact, the product of masculine domination (2001, 5). We thus need

[1] For Colebrook, "tackling gender requires tackling an entire conceptual apparatus" (2003, 48) due to the ways by which gender is constituted by larger systems of binary thought.

to think beyond such monolithic structures to be able to see the potentiality, positivity, indeed *vitality*, of breaking.[2]

Despite Bourdieu's pessimism about facilitating structural change to patriarchal domination, his concept of 'habitus' is productive in showing how the conditions of a particular cultural event shape the capacities of the body. When coupled with individual agency (as discussed McNay, 1999; Noble & Watkins, 2003; Wade, 2011), habitus allows for a more fluid and dynamic account of the relations between bodies and social structures. As we will explore in the following chapter, habitus is a necessary prerequisite of 'flow' within creative practices, and through an adherence to the structure of a particular cultural event one might harness the potential of the 'singularity'. This concept, as discussed in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2004), is a haecceity or event that emerges in relation to the conditions that produce it. In short, it is a process of individuation.

What we see through such a reconceptualization of habitus are contestations and contradictions emerging in relation to how gender orders the body. Despite the pervasive social assumptions that 'women shouldn't do that', as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, b-boys and b-girls *do* have access to the same movement vocabulary, in that unlike other forms of dance, such as ballet (see Foster 1996b), there is no division of labour or difference between vocabularies, and this can be seen in Figures 8 and 9 on the following page. Specifically, b-boys and b-girls not only attend the same classes and workshops, but also learn the same moves and techniques, and battle in the same competitions against and with one another. In regards to female body builders, but applicable to breaking as well, Angela Ndalianis highlights, "[i]t is precisely in the articulation and naming of these contradictions and confusions that it is possible to draw attention to the performative nature of gender construction" (1995, 13). Breaking itself, then, is not *inherently* gender-exclusive, yet, as we have seen, it is constructed as 'masculine' through myriad discourses and practices.

[2] While outside the scope of this thesis, the notion of 'vitality' is tied to larger discussions of material, feminist, and also 'vitalist' scholarship (see Colebrook 2008), and has recently been reinvigorated by Jane Bennett and her theory of 'thing-power' (see Bennett 2010).

Figure 8 – J-One. *Freestyle Sessions:* Australian Qualifier. February 2, 2013. David Tang.

Figure 9 – B-girl Sass. *Destructive Steps 7*. July 18, 2014. JNY Photography.

Using my autoethnographic research, in this chapter I will show the many 'contradictions' and 'confusions' that emerge in attempting to open up the inclusivity of the breaking scene. In summary, those contradictions include: challenging gendered assumptions about what the female breaker 'can do', yet in a way that perpetuates masculinist norms and is also measured through masculine structures; resituating feminine significations in a masculinized space, but, in doing so, reinforcing their connotations with femininity; and creating a more inclusive space for female breakers yet maintaining gendered segregation. By drawing out these contradictions, we can begin to see how breaking might facilitate deterritorializations of gender.

To this end, in the next section I will analyse interviews with b-girls, both locally and internationally, to demonstrate the way deterritorialization operates in both the local (Sydney) and overseas (global) scene. This means also examining online media to reveal the way both Bourdieu's habitus and Deleuze and Guattari's strata is, to use the latter's conceptualizations, simultaneously reterritorialized and deterritorialized. In examining interviews and the use of online technologies to visibilize b-girls, I also argue that this visibilization brings with it both its problems and liberations; its reterritorializations and deterritorializations; its sedimenting or perpetuation of gender binaries and norms and 'ruptures' of the culture's dominant masculine construction. In other words, despite the fact that the gendered norms and binary are reterritorialized and rearticulated on a global scale, at the same time, the Net, also provides a productive platform for deterritorializations to impact and influence international cultural assemblages. So online networks increase the visibility of b-girls' accomplishments, and provide resources of support and encouragement for Sydney b-girls. Furthermore, the Net reveals the transgressions being undertaken in other countries, which can be applied to local (Sydney's) gendered assumptions of corporeal capacity and vice-versa. In this way, the Net facilitates a platform to challenge perceptions about what the b-girling body can do and perform. And as we are also about to see, this visibility on a local and global scale through the Net reveals the political and feminist debates within the scene about breaking with b-boys. In summary, while the online technologies visibilize female breakers by providing larger networks of support and encouragement for b-girls worldwide, as I will show, what it also does is expose more clearly the underlying feminist debates within the b-girl scene (even if not articulated in these terms). To be slightly reductionist, on the one hand what we will see in this section, through the ethnographic interviews, are the 'for' and 'against' debates of breaking

with b-boys that are occurring in the culture itself (debates that touch on previous feminist debates more broadly), and on the other hand the issues around the forms of transgression and deterritorialization that this debate implicitly raises, and that I am wanting to make more explicit in this chapter.

#bgirl

With the practice of recording and uploading footage prevalent throughout breaking culture, local participants gain access to a plethora of models of how breakers might reproduce or challenge the masculine stylization of the dance. Yet having access to breaking footage, or contact with other breaking scenes, is by no means a new phenomenon, as online technologies merely extend the desire for connections, or as Fogarty terms 'imagined affinities' (2012), between and across cultures. For Fogarty, these connections were initially facilitated through the transmission of VHS training tapes that were passed globally through itinerant breakers, and my interview with Mistery also revealed the pen-pal practices in hip-hop culture that enabled Sydney-siders to connect with breakers in South Africa and Europe (interview, November 1, 2014). What online technologies have done, then, is to merely amplify this practice, the prevalence of which can be seen in b-boy Willastr8's comments:

> *YouTube* is the major platform by which we get to *see* what's happening, you know [breaking] doesn't get broadcasted on television, sometimes it has but yeah, I'd say 95% of the footage is online on *YouTube*, or live streamed, but then it all goes to *YouTube* anyway (interview, December 22, 2014)

As Willastr8 points to here, almost *all* breaking battles worldwide are filmed – often through camera phones or *GoPro*s – and uploaded to *YouTube*. As *YouTube* is not privy to the same profit margin of broadcast media, there is potential for a more 'horizontal' engagement, and this is broadly acknowledged as the possibilities enabled by Web 2.0 and discussed at length by numerous media scholars (see, for example, Flew (2008) regarding 'participatory media cultures'). For this reason, as Saskia Sassen (2002) articulates, the Net is a productive medium for marginalized groups to communicate and support each other, because these connections enabled by the Net is "one centered in multiple localities yet intensely connected digitally" (Ibid., 381).

In the breaking community, the connections enabled through online access have provided forums of solidarity and support for the minority of b-girls in local scenes. Organizations such as *We B*Girlz*, *Keep Rockin You*, *Heartbreakrz*, *No Easy Props*, *BGirl Zone*, and *BGirl Sessions* provide support networks aimed with encouraging b-girls not only in their respective communities, but also worldwide.[3] Additionally, closed *Facebook* groups like 'BGIRLS', and also b-girl specific hash tags on *Instagram* such as #bgirls and #giveagirlabreak increase the visibility of b-girls, despite participants being geographically distanced.[4]

These capacities of online technologies are central to challenging the dominant masculinist image of breaking culture. Indeed, the b-girls in my interviews highlighted that *seeing* other girls breaking was the catalyst in encouraging them to learn the dance. As b-girl Sass explains:

> [I]mage is what matters when you're that age, and when you're young like, when I was 14 and I first saw breaking I thought 'oh girls can't do that', it wasn't until I saw a girl break in real life that I decided I wanted to be able to do it. (interview, October 24, 2014)

Similarly, for Rap Attack putting yourself 'out there' helps others who are potentially struggling to do so:

> You know some people they find it difficult to speak up, or get on the dance floor, or whatever it might be, so the thing is when you're an example, a *living* example, other people will see you and think 'I can do that too', *especially* as a

[3] These organizations and sites, while primarily based in Europe and the USA, are also accessible via their respective *Facebook* and *Instagram* pages. *We B*Girlz* (http://www.bgirlz.com) is a Berlin-based organization that organizes b-girl battles and published the first book on b-girls worldwide (Kramer 2008); *Keep Rockin You* (www.keeprockinyou.com) is a Toronto (Canada) b-girl movement involving Mary Fogarty, a breaking scholar at York University; *Heartbreakrz* (http://www.heartbreakrz.com) is a global b-girl super crew, including Australian b-girl Melodee (Melbourne); *No Easy Props* (http://noeasyprops.tv) was created by b-girl Asia One, USA; *BgirlZone* (http://bgirlzone.com) primarily focused on b-girl culture in the USA, featuring interviews with successful b-girls and b-girl crews in the USA; and finally *BGirl Sessions* (http://www.bgirlsessions.com/en/), a website and blog by b-girl Bo (Netherlands) talking all things b-girl, sharing b-girl events; Bo is not only a highly accomplished b-girl, but is also the author of the blog *Give A Girl A Break* with its respective hashtag #giveagirlabreak.

[4] Other notable successes the all b-girl crew 'Beat Freaks' from Los Angeles, all-female popping group 'We Are Heroes', and 'ReQuest Dance Crew', an all-female hip-hop dance crew from New Zealand. All of these groups gained mainstream attention through their success on 'America's Best Dance Crew', with 'We Are Heroes' the first female crew to win the coveted 'Golden B-Boy Trophy' (a b-boy doing a freeze). Online technologies enable fans to follow these groups, re-watch their battles, and thus continue to be inspired.

> female, and a woman of colour, you know other people need encouragement. (interview, November 4, 2014)

At many competitions where I have competed (in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide – see Appendix A), my participation has been actively embraced – "it's good to see a girl doing it", "you're an inspiration". Therefore, increasing the visibility of b-girls is important in encouraging other girls to take up breaking, as b-girl Catwmn stated: "I think just seeing girls compete in competitions, do showcases, music videos […] just helps the scene overall in general, just so there's less of a gender bias in the breaking scene" (interview, October 24, 2014). Indeed, increasing the representation of female bodies may be *one* way in which to deterritorialize the stronghold of gendered segregation, even gendered subordination, which I have attempted to show throughout this thesis.

With this in mind, ensuring girls have the opportunity to *see* female role models in hip-hop culture is a key strategy employed by Mistery and his hip-hop ministry *Krosswerdz*.[5] In our interview, Mistery comments:

> [W]e try whenever we can to bring out a female emcee or b-girl or things like that, just to sort of provide role models for the young girls that think it *is* a male-dominated thing, wrongly you know, and even like from a cultural perspective, I remember I was teaching graff [graffiti] and my workshop where I was working was predominantly young Pacific-Island girls, so what I did was brought Chez along, she's from Fiji, and they were like 'Oh someone that's like us does this, it's not like some white guy.' And just for them that was like real cool, cos it really encouraged them to see someone that looks like themselves, doing something that they dig. (interview, November 1, 2014)

As I highlighted in Chapter 2, the breaking workshops I have attended with the highest number of female participants were all run by b-girls – two of whom were brought over through the efforts of Mistery and his organization (b-girls Bonita and JK-47 – see Appendix B). It is important, then, that women are given these opportunities to counteract the masculine image of the culture, and encourage other potential girls to

[5] *Krosswerdz* runs a number of hip-hop events, such as the yearly breaking competition *Uprock* and its associated workshops.

learn the dance. This is because, as b-girl Sass explains, it can be very inspiring to see other girls break:

> [T]hey see a girl doing it and they think 'oh yeah if she can do it then I can do it', you know where as if it's a boy it's kind of like 'he's built differently', you know it's a completely different thing, so it's harder (interview, October 24, 2014)

In this way, the representation of gendered bodies continues to play into what similarly gendered bodies think they 'can do'. That is, if a physical activity is significantly dominated by male bodies, the characteristics and capacities needed to perform this activity are further naturalized as masculine, thus normalizing its unpopularity with women.

While a "masculinised, even phallocentric world" (Maxwell 2003, 33) still impedes entry into the breaking scene, as we have seen, an active global b-girl scene is testament to the many women who continue to persevere in spite of the difficulties. Examples of success can be gleaned from the global spread of b-girl culture, such as a growing online presence, as highlighted above, but also b-girl only competitions,[6] and b-girl crews.[7] For example, the global superstar b-girl crew, 'Heartbreakrz', has asserted itself as a formidable opponent. Beginning in 2006, the crew's founder b-girl Beta (Miami, USA), describes:

> Several successful B-Boys have said they would drop everything to represent our crew and be a member – that they'd be honored. They'd tattoo it on their forehead if they could, so the level of commitment that they'd show if they had that opportunity would be quite entertaining. We have those B-Boys as support and for advice, or anything, really. They're there for us 100%, and we appreciate that. That kind of support wasn't there back in the day. It was quite

[6] For example, *We B*Girlz* is a global competition with qualifiers (2v2 b-girl battles) in multiple countries around the world, last held in Australia in 2012. While this particular competition is b-girl-only, there are plenty of other opportunities for 'b-girl-only' battles within larger breaking events. Within Australia this includes *The Australian B-boy Championships* and *Shadow Wars*, which featured 'full crew' battles (male and female breakers can enter as part of a crew) with 1v1 bgirl battles. There is also the 2v2 *Bonnie & Clyde* battle, which sees b-boys and b-girls teamed up together, sometimes at random, and have been held on multiple occasions in Brisbane (Queensland).

[7] B-girl crews include, for example, 'Soul Flow' in South Korea, 'Skill Sisters' in Germany, 'Nishikasai Crew' in Japan, 'Raw B-girls Crew' in Poland, 'Queen City Bittys' in the USA (North Carolina), and 'Form One Lane' in Australia.

> the contrary. So I know that we're making a difference – we're doing the right thing. Actually, we are doing many good and right things – some things take a little longer than others, but as long as we keep moving forward its good. (Red Bull BC One 2016)

'Heartbreakrz' are exemplary of how contemporary b-girls are challenging larger gendered norms. There are, however, contradictions within b-girl Beta's statement, as though 'Heartbreakrz' are "making a difference", their success is measured through the support and commitment from b-*boys*. In this way, the achievements of b-girl culture are still measured through masculinist structures, and is perhaps an example of Bourdieu's earlier caution that even attempts to challenge masculine domination result in ways of thinking that are, in fact, constituted through the systems of masculine domination (2001, 5). Given this, and Beta's comments above, 'Heartbreakrz' are perhaps not transforming the breaking scene in a larger sense, in terms of facilitating an absolute deterritorialization of gender; but rather they are continuously (re)asserting themselves as serious opponents on the dance floor. Importantly, this is still a deterritorialization, in that it disrupts normative gendered assumptions of 'just a girl' and calls attention to the very fragility of binarized gendered norms. In saying this, it is still a deterritorialization that remains on the plane of organization and development due to the ways by which masculinist structures are maintained.

In addition to the growing presence and success of b-girl crews, some of the organizations listed above have attempted to rupture breaking's 'standard' historical narrative of male dominance. This can be seen in the pictorial book *We B*Girlz* (2008),[8] which looks at b-girls not only worldwide, but also throughout history, even featuring discussions of the "THE first real b-girl" Headspin Janet (b-boy Alien Ness quoted in Kramer 2008, 12). Additionally an initiative of global collective *Heartbreakrz*, the 'Heartbreak Hotel' programming at *I.B.E.* (2015) featured a 'B-Girl Timeline' installation.[9] Here, *I.B.E.* event goers could add their names and any b-girl

[8] *We B*Girlz* was written by Nika Kramer (organizer of *We B*Girlz* competition) and b-girl Rokafella (an old-school b-girl from New York). Featuring interviews with not only b-girls, but also pioneer b-boys in the culture (such as Ken Swift), it also includes photographs by renowned hip-hop photographer Martha Cooper.

[9] At its 15th Anniversary, *The Notorious IBE*, an international competition and street dance festival, featured its first-ever 'Heartbreak Hotel'. Put together by the Director of Rotterdam's 'Hip Hop Huis', Aruna Vermeulen, who is also involved in the global b-girl crew 'Heartbreakrz', the Hotel featured a whole day of programming, including lectures, workshops, b-girl battles and a blind date battle, a block

knowledge, such as local history, to the timeline that spanned the past few decades. Since taken over by the Dutch b-girl collective, *Bgirl Sessions*, the program's director, Aruna Vermeulen, explains:

> This project had them research their history so they understood what came before them—in Holland and worldwide. Now these three B-Girls not only know the history but [sic] created the base of the timeline. This knowledge can now be shared with others. The younger generation can do so much more than we did, to be honest. They came into this with what we managed to make – events, spaces for practice, figures to look up to – but important [sic] to keep it moving. We need the new pioneers, and we need more of the younger generation to take the reins, hit the ground and run. (Red Bull BC One 2015d)

We can begin to see from these interviews how online technologies can provide an avenue to rupture breaking's dominant masculine image from *within* the culture. As Vermeulen points to, the younger generation is already reaping the benefits of what b-girl culture has managed to produce – b-girling history, networks of support, events, figures to look up to, and so forth. Simply, a space in which for b-girls to (co)exist. Importantly, this may enable easier access for b-girls entering the scene, as b-girl Sass explained, "because there's so few b-girls [in the scene] it's hard to get a name for yourself" (interview, October 24, 2014). Greater visibility and presence of b-girls, then, is a deterritorialization of the representation of breaking as 'just for guys'. Strengthening the connections, histories, and experiences between and across b-girl culture globally both 'upsets' (as Butler would say) and facilitates a deterritorialization of breaking's masculinist stronghold.

Moreover, through these initiatives and online networks, a b-girl's success on a local level becomes celebrated and recognized internationally. This includes the distinct achievements of international b-girls winning not only male-dominated competitions, but also competitions *only ever* won by males, such as Queen Mary and AT (see Figure 10).[10]

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party, and a 'B-girl Timeline' installation (that was in collaboration with event organizer and *Red Bull BC One* blogger Tyrone van der Meer) (see Red Bull BC One 2015d).

[10] B-girl Queen Mary in 2015 won the Bulgaria qualifier for the international one-on-one competition *Red Bull BC One*. From here she represented Bulgaria in the Eastern Europe final later in 2015 (the winner of this final then competes in the world final). This is the first time a b-girl has won a *Red Bull BC One* qualifier and been named 'Cypher Champion'. In 2014, Finnish b-girl AT won *The Notorious*

Figure 10 – B-girl Queen Mary. *Red Bull BC One:* Bulgaria Cypher. April 4, 2015. Nika Kramer.

In highlighting the broader significance of the achievements of b-girls Queen Mary and AT, a post on the *Red Bull BC One* Blog explains:

> The past year has seen a great shift in breaking competitions, with B-Girls snatching coveted titles on high-level dancefloors around the world. Bulgaria's B-Girl Queen Mary was recently crowned the first-ever female Red Bull BC One Cypher Champion. Her victory is another step in a growing trend of female presence in urban dance battles. B-Girl AT's victory at The Notorious IBE 2014 Focus on Footwork battle also marked a great turning point in the history of the dance. (Red Bull BC One 2015b)

These achievements, now more visible and even celebrated via social media and on well-known websites, also show a growing acceptance of female participants in breaking culture.

IBE 2014: Focus on Footwork battle ('IBE' standing for 'International Breakdance Event'). This one-on-one competition, where dancers display their skill in footwork, has been a largely male-dominated event.

While b-girls' victories are testament to female corporeal capacity, in that they challenge broader gendered assumptions that the dance 'is not for them', they do not necessarily displace patriarchal structures. In the case of Queen Mary particularly, her successes are based on her ability to perform the more masculinist moves (including power moves and freezes, as can be seen in the above photo), and one could argue that in this way masculine norms are still being perpetuated. Such a position might be similarly observed in b-girl Sass's comments, as she declares, "we can dance *just* as well as they do" (interview, October 24, 2014). Through these two examples, we can see how often b-girls' understandings of their skills and participation are still reliant upon masculinist norms. That is, a breaker's progression is measured through a masculine structure. Indeed, in the quote from the 'Red Bull BC One Blog' above, b-girl's victories are described as 'snatching coveted titles', perhaps revealing the tacit implication that they are 'snatching' them from b-boys. Indeed, in reinforcing b-boys as the *norm* of title winners, this language suggests that b-girls' wins are an act that is both clandestine and ephemeral.

The Net also provides a platform for b-girls to speak to their lived experiences in the scene. In an interview following her ground-breaking win, Queen Mary said:

> [I]t's harder because you need to show everybody that you can do it. It's not as though everyone believes you can actually break just because you're a woman. […] There will always [be] problems with the guys who can't understand that nowadays women and men are equal. […] I hope my victory can motivate more girls and show them that we b-girls can do it. (Red Bull BC One 2015c)

Queen Mary's comments, here, while from a position of encouragement by attempting to further grant access for b-girls to the dance floor, are also implicitly naïve. That is, equality is not merely about changing the opinions of a few b-boys, but rather addressing the larger structural inequalities that discourage, prohibit, and even deny women the same access to the dance floor. This is not to say that women have to adopt a masculinist habitus, or even perform masculine moves and bodily comportment in order to be 'included', however it does raise the question of why b-girls would even *want* to, and to what end, and I will be discussing and taking a position on these questions later in the chapter.

Despite these questions, online technologies are a valuable platform for b-girls to share their lived experiences in a way that is now accessible to geographically disparate scenes, for example from Bulgaria to Australia (as is the case for Queen Mary above). In this way, b-girls on the other side of the world are challenging local assumptions about what bodies 'can do'. By showing that women can, in fact, do the same moves as men, b-girls' performances not only undermine feminine stereotypes, but also reveal the inherent construction of the gendered body.

Consequently, there are deterritorializations that are beginning to emerge in the global breaking scene that challenge patriarchal and masculinist gendered norms. In our interview, b-girl Catwmn notes that the success of b-girls overseas, who are reaching the top sixteen in large international competitions typically dominated by men, "show that b-girls can get on the same level as guys, and even better" (interview, October 24, 2014). While Catwmn begins to point to b-boys as the indicator of success, she highlights the potentiality of b-girls to be 'even better', and perhaps here we can begin to conceptualize how b-girling might facilitate an absolute deterritorialization of gender in breaking, that is, one not 'overcoded' through molecular politics. This is not to say that we completely abandon the strata, as we saw in the previous chapter, but rather to think about ways to 'smooth' out the striated and regulated space of the plane of organization (by which they mean space that is organized through rigid sediments that limit bodily expression in accordance with normative politics). Indeed, perhaps through b-girls asserting a *new* kind of presence, one not reliant upon masculinist norms or structures, breaking might open up to the deterritorializations enabled through stylistic 'difference'. A number of questions emerge here. First, how might a stylistic difference, that is, a difference untethered to biological assumptions, be explored and cultivated without being perceived through a masculinist or Cartesian lens? And second, how might women use technology to do their own moves, get a following, create their own competitions and so forth without the explicit or even implicit approval from b-boys or the mainstream, and without being 'othered'? And I will explore these questions in more detail in the remainder of the thesis.

While these events and forums aim to *unite* female breakers, it could be argued that emphasizing pre-existing gender divisions within the culture also has the effect of segregating them further. This can also be seen in the comments of b-girl Beta in regards to whether she would encourage burgeoning b-girls to practice with other girls:

> I never practiced with females when I started and really didn't until early 00s. It depends what you want to sacrifice. If you want a challenge and to be serious about increasing your potential, I would say no. If you want comfort, to not be discriminated, critiqued harshly and to not suffer catcalling, I would say yes. In the end, once you reach a certain peak in your artform you will know exactly what's best for you. (Red Bull BC One 2016)

What Beta points to, here, is the implicit gendered hierarchy that is often tacitly reproduced within breaking culture. That is, breaking with b-boys is considered more 'authentic' and challenging because of the harsher training conditions of critique, discrimination, and somehow even catcalling. In viewing this space as through which to be "serious about increasing your potential", Beta's position reaffirms the masculine domination of breaking culture. Women must put up with these harsher conditions, and become one of the (b-)boys in order to succeed in breaking. While Beta acknowledges the distinct benefits or 'comfort' of training among b-girls, the way she characterizes training spaces through gendered segregation is a normative repetition of gendered assumptions.

Indeed, and as I will show in the next section, the gendered segregations prevalent *offline* are often reproduced online, and consequently contain b-girls' gendered transgressions outside of breaking culture. That is, because transgressions are visible online they can make their way out of the confines of breaking culture to broader, mainstream viewing. To demonstrate how this works, I will use the example of b-girl Terra's fame, and analyse the ways by which her transgressions were reconstituted into normative frameworks.

'E-boys' and 'Cute' B-girls

While one may think of ways to disrupt breaking's cycle of male-dominance would be to merely include more females in public performances, my interview with b-girl Catwmn disclosed how breaking's gendered representation is often regulated 'behind-the-scenes'. She relayed a story where she was invited by to do a performance by a big promotional agency. However after agreeing, she says,

> they called me a few hours afterwards, after I had received the call asking me to do it, [and said] that they only wanted boys – they only wanted b-boys now –

> and that they didn't want a girl, so like I got really really angry and kind of disappointed that the Australian media and I guess what people are looking for in terms of breakdancing and performances, that it's only specific to boys (interview, October 24, 2014)

In light of Catwmn's insights, we can see the perpetual cycle in breaking of showcasing certain bodies doing certain things, which influences not only what broader society think those bodies can do, but also what they *want* to see. Indeed this interlocks with the male-dominated 'street dance' films I analysed in Chapter 2, and these examples reinforce the problematic cultural dominance of the b-*boy,* which sustain the normative gendering of both the dance and culture.

Moreover, Catwmn's experiences, here, point to larger issues regarding diversity within mainstream media. Her experiences are indicative of how the mainstream media both supports and privileges the normative status quo (gendered, raced, sexual), because the normative is what drives profit. In contrast to mainstream media, the Net is much more democratic, as I highlighted above, and this more democratic mode of engagement is due to its increased accessibility (assuming they have the resources and knowledge to do so). The advantage to the Net is that the community can use online media to support and encourage those who are typically denied representation through mainstream outlets. However, what these two types of media have in common, in relation to the b-girl at least, is the fact that b-girls are marginalized through invisibility. In one case (mainstream), this invisibility is deliberate to conform to the normative status quo, in the other (online), it manifests inadvertently, because access is difficult outside the community, as we will explore further below. Therefore, while these two media forms are different in their organization, their impact on the representation of gender and gender roles outside a specific community is often the same.

Therefore, while the virtual space is a productive forum for those *within* the community by providing support and encouragement, much like the 'real world' it remains inaccessible for those positioned outside the culture. Though virtual sites are accessible once online (such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *YouTube*) – there aren't so much barriers to entry – boundaries remain due to subcultural knowledge. As b-girl Sass explains, "the struggle is still there cos it's still underground in a way and to look up a battle of girls on *YouTube* you have to know what to search" (interview, October

24, 2014). Indeed, familiarization with the organizations listed above, or knowing to even search 'bgirl' for battles of female participants, typically requires existing knowledge about the culture. In contrast, merely searching 'bboying' or 'breaking' or 'breakdancing' on *YouTube* will predominantly feature male breakers in the search results, despite these terms being 'gender inclusive', as outlined in Chapter 2. Thus, for b-girls to access these support networks, they have to get past the myriad obstacles that discourage them from learning the dance in the first place. Moreover, one might argue that the cultural segregation of these websites and social media pages inherently limit the capacity of these networks to facilitate a larger deterritorialization of gender in breaking culture, as they predominantly rely upon differently gendered audiences.

In her discussion of the gendering of electronic space, Sassen (2002) highlights the significant limitations of the Net due to the way electronic space is 'embedded'. Specifically, she sees no community as purely virtual, but is always embedded in the material, and "[t]his means that power, contestation, inequality, hierarchy, inscribe electronic space and shape the production of software" (Ibid., 366). As such, while the Net "enables women to engage in new forms of contestation", it still "reproduces masculine cultures and hierarchies of power" (Ibid., 368). The virtual, then, is merely an extension of the material, reproducing its specific relations of power. To couple Sassen's theory with Butler, the Net is an extension of the 'historical situation' of the broader material politics that affect and can dominate the lived experiences of bodies. In breaking culture, this can perhaps be seen through the colloquial label 'e-boy', which denotes 'electronic boys', or the participants who excessively watch and comment on online footage yet do not participate in their local culture. Not only is 'e-boy' a highly gendered term, but it is also one that replicates the gendered hierarchy of lived experience. Thus, even when there is no physical body – only a virtual body – that body is defined as a *boy*. In the same way as Cartesian logic, the virtual breaking participant is invariably gendered male. As Sassen continues, "[d]igital space is embedded in the larger societal, cultural, subjective, economic, imaginary structurations of lived experience and the systems within which we exist and operate" (Ibid., 368–369).

Yet the viral video of b-girl Terra (UK) is exemplary of how online technologies can render visible transgressions of normative body politics beyond subcultural boundaries. As I will attempt to show after I have introduced Terra's achievements, her propulsion into mainstream media reterritorialized her transgression by containing it within normative structures. With over seven million views, the

YouTube video (titled 'BGIRL TERRA 2013 (the best BGirl of the world) [sic]') (MoBo1982 2013) features her battling in a qualifying 'baby' competition in Chelles (France) in 2013,[11] and can be seen in Figure 11.

Figure 11 – B-girl Terra. *Chelles Battle Pro*: Baby Battle. March 2, 2013. *YouTube*.

Terra's significant popularity online saw her image mobilized across mainstream media, as numerous online articles about her emerged throughout 2013 (see, for example: Barness 2013; Eleftheriou-Smith 2013; Goodman 2014; Moran 2013; Reilly 2013; Swift 2015). Also, she was interviewed and performed on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, starred in an advertisement for *Sainsbury*'s (titled 'Back to School with Sainsbury's and B-Girl Terra'), featured in *Jungle*'s video clip of their track 'Platoon' as well as performed live with them at their shows, and finally, and more recently, in 2015 she was the solo performer in an advertisement for *Persil* (titled 'B-Girl Terra Dancing for Persil Dual Capsules'). Using Terra's fame as an example is productive in a number of ways, not least of which because it shows how the de-centralized network of the electronic space can rupture dominant modes of production. Importantly, Terra

[11] *Chelles Battle Pro* features a number of different battles, including crew battles and 'baby' battles, the latter of which is for breakers aged twelve and under.

brought into the spotlight the 'bgirl', and, in doing so, increased the visibilization of female participation in breaking culture. Indeed, her name – recognized as 'b-girl Terra' – even provided the appropriate terminology for culture's search terms, i.e. 'b-girl'.

Terra's reach is thus productive for a number of reasons. That it is a *little girl* performing highly athletic moves powerfully deterritorializes not only the dominant image of breaking's male-dominance, but also the normative assumptions that the female body should not, even cannot, break. Indeed, Terra encapsulates the 'other' of the normative breaking image – she is both a female, and a child – and her specific 'stylization of the body', such as her aggressive gestures, athletic movements, and the increased muscularity required to perform these movements, both subverts and contests normative gendered significations. In this way, we can see how Terra's amazing athletic feats push the boundaries of gendered social norms. Indeed, her mimicry of adult behaviours – even behaviours she may not understand (such as the slitting of the throat) – transgresses social boundaries and, in doing so, undermines the naturalized association of aggression with large, athletic, domineering male bodies.

The success of Terra's performance is in the way she so fails to repeat the gestures and acts of a 'little girl', and also in the radical displacement of normatively masculine enactments onto her child body. Terra takes the 'historical situation' of the b-*boy*ing body, which we explored in Chapter 2, and, in imitating it, effects a type of 'gender parody' due to the way it is resignified on her dichotomously opposed body (female and child). In this way, Terra's 'parody' of masculinity undermines the notion of a naturally-occurring gendered subject, and as Butler argues, this sort of imitation or parody, "*implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency"* (1990, 187). Moreover, Butler continues, "part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender" (Ibid.). The ritualized repetition that gender performance is so reliant upon is undermined, thus opening up a larger potentiality for gender transformation.

While the popularity of Terra can be seen to provide a way *in*to the culture, much like 'offline', her transgressions are also maintained through larger gendered politics. Framed as literally "the best BGirl of the world" (MoBo1982 2013), Terra's performance is decontextualized from the specificities of breaking culture, and yet she owes a lot to the b-girls before her that initially enabled her access to dance floor. For

example, BabyLove from the 'Rock Steady Crew', B-girl Rokafella, Headspin Janet, B-girl Asia One (to name merely a few) – all b-girls from the 1980s that are relatively unknown.[12] This is not to take away from Terra's achievement, but rather to highlight the broader institutional systems of power in which she is situated. Rather than bringing these figures into the spotlight, Terra is seen as an *exception* to breaking's male-dominance: a sort of freak of nature that is contained through her 'cuteness'. Indeed, the articulation of Terra as 'cute' was prevalent in the many online articles about her battle, as well as in her interview with Ellen (2013) (coupled with the audience responding: 'aww'). As Lori Merish (1996) and Ann Chisholm (2002) would argue, 'cuteness', here, resituates Terra within patriarchal, heteronormative structures, thus (re)containing her gendered transgressions into models of the 'familiar'. Moreover, Terra is re-stratified into the containable, as her moment of excess is not only controlled, but also considered an orderly disruption and reterritorialization that supports breaking's masculine organization. Returning to Butler, this sort of reconstitution is a product of the very systems that constitute the gender subject, as she writes, "[t]he historical possibilities materialized through various corporeal styles are nothing other than those punitively regulated cultural fictions alternately embodied and deflected under duress" (1990, 190).

In this way, Terra's virtual presence is an extension of the material, in that her transgressions accessed through the electronic space are circumscribed by the broader politics that construct the body as 'other' and contain any transgressions within heteronormative patriarchal structures of power. It thus leads me to question whether Terra's unique success is *because* she is so containable, more so than such successful b-girls as Queen Mary and AT, as discussed above, who are pushing the boundaries of gender norms through their success in male-dominated competitions. Indeed, when their successes, which happened since Terra's original battle, have not entered mainstream consciousness in the same way, it points to broader patriarchal power structures at work, and the different ways gendered transgressions, or the failure to repeat gendered stylizations of the body, are policed.

Terra, then, is both a 'materializing of the possibilities' of the female body, and an embodiment of the specific material conditions that contain her subversiveness

[12] There's also plenty of children (under 16) that are widely regarded as highly skilled breakers, such as: Sonek (Brazil); B-boy Maya (Furious Styles, USA); B-boy Justen (HustleKidz, The Netherlands); KAKB crew (Japan); and b-girls Kanami and Myw (Japan).

through broader patriarchal heteronormative narratives. The reiteration of her 'cuteness' undermines her performative transgressions, as her distinct 'stylization of the body' is re-focused through a lens of infantilization. This construction of 'cuteness' not only obscures the wider successes of b-girls visible through online technologies, but also works to maintain breaking's male-dominated and hetero-masculine image. As Sassen states, "it may be naïve to overestimate the emancipatory power of cyberspace in terms of its capacity to neutralize gender distinctions" (2002, 377). Therefore, we should not view the Net as that which will emancipate b-girls from normative gendered assumptions, but rather as a type of amplifier – an amplifier of not only policing, but also transgressions. Indeed, we could perceive Terra's successes as expanding the strata, that despite her re-stratification into the social order, her transgressions still deterritorialized the normative masculine image of breaking in that it facilitated larger disruptions to the way in which female bodies – and their capacities – are viewed, even if it was short-lived. Consequently, the Net still continues to perpetuate Bourdieu's 'structuring structures' of habitus, and the signifying and subjectifying constitutions of the strata, while simultaneously enabling deterritorializations to happen.

Gendered Contradictions in Breaking

To further understand how the actions and performances of b-girls are reterritorialized into dominant, prescriptive frameworks, I want to return to Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the 'strata'. For Deleuze and Guattari the individual is predominantly constituted through the 'three great layers' of the strata – 'the organism', 'significance' and 'subjectification' (2004, 176). These layers of stratification hierarchically organize identities and bodies into unified subjects and opposable organisms through, as Deleuze and Guattari say, "steal[ing]" (Ibid., 305) our bodies and reducing them to a general idea. That is, constituting them through the 'molar' subject 'woman' whose function and form are defined by her organs (Ibid., 304). Not only can processes of stratification impact how the body is perceived, and what the body 'can do', but also, and as I will attempt to demonstrate, they limit its capacity to 'become'. This can be seen in the way b-girls are often reduced to 'just a girl', and not considered a threat even prior to demonstrating their skills on the dance floor.

Yet for Deleuze and Guattari the way to challenge these limits of the strata is not purge the material body, or even to view organs as the site of spoliation, but rather

to deterritorialize the 'organism', as that which encapsulates the body's scientific organization that then gives prominence to specific organs in subjectification. In reference to their concept 'Body without Organs' ('BwO'), they state, "[t]he organs are not its enemies. The enemy is the organism" (Ibid., 175). Their concepts, such as the 'BwO', assemblage, becoming, and deterritorialization, are to be used as tools to move away from the 'organism'. As we saw earlier in the thesis, for Deleuze and Guattari 'deterritorialization', describes the unhinging and decoding of a particular organization. Its function, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "is the movement by which 'one' leaves the territory. It is the operation of the line of flight" (Ibid., 559). It is the process that marks the formation of a new assemblage. In this way, we can see that b-girls' actions deterritorialize breaking's masculinist norms, while at the same time reterritorialize them by imitating, indeed reappropriating, them. As I will show below through my autoethnographic research, these territorializations manifest through the performance of particular moves, the creation of 'new' moves, and also particular ways of moving and bodily comportment.

The process of initiating territorializations, however, is difficult, and Deleuze and Guattari remind us of the dangers in disregarding the domination of the strata:

> You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body – otherwise you're just depraved. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted – otherwise you're just a deviant. You will be subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement – otherwise you're just a tramp. (Ibid., 176–177)

Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical framework, here, shows what is at stake in attempts to challenge the limitations of the strata, and, as such, point towards the need to retain elements of meaning and signification in order to expand or 'smooth out' striated space. We can see the retention of meaning occurring in the example of Terra who, as I have argued, was reappropriated into the mainstream while at the same time deterritorialized gender norms. Moreover, and as I discuss shortly, battles between b-girls and b-boys further demonstrate the way in which the strata is maintained while also deterritorializing gender norms. Playing into the debates about whether or not b-girls should break with b-boys, in what follows I argue that while b-girls have to adopt masculinist discourses and breaking moves to be accepted in the scene, thus to some

extent perpetuating the gender binary and masculinist norms, it is in breaking with b-boys that deterritorializations are also enabled.

That b-boys and b-girls learn the same techniques and moves is an expectation, and has been reiterated by pioneer b-boy Ken Swift (bjhiphopcollective 2009) in a commentary posted on *YouTube* (titled 'Ken Swift On Bgirls'), as he states: "we need to be together everybody. So b-girls practice everything you see from the guys". This encouragement from Ken Swift not only legitimizes female engagement, but also encourages women to challenge the socio-cultural assumptions that discourage their participation. Indeed, this encouragement facilitates the creation of a *new* body, as for Foster this occurs through the 'drilling' of specifically-tailored dance techniques, with the central aim of creating a new body (1997, 239). The repetition of techniques and exercises through dance training results in a reconfiguration of the capacities of the body. Thus through b-girls both learning and performing in a 'masculine' or 'dude-ish' way, as my interviewees described in the previous chapter, getting high-levels of strength or even merely 'jumping out' to break, b-girls not only deterritorialize the normative assumptions of what the female body 'can do', but also sever the connection of these traits with the male body. Indeed, female participation reiteratively undermines breaking's construction as 'naturally' masculine, thus enabling deterritorializations to take hold.

Women's participation in breaking, then, destabilizes the discursively constructed association of strength with masculinity. Through performing the same moves, demonstrating the same technique, and not only competing but also *winning* the same competitions as b-boys facilitates a deterritorialization of dualist modes of thought, such as the Cartesian dualism and its associated gendered assumptions. Like Chisholm (2008), I want to stress the lived experiences of my body over the broader categorization of gender, and highlight that in no way are Young's (1980) seminal descriptions of embodied femininity final. This is because despite all of these social sanctions that discourage and prohibit women from entering breaking, and that breaking's 'way of moving' is more socially accessible to the male body, the female body *can* break and b-girls *have* always actively participated (Kramer 2008; Monteyne 2013). Ill-FX optimistically states, "it's a very positive message that if girls keep on trying their bodies can become a lot stronger and they can do things they never thought that their body would be able to do" (interview, November 3, 2014), and this can be seen, for example, in Figure 12 where b-girl Catwmn performs a 'freeze'.

Figure 12 – B-girl Catwmn. *R16*: Oceania Qualifier. May 3, 2014. JNY Photography.

Indeed, for the women that *do* persevere, breaking affords them opportunities to challenge the normative gendering of aesthetics, and to powerfully assert their presence in a way that transgresses patriarchal constructions of femininity. Therefore, the ways in which female breakers perform their bodies *differently* confirms the ways in which bodies have been constructed, and are not *only* biologically constructed. As outlined earlier, the performance of female bodies, as suggested by Butler (1990), is the ritualized repetition that manifests through the moment of the body's performance, and creates the illusion of an interior gender core. Yet this is not to say that gender cannot be undermined, and in her analysis of drag, Butler argues that its performance "plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed" (Ibid., 187). Yet enacting subversive modes of repetition has the potential to call into question the "*regulatory practices* of gender formation and division" (Ibid., 23), and thus undermine the logic through which gender and gendered bodies are constructed. Through imitating gender norms on differently sexed bodies, b-girls' performances of the masculinist moves of breaking can thus reveal the organization of gender that is assumed to be both necessary and natural. Monteyne has similarly

observed the inherent appropriation of breaking that manifests through female participation, writing:

> Women, however, also played an important, yet underexamined [sic] role in the cultural phenomenon of breakdance. It is all but forgotten that breakdance offered a lexicon for women (and girls) to challenge and confront potentially overbearing or threatening expressions of youthful masculinity. In fact, it is precisely the association of the form with male vigor, athleticism, and sublimated violence that allowed women to appropriate the dance in a critical manner. (2013, 132)

It may, then, be productive to use our discussion of how breaking is constructed as masculine, in order to examine how those masculine discourses and practices and negotiated, challenged, and deterritorialized through female participation.

This larger potential of breaking for female participation is readily felt by b-girl Ill-FX, who notes: "the idea that you can step up and express yourself in this way and not have to think about if you're sexy to men or not, you know [it] is very important for girls to grow up having as an option" (interview, November 3, 2014). Indeed, we can see b-girl Sass embracing these opportunities in breaking in Figure 13.

Figure 13 – B-girl Sass. *Sydney Bboy League*. April 4, 2014. JNY Photography.

Thus the inherent potential of breaking to rupture the normative expectations of femininity is not only political, but also profoundly important. It offers new avenues of expression, providing a masculinist template for b-girls to simultaneously use and reject, as through breaking they simultaneously challenge and displace, deterritorialize and reterritorialize normative gendered significations.

For example, within breaking, b-girls are liberated from some of the social sanctions of patriarchy that overly sexualizes their bodies. For example, in learning breaking, I initially felt extremely self-conscious trying out some of the moves because I was concerned about appearing overtly sexualized. Going into a headstand, positions with my bum up in the air, or sitting stretching with my legs wide open. Even though my male peers were performing the same moves, as I was surrounded by b-boys I felt I had to tame the way I presented myself. I felt it was not 'appropriate' for me to position my body in such a way. Like Young's (1980) description, my body was an embodied 'object', yet through breaking I had to slowly re-learn that my body was not on display in the same way. My body *needed* to be put in these positions so that I could learn the requisite moves and techniques correctly (see Figure 14).

Figure 14 – B-girl Raygun (author). '143' training session. March 1, 2013. Daniel Boud.

Through breaking, I could execute what in other contexts might seem inappropriate for women. Indeed, much of breaking's practices are more 'appropriate' for male bodies but as I will demonstrate, b-girls challenge both patriarchal restrictions and these normative gendered connections through their performance.

The patriarchal restrictions regarding appropriate gendered behaviour – normalized through the discourses of 'good girl' and 'lady like' – regulate the actions and behaviours of girls in-line with dominant gendered assumptions, such as fragile, vulnerable, and passive. Yet this is often the first point of transgression and deterritorialization, as McRobbie states, "[f]or many girls escaping from the family and its pressures to act like a 'nice' girl, remains the first political experience" (1991, 42). Ways that female participants might challenge, or even 'escape' from, the constructions of the 'good' girl has been explored within popular music studies (see Attwood 2007; Clawson 1999; Gottlieb & Wald 2006; Wald 1998). Of particular relevance, here, is Gottlieb and Wald's analysis of punk conventions. They argue that the practice of self-naming,

> becomes a tactic not only of reclaiming and recirculating masculinist terms (and thereby depleting their potency), but also of outing or enabling women's uses of vocabularies otherwise forbidden to 'good' girls, who are never supposed to swear or speak to [sic] loudly in public, let alone refer explicitly to their genitals and what they do with them. (2006, 356)

Not only through these masculinist spaces can female participants displace and reconfigure gendered terms and practices, but also, as Gottlieb and Wald continue, these spaces offer opportunities for transgressive performances of femininity:

> [P]unk's staging of defiance and impropriety allowed female punk performers to negotiate the paradox of femininity on the rock stage by enacting transgressive forms of femininity, for instance, in frighteningly unconventional hair, clothing styles, and stage activities. (Ibid., 358–359)

Gottlieb and Wald's analysis of punk culture's conventions, here, turns a critical lens on specific masculinized practices in breaking culture. Indeed reappropriating and amalgamating gendered norms and significations enable larger deterritorializations to emerge; deterritorializations that undermine the dichotomy of gendered stereotypes.

While I continue this analysis in the next section, for example, the convention of 'self-naming' is similarly present in breaking culture, with my own b-girl name of 'Raygun' testament to a reclaiming of masculinist terms, though a stronger example might include b-girl 'Demolition' from Melbourne, or even b-girl 'Terra' from the UK. These names on feminized bodies disrupt the signifiers of violence within the title from being connoted with masculinity. In this way, breaking enables b-girls to politically assert their presence in ways that challenge broader gendered assumptions regarding the female body and femininity, and as we saw above, the transgression of these constructed limitations is becoming more visible through the capacities of online technologies.

The 'Battle': Contesting and Deterritorializing Gender

The breaking dance floor is an arena of confrontation, or simply, a *battle*, and this masculinized stage of breaking enables b-girls to assert of a *new* kind of femininity, one that is not only liberated from the strictures of patriarchal culture, but also where once denied masculinist aesthetics can be displaced. An integral part of the breaking battle is knowing how to respond to your opponents, as on the dance floor breakers can be confrontational and even aggressive through verbal abuse or 'trash talking' (Schloss 2009). 'Trash talking' involves a breaker shouting pointed insults at their opponent in an attempt to undercut their confidence or make them slip up (Ibid.), practices often 'off-limits to 'good girls'. In an interview with Schloss, renowned b-boy Alien Ness reveals the importance of these practices: "That's all part of the game: the mental aspect. The trash talking. […] Whoever says it ain't, don't know what this game is about" (quoted in Schloss 2009, 111). Yet this is a distinctly masculinized practiced, as evidenced in Osumare's description: "[l]ike rap battles, b-boy challenges often become enacted bravura commenting about other dancers' perceived lack of skills, while the same messages extol one's own prowess as a performer" (Osumare 2008, 53). The gendered language here – bravura, prowess, and b-*boy* – highlight the masculine performativity of the breaking dance floor, which, as we saw in Chapter 3, is often connected with the assertion of heteronormative display, or 'picking up girls'.

Insults during battles can also manifest through the practices of 'burns', and I want to focus my analysis on this practice in order to demonstrate how b-girls use this genre to transform bodily postures and movements they are denied through the social order. Through learning and performing the requisite moves of breaking, b-girls disrupt

‘masculine’ and ‘ladylike’ significations. Before I begin this analysis, I want to first contextualize this practice to show the male-dominated histories of the practice.

‘Burns’ are one element of ‘rocking’ (also known as ‘uprocking’) (Pabon 2006; Schloss 2009), which is an important influence though separate style to breaking.[13] Despite this separatism, breakers may still include elements of the style in their ‘toprock’, or during particularly tense moments in breaking battles opponents may erupt into ‘uprocking’ (or ‘battlerock’).[14] Here two opponents ‘spar’ with each other using a series of steps, jerks, mimes, and burns (Schloss 2009, 132). Pabon’s (PopMaster Fabel’s) description of uprocking as a “war dance”, and as “more confrontational” (2006, 21) than breaking illustrates its overt connection with masculine stylizations. Similarly, for Banes, uprocking is (which is inclusive of ‘burns’):

> [A] more pantomimic, narrative style of dancing done jumping down and up to standing level, kicking, jabbing, and punching right in a rival’s face, without actually touching. In uprock every move is intended to insult the opponent, and besides actual fighting gestures, a dancer might mime grabbing his rival’s private parts, smelling his hand, making a face, and then throwing the offending odor back. Uprock is funny, but like a rapper’s boast it has a mean edge. (1994, 148)

The gendered language here is, again, telling, such as grabbing *his* rival’s private parts, smelling *his* hand, and so on. These individual actions are considered ‘burns’, which are mimed actions directed at, but not touching, your opponent during battle.

Burns are used to both insult and establish dominance, and in Sydney’s breaking scene,[15] I have observed the most common burns to be stabbing, shooting, punching or humping your opponent, pushing your opponent’s face into your crotch, and miming getting your cock out of your pants. Interestingly, all of these burns were performed in the Sydney dance show *Cypher*, which showcased many of the rituals,

[13] Rocking emerged in Brooklyn in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Schloss 2009).
[14] The complicated positioning of burns within the breaking repertoire is illustrative of the complexity of the breaking dance form.
[15] See *YouTube* footage of ‘Platform 5 Hip Hop Festival’ (2012), a semi-final battle between Melbourne’s Naacals and Brisbane’s Skill@Will (both Australian crews) for the Sydney competition *Platform 5 Hip Hop Festival*. At approximately 4.20mins, a breaker from Skill@Will mimes pulling his cock out and directs it towards his opponent battling.

exchanges, and movements of breaking culture.[16] The burns' reliance upon violence, aggression, and confrontational aesthetics (Schloss 2009) reinforces its masculine alignment, but also makes it exemplary to examine how b-girls displace and reconfigure these gendered significations. While any breaker can uprock regardless of gender, race, class, and sexuality, unsurprisingly the style is more common with b-boys (Ibid.).[17]

Burns often coincide with a climactic beat or even gunshot in the music (similarly noted by Schloss 2009). In an interview with Schloss, Harlem-based rocker Fabel describes how burns can be a manifestation of the dancers' musical interpretation: "The songs in particular that have drum rolls…you can machine gun someone down on that part. Certain yells, you know, you could jump up and grab their head and pull it towards your crotch, or pretend you did" (quoted in Schloss 2009, 133). Strategically used, when 'burns' are performed successfully – such as they were unexpected and not blocked by their opponent – this alone can win the round of the battle. Assertion of dominance, then, is integral to contemporary performances in breaking culture.

The importance placed upon dominance tacitly conforms to the structures of patriarchy, thus implying dominance over the 'effeminate'. Such overt references can similarly be found in sporting culture, also interlocking with the alignment of male dance stars as types of 'athletes' as I explored in Chapters 3 and 4. In relation to sporting culture, Murphy writes:

> Courage is not equated with intelligence or emotional commitment but with testosterone. The larger a man's gonads (and, of course, his penis) the greater a man he is. The penis as a metaphorical cudgel, used to beat a competitor into submission or intimidate the other team, informs the way male athletes think about themselves as men. (2001, 68)

[16] Developed in Sydney and performed by four Sydney-based b-boys, the show formed part of the 'Sydney Festival' in January 2016 (Riverside Theatre, Parramatta). Now in its second year – touring both nationally and internationally – the show has only featured b-*boys*, which may perpetuate the masculine articulation of Sydney's breaking scene.

[17] I acknowledge there are broader politics at play in terms of how violent and sexualized actions are read on differently marked bodies, particularly in a scene as diverse as Sydney. In drawing from black feminist hip hop literature, such as Pough (2004), the 'burn' could be seen to demonstrate resistance to such dominant discourses. Further research, however, is needed here.

While we explored breaking's relationship with sporting culture in the previous chapter, this quote from Murphy is useful because metaphorical 'gonads' are a prevalent burn used in breaking culture, though more colloquially known in Sydney as 'getting your cock out' or 'giving someone the cock'. To increase the intimidation of the burn, during this mime the male genitals become gigantic, as breakers will reach their hands out in front of their bodies miming holding a large, long weight. B-girls' access to this cock-based burn is politicized. Even though the 'cock' burn is a *mime*, and so no body part is ever actually exposed, its power is depleted when a body without the required genitalia performs it. For example, in my own attempts to perform this burn, my opponents typically retort by pointing out I do not have the required genitalia, thus diminishing the insult of the burn. To be successful, a burn, like an insult, must be cutting so as not to invite a comeback.

I want to now focus my analysis on the practice of 'burns', which I see as exemplary of deterritorializing the binary of gender norms due to the body's visceral involvement. As the burn relies on the specificities of the physical body as the basis of the mime, b-girls have a platform to use their *own* bodies and sexuality to assert dominance over their opponents, thus blurring the distinction between, and hierarchization of, gendered bodies and their normative expression. In this way, b-girls performances facilitate a deterritorialization of the logic of bodily expression that is reduced through the lens of the gender binary. Moreover, and as I will demonstrate, b-girl's creative burns are not reliant upon the invisible *male* body for comparison, in that they use the specificities of their own feminized bodies in a way that transgresses patriarchal sanctions. The opportunity, as well, to 'block' burns can be read as a challenge to patriarchal dominance. I thus see the burn as an entry point through which to set in motion processes of deterritorialization to facilitate larger destabilizations of gender within the breaking milieu.

To illustrate this argument, I draw on examples of b-girls performing 'burns' both in Australia and overseas. First, during a battle in the international competition *Evolution III* (2007) held in the USA,[18] a b-girl from 'Furious Styles' crew (Arizona, U.S.A.) entered the dance floor, as a b-boy from 'Phaze T' crew (France) was finishing

[18] *Evolution* is an international breaking competition with qualifiers throughout the world, and final held in USA. While a qualifier was last in Australia in 2011 (Brisbane), this battle is available via DVD (ordered online), though most contemporary battles are accessible through *YouTube* or even live streaming. The practice of using recorded footage to connect with other breakers geographically dispersed is not a recent phenomenon, and Fogarty (2012) examines the uses of mediation to create what she terms 'imagined affinities' within the global breaking community.

his set. As only one person should be on the dance floor, the b-girl used burns to assert her dominance over the space, thus attempting to deterritorialize its masculine privileging. Immediately escalating into fast, highly coded sparring, the b-girl mimed stabbing his face, which he countered by trying to hump her. She blocked this insult by grabbing his (imaginary) cock, cutting it off and then feeding it back to him. Through the success of her fast rebuttal, evidenced in the crowd's laughter and the b-boy's quick exit, the b-girl took the floor. Following this exchange, during her performance the b-girl mimed using her boobs to punch her opponent's face, grabbed her crotch, and humped the floor. The b-girl's performance enabled a different relationship between the specificities of the female body, music, and dance floor, and deterritorialized the masculinity of the space.

Within the global culture, b-girl Narumi in 'Body Carnival' crew from Japan is fairly renowned for her trash talking and use of burns during battles. Undeterred by her b-boy opponents, Narumi is often confrontational, aggressive, and even laughs at her opponents. While there are broader politics here regarding Narumi's challenge to archetypal constructions of Japanese femininity, her confidence and skills at the more athletic power moves powerfully rupture entrenched gendered assumptions.

In Sydney, during a battle in *Shadow Wars 7* in December 2011 an Australian b-girl (of Asian heritage) in Sydney utilized the specificities of her female body – thus deterritorializing feminine norms (such as 'good girl' behaviour) – and reterritorialized them for a different purpose and expression. While doing a freeze (held pose) the b-girl mimed wiping her crotch and then flicked her fingers into her opponents face. The creativity of this burn was central to its success, as both the b-girl and audience laughed at the shocked opponent (who had no rebuttal). Here, the b-girl's creative burn was not reliant upon the invisible male body (b-*boy*) for comparison, nor the logic of the 'One', and thus productively works towards deterritorializing the masculinity of the breaking dance floor.

In my own experiences, I have often used burns during battles (in Sydney and interstate) to insult my opponent. This includes miming getting a cock out of my pants, though my opponents often quickly retort with highlighting I do *not* have a cock. If they are too close to me I mime humping my opponent or bringing their face down to my crotch. If a b-boy mimes giving me the cock, I pretend to bite it off or make a face of disgust, using humour to undermine their action. While the significance of the 'giving the cock' burn is highly charged through its signification of masculine virility, I

see the practice of burns and the sparring that often ensues as a space to deplete its potency.

Another example includes a Sydney b-boy who is renowned for his burn of miming lifting his boobs out. As a mark of distinction from these burns above, this particular burn is imbued with a level of humour and 'tongue-in-cheek' that is potentially a recognizable trait within Australia's breaking scene.[19] Often, holding these large invisible boobs in his hands he then offers them to his opponent – regardless of their gender. The playful-ness of this original burn is usually received with laughter by Australian breakers, or the opponents receive the gift of the invisible boobs or may even lick their lips to convey their excitement (again – regardless of gender). In contrast, international breakers are often left confused, which highlights the idiosyncrasies of Australia's breaking scene.[20]

We can begin to see how breakers experiment with and *transform* normatively masculine postures and movements into a nexus of fluid gendered expression. Importantly, b-girls do not completely abandon a feminine identity in breaking; rather, they negotiate, and thus disrupt, the stability and separatism of the gender binary. Consequently, the body scene is reterritorialized through these performative transgressions. That is, a reterritorialization takes hold of the breaking territory through a process of 'overcoding' (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 243) and 'marking' a new assemblage, facilitating its passage (Ibid., 360). Moreover, that breaking is predominantly *improvised* also points to heterogeneity in performances. In other words, reactions, steps, and transitions are not duplicated and manifest through the body's action in the present, and this will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter where we look at the conventions of 'style' and the improvisational space of 'the cypher'.

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[19] During my interview with b-boy J-One – a well-known organizer of breaking events in Sydney – I asked how the Sydney/Australian breaking scene differs to other parts of the world. Drawing on his experiences battling overseas, J-One responds: "Well, you can go with the usual spiel which I'm sure everyone will say, which is that Australian culture is more laid-back" (interview, October 24, 2014). This descriptor of 'laidback' was a recurring theme throughout my interviews and informal conversations with Australian and international breakers. The descriptor 'laid-back' is often connected with the 'larrikin', an almost mythological characterization of Australian-ness (Collins 2009; Rickard 1998; Bellanta 2010) though one that intersects with very specific gendered, racial, and sexual identity categories, and is why I refrain from using the descriptor here.

[20] For an example of the more playful interaction that can manifest on Sydney's dance floor, see the international qualifying event for 'R16' in Sydney between Parramatta (Sydney) crew 'SKB' and Gold Coast (Queensland) crew 'Team Cream', titled 'Prelims | R16 Oceania 2014 | Crew Battle : SKB vs Team Cream' (2014).

Becoming-B-girl

As we have seen through online technologies, through b-girl burns, and through the feminist debates that have been raised in the scene, breaking can be an effective mode of "resistant political action" (Markula 2006c, 8). In her article, 'The Dancing Body without Organs: Deleuze, Femininity, and Performing Research' (2006c), Markula recounts her use of dance to challenge the restrictions of gender performance, where "feminine bodies become articulated and understood through the particular social context into which they are inserted" (Ibid., 10). To further expose the cultural regulations imposed upon the "feminine" body, Markula (2006c) employs Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) notion of the 'strata' and its relationship to the 'Body without Organs' as that creative potential of an unregulated body. While I do not employ the BwO here, Markula's approach to using Deleuze-Guattarian theory in dance practice is valuable to my own analysis of breaking.[21]

Through dance practice, Markula reclaims the body from the strictures of pre-existing gendered identity through a "feminine" that might be "inhabited instead of interpreted" (2006c, 13). How is it possible to 'inhabit' woman without reinforcing an interpretation of 'woman'? This idea extends Deleuze and Guattari's observations of the work of Virginia Woolf, who, according to Colebrook, "*writes woman*. Her writings neither express nor represent an already given female identity; rather, through Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique, identity is seen as the effect of a flow of speech" (2000b, 2). In this way, Colebrook points towards perhaps Deleuze and Guattari's most controversial becoming, 'becoming-woman', which is not merely an imitation or performance of woman but is the 'minor' to man's 'major', and the 'other' to a male-dominated hegemonic power. Becoming-woman both draws on and abandons fixed categories as a becoming-other to the given world of social regulation, and is a process that, in effect, initiates all becomings. As Patricia Pisters elucidates, "becoming-woman becomes something capable of inducing an effect (on readers or spectators)" (2003, 107).

In this way, we can understand that Woolf's work extends the capacities of all bodies to express difference through a new creative vocabulary. It is not just the work of 'a woman writing', which is not to underestimate the political difficulties many

[21] As Buchanan writes, "[t]he infamous and by now well-known distinction Deleuze and Guattari draw between the organism, or organic body, and the inorganic matrix they call the body without organs, has been the cause of much confusion, as well as anxiety and outrage" (1997, 73).

women faced in order to write, but rather that Woolf's style contributes to the becoming of a concept of woman that exists outside its hegemonic regulation. Indeed, to "dance woman" is to take part in a counter-hegemonic agenda that harnesses all of the virtual potential of this event for all bodies, rather than giving precedence to the body's nominal representation. In a similar sense, in this thesis I want to articulate a means to transcend the superficial concepts of feminine identity ("a woman who breaks") to conceive how one might "break woman", and to give its potential back to all bodies as a power of becoming. Is it possible to 'break girl', to give the effect of breaking girl, and transcend the signifier of 'just a girl'?

Such questions intersect with earlier methodological queries around bringing together the universal and the particular. Indeed, whether it is possible to facilitate change on an individual level, without being 'individualistic', and keeping in mind Bourdieu's pessimism regarding limitations towards structural change. Markula (2006b, 41–42) reconciled this tension through attempting to actively create her own BwO that will set in motion further zones of transformation. Indeed, and as we saw in Chapter 3, Deleuze and Guattari direct us to "[l]odge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers" (2004, 178). In this way, Deleuze and Guattari's theory supports Markula's approach, as she notes that it is not possible for *any* activity to exist outside the strata, rather we can attempt "to create new territories that gradually allow the strata to smooth out" (2006b, 42). This 'smoothing out' Markula refers to are the sedimentary beds of 'striated' space on the plane of organization and development.

Rather than focusing on the negativity of striated space, Deleuze and Guattari see the layers of imprisonment of sex and gender as sites of creativity and perpetual variation, writing:

> For the two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant, etc.: a thousand tiny sexes. (2004, 235)

Perhaps 'bringing into play the woman in the man', as Deleuze and Guattari allude to here, might manifest as an emphasis on the more positive side effects of the feminized body. Maintaining a connection with femininity, as we saw in the previous section, is important for b-girl Sass, and she suggests this might be a way to relearn what b-girls can do. She explains:

> [T]hat's kind of keeping that like, you know, just to ourselves really: 'We're still girls but we can break *just* as well as you can', like it's having that happy medium of being 'I can still represent myself but still be female' and I think for me personally that's really important, it's important to show that 'yeah I *can* break just as well as you can, but I can still be girly in my ways'. (interview, October 24, 2014)

What encompasses being 'girly' is not a static identity, but rather is negotiated in different ways by Sydney breakers.

For example, in my own experience, b-*girl*-ness has been encouraged through utilizing more hip movement during toprock, and such positive embraces of femininity in breaking was acknowledged by b-boy Don who preferred b-girls who break 'like a girl' (interview, February 23, 2015), in other words, maintain elements of feminine performativity (and not look 'dude-ish').[22] For b-girl Catwmn, the positivity of femininity manifests through the specificities of the feminized body:

> We're definitely more flexible, we have more musicality, naturally we're built with more musicality and rhythm […] So girls would, for me, my perspective, would be more attached to the music so that's why they dance differently and the way they approach training is different as well. Whereas guys 'I just wanna learn that move I wanna get that move down' and then the music comes after, whereas girls sometimes it's at the same time as they're learning. (interview, October 24, 2014)

Here Catwmn highlights different approaches and styles within breaking. While often these are categorized into either feminine or masculine approaches, as they are here, what the various theories we have been looking at throughout this thesis can do, here, is further complicate these expressions of normative gendered significations. Indeed Deleuze and Guattari might see these approaches as not equated to a homogenized gendered identity, but rather as different intensities of 'style' on a larger continuum of 'difference', and this will be dealt with in greater depth in the following chapter where we examine breaking's conventions of 'style' and 'the cypher'.

[22] This contrast between my interviewees regarding breaking 'like a girl' illustrates the different ways bodily movement is perceived in Sydney's breaking scene. It both confirms the fluidity of gendered performance, and the potential to rupture the hierarchization of gendered expression.

Again, picking up on the debates discussed earlier, like Catwmn, b-girl Sass also acknowledges the specificities of the feminized body, stating:

> Yeah [b-girls'] might have a different body shape but it just means that they have to have a different approach to it, it doesn't mean that we can't do it. And that's kind of another reason – what we as b-girls are trying to prove – that we can be just as dope as the b-boys, but a little bit in a different way (interview, October 24, 2014)

In calling attention to body shape, b-girls Sass and Catwmn highlight the homogenizing categories we rely on to organize bodies and their capacities, or what Gatens (1996) refers to as 'biological commonality'. Yet this 'little bit in a different way' that Sass alludes is almost a call for a more inclusive space – a space that *embraces* difference. Perhaps it may be worthwhile to re-examine the specificities of this particular b-girling body in order to see the groups of differences that may emerge. These differences do not rely upon biological or cultural constructions, but rather operate horizontally in their similitude. In discussing a more ethical approach to difference, Gatens writes:

> The body of a woman confined to the role of wife/mother/domestic worker, for example, is invested with particular desires, capacities and forms that have little in common with the body of a female Olympic athlete. In this case biological commonality fails to account for the specificity of these two bodies. Indeed, the female Olympic athlete may have more in common with a male Olympic athlete than with one confined to the role of wife/mother. (1996, 68–69)

There is fluidity to Gaten's conceptualization of the body, as it is the body's action in a specific milieu that shapes its capacities. Yet this is not to say that the body is stratified or locked entirely within one habitus, but rather through its engagement it remains open to new connections and possibilities; to deterritorializations.

Indeed, the notion of 'the girl' is considered "the becoming of becoming" (Colebrook 2000b, 2) due to the way in which she must become a woman. As Colebrook explains:

> Man is traditionally defined as *being*: as the self-evident ground of a politics of identity and recognition. Woman, as his other, offers the opening of becoming;

> and the girl thus functions as a way of thinking woman, not as a complementary *being*, but as the instability that surrounds any being. […] What makes this becoming girl-like? Its radical relation to man: not as his other or opposite (woman) but as the very becoming of man's other. (Ibid.)

In this way, (b-)girl might be the site through which to facilitate absolute deterritorializations due to its opposition to the 'norm' or 'Man', and I will continue this reconceptualization of the gendered body in breaking in the following chapter.

Conclusion

By maintaining control over how they are subjectified, b-girls not only deterritorialize the social limitations that come with the hip-hop habitus, but ease the way in which this deterritorialization is received. In doing so, b-girls' participation calls attention to the inherent performativity of gender, as their performance confuses and contests binarized gendered norms. Expanding the limitations of the strata through superficial mimicry assists in opening up the signifier of 'girl' into a more positive and creative difference. Indeed, the overt recourse to feminine identity deployed by Sydney b-girls, including myself, is an exploitation of the more superficial constructs of gender; yet maintaining an alignment with them is of vital importance. This is because it not only eases acceptance within the culture, but it also enables the body to experiment with further different, 'un-feminine' techniques, such as breaking, from which points of singularity might emerge. In some respects, Bourdieu might appear to be vindicated, in that I appear to be performing the feminine role society has conceived for me; but in line with those arguments made by Wade, Markula, and Deleuze and Guattari, I would argue that there is no choice than to affirm difference, and to transform things from the *inside*. Because, following Deleuze and Guattari, while there remain issues with defining participation by gender, the path to 'breaking woman' can never be an unstructured display of the unrecognizable. As we will explore in the following chapter, 'breaking woman' might slowly be incorporated into 'style', facilitating larger deterritorializations of Sydney's breaking scene that ultimately produce mutual becomings. Without adherence to the strata constituent to habitus, I might not get onto the dance floor at all, and that wouldn't be doing anyone any good.

Chapter 6 – Potentiality of Breaking: People to Come

Introduction

Throughout this thesis, I have examined the discourses, practices and representations that support breaking's normative construction as masculine. I have analysed how b-girls negotiate this dominant gendered construction, and how they transform and undermine gendered significations through their performance. I now want to push my analysis further in order to locate the possibilities to deterritorialize gender through breaking. I do this through examining specific breaking practices, such as the development of 'original' style, and the convention of 'the cypher'. Using a range of Deleuze-Guattarian concepts, my aim is to reveal how the breaking body enters into new relationships on the dance floor, and thus can be conceptualized beyond the image of dominant thought as a type of assemblage.

Re-thinking the breaking 'body'

My shift in analysis, in this chapter, is due to the way my autoethnographic and theoretical research has become more informed over the course of this project. Now, after a number of years training and competing, my focus has adjusted to how specific practices and sites within Sydney's breaking scene may productively enable deterritorializations to occur. In this section, I will return to Deleuzean concepts I introduced in Chapter 1, specifically 'action-theoretical-action' and the 'people to come' to examine how my conceptualization of Sydney's breaking scene, informed through parallel genealogies of my autoethnographic practice and cultural theory, might facilitate 'absolute' deterritorializations that open onto new planes and ways of thinking about creative expression.

(Re)Conceptualizing Gendered Bodies: Action-theoretical action

As we saw in Chapter 1, in conversation with Foucault Deleuze articulates the 'relays' and 'networks' that emerge between and across the processes of 'theory' and 'practice' (Deleuze quoted in Foucault 1977b, 206). He considers these two domains instrumental to the (re)construction of theory, taking us further into examining the complexities of life. Specifically, he conceptualizes 'action-theory action' and 'practical-action' as

ways to encounter the 'obstacles' and 'walls' that manifest in attempting to move beyond representation (Ibid., 206–207). I return to this way of approaching critical thinking, now, because my thesis has endeavoured to encapsulate Deleuze's theory-practice relay between not only various ethnographic, empirical and theoretical methods, but also different modes of writing. Indeed, by writing in first person, in this chapter I attempt to continue undermining the binary between theory and autoethnography, viewing both as equally productive sites of knowledge. Moreover, this critical relaying that has emerged through interactions across my methodological platforms has raised a number of questions about how I was conceptualizing breaking and my own dance practice.

First, I wondered whether exaggerating the b-*girl*-ness of my breaking through utilizing 'hyper-feminine' characteristics might reduce bodily expression to a general representation. In other words, I define my body through the molar category of 'woman', which is articulated through its form and organized through hierarchized capacities. Not only does this reinforce the gendering of the body, relying on a feminine identity that is 'pre-given', but it is also reliant upon articulating the b-girl as always-already differentiated. For Butler, this 'always-already' constitution of the gendered body similarly constructs any notions to move *beyond* gendered constructs – they are the products of the same systems of power. Colebrook articulates Butler's position in this way:

> Butler's account is, therefore, critical of any attempt to retrieve or radicalise sexual difference. And she certainly does not want to articulate another system or a point beyond the law: for the idea of a sexuality or embodiment before all law is precisely the fantasy that the law installs. (2003, 170)

However, while Butler's theory of gender performance productively reveals the ways by which the gendered subject is constituted, indeed naturalized as a stable unity, and while she does not want to radicalize sexual difference as Colebrook argues, I would argue that there are significant limitations to Butler's approach. Specifically, she does not account for space in and through which 'absolute' deterritorializations of gender can be facilitated. That is, unlike 'relative' deterritorializations, which coincide with reterritorializations, 'absolute' deterritorializations open out onto the plane of consistency. This limitation within Butler's work is in spite of her acknowledgement of

the value in gender 'parody' as rendering visible the illusion of an internal 'core', and is a means through which to 'upset' the cultural mechanisms that sustain it. In this way, for Butler, the process of 'becoming' 'woman' (not in the Deleuze-Guattarian sense but in that gender is always a 'doing') is always-already occurring, as for Butler and following Nietzsche, there is no 'doer' behind the deed of gender.

In evaluating the uses and political worth of 'becoming-woman', Colebrook (2013, 431) puts into question how the concept is often deployed in a way that already limits its potential. This includes through a Lacanian lens that attempts to negate 'woman', through efforts "to destabilise the 'heterosexual matrix' from within by repeating and distorting gender's already constituted figures", and through adopting "the existing figure of woman to repeat or perform it ironically" (Ibid.). The problem with these positions, for Colebrook, is that they result in a simultaneous over- and under-valuing of thinking, and which consequently conforms to the 'common logic' of Oedipal structure (Ibid., 431–432). That is, these positions uphold systems of dualistic thinking, such as those that are derivative to the 'One'. She explains:

> Such strategies overvalue thinking by assuming that one can pass from recognising the fantasmatic status of thinking to adopting a distanced and critical attitude; at the same time, the future potentiality of thinking is constrained by not creating or writing other modes of perception. For the Oedipal structure is just that, a style or mode of perceiving: one views the world as a subject, as a point of view opening onto a world that is structured and differentiated according to a certain common logic. (Ibid., 432)

To think beyond the 'common logic' of Oedipal structure, Colebrook advocates for "destroy[ing] that style of subjectivism by creating a mode of thought that is not of a world differentiated by 'a' system of signification for 'the' speaking subject" (Ibid.). Colebrook's insights, here, thus highlight how aligning my body with an element of femininity in order to perform the masculine habitus not only reaffirms the hierarchization of gendered expression with breaking culture, but also fixes perceptions of bodily potential within an already constituted system of binary logic.

With this in mind, Markula also becomes useful for re-evaluating approaches to gendered bodies, especially as she reconsiders her initial theorizing of the body, where she "oscillate[d] between the oppressive feminine body ideal to be discarded and its

opposite, the masculine body ideal that signifies the potential to liberate women from male dominance" (2006b, 34). Like Markula, I situate my own research in a similar fraught terrain, as it is tempting to view breaking as a site of liberation where women can *reclaim* bodily postures and movements denied through stratification. However there are multiple problems that emerge in this approach. First, and as I have pointed towards in previous chapters, the body remains situated within the dualistic framework that hierarchizes the male body – the body of the b-boy – as ideal, and consequently places limitations upon the emergence of *new* modes of moving and singularities, precisely because they are perceived through the masculinist lens. That is, they are perceived through a patriarchal lens through which masculine significations are one dominant or 'molar' expression. Under these limitations, the b-girl, generally speaking, attempts to be an aspiring b-*boy* in the hopes of gaining acceptance into the scene. The learning of b-*boy*-ness becomes a means of liberation from the patriarchal strictures of feminine identity – of fragility and passivity – to its binary opposite of strength and vigour. In this framework, a b-girl's worth continues to be measured through masculinist structures, as we saw in the previous chapter regarding how the achievements of international b-girls are framed, while masculine aesthetics are privileged as the site bodily liberation, in that any 'othered' expression beyond masculine norms is subordinated (Gunn 2016). This was, for example, and as we saw Chapter 4, evident in Catwmn's difficulties learning the techniques suited to masculine norms while managing feminine stylings, and Ill-FX's description of the social pressures to conform to femininity yet 'getting problems from the guys' if you move 'like a girl'. As we have seen through the interviews and the scholarly research in this field, femininity is seen as a hindrance: something that both gets in the way of breaking and yet remains a social necessity. Moreover, the potential of femininity is reduced to a strategic use, as one that enables female bodies to 'get away with' performing a 'masculine' style.

The second problem to emerge from our initial theorizations is that b-girls are not the only ones to suffer under the prominence of the gender binary. As Bourdieu once remarked (with Wacquant), pointing to the double bind of masculine privilege, "the dominant is dominated by his domination" (1992, 173). While female breakers must assume the cultural hegemony of the 'b-boy', there is lack of reciprocity in what a male breaker might gain from becoming-'b-girl' in turn, as the latter category remains exclusively and explicitly, female-only. As we saw in the previous chapter, this

exclusivity emerged through the creation of 'b-girl culture'. Also, any expressions deemed 'feminine' are disregarded on the b-boying body, and this can be seen in the construction, and in some cases denigration, of certain breaking steps as 'girl moves'.[1] Consequently, perceiving breaking *only* through this sort of masculinist structure does not do justice to the creativity, skills, and performances of b-girls throughout the world, nor to the many b-boys whose expression is 'imprisoned' within patriarchal and masculine norms,[2] regardless of the way they move. Thus, in this way, bodily expression remains within a gendered binary, which not only continues to reinforce dualistic gendered constructions, but also intersects with a normalization of heterocentric structures, as expression is limited to the 'correct repetitions' of heteronormative gender performances. We can begin to see, then, how continuing an examination of breaking through binary structures places limitations on the processes enabled through deterritorializations. It reduces difference through organizing expression into dualistic structures.

Finally, the third issue to emerge from my previous theorizations is that viewing breaking as a means to *reclaim* agency over signification, or the meanings produced through bodily expression, has a number of problems in and of itself. Importantly, there are ethical questions that arise through discussions of agency, and which are productively explicated in the work of Coffey and Farrugia (2014). These questions include what 'agency' refers to in and of itself. Indeed, when we talk about 'agency', are we referring to something we all 'possess', that we 'acquire', and can agency be quantified (Ibid.)? Also, does an emphasis on agency omit entrenched divisions between gender, class, race, sexuality, and so on and their associated larger structural inequalities (Ibid.)? Additionally, such an appeal to an ontologically prior 'agency' residing in the body that can then be 'unleashed' is at odds with Deleuzean philosophy (see Bray & Colebrook 1998; Budgeon 2003). Specifically, the problems with an *a priori* agency is elucidated in Bray and Colebrook's work where they argue *against* trying to locate a 'pre-representational' feminine body (1998, 37), and instead advocate

[1] For example, a particular 'thread' that requires great shoulder flexibility is colloquially labelled the 'girl thread', and this construction might be a result of its popularity with b-girls, or perhaps because, with typically less upper body strength to their b-boy counterparts, b-girls' shoulders are more mobile thus making it a typically easier move for them to perform. In either reasoning, the performance of this move is denigrated in accordance to hierarchized gendered assumptions.

[2] As Gatens would argue, often patriarchy and masculinity are bound together, that is, masculinity is *one* dominant expression of patriarchy. Due to the ways by which patriarchy structures society, however, the regulations of patriarchy extend beyond simply associating it with masculinity or the male.

analysis to be focused on bodily *activity*. This conceptual shift denies seeing thought as having any kind of overarching logic or identity, and consequently avoids the (re)positioning of feminist thought as its 'other'. They suggest this through a 'positive feminist ethics', that is, an "ethics that does not appeal to a repressed, silent, innocent or negated feminine but approaches sexual difference as a site of practices, comportments, and contested articulations" (Ibid.). With this understanding, we could posit the question: might specific feminized ways of moving be such practices and comportments? Would opening up feminine significations to b-*boy*ing bodies be such examples of 'contested articulations'?

For Markula, re-conceptualizing the feminine through Deleuzean theory productively expands the body's affective potential. She posits: "[i]t is thus important to reconceptualize femininity from a symptom, effect, or product of patriarchal culture into an intensity exerting its own force. Femininity therefore should be understood as positive and enabling, not something to get rid of" (2006b, 36). Markula, here, attempts to free 'femininity' from the sexed female body, and open it up to all bodies as a new expression. Bodies are thus not limited to the so-called gendered representation, but are enabled to experiment, complicate, and contest through their activity.

Markula's reconceptualization of gender attempts a more horizontal, or as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) would say 'rhizomatic', organization of bodily expression. Here, feminine expression is re-read as sites of intensities and flows that enable new relationships between and across bodies and cultures. Opening up the body to new expressions and modes of perception, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, "[t]hus opens a rhizomatic realm of possibility effecting the potentialization of the possible, as opposed to arborescent possibility, which marks a closure, an impotence" (2004, 211). As we saw earlier in the thesis, 'arborescent' models of thought are hierarchized, organized, and derivative through the 'root-tree', and I attempted to show how this manifested through historical narratives of hip-hop culture. With this in mind, perhaps through untethering the way we view bodily expression from dualistic structures the body may be seen as sites of contestations, flows, facilitating the space to see its larger capacity to open onto new connections and planes. Deleuze and Guattari continue, "[i]t seems more important to us to underline a certain number of factors liable to suggest an entirely different scheme, one favoring rhizomatic, rather than arborified, functioning, and no longer operating by these dualism" (Ibid., 361–362). In this way, Deleuze and Guattari advocate for thinking beyond the 'common logic' of binary structures, and this

thinking may manifest through re-emphasizing the potentiality of the body, and we can in turn understand this potentiality through 'bodily activity', as suggested by Bray and Colebrook (1998), or through an emphasis on the 'now', which I return to below.

However, questions emerge from Markula's theorization of femininity with regard to the gendered codes and conventions of Sydney's breaking scene. Specifically, whether in a culture so privileging of masculinity can femininity be 'positive and enabling', particularly when representationally informed judgements are made even before the moment of the body's movement (such as in my field note in Chapter 4). Is it possible to reconcile the conceptualization of breaking as a space that affirms 'difference', despite the external views and judgements of my peers that continued to homogenize and subordinate me as 'just a girl'? In relation to their concept BwO, Deleuze and Guattari clarify how such approaches to difference should be negotiated, advising, "the BwO is not an internal psychological state at an individual level, but neither is it an externally imposing category" (2004, 40):

> It is a question of making a body without organs upon which intensities pass, self and other–not in the name of a higher level of generality of a broader extension, but by virtue of singularities that can no longer be said to be personal, and intensities that can no longer be said to be extensive. (Ibid., 173)

Deleuze and Guattari, here, are highlighting the limitations of not only facilitating transformations for a higher purpose, but also transformations that remain grounded with the self.

Using Deleuze and Guattari's theory to understand Sydney's breaking scene, then, might enable us to perceive bodily expression beyond the limitations of binary thought. For Colebrook, in order to undermine the dominance of dualistic structures, difference must be perceived as "creative, positive, and productive" (2003, 189). It is a difference that is not explained through a single binary, but rather a difference that is expanding and refuses any bound identity or even recognition. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "[t]he only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo" (2004, 305), and they suggest this through their concept of becoming-woman, as well as the notion of 'the girl'. For example, they write: "The girl is like the block of becoming that remains contemporaneous to each opposable term, man, woman, child, adult." (Ibid.). In this way, 'the girl' encapsulates that which is opposite

to the ‘dominant’, thus encapsulating the affirmation of difference beyond hierarchical structures (see, also, Pisters 2003). In a similar vein, for Deleuze and Guattari ‘becoming-woman’ is initiates *all* becomings (Ibid., 306). This is because, as Colebrook explains, it is “an affirmation of positive difference: not the differentiation of man from woman, but difference that is not grounded on humanity” (2003, 190).

Therefore, becoming is not founded on any type of fixed meaning or representation; rather, it is the power to differ, and to create styles and bodies that affirm difference (Ibid.) in a way that attests to the possibilities of the present. Deleuze and Guattari see this process emerging through extracting “the particles, the speeds and slownesses, the flows” (Ibid., 306) that constitute the girl or woman of *that* particular age or sexuality, and to “experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment” (Ibid., 178). Importantly, this would not be reproducing the meanings of these representative categories, or indeed finishing with the identity of girl or woman, but rather opening the body to the ‘thousand tiny sexes’ (2004, 235) that refuse reduction to binary thought and Oedipal logic. Indeed, while we may perceive events through binary structures and molar organization, this does not preclude the existence of complexities, ‘in-betweens’, molecular formations, or even singularities. As Deleuze and Guattari write, “[i]f we consider the great binary aggregates, such as the sexes or classes, it is evident that they also cross over into molecular assemblages of a different nature, and that there is a double reciprocal dependency between them” (Ibid.). We can see this ‘double reciprocal dependency’ occurring in the ways by which the b-*boy* is, in fact, co-dependent upon the b-girl, as I have attempted to show through this thesis.

Therefore, in order to expand difference beyond binary formations, Colebrook views this process as reliant on the responsibility of the observer. She writes, “a species of perceived sameness is really the result of the observer’s incapacity to see life as a proliferation of difference, creating ever-different bodies, with each body being an affirmation of difference, not the repetition of the same” (2003, 189). Colebrook’s reference to repetition, here, is an important and prominent philosophical concept for Deleuze and Guattari, and will be examined in more depth through breaking’s convention of ‘foundation’ later in the chapter. Briefly, the notion of repetition, here, is not about ingraining new representations, but rather it is about consistency – the bringing together of heterogeneous elements into new formations and relationships,

indeed assemblages, yet always remaining open through the rhizomatic logic of the 'and'.

Meanwhile, the questions that are raised at this point is whether or not aligning with the strata through hyper-feminine significations is a repetition of the 'same', or an intensity and contestation that singularly emerges through bodily activity. As we will see through a discussion of originality and repetition in breaking, dancers extend beyond the world of subjectification into singular intensities that manifest through each moment, life, and movement. Indeed, in the next section I explore 'style', and the more process-based aesthetic that manifests through dance, as a way to expose the myriad styles and approaches that have emerged through breaking's conventions of creativity and competitiveness.

Locating Deterritorializations on the Dancing Body

In order to explore in what ways breaking might facilitate new expressions beyond the confines of dominant thought, it is necessary to first return to a discussion of dance. As we will see, dance can expand the dominant configurations of the body beyond narrativizing discourses, and productively set conditions for a more process-based aesthetic. Within breaking, these aesthetics manifest through improvisation, and the associated emphasis on the 'now', and operate to re-situate breaking beyond pre-existing directives or norms, thus productively enabling the body to experience new stylistic differences.

In attempting to rethink 'dance' as a way to deterritorialize gender, it is worthwhile to shift towards examining it as an 'activity' or indeed *process*. Because in doing so, this shift avoids placing limitations upon the body through pre-arranged plans, 'Grand' narratives, or indeed seeing the purpose or function of dance, and instead re-emphasizes the possibilities of the *present*. For Colebrook, the way dance inhabits the present importantly distinguishes it from other modes of creative practice. As Colebrook writes,

> dancing -- unlike writing a novel that would have an external object of completion -- is, at each moment of its actualisation a dance; one does not have to wait until the completion of the performance to produce the dance. Dancing might be a more appropriate image of human creative becoming than, say, crafts that are governed by the making of an object outside the creative activity itself;

> in dance the activity is itself the realisation. (2005, 7)

Indeed, and extending Colebrook's theory here, in breaking there is no final product or even pre-arranged plan for a specific outcome. While breakers' may have a series of moves in mind before they drop to the floor, their improvisational skills means that the body is always open to responding differently in the moment. Indeed, the way that breaking is even understood – break*ing*, always a do*ing* – shows its aptness for an examination of human-becoming. As Colebrook continues:

> Dance would, then, need to be considered less as an expression of a potential that pre-exists the actual dance, and more as a potentiality that is brought into being only as it acts or exists. Such a pure potentiality would not be limited by a proper end – what it ought to bring into being – nor by a preceding ground, nor by the form it expresses in this or that style. (2005, 8)

Thus in dance we can see a more process-based aesthetic emerge, making it exemplary for discussions of the potentiality of deterritorializations. As a practice that embraces the 'now', dance can facilitate an opening up of bodily potentiality, beyond the restricted norms of identity categories. By broadening these moments, or expanding them, we can thus begin to conceptualize how breaking can be re-constructed to a more inclusive space of 'difference', and I will explore this through a discussion of improvisation later in the chapter.

Dance's potential to dismantle the organization of the body as a singular unified entity has been similarly noted by Albright (1997), Colebrook (2005), Foster (1997), Greiner (2007), Lepecki (2004), McCarren (2003). For example, Foster observes that dance training "identifies and names aspects or parts that were previously unrecognized, and it restructures the whole in terms of dynamic actions that relate the various parts" (1997, 239). This may be through increasing the strength of a particular limb, learning a new 'way of moving', or even utilizing the body in a way that challenges its hierarchical organization. While for Foster (1997), this reconfiguration has a definitive end, or 'output', as the perceived body strives to conform to the specificities of the 'ideal' dancing body (and is corrected through the 'demonstrative' body), we could use this framework to analyse the rhizomatic connections facilitated through breaking. While Foster does not articulate a Deleuzean analysis of the dancing

body, she does highlight the types of 'mapping' that manifest through 'dance techniques', or ways of learning dance, as she explains, "[m]ost techniques offer both a body topography, a mapping of key areas on or in it, as well as principles governing the proper relations of these areas" (1997, 238).

With dance techniques facilitating a (re)mapping of the body, we can begin to see how dance itself, particularly breaking, is a valuable case study for proposing new ways of understanding the body. Indeed, examining the body as an 'assemblage', with lines that criss-cross and intermingle, that both ruptures and meets impasses, opens up the body to a continuously expanding network of possibilities. As we saw in Chapter 2, for Deleuze and Guattari the rhizome is governed by logic of the 'and', whereby there is no centered ruling or hierarchical organization. Applying the concept of the rhizome to the breaking body thus undermines the fixed structure of the body's form and capacities, and instead posits it through the 'in-between'. Such reorganization of the body can be seen in what Gottschild (1996) labels the 'democratization' of the body in dance. Here, no body part is privileged in either expressing musicality, or in directing or supporting movement. While Gottschild connects this expression to the Africanist aesthetic, a connection I am attempting to avoid for reasons discussed in Chapter 3,[3] her observations regarding the reorganization of the body show how through dance, varied types of movement can regroup and rearticulate the body's forces, opening them up to new connections. Indeed, this distinct potential within breaking can be seen in Maxwell's description of a breaking performance:

> Watching this particular performance is like watching a demonstration of entropy in action. The breaker seems to be engaged in a struggle against the ground, against the gravity that threatens to slow and eventually halt his/her frenzy of motion. To break is to throw one's body and strength into a few hectic moments of improbable defiance, pushing physiological limits, defying propriety in taking care of one's body. (2003, 233)

Unlike 'standing dances', such as partnered social dances, in breaking the whole body interacts with the ground. That is, breaking is not restricted to dancing while standing,

[3] As I discussed in Chapter 3, the problems with the 'Africanist aesthetic' are in the way it is often coupled with reducing bodily expression to racialized essences, and viewing dance through a particular 'purpose'. In these ways, the 'Africanist aesthetic' places limitations upon the larger possibilities that open through dance.

as breakers quickly drop or get-down on the floor to do footwork, power, backrock, and freezes (See Appendix D for definitions of terms). In this way, breaking facilitates new connections between different parts of the body and the dance floor, and is a deterritorialization of both the body's hierarchical organization and also its 'everyday' interactions with the environment. Rather than simply engaging with the floor via the soles of the feet as we do through walking, indeed relying on the feet to support and structure our body weight, in breaking different body parts are given this emphasis. For example, in power moves, the body's weight is completely supported by, and balanced on, either the hands or head, while the legs and hips twist to spin the body on the floor (see Figure 15). These moves deterritorialize the 'totalizing roots' of the body's hierarchical organization, reterritorializing them into a new assemblage held together through the relationships formed on and with the dance floor. The legs and hips now become a source of power that spins the body while it balances in this new assemblage. As outlined in Chapter 1, by 'assemblage' I am referring to formations and organizations that are not fixed, but rather held together through consistencies.

Figure 15 – B-girl Catwmn. *R16*: Oceania Qualifier. May 3, 2014. JNY Photography.

It is this unusual engagement with the ground in breaking that can be seen as a deterritorialization of the unified hierarchically organized body, thus disrupting

Cartesian authority. In breaking, the dominant functions of the body are reconfigured in a way that enlarges possibilities for expression. This development often occurs in training, when breakers experiment and push their bodies beyond their existing repertoire. Indeed, breaking's competiveness, with frequently held competitions, facilitates the space for breakers to demonstrate their distinct skill set. The style displaces expectations of those external to the culture by articulating unformulated aspects of the dancer's body, and I will discuss 'style' as it is conceptualized in Deleuze and Guattari's theory below. This displacement can be conceptualized through their concept of 'singularity', that is those unforeseen moments of creative expression that emerge in relation to the conditions that produce it – it is a process of individualization. To reach these threshold moments in a performance (in this case breaking), the requisite moves and structure must be understood, the lines of flight must be drawn, and facilitate runoffs *from* a structure or map.

In breaking culture, music is the way by which such improvisations are facilitated, with the soundtrack to breaking battles and cyphers, typically mixed by a live deejay, providing the backdrop for the culture's 'correct embodiments' (Maxwell 2003, 27) to be broken. Yet, and much like breaking itself, breaking music is hard to define. A mix of funk (*particularly* James Brown), Latin rhythms, disco, breakbeats, and 90s hip-hop, there is a consistent element in breaking music that propels the body into dance. Be it a simple tapping of feet or a shrugging of shoulders, breaking music tends to instigate a visceral reaction. The deterritorializing capacity of music is similarly noted by Deleuze and Guattari, as we will see in a discussion of the refrain below, and also in their comments: "Music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many 'transformational multiplicities'" (2004, 13).

There is an advantage to being familiar with what Schloss (2006, 2009) terms the 'canonical' songs of breaking culture.[4] Indeed, familiarity with a particular track can enhance the dynamics of a breaker's performance during battle, thus working to their advantage. For example, a breaker might 'burn' their opponent in-sync with a drum roll in the music, or they might freeze at a particular rhythmical climax. This deterritorialization of the dominant organization of the body facilitates new connections

[4] Schloss (2006) defines the 'b-boy canon' as a choice of music that may seem eclectic in taste, but in fact shares certain musical characteristics. He lists these to include Latin percussion (such as bongos), moderately fast tempos, percussive guitars and horns and "a formal structure that builds to decisive musical peaks. But, most importantly, they have breaks" (2006, 414). For Schloss, the b-boy canon is "a recognized repertoire of songs that b-boys and b-girls are expected to be able to dance to" (2009, 12).

between *parts* of the body, and musical motifs.

Moreover, often breaking music propels the body into action, as a difference in the rhythms produces a momentary change in bodily movement, and this amplified in the 'break'. In her discussion of James Brown,[5] Gottschild defines 'the break' as "when music and movement break from one rhythm and suspend for a nanosecond before shifting into another" (2003, 120). Schloss (2006) considers the breaks as the 'suppressed' elements of a composition – implying that a potential force is waiting for actualization. He writes, "the suppression serves to accentuate musical absences, creating a sense that a contribution is required from listeners to restore the music to its proper state […] that contribution takes the form of dance" (2006, 415). He later continues, "[t]he break, then, is an interruption of an integrated groove. In a very real sense, by inviting the dancers to 'fill the silence with motion', the break is reaching out to the listener" (2009, 21). The break thus works concomitantly, as the drive of the funk rhythm is a motivating force that impels bodily action, while the delay or suppression of the rhythms creates the space for that bodily action. Indeed, it facilitates the space for bodies to enter into new relations with the music.

In his Deleuzean analysis of James Brown, John Scannell describes Brown's funk groove that emphasized 'the one' as indicative of "an aesthetic that embraced the *now*" (2012, 76). This syncopated rhythm that drives the music forward asserts the presence of the minoritarian body (as that which affirms 'difference', in contrast to the majoritarian, molar body). Scannell writes:

> Brown's focus on the groove is indicative of this investment in a micropolitics of minority becoming, rather than the more macro-political concerns of hegemonically inspired narrativizing. It provides a set of conditions allowing the virtual potential of bodies to engender new connections. (Ibid., 75)

Indeed, Brown's polyrhythmic aesthetic re-emphasizes the present in a way that avoids

[5] Since this is not a musicological thesis, my discussion here is limited, however I do want to highlight that the musical innovations of James Brown – and their role in hip-hop dance – are widely noted in academic research (Gottschild 2003; Holman 2004; Osumare 2008; Schloss 2006; 2009). Specifically, there has been much discussion regarding Brown's development of the funk groove in facilitating the space for bodily action. That is, unlike most rock and popular music, where the beats are placed on the classic second and fourth beats of the bar, in funk the beat is placed on the first and third, and this earlier beat (on 'the one') is integral to the funk rhythm. Moreover, Brown's *Give It Up or Turnit a Loose* (1969) album contains a number of popular tracks played at contemporary Sydney breaking events, which highlights his relevance to the examination of bodily expression in Sydney's breaking scene.

limiting its possibilities. Within the 'now', even pre-arranged plans fall apart. It is more productive, then, to see the larger potential in embracing the 'now', as the space through which to both create and affirm difference, and thus as a space for deterritorializations.

This interruption is crucial in creating the space for experimentation, past the strictures of traditional form and everyday ways of moving. Osumare notes the importance of the equilibrium of repetition and anticipated rupture in hip-hop music:

> These two musical dynamics [rhythmic repetition and improvisation] in tandem establish a foundation of expectation that is circular, but at each turn contains critical difference. The surprise invoked by the variable unit, […] creates anticipated innovation within the rhythmic conformity. (2008, 46)

The structural principles of breaking music – of repetition and (anticipated) rupture – are pivotal in yielding an improvisatory space that is optimal for new becomings. Indeed the 'break' facilitates a momentary response in the body, a sudden change in pace or emphasis. As Maxwell describes:

> And again the trope of the pause, or break, appears, emerging as a stylistic constant, fueling the watchers' desires for more, just as the break in the rap suspends the listeners, all the better to throw them into the next refrain, laying out the territory into which the music and voice will unfold. (2003, 234–235)

Therefore, the polyrhythmic qualities of breaking music can re-singularize elements of the body, as new expressions to the music manifest in bodily movement. The momentary change in the body is facilitated by difference in the music, by a 'break', and a type of rupture. In this way, music illustrates the breakings' territorializing capacity, that is, its power to facilitate transformations, and I will return to discussing music below through the convention of 'the cypher'.

First, this negotiation of what could be understood as a type of difference and repetition is an acknowledged characteristic of hip-hop culture, with Rose (1994) conceptualizing hip-hop's stylistic continuities into three primary categories: 'flow', 'layering', and 'ruptures in line'. She explains:

> Interpreting these concepts theoretically, one can argue that they create and

> sustain rhythmic motion, continuity, and circularity via flow; accumulate, reinforce, and embellish this continuity through layering; and manage threats to these narratives by building in ruptures that highlight the continuity as it momentarily challenges it. (1994, 39)[6]

Breaking exposes the value of 'bodily knowledge', as breakers 'go with the flow' in their dancing; yet respond to their opponents with their strategized moves. An understanding of 'flow' or the 'continuity' of breaking enables us to locate the sites to rupture, or deterritorializations. In a similar vein, Maxwell describes how this process manifests in Sydney's hip-hop culture:

> But what of this interpolation: the claiming of a moment marked as, and experienced as, ecstatic? The *refrain* of the flow, its potential to move *beyond*, to the point at which it is impossible to say anything of it other than it is *flow*, is *territorialized* by narrative, is made *music*. The excess of being is articulated to a meaning: *this* is Hip Hop. (2003, 228)

Hip-hoppers rely on 'themselves', be that the rehearsed rhymes of the emcee or even the rehearsed combinations of the breaker, which set the conditions to guide expression into a new territory. It contextualizes and facilitates rupture – the moment of singularity, of difference – that enables a new way of engaging with the world. This flow and moving *beyond* is thus enabled through the expression of territorial marks, and amplified through the music of the breaking dance floor. In this way, repetition sets the conditions for the new to emerge, as Deleuze puts it:

> What we repeat is each time a particular suffering; but the repetition itself is always joyous, the phenomenon of repetition forms a general joy. Or rather, the phenomena are always unhappy and particular, but the idea extracted from them is general and joyous. (2008, 47)

As we will see in the next section, repetition is not repetition of the same, but rather a repetition that opens onto possibility through its difference. Indeed, repetition is never precisely identical, because each moment, in the way it is situated on different

[6] Rose (1994) develops these concepts in collaboration with artist, filmmaker and cultural critic Arthur Jafa.

assemblages and connected with different territorial marks, is inherently different. An examination of repetition in breaking is thus productive to examine how Sydney's breaking scene might be a space through which to affirm difference.

We can see there is the potential in breaking to not be hindered by narratives or representation, but rather to continually develop deterritorializations in ways that "*summon forth a new earth, a new people*" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 99), and which do not currently exist – they are "to come" (Ibid., 109). In this statement, Deleuze and Guattari are further emphasizing the need to not place limitations upon processes of deterritorializations – for example not looking for a specific outcome – but rather exploring and experimenting with ways to affirm difference. We cannot know what will happen through territorializations, how organizations are transformed, and what possibilities they enable. Therefore, to fully allow for the potentiality of deterritorializations, we need to see them as transformations that open onto the future, and with this I move to interrogating 'tradition' in Sydney's breaking scene.

Embracing the 'now': Productions of the 'new'

In this section, I will examine how repetition, or 'foundation', and difference, or 'originality', are negotiated in Sydney's breaking scene within the moment of the body's movement. I will then explore the space of 'the cypher' in order to argue how parts of the body enter into myriad rhizomatic connections on the dance floor, enabling the reconceptualization of the breaking body as an assemblage.

Originality and Repetition: Negotiating Hip-hop Tradition

> [W]e must invent our lines of flight, if we are able, and the only way we can invent them is by effectively drawing them, in our lives. (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 223)

The role of repetition – particularly periodic repetition – in the consolidation of heterogeneous elements appears in various forms among various philosophical thinkers in the late 20th century. As I have alluded to throughout this thesis, within Butler's work it is the ritualized repetition of 'performativity' that gives gender the effect of a naturalized stable identity; while Bourdieu's 'structuring structures' are that which define and perpetuate social milieus. Although much of this thesis has been dedicated

to highlighting the problems with privileging repetitive structures, such as in Chapter 2 where we explored the reiteration of a 'masculine' habitus through learning the embodied 'history' of breaking, in this chapter I want to examine the potentiality that emerges through repetition, or what will be explained as breaking's 'foundational' steps, using Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'refrain'.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the 'refrain' is the expressive quality of a territory. It is the expression of familiarity that facilitates territorializations through disrupting the dominant organization of a milieu. As mentioned in Chapter 1, my understanding of the notion of territorialization is the power through which elements of an assemblage are transformed. This process refers to deterritorialization and reterritorialization and its associated 'decoding' and 'overcoding' of an assemblage. Perhaps pointing towards music's territorializing capacity, Deleuze and Guattari begin their chapter on the refrain in *A Thousand Plateaus* with a short tale:

> A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with his little song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, center in the heart of chaos. (2004, 343)

The refrain, here, is that which marks and draws a territory, whereby the familiar rhythms enable territorial consistency. This perhaps familiar image of a scared child alone in the dark is almost a refrain in and of itself – territorializing the pages of *A Thousand Plateaus* and its unfamiliar concepts with that which is recognizable. They continue, "[n]ow we are at home. But home does not preexist: it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile center, to organize a limited space" (Ibid.). The refrain is thus a productive way to conceptualize the transformation of organizations – from a scared child in the dark, the song as the expressive quality of the refrain initiates a deterritorialization of the space, organizing it into that which is 'calm and stable', or more simply, 'home'. It re-draws the consistency of the space, reterritorializing it via the expression of the familiar. It is the line that facilitates passage to another plane, a virtual landscape, and a home that is there in that it is felt, though not there visibly. Moreover, it is the repetition of this song, which the child continues to sing, that maintains this new territorial organization. Using the refrain to

analyse Sydney's breaking scene contextualizes why, in a dance style as prolific and varied as breaking, repetition is necessary to draw territorializations of the dance floor.

Repetition manifests in breaking through its 'foundation'. By foundation, I am referring to the form, technique, and ability to perform key steps and movements in breaking that subsequently underpin multiple, more complex steps and movements.[7] In short, foundation is a repetition of sorts. While repeating moves within dance to further mastery of style is by means unique to breaking, with any physical activity operating through stages of building technique, I want to emphasize that unlike many dance styles (for example, ballet), there is no fixed repertoire of moves within breaking, nor is there the requirement to conform to an 'ideal' body (Foster 1997). Therefore, repetition in breaking through 'foundation' is functional, in that it operates to give both consistency and familiarity to performances of breaking.

Through a Deleuze-Guattarian lens, foundation might be the 'expressive' components that facilitate territorializations of the dance floor as a site of 'breaking', regardless of the cultural or social setting. This function is also noted by Osumare, who writes, "[p]art of that socializing process in the global era of hip hop culture is the development of an Intercultural Body that is represented both similarly and differently in various parts of the globe" (2002, 36). This can be understood as the 'habitus' of breaking, and the 'structures' and parameters of embodied knowledge and movement, which are fundamental for productions of the new. I want to emphasize, though, that the refrain in breaking is by no means a consistent entity, as that would of course place it in opposition to the inherent fluidity of Deleuze and Guattari's mode of thought. Yet beyond this larger philosophical ordinance, within breaking 'foundation' does not constitute a singular technique, movement, and stylization of the body, form, or even step. Indeed, it might be a particular sequence that uses the feet, an action performed by the hands, a quick shoulder shrug, the technique of breaking hands in footwork (using full flattened fingers and the tip of the thumb to support the body's weight (see Figures 8 and 9 in List of Figures), or even the toprock characteristic of the 'hunch' (as we saw in Chapter 4 and Figure 6). The performance of all of these foundational elements at the same time is not required to facilitate a territorialization of the dance floor. Nor is the expression of foundation fixed, because techniques and moves are always being refined

[7] As we saw in Chapter 2, learning breaking foundation is not only connected with learning the history of the dance, but also establishes good technique for other, more complex steps, and this was explicated with the example of 'C.C.s'.

and further developed. In this way, and as Deleuze and Guattari explain, the refrain is not only territorial, but "becomes amorous and social, and changes accordingly" (2004, 358), and thus the refrain remains open to new territorializations and expressions. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari see expression as not fixed, as they clarify, "[t]o express is not to depend upon; there is an autonomy of expression" (Ibid., 350).

While breakers must learn their 'foundation', the key steps and techniques repeated and recognizable across the breaking repertoire, developing individual style, or 'originality', is considered of the upmost importance. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the importance of style can be mapped to hip-hop's development in the Bronx throughout the 1970s (Banes 1994; J. Chang 2007; George 2005a; Fogarty 2012; Rose 1994; Schloss 2009). For example, Banes argues, breakers must "flaunt a unique personal style within a conventional format" (1994, 145). There are important subcultural conventions to learn, here, due to the way original moves are treasured, and because copying another breaker's moves or combinations are considered 'bites'. For example, in our interview J-One describes the relationship between originality and identity:

> [F]or a breaker a move is a *lot* about their identity, of who they are and how they see themselves, and being able to put your own moves online and other people to see it halfway across the other side of the world and then take that move and copy it without having done the *hard* work and the blood sweat and tears to *create* that move and they just *rip* it off someone and just do it yourself and exploit it for what it is and take all the glory, without recognizing and acknowledging the person that really deserves it, that creates a lot of enemies and creates a lot of bad blood (interview, October 24, 2014)

As J-One points to, here, 'style' is also connected with other important hip-hop conventions, including 'representation' (the subcultural standing a breaker has in the community), and 'respect' (recognizing their contributions and authority). Both J-One and Banes (in her comments above) reveal the underlying tension in hip-hop, whereby style reflects a stable, inherent identity.

Yet the transnational and diasporic nature of contemporary breaking culture has led to more open-ended tactics of the management of 'biting', and I see these tactics as productively weakening this link between style/originality and identity. For example, throughout his workshops b-boy PoeOne describes the foundational steps he teaches as

‘tools’ for breakers to create their own moves (see Appendix B for workshop details).[8] Here, he differentiates between ‘steps’ and ‘moves’, with steps referring to the basic structure of the movement, and ‘move’ referring to breakers’ ‘making it their own’ and infusing it with their own style. This process is also known as ‘flipping a move’, which involves modifying a move so that it is your ‘own’ or recognizably different from the source. These strategies are not dissimilar to contemporary tap, as Willis explains: “[i]t is no secret that tap dancers ‘steal’ steps from each other; however, in a discussion with any of the tap dance masters the philosophy of ‘take it and make it your own’ prevails” (1996, 154). This difference might be as simple as the different ways different bodies perform the move, or a placement of a hand, an extra kick, and so on.

Yet in a digital era, creating original moves can be harder due to the proliferation of breaking footage accessible online. B-boy Willastr8 describes how to navigate originality in this digital age, while also pointing to his conceptualization of ‘originality’:

> [W]ith the internet, with the overexposure, it suffocates creativity, unless you can recognize that you need to spend more time developing your skills autonomously rather than just relying on videos for inspiration, and to develop a style as unique to you. And it doesn’t have to be crazy original, it doesn’t have to be you know, totally weird, original b-boys are just being themselves, originality is not hard, you just have to be yourself. It’s not about doing the *weirdest* stuff in the world, nah it’s just about being yourself, that’s originality, you are you, so the way that you break, if it’s your response to the music then it’s totally original as far as I’m concerned (interview, December 22, 2014)

Originality is thus not subject to a specific creative limit or ideal. Indeed, Willastr8 calls attention to how ‘originality’ might emerge through a bodily reaction to the music.

Moreover, a Sydney b-boy explained to me that if your main identifying features (such as your face) were obstructed, your style should still be identifiable to others.[9] This particular understanding of style, however, recognizable through ways of

[8] The idiom ‘Each One Teach One’ is a well-known cultural convention in hip-hop (Fogarty 2013), and reflects the importance of sharing knowledge.

[9] For example, while watching *Step Up 3D* (2010), my boyfriend (a breaker) quickly recognized the main character was using a ‘dance double’ – b-boy Kid David. As this was during my early learning of breaking, I could not understand how he could recognize a breaker, especially since the use of a dance double was not meant to be visible.

moving, undermines the hierarchical organization of bodies, whereby the face or head are the signifiers of identity. Moreover, it also calls attention to the reiterative performance of style, which is not the representation of a fixed identity or individual, but rather a 'style' or genre that is portrayed and conveyed as open to possibility. That in the breaking scene there are even politics and concerns about 'biting' style, confirms how characteristics of style are not fixed to bodies. Furthermore, breakers are not fixed within their own style, in that style is not necessarily a restriction on their bodily expression, as they draw inspiration from a wide range of sources. This *includes* other breakers, as moves are continuously (re)taught, adopted, and transformed through each body's performance. In this way, 'style' may be resonances, because the performance of these specific 'moves' facilitates passage to another time and place, indeed bodily assemblage.

Moreover, depending on the context, breakers may respond to their opponent in battle, or a song in a way that contrasts their specific style. Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari there are important distinctions between 'style' and 'signature', in that 'signature' "is not the indication of a person; it is a chancy formation of a domain" (2004, 349). As these formations, in their interrelationship develop into style. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

> The signature becomes style. In effect, *expressive qualities or matters of expression enter into shifting relations with one another that 'express' the relation of the territory they draw to the interior milieu of impulses to the exterior milieu of circumstances*. (Ibid., 349–350)

In this way, we could untether style as a fixed expression, representative of the constructs of a stable identity, organized body, or even specific context, and perceive it, instead, as an intensity that manifests in the moment of the body's movement and draws relationships across formations.

There is thus an inherent tension within breaking culture in demonstrating 'foundation' while simultaneously developing original 'style', and it is here that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the refrain continues to be productive. Indeed, the refrain's expressive qualities may take shape and territorialize through the 'conventional format' of breaking. It regroups the forces of the dance floor through familiar (though not static) motifs and counterpoints, and I will elaborate on how this

manifests on the dance floor in further detail below. Deleuze and Guattari incorporate space for the 'new' in this concept through acknowledging how the refrain is eternally impeded by a 'crack' (Ibid., 353) of difference and chaos. This 'crack' in the refrain, where different 'territorial motifs' and marks may enter, facilitates perpetual growth and fluidity. By using the refrain to understand breaking, we can see how the potential for difference in the refrain, or foundation, manifests in the expectation that breakers individualize their approach and interpretation of the foundational elements, and even use them to create 'original' moves and variations. Original moves, however, are not merely moves created or even reterritorialized from another domain (such as influences from capoeira), but have an element of distinctiveness to them, a 'unique style' as Banes states above. Individual style may comprise of the choice of movements performed, such as foundational or original moves/transitions, set structure, such as how those moves are put together in a performance, and the manner in which those movements are performed through the stylization of the body. Importantly, breaking's vast vocabulary of movement means that choice and inventions of the 'new' are *available*.

The value placed on 'originality' facilitates the space in breaking culture for moments of distinct bodily expression, and with repetition, such expressions can be incorporated into the larger foundational framework, in turn reterritorializing the organization of the space in which breaking is performed. The categorization of moves – into 'original' or 'foundation' – is thus a complicated terrain.[10] While some moves are named after breakers (such as 'C.C.' and 'Icey-Ice'), others are known as being created by specific breakers, and may be a 'signature' move, or has transitioned into a foundational move through extensive periodic repetition. For example, the air-chair, which was created by PoeOne, has become one such 'foundational' freeze. Signature moves, in that they maintain a consistency within a specific assemblage, are original moves created by breakers. For example, b-boy Dyzee's elbow freeze (see Dyzee Supernaturalz 2014), Hong10's use of only his fingers to freeze, and Willastr8's use of his ankles or the tops of his feet to 'drop' (see Figure 16).[11]

[10] See video titled 'Who is better BITER by Poe1, Hong10, Neguin & Maurizio' (2015) for an in-depth discussion by prominent breakers in the global culture regarding how original moves are incorporated into foundation.

[11] Willastr8's distinctive style has seen him featured in the *YouTube* compilation 'Who Got the Flava Today' (2012).

Figure 16 – B-boy Willastr8. *JUSE Crew 15-Year Anniversary*. December 11, 2015. JNY Photography.

Importantly, the distinctiveness of these moves is coupled with the expectation that they are not 'bitten'. Breakers can thus become memorialized through the transition of their original moves into 'foundation', that is, from territorialization through deterritorialization to reterritorialization. Yet there are also variations to moves, and original (though not necessarily signature) variations. For example, the foundational move '6 step' has myriad variations, including well-known variations by b-boy PoeOne and b-boy Puzzles, which might also be taught in their workshops.[12] Within each move and body there are layers upon layers of variation and individualization, of familiarities and singularities, thus further coding the breaking body as a type of assemblage.

Any cultural assemblage is always constituted through the repetition of a series of singularities, and where such repeatability eventually translates into style (such as literature, and cinema, see Colebrook 2002b; Pisters 2003). In elucidating how the

[12] This can also happen through networks, as breakers travel and perhaps learn new moves and variations, and then carry them to another place. During one of PoeOne's workshops, I created an original 4-step variation, which PoeOne, as he has told me, has shown other breakers in his workshops worldwide, telling them a b-girl from Australia made this (proceeding to demonstrate and share the step). Thus while this step may have originated on my own body, it is not fixed there.

refrain operates, and how, through expression, can new territories and assemblages take form, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> The matters of expression themselves must present characteristics making this taking on of consistency possible. We have seen that they have an aptitude to enter into internal relations forming motifs and counterpoints: the territorializing marks become territorial motifs or counterpoints, the signatures and placards constitute a 'style'. These are the elements of a discrete or fuzzy aggregate; but they become consolidated, take on consistency. To this extent, they have effects, such as reorganizing functions and gathering forces. (2004, 363)

In order for style to avoid becoming a banal repetition of habit (such as that which necessarily constitutes habitus or a consolidated representation), instigating points of difference are essential, and within breaking, it is the breaker's political responsibility to contribute a stylistic difference that will not only take on a collective expression, but also broaden the breaking assemblage so it is more *inclusive* of difference.

Breaking, then, demands a mastery of the techniques and 'habitus' that define and perpetuate the culture, but also a singularity – the development of the elusive 'originality' that sets individuals apart. Managing both – originality and foundation – however, is vital: while practitioners want to be recognized for their innovativeness, the refrain is required to initiate processes of territorializations. Indeed, understanding these practices and philosophies, and knowing 'your' foundation, productively enables lines of flight to emerge. This occurs in breaking as 'original' movements and combinations become legitimized, or in a way contained, through the dance's foundation. As Schloss explains:

> [D]ancers who do have a strong understanding of foundation can be boldly innovative, knowing that they are well grounded in the tradition. In fact, when b-boys and b-girls are criticized for being overly abstract or experimental, their first line of defense is usually to demonstrate–either verbally or physically–their knowledge of foundation. It is notable that this defense, if properly executed, is almost always accepted. (2009, 51)

Indeed, *through* the foundation, the formation of the territory, lines of flight emerge. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, "[l]ines of flight, for their part, never consist in running away from the world but rather in causing runoffs" (2004, 225). In this way, we can see how lines of flight, indeed 'original' moves, are not a way to *escape* the foundation, but rather to cause 'runoffs' within this repertoire of moves and techniques. Original moves are that which facilitate moments of rupture, and are in and of themselves deterritorializations. There is larger potential to this process, as, in their discussion of assemblages, Deleuze and Guattari elucidate:

> What holds all the components together are *transversals*, and the transversal itself is only a component that has taken upon itself the specialized vector of deterritorialization. In effect, what holds an assemblage together is not the play of framing forms or linear casualties but, actually or potentially, its most deterritorialized component, a cutting edge of deterritorialization. (Ibid., 371)

With this in mind, we might conceptualize 'original' moves as that which holds together the breaking assemblage. It is the vector of transformation that always threatens to disrupt and decode the breaking assemblage, yet in doing so, initiate the reconfiguring of the elements, that may establish another type of frequency – one perhaps subject to rigid segmentarity, or perhaps an 'absolute' deterritorialization that smooths the striated space, facilitating passage onto the plane of consistency. This potential in breaking has been noted by Guattari once in an interview:

> [B]reak dancing and music, all these dances which are both hyperterritorialized and hypercorporeal, but that, at the same time, make us discover spectrums of possible utilization, completely unforeseen traits of corporality, and that invent a new grace of entirely unheard-of possibilities of corporality. (Guattari quoted in Stivale 1998, 222)

To further explore these 'unforeseen traits of corporality' I will turn to the breaking practice of 'the cypher'. My aim is to highlight how breaking operates through rhizomatic logic, in that it asserts familiarity through myriad options while simultaneously engendering a new pathway via the production of the 'new', or 'unique' style. It is both the familiar and unfamiliar, the complexity of which refuses organization into dualistic structures.

Deterritorializing 'the body': Creating New Assemblages in 'The Cypher'

> Cyphers do not produce sameness but instead can posit those differences as generative of the whole. (Johnson 2009, 72)

In this section, I want to question the possibilities of moving beyond the stronghold of gendered significations through examining specific qualities in what the breaking scene calls 'the cypher'.[13] Returning to Deleuze-Guattari's notion of deterritorialization, I want to highlight how the more process-based aesthetic that emerges in the space of 'the cypher' facilitates more open-ended possibilities of bodily difference to emerge.[14]

The cypher is an impromptu circle formation that manifests around a breaker dancing,[15] and is exemplary of the ways by which breaking facilitates the space for deterritorializations for a number of reasons. First, its circular and democratic structure challenges the dichotomy between performer and spectator; secondly, it is less regulated because it is situated beyond the arena of formalized competitions and judging systems; finally, its emphasis on improvisation is indicative of embracing of the 'now'.

The cypher is democratic simply because any dancer from the circle can enter its circular dance floor demarcated by breaking bodies. Unlike formalized competitions, where breakers must register to enter the competition, wait their turn to battle, and then wait their 'round' to enter the dance floor, cyphers spontaneously materialize and rely upon the circle of breaking bodies for it to be maintained. In other words, the cypher fails if it is only one breaker performing, and so the energy of the circle must be maintained through breakers taking turns to enter the circle.[16] As Schloss writes, "[t]he

[13] I refer to it as 'the cypher' rather than 'a cypher' for specific reasons, and these are productively elucidated by Schloss, who writes: "Rhetorically, it is often referred to as 'the' cypher, rather than 'a' cypher', which suggests that all cyphers are, in some abstract way, connected" (2006, 413–414).

[14] Interestingly, the notion of the 'cipher' emerges in Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of 'concepts' (1994, 15) and the 'war machine' (2004, 430). The 'cipher' is the secret code or combination that drives processes of change.

[15] These circles manifest at breaking events, such as training sessions, jams, and competitions (though in a separate space to the formalized battles, or during a break between battles).

[16] The breaker improvises for twenty to thirty seconds – due to the intensity and athleticism of breaking, sets do not typically exceed this length – and then another breaker from the circle dances in the center. While there is no official sequence to who enters the cypher next, like any cultural activity there are unspoken conventions and 'etiquettes' that regulate its practice (Schloss 2009; Osumare 2002, 2008).

cypher's very informality and transience are part of its power, it appears when and where it is needed, then melts away" (2009, 99).

It is this circular and inclusive characteristic of the cypher that Gottschild views as a disruption to the binaries of performer/spectator, as she writes: "there is always the possibility that the person who is an onlooker may be drawn into the action and become a performer" (2002, 9). In this way, the cypher reconfigures traditional and hierarchized relationships between the audience and performer, as bystanders are almost always waiting for their turn to dance. For Pabon, in the cypher,

> the circular dance space that forms naturally once the dancing begins, the dancers can direct their performance in various directions, uninhibited and free from all counts and cues. This freedom is the key to creativity since the dancer is constantly challenged with variations in music, an undefined dance space, and potential opponents among the audience. (2006, 24)

Indeed, and unlike competitions where there may be a set order, breakers do not *have* to enter the cypher, but might upon being moved by a song, or by another dancer's set.

In contrast to breaking competitions, the cypher is a more liberated space for creative experimentation. The space of the battle places limitations upon the possibilities to develop new styles and connections because it is regulated and organized through judging criteria, time constraints, and a limited number of rounds per breaker and/or crew. Because the stakes are high in competitions, breakers must perform to perfection. Thus, breakers prefer to execute well-rehearsed moves, or even sets, wary that if they 'crash' a move, they immediately lose the round. While learning how to respond to 'mistakes' is an important skill in breaking, as Schloss (2009) describes breakers must learn how to both hide mistakes and turn them to their advantage, there is less pressure in the cypher to execute moves to perfection. This can be through not trying to *correct* the mistake, such as stopping and attempting the move again, which would consequently extenuate the error, but rather 'going with the flow' of the body's movement. In other words, pretending it never happened and going into something else, or even emphasizing the 'mistake' by turning it into a new move.

Consequently, breakers must be ready to respond to a changing situation, as for Schloss, this "is more important than maintaining allegiance to a prearranged plan that is no longer relevant" (2009, 101). Rather than 'correcting' or retraining such moves

back into acceptability, such an unexpected ephemeral transgression could work to expand breaking's repertoire. Indeed, if breakers liked the expression that evolved out of the 'mistake', they may train it, developing it into a new 'original' move. In this way, 'mistakes' remain open to deterritorializations of the body, as they are inexorably unplanned. They are that which cannot be accounted for, and are thus productive sites through which to examine the possibilities in breaking for absolute deterritorializations of gender.

Thus the cypher is by no means as regulated as competitions, and breakers can experiment more 'freely' and enter into new connections with other bodies and the music (and I return to music below).[17] As b-boy Willastr8 observes, "in competitions, yes you can dance like you're free, but there are still constraints, inevitably, because you're getting judged, so you have to fit the constraints of the judges subjectivity" (interview, December 22, 2014). Consequently, dancers are often less willing to take risks in competitions, and this concern for their performance can shut down the possibilities engendered in the 'now'. Indeed, in contrast to competitions, as Willastr8 differentiates, you can: "go and do *whatever the hell you want* in cyphers, cos you don't have to worry about winning or losing *jack*, you're just there to dance" (interview, December 22, 2014). As a space where breakers can improvise, test out new or still developing moves, the cypher augments the territorializing capacities of the body. Indeed, 'going with the flow' provides a set of conditions for breakers to not resist exploring creative expression and experiencing new ways of moving. As Schloss observes, "[d]ancing in the cypher forces b-boys to instantly incorporate mistakes into a larger framework that recharacterizes them as being correct" (2009, 101). Improvisation in the cypher thus facilitates the expression of new territorial motifs and marks passage into the breaking assemblage.

Within the cypher, the body is the means through which to communicate and express. Indeed there are very little 'words' spoken, if at all. Though, in this way it is not 'the body' as that which is dualistically defined, but rather *parts* of the body. Indeed, the breaking repertoire – new and old – can be broken down into stylizations of different parts of the body. As a result of the cultural conventions that surround 'foundation' and 'originality', each movement in breaking is either layered with

[17] While informal battles may erupt in the cypher, as a breaker might 'call out' another breaker, this changes the characteristics of the cypher to beyond my focus here.

histories and connections with other contexts and bodies or is an expression of the singularity – that which is unforeseen.

Specifically, what we can understand as the refrain in breaking – those familiarized steps, movements, forms, techniques and stylizations of the body – facilitates connections to be made with a multiplicity of histories, places and other breakers. For Deleuze and Guattari, the refrain expression operates as a type of 'transformative vector' that cuts across and intersect with other territorial organizations.[18] As they write, "[a] matter of expression is never a vestige or a symbol. […] It is an operator, a vector. It is an *assemblage converter*" (2004, 358). Therefore, characteristics of expression operate as the passages that initiate new connections or unforeseen relationships. Consequently, through this concept we can see how each breaking move acts is not a 'representation', but rather facilitates passage to other assemblages, and encapsulates the territory's power to transform.

In breaking, each move is layered with histories and connections. They may connect with a foundational step, such as '6-step', or a variation taught by PoeOne throughout his international workshops, and an adjustment to PoeOne's step with the placement of the forearm, and though this adjustment a connection with another breaker's tendency to use this move, or even a resonation with a previous event where the breaker performed this move, and so on. These vibrations with other performances might be viewed as paying homage to someone else's style or originality (and here, if during a battle, the emcee might announce into the microphone: 'shout out to CrazyLegs' for example), or it may go unspoken and only those 'in-the-know' will recognize the homage. These virtual connections fleetingly manifest, as within a few seconds the breaker has transitioned into another move. With regard to the 'virtual' potential enabled through art, Colebrook writes:

> But it is art that brings us to the essence of perception and virtual difference. One of the ways this is possible is through the presentation of time, not a time that is merely the link between one action and another (actualised time), but the differing time that allows us to perceive the actual at all. This is just what happens in literature in an epiphany, which moves from the perception of

[18] The relationship between territories and assemblages are explained by Deleuze and Guattari when they write, "[t]he territory is the first assemblage, the first thing to constitute an assemblage; the assemblage is fundamentally territorial" (2004, 356).

viewing subjects to a virtual perception, viewed by no one. (2002b, 155)

Using Colebrook's approach to time, and perception, we might see how the use of a well-known breaking move is both an actualized assertion, though simultaneously a virtual connection. Indeed, and to return to the example of music, Deleuze and Guattari elucidate how the refrain facilitates connections beyond dominant modes of thought, as they write: "the melodic landscape is no longer a melody associated with a landscape; the melody itself is a sonorous landscape in counterpoint to a virtual landscape" (2004, 351). In this way, breaking opens up multiple, divergent lines of time, as a particular movement signals another experience, another assemblage. Repetition is thus not the repetition of the 'same', but rather a repetition of a multiplicity of difference.

While every breaker may not know these histories, there is still an element of familiarity that manifests upon repeatedly seeing these steps and stylizations of the body, and this highlights the fluidity and rhizomatic mode of breaking's history. Breakers may have their own rhizomatic account of how these movements are connected. Therefore, breaking is highly coded, with each performance a corporeal mesh of past breakers and histories. Each step is located within the rhizomatic logic of the 'and', as parts of the body create connections with other styles, places, times, events, people, and groups of people (crews). Through breaking, the rhythms of another time and place are reterritorialized onto the dance floor through the moment of the body's movement. Through breaking, then, the dominant organization of the body is de- and re-assembled, while individually remaining open to myriad connections. The breaking repertoire, manifesting in each moment of actualization, is a deterritorialization of the dominant, indeed gendered, organization of the body. It is not only a reopening of the possibilities of the present, but an opening of time, simultaneously actual and virtual. We can begin to see, then, how breaking can be thought of, indeed experienced, beyond binary and Oedipal structures through the way it affirms a difference in 'time'. It opens onto a different plane through the flows, intensities, and drifting lines that are drawn through the breaking.

Observing the convention of the breaking cypher, Osumare writes, "it is the collective energy of the circle to which each individual has contributed that is evaluated as success or failure. Therefore, this communal aesthetic promotes a particular kind of socialization" (2002, 36). As I will attempt to show, this type of 'socialization' is one built upon creative exchange, and is exemplary of how the breaking body operates as a

type of assemblage. Through breaking, often moves that are thematically or conceptually connected, or 'motifs', are experimented with through the different dancing bodies entering the cypher. Sydney b-boy Willastr8 explains this process:

> Sometimes it's just with two or three guys and those guys are just playing around, but they're still dancing, so you'll jump in with them and it's just an exchange, you know one guy will do something and you'll think "oh hey I can do something similar" but you do it your own way and you'll kind of show it off, and then he'll respond, and it's just like a tennis match – you'll go back and forth indefinitely. (interview, December 22, 2014)

These events, which Willastr8 conceives of as 'exchanges' or even 'play', are ideological and conceptual conversations that manifest corporeally. By experimenting with motifs – such as kicks, contortions, slides, balancing on different body parts, and different stylizations of the body – the body's dominant organization is reterritorialized as different body parts are given new emphasis.

The level of code in these momentary movements is extremely high. During my initial foray into Sydney's breaking scene I could not understand these conversations transpiring on the dance floor. It seemed almost random to me when the breakers in the circle would nod after the dancer did a particular movement, say 'yeah' or 'nice' or even put their hand out in a demonstration of 'giving props' (acknowledgement). There was no other explanation to the movement, no verbal description to what the breaker was trying to do; rather the conversation was occurring in a different realm, as those on the side could see how a particular movement connected to its predecessor, how a breaker was exploring a thematic motif throughout their set, or indeed how they took what the breaker before them did and added to it, varied and built upon the move or concept through their own body's movement.

This ability to 'respond' to the breaker before you is an extremely important skill in breaking, manifesting both in the cypher and in battles. For example, and this will also explain what I mean by 'respond', in the *R16* judging system 'conversation' is one of the five categories that is judged (under the rubric of 'Cypher / Battle'). In his description of this category, b-boy Dyzee writes:

> In short, this element is about who was conversating [sic], debating and

> responding more against their opponent. The judge is looking for a question and reply. For example, if someone presents a specific style or technique, the following person should respond with a similar, better or upgraded version. (R16 2016)

In this way, conversations, exchanges, or even responses that occur through the breaking body, and enriched through the knowledge of the dance, facilitate new connections on the dance floor. It is a passage to another domain, a new event that contains its own consistencies and formations.

Through Willastr8's description, we can begin to see how in breaking *parts* of the body facilitate rhizomatic connections between and across myriad places, events, and people, understood at varying levels by those who have become fluent in the multiple histories and connections within breaking. Moreover, moves and connections might exist *purely* in the virtual, as breakers can see what a breaker is about to do, or trying to do, or attempted to do. They may know the breaker particularly well, as recognize the beginning of a combination, thus opening up onto a virtual future. Through the breaker's body, these disparate practices and motifs enter into new, unforeseen relationships with one another. The competitive, yet also collaborative, space of the cypher is a productive forum through which breakers can explore style, while also pushing their peers beyond their existing bodily repertoire. As Schloss writes, "[e]ssentially, cyphering is to b-boys what jamming is to musicians: a collective enterprise that mixes improvisation, competition, and mutual support" (Schloss 2009, 99). Thus via these corporeal conversations in the cypher, each body becomes a vector that transforms the next body's expression. It pushes breakers beyond their own repertoire of self-expression, as different styles and ways of moving are deterritorialized from their original milieu and, through the refrain, reterritorialize the breaking body.

The cypher facilitates new relationships and connections to be made with the music, again de-assembling the body facilitating new types of assemblages. For example, in my own cyphering experience, my body is more open to enter into new relationships with the music, unhindered by the large crowd of spectators that are coupled with competitions. In this smaller, almost safer space, I might anticipate a musical motif and dance with it through a particular part of my body, such as a shoulder shuffle to a drum break. I might suddenly move a different direction than I

usually do, or my foot might step out of form, or I might accidentally lose my balance. As highlighted above, to 'hide' these mistakes, I often result in creating a new move. Despite extensive practice, the cypher is often when dancers feel free to 'lose themselves' in their bodily expression, thus opening up the space for singularities – that unforeseen – to emerge. Indeed, this is an important component of improvisation, as Foster writes,

> improvisers can craft their composition at the same time that they allow opportunities for the unanticipated to emerge. By improvising, the dancers were literally placing their bodies in the social rupture that Rose describes and dedicating themselves to the creation and resolution of hazardous corporeal dilemmas. (1998, 15)

Dancers commonly refer to this experience as 'letting go', or 'losing' oneself in the music. It is these moments where the body can experience 'new' intensities with its surroundings, whether that may be other bodies, the physical environment, or even the music, as described above.

Moreover, such territorializations can momentarily disrupt molar representations, as they transform and deterritorialize the reductive organization of bodies as 'masculine' or 'other'. For example, Banes observes the 'set of motifs' (2004, 97) that emerge in the 'freeze' through the exploration of subjunctive bodily states: "things not as they are, but as they might be – comparing and contrasting youthful male vitality with its range of opposites: women, animals (dogs, horses, mules), babies, old age, injury and illness [...] and death" (Ibid.). While such a practice could be read as reinforcing categories that conform to binary logic (man/woman, young/old, and so on), the exploration of these 'subjunctive modes' might connect with a capacity for creative-becomings. Returning to the notion of 'becoming', Colebrook productively explicates the term within Deleuze's canon:

> Becoming, for Deleuze, is not a relation between two terms. Becoming-animal is not a human being impersonating an animal; becoming-woman is not a transformation to a pre-given image of what woman is or should be. Becoming is a direct connection, where the self that contemplates *is* nothing other than the singularities it perceives. (2002b, 155)

Within breaking culture, such a re-conceptualization of bodily expression changes the lens and implicit hierarchy through which the dance is perceived. Indeed, such a framework of 'difference', and the conventions whereby difference is affirmed, built upon, and varied, may (re)create breaking culture as a space that is both dynamic and inclusive.

The performance of these moves that are historically grounded in breaking's global culture transforms the body into a rhizomatic vessel. With each choice of movement expressed through the body, new connections are made and reterritorialized into the present. Movements within breaking, then, are rich in their affective capacity: they produce a momentary change, as they engender new relations between and across bodies. As such, the cypher productively encapsulates breaking's potentiality for new becomings in the moment of the body's action. I want to close this section with an extract from Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the refrain:

> Finally, one opens the circle a crack, opens it all the way, lets someone in, calls someone, or else goes out oneself, launches forth. One opens the circle not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself. As though the circle tended on its own to open onto a future, as a function of the working forces it shelters. This time, it is in order to join with the forces of the future, cosmic forces. One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune. Along sonorous, gestural, motor lines that begin to bud 'lines of drift' with different loops, knots, speeds, movements, gestures, and sonorities. (2004, 343–344)

Deleuze and Guattari's description of the refrain, here, so productively encapsulates the potentiality of the cypher to facilitate larger deterritorializations beyond the confines of binary thought. Like the refrain, in the cypher the circular structure is opened through a crack, when dancer is called in from the circle, launches forth, and hazards an improvisation. The familiarity of the foundation, 'home', enables the point to venture forward, enabled through the lines of music. Here, bodies drift across the space and repertoires, change speeds, contain knots of familiarity, develop loops and motifs. In doing so, breakers move away from the 'old forces' of the masculinist lens, or indeed dualistic modes of thought, which continue to push up against it, threatening it with

segmentarity. Instead, the cypher creates a new region, where breaking bodies can open onto a future, beyond that which was sheltered, and that is 'to come'. The deterritorializations enabled through the cypher joins with the World, though not a world we normatively perceive through the lens of dualism, of masculine and feminine and male and female, but a World that is open to possibilities, an inclusive region that creates and affirms difference and, consequently, deterritorializes gender in Sydney's breaking scene.

Conclusion

Breaking's cultural conventions refocus on the possibilities of the present as dancers are both inspired and pushed by their counterparts. The emergence of new territorial marks and motifs through the conventions of the cypher enable a deterritorialization of the stronghold of gender, while simultaneously opening the body to new connections, flows, and consistencies. The inclusivity enabled through the cypher demonstrates how breaking can be reterritorialized into a space that includes greater bodily expression and possibilities. This new milieu is not prescriptive to molar norms or even binary structures, but encapsulates the processes of becoming through an emphasis on the 'now'; openness to creative bodily expression, and new relationships between and across bodies, all of which are facilitated through 'the body's' deterritorialization.

Conclusion – Looking to the future

I began this thesis with recounting my initial foray into the male-dominated breaking scene in Sydney, including my early assumptions about the nature of gendered engagement, and the questions I had regarding why there were so few b-girls in this space. In this conclusion, rather than provide a chapter-by-chapter summary, I want to return to these assumptions in order to shed light on how they have changed through this research project. In doing this, I also want to look to the future of Sydney's breaking scene, and suggest what my insights in this thesis might mean for breaking and broader Australian gender politics. The work in this thesis foregrounds a future examination of how breaking might facilitate a more cohesive deterritorialization that can cut across to other cultural assemblages, such as broader Australian culture, or other similarly gender-dominated spaces. Indeed, a more fluid and open-ended understanding of bodily expression enables examinations into transgressive practices and negotiations in other masculine, indeed gender, dominated domains.

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to show how deterritorialization is operating on several different levels at once: through the performance of dance moves, through clothing styles, through bodily comportment, and through experimentations with 'difference'. In calling attention to the possibility for online technologies to render visible the achievements of b-girls overseas, in this thesis I attempted to show the larger potential for transgressive practices internationally to facilitate deterritorializations of the local. There is room to analyse, here, how we can make these forums and communities more visible so as to rupture the male-dominated image of breaking. It may also be productive to examine what structures and representations are different in the locales with higher participation of b-girls, such as Canada and parts of Europe. How are such lines of flight more productively enabled in these assemblages? Is increasing the numbers of female participants the way, as Catwmn phrased, for less of a gender bias in the scene?

In many ways, the structure of this thesis followed my own critical realizations that emerged both through my theoretical research and b-girling practice. At first overwhelmed with the masculinity of the scene and how b-girls were sidelined, the first half of this thesis focused on analysing the discourses, practices and representations that support the masculine construction of breaking in Sydney. This not only assured

me that female bodies are in no way 'lacking' in their physical capacities, but also shifted me towards an emphasis on how bodies are both constituted and shaped through specific histories and discourses. Consequently, I became aware of how access to the dance floor was regulated not only through broader patriarchal restrictions and biologically determinist discourses, but also through larger politics that optimize bodily capacities to produce ideologically appropriate subjects.

Discourses of normalization, gendered assumptions, and the wider denouncement of 'pleasurable' activities intersect with the gender politics of Sydney's breaking scene in shaping and defining performativities. I then wanted to understand how, as a b-girl, I could negotiate breaking's dominant masculine construction, even reclaim particular masculine significations women are normatively denied. I wanted to explore how through my own participation in breaking I could deplete the potency of these masculinist signifiers that were representative of an oppressive patriarchal order. I began to experiment and push myself further on the dance floor, inspired by my peers – both locally and internationally – to utilize breaking to transgress and displace gendered norms and overturn the oppressive components of breaking that omit and sideline femininity. As such, I critically analysed my conformity to normative feminine significations, which was at first a way to overcompensate for my increasing masculine stylings, then later to reassert them in a way that undermines their dominant subordination.

Despite how far I had come, I was still not content with how I had addressed my early questions about gender. I wanted to turn a critical lens on the creativity and almost athletic excess within breaking, as I was consistently surprised at what the breaking body *could do*. Indeed, in writing my final chapter, I became aware of b-boy Kill becoming the first in the world to perform two one-elbow air-flares in a row – a feat not previously thought possible.[1] Additionally, I was privy to the growing number of b-girls in Europe that were bringing to the fore the distinct and musical style b-girls expressed on the dance floor, as well as the increasing numbers of b-girls in Japan and South Korea, even under the age of eighteen, excelling in power moves previously dominated by their male peers. How, then, could I reconcile my theoretical impetus to emphasize the positivity of breaking with my empirical research that revealed the lived inequalities and subordinations in hip-hop culture? How could I bring into the one

[1] Uploaded to his *Facebook* profile with over 107,000 views and shared 112 times (as of 20 May, 2016).

assemblage the transgressive actions of b-girls – actions as simple as 'being there' on the dance floor – without homogenizing bodily expression through reductive cultural constructs?

I slowly came to realize that viewing corporeal expression through the lens of gendered signifiers – transgressing or simply 'reclaiming' gendered codes and expressions – was doing more harm than good. It continued to place value in the hierarchization of gendered expression, while engraining bodily expression within the framework of 'representation'. Growing more experienced in my breaking practice, I wanted to explore the potentiality of breaking and its improvisatory practices, and how the body's movements were realized through a series of conjugations and flows, singularities and events. Through my practice, I could begin to understand the connections made between and across breakers, the way a move on a limb signalled a move on another temporally and geographically separated limb, conjoining in a *new* body. I could understand the complex coded discussions and creative exchanges that manifested in the cyphers, without breakers ever speaking a single word.

In doing this, I have attempted to re-conceptualize breaking as a more inclusive space that *embraces* difference, rupturing the authority of binary thought and instead positing expression on a continuum of difference. Through using gender as my case study – that in which I have the greatest insight – I hope this reconceptualization opens up the space for other, perhaps currently unknown, repressed differences to emerge. Viewing the breaking body as not a 'body' constituted through regulations and assumptions, but as an assemblage – forever entering in new rhizomatic connections with other bodies, histories, ideas, and structures and yet always open to new possibilities through the logic of the 'and' – creates a more ethical space for discussions of difference that is both grounded in the particular and the universal.

While I have explored some of the ways breaking might disrupt and deterritorialize dominant organizations of the body, particularly gender, in-line with Deleuzean philosophy I do not want to set out a utopian vision for the future of gender politics in breaking. As tempting as this may be, such a call to arms would place limitations on the prospects enabled through deterritorializations. I therefore want to conclude this thesis by emphasizing the larger potential of breaking that, in its process-based aesthetic, invests in a future untethered to today or even yesterday. I view breaking practice, including that of my own and my peers, as rich with possibilities and potential transformations that I leave open and looking outward. In this way, breaking

is not entirely contained within the hierarchy of the strata, but can be conceptualized as a line of flight that continues to engender new relations and connections. As I continue my breaking practice and research beyond the containment of this thesis, I will explore the potentialities enabled through a more process-based aesthetic. I see breaking practice as possibility, potentiality, and as vectors of transformation that facilitate deterritorializations of Sydney's breaking scene in ways that – right now – we cannot predict: they are "to come" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 109).

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Appendices

Appendix A – List of Breaking Events attended[1]

Down and Dirty Jam, watched 2v2 battle, ACE Studios, March 2011

Steady Rockin Jam, watched cypher jam, Crossover Dance Studios, April 2011

Bboy Troy's 30th Birthday Jam, ACE Studios, June 2011

Destructive Steps 3, watched 3v3 breaking 1v1 popping, Dance Alive Studio, July 2011

Ain't No Half Steppin, Tone Nightclub, Surry Hills, October 2011

SKB 11 Year Anniversary Jam, 5v5 breaking, Parramatta PCYC, November 2011

Australian Bboy Championships, watched full crew and 1v1 b-girl, Melbourne, November 2011

Shadow Wars 7 (the final one), watched crew and 1v1, b-boy and 1v1 b-girl, Christmas Island, December 2011

Sydney Bboy League, watched 3v3 crew battles, Parramatta, Bankstown, Epping, Liverpool, and the City, Feb-May 2012

Bboy PoeOne's Birthday Jam, watched 1v1, Crossover Dance Studios, March 2012

Roll the Dice Jam, watched 1v1 143-147 Liverpool Street, June 2012

Destructive Steps 4, watched 3v3 breaking and 1v1 popping, Wesley Conference Centre, July 2012

Synergy All Styles Battle, watched inter-uni and 2v2 freestyle, Sydney University August 2012

Higher Volume 5 at Beams Art Festival, watched 2v2 freestyle, Chippendale, September 2012

Platform 5 Hip Hop Festival: 'Freak the Technique', battled in 4v4, Carriageworks, October 2012[2]

*We B*Girlz*, watched 2v2 b-girl, Carriageworks, October 2012

SKB Anniversary Jam: Preliminaries, battled in 4v4, Parramatta PCYC, November 2012

Uprock Park Jam, battled in 3v3 battles, Wiley Park, November 2012

SKB Anniversary Jam: Top 8, battled in 4v4, Parramatta PCYC, November 2012

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[1] In chronological order. In Sydney, unless specified otherwise.
[2] First battle to compete in.

Australian Bboy Championships, battled in full crew and 1v1 b-girl, Melbourne, December 2012[3]

Pyramid Jam, watched 2v2 battles, Melbourne, December 2012

Code Bboy and *Steady Rockin*, entered cypher battles, Dance Generation Studios, January 2013

Freestyle Sessions: Australian Qualifier, battled in 3v3, Adelaide, February 2013

Sydney Bboy League, battled in 3v3 crew battles, Parramatta, Bankstown, Epping, Liverpool, and the City, Feb-May 2013

R16: Oceania Qualifier, battled in 8v8 and 1v1 and watched 1v1 under 18s, Darling Harbour, May 2013

Destructive Steps 5, battled in 3v3, Wesley Conference Centre, July 2013

Looze Control: Preliminaries, watched 2v2, Pitt St Mall, August 2013

Poe One's Cypher Jam, Dance Generation Studios, September 2013

Spring CypherMind Control, battled in 2v2, Heffron Hall, October 2013

Zou Rock Anniversary Jam, battled in 3v3, Perth, November 2013

Rooftop Showdown, watched 3v3, Chatswood Youth Centre, April 2013

RAW Jam, watched 2v2, Dancekool, December 2013

Code Green, watched 2v2, DG Studios, January 2014

Sydney Bboy League, 3v3 crew battles, Parramatta, Bankstown, Epping, Liverpool, and the City, Feb-April 2014

Toe Jam, battled in 2v2 breaking, watched 2v2 freestyle, Dance Central, February 2014

Cypher Supremo, Play Bar, March 2014

Red Bull BC One: Australian Qualifier, battled in 1v1, Central Plaza, Ultimo, July 2014[4]

Destructive Steps VI: Intercontinental Championships, battled in 3v3, watched 1v1 popping, UTS Basketball Courts, July 2014

Cypher Supremo, Play Bar, August 2014

Freestyle Sessions: Australian Qualifier, Adelaide, battled in 1v1 and 3v3, September 2014

UTS Hip-hop society: 'Breaking Bad', battled in 2v2 and watched 7-to-Smoke, October 2014

[3] Entered as part of a b-girl crew.
[4] In this competition I was the only b-girl to enter out of 63 competitors.

The Crossover 4th Anniversary, battled in 1v1 breaking, and watched 2v2 all-style and 1v1 popping, Wesley Conference Centre, October 2014

Spring Roundbox, watched 2v2 breaking and 3v3 all-style, Bankstown PCYC, October 2014

Uprock Jam, Wiley Park, battled in 3v3 breaking, November 2014

Pyramid Jam VI, watched 2v2 breaking and 2v2 under 18s, Melbourne, November 2014

Break Day Out, battled in full crew and 1v1 bgirl, Melbourne, November 2014

Pacific Break: Australian Qualifier, battled in 4v4, Central Park Sydney, December 2014

Liverpool Street Summer Jam, watched 2v2, Liverpool Street, March 2015

Sydney Cypher Supremo III, battled in cypher jam, Play Bar, March 2015

Unification Day 2015, battled in all-style, Crossover Dance Studios, March 2015

Mistery in a Box, battled in 2v2, Embassy Church, April 2015

Dance Battle (as part of National Youth Week), battled in 3v3, Chatswood Mall and Chatswood Youth Centre, April 2015

Redfern Block Party, cypher jam, April 2015

Game of Death 2: Uni battles 1v1 all-style, UTS Underground, May 2015

Jam Session / Tribute to Bigo, all v all, cypher jam, watched 7-to-Smoke, Crossover, June 2015

Red Bull BC One: Australian Qualifier, battled in 1v1, Paddington Uniting Church, July 2015

Destructive Steps 7, battled in 3v3 breaking, watched 1v1 popping, UTS Basketball Courts, July 2015

R16: Oceania Qualifier, 4v4 1v1 and 1v1 under 18s, King George Recreation Centre, August 2015

Cypher Supremo IV, battled in cypher jam, Play Bar, September 2015

StayFly Turns 2!, Surry Hills, October 2015

The Crossover V, watched 2v2 all-style, Seymour Centre, October 2015

Uprock Park Jam, battled 3v3 breaking, 3v3 juniors 2v2 all-styles, Wiley Park, November 2015

143 Liverpool Street Familiar 10 Year Anniversary Jam 1v1 breaking, 3v3 all-styles, 4v4 breaking, December 2015

MDA Christmas Battle, battled in 2v2 all-style, December 2015

Appendix B – List of Breaking Workshops taken

Breaking classes with B-boy Sammy Sex (‘143 Liverpool Street Familia’, Sydney) 2011-2013

B-boy PoeOne’s (‘Style Elements, L.A.; ‘Original Manners’, Adelaide) workshop, Crossover, June 2012

B-girl JK-47 (‘Frontlinez’, Canada) ‘b-girl workshop’, Street Uni (Liverpool), November 2012

B-boy KC-One (‘Flying Steps’, Germany) workshop (style and freeze combinations), Sydney Dance Company, March 2013

B-boy PoeOne’s workshop, Crossover, January 2013

Breaking classes with B-boy Hideboo (‘143 Liverpool Street Familia’, ‘RAW’, Sydney), Dancekool Studios 2013

B-boy Ippy’s (‘Zourok’, Perth) workshop, Crossover, May 2013

B-boy Tazo’s (‘Maximum’, South Korea) workshop, Crossover Dance Studio, July 2013

B-boy PoeOne’s workshop, Dance Generation Studios, October 2013

B-boy PoeOne’s workshop, Crossover, October 2013

B-boy Puzzles’s workshop, Crossover, October 2013

B-boy Ynot’s (‘Rock Steady Crew’, N.Y.) workshop, Crossover, November 2013

B-girl Bonita’s (‘Rock Steady Crew’, N.Y.) workshop, Dance Central, November 2013

B-boy Rush’s (‘7 Dollars’; ‘Fresh Sox’, Melbourne) workshop ‘Between the Cracks’, Dancekool, January 2014

B-boy PoeOne’s workshop, Crossover, 8th September 2014

B-boy PoeOne’s workshop, Crossover 27th September 2014

B-girl Ayumi’s (‘Body Carnival’, Japan) workshop, Melbourne, November 2014

B-boy PoeOne’s workshop, Crossover, July 2015

B-boy Puzzles’ (‘Supernaturalz’, Canada) workshop, Crossover, December 2015

Seminar on judging with B-boy PoeOne & B-boy Puzzles, Crossover, December 2015

Appendix C – Details of Interviews and Interview Participants

I supplemented my own experiences and observations of the scene with nine semi-structured, in-depth interviews with prominent figures in Sydney's breaking community between October 2014 and March 2015. I selected these individuals based on a number of factors, including the period of their involvement in the scene, the specificities of that involvement, and their crew's geographic location. While the City of Sydney is a large contingent for training sessions and competitions, crews throughout Greater Sydney region also constitute the Sydney scene. Most notably, these (currently) include to the West of the City: Bankstown, Liverpool, Cabramatta, and Parramatta, as well as to the North-West: Chatswood and Epping. As such, understanding the 'Sydney scene' is not possible without recognizing the various contributions of these regions. In addition to these factors of selection, preference was given to any female breaker, since there have been so few in Sydney's history.

The interviews I conducted ranged between twenty-five minutes to two hours, depending on the length of answers from the interviewees and their availability. All interviewees first signed an Information and Consent form. The interviews were all conducted in person in Sydney, except for Ill-FX who was overseas at the time and so the interview was conducted over *Skype* (video call). The interviews were audio recorded, which I then transcribed. The participants chose how they wanted to be identified in the project – either via pseudonyms, their breaking name, or their full name – and whether photos of them could be included in the thesis. Every person I contacted was both eager and excited to participate in the project, which demonstrated to me the widespread support and generosity of Sydney's breaking scene.

My varied interviews were important in calling attention to the multi-faceted nature of Sydney's breaking community. My interview with 'hip-hopper'/'b-girl' Rap-Attack, for example, exposed Sydney's underground street dance scene that manifested in the late 1970s. As a popper, b-girl and emcee Rap Attack recounted how Sydney's 'street dance' scene, the culture's initial label, was a development of the funk generation of the 1970s and 1980s, and this account importantly rebukes the popular narrative that hip-hop culture was introduced to Sydney through the mainstream films of the 1980s (see, for example, Maxwell 2003; Mitchell 2006). She explains, "so when

those movies came along I was like, 'oh yeah I already do that'" (interview, November 4, 2014). Additionally, Rap-Attack is considered Sydney's earliest b-girl, actively dancing until the 1990s and returning again to support the scene in the early 2000s. In her interview Rap-Attack remembered 'Spice' – the only other female she remembers breaking at the time: "people have *told* me that were other girls, and I honestly don't remember any of them doing it *seriously* outside of that" (Ibid.). As such, Rap-Attack's extensive engagement through to the early 1990s disrupts the dominant image of masculinity that defines breaking culture. It is perhaps surprising that there has been no mention of Rap-Attack in the current literature on Sydney's breaking culture; though there has been detailed discussion of Mistery, a male hip-hopper who is of a similar generation (started breaking in the early 1980s) (such as Iveson 1997; Maxwell 2003; Mitchell 1998). Describing herself as 'mixed-race' and identifying as Sicilian and a vegan, Rap-Attack describes how hip-hop has been an important vehicle through which to both voice her encounters with, and challenge her experiences of, inequalities in Australia. She explains, "hip-hop helped me to understand the world is not what I thought it was, and that's got to do with the environment, how we treat animals, women, so many factors" (interview, November 4, 2014).

In my interview with hip-hopper Mistery, he describes learning breaking through watching films and video clips in the early 1980s. Mistery continued breaking throughout the 1990s, despite being in the only hip-hop crew in Sydney – the 'Superstarz'. This is a potential reason why there is little reference to breaking in Maxwell's (2003) study of Sydney's hip-hop culture in the 1990s. Mistery's regular practice sessions at Marrickville Youth Centre in the late 1990s (described by Strong 1998) were important in introducing the next generation of breakers (such as 'JUSE' crew and 'SKB' in the Cabramatta and Liverpool area). As a prominent graffiti artist and emcee, Mistery has maintained consistent involvement in Sydney's hip-hop community. Most notably, he continues to emcee breaking competitions and is involved in *Street Uni* – a youth centre in Liverpool that runs workshops, events, and practice sessions in all areas of hip-hop.

It was Mistery's practice sessions at Marrickville Youth Centre that b-girl Ill-FX first began learning to break. Actively breaking in Sydney from 2002 until 2011, and again from 2015, Ill-FX is not only a member of '143 Liverpool Street Familia', but was also involved in several all-b-girl crews, such 'Rap City' in Sydney, and the Australian crew 'Sweet Elite'. She also was the Australian B-girl Champion in 2006

through the competition *Australian Bboy Championships* organized by b-boy Scot-Doo-Rok, one of Sydney's most prominent event organizers. Her varied experience battling in both mixed (though mostly male) and all-female crews gives her great insight into the complexities of the scene's gender politics.

Growing up in Redfern, b-boy Scot-Doo-Rok established the breaking jam the *Redfern Block Party* after the well-known 'Redfern Riots' and helped form the crew 'Redfern City Breakers'. Winning the *National Planet-X Breaking Championships* in 2002 with his crew 'Mind of Style', and one of the first Australians to be part of the 'Mighty Zulu Kings' ('MZK') – an instrumental organization in global breaking culture – Scot-Doo-Rok is best known for his organization of the *Australian B-boy Championships* (2004-2012), which was not only the first national breaking championships, but also the first solo b-girl competition in Australia (2005-2012). He describes how he was inspired to organize events after travelling overseas and forming relationships and gaining knowledge from breakers around the world.

Another prominent Sydney event organizer, J-One, was introduced to breaking in the early 2000s. Moving to Australia from South Korea at young age, growing up in the Shire (Sydney's South), and a longstanding member of '143', J-One is commonly credited in the community as currently keeping the scene alive through the numerous breaking events he runs each year. These include small crew jams (*143 Liverpool Street Familia Summer Jam*), cypher jams (*Cypher Supremo*), and large international events (*Destructive Steps*, *Red Bull BC One:* Australian Qualifier'). In 2013, he held the first international final in Sydney's street dance competition history (*Destructive Steps 6*).

A frequenter of such events, and renowned for his aggressiveness in battling, original dance style, and endless energy in the cypher, b-boy Willastr8 was first introduced to breaking on Sydney's North Shore in the early 2000s. Initially part of the crew 'Mind of Style' with Scot-Doo-Rok, together they were instrumental in turning the Downing Centre Courts into a regular practice location in the early 2000s. This, then, instigated the establishment of Sydney crew '143 Liverpool Street Familia' (name taken from the address of the Downing Centre Courts) in 2005, and a few years later he established 'RAW' crew.

Sydney's breaking scene, however, is not restricted to the city, and my interview with b-boy Don detailed his experiences in Mount Druitt and Parramatta. Of Filipino heritage, and one of the earliest members in the prominent Sydney crew 'SKB' ('Street Kulture Breakers'), Don describes how the scene has changed since he began in

the early 2000s, including the increased politicization and regulation of battling. Don's participation in Australia talent show 'So You Think You Can Dance' also provides a distinct insight into how breaking fits in the broader dance industry in Australia, and his experience representing Australia with his crew SKB at the international *R16* final enriches his observations of the Sydney and Australian scene.

Of Vietnamese heritage, b-girl Catwmn was introduced to breaking in the mid-2000s and is part of the Sydney (City) crew 'Flavawave'. Catwmn notes the importance of *seeing* more girls breaking so as to challenge the popular (mis)conception that only boys break. As the Sydney b-girl currently active for the longest, and her experiences battling overseas, such as in Singapore, as well as her friendships with other b-girls throughout Australia and New Zealand, Catwmn shed great insights into the limited opportunities for b-girls in Australia.

The only other active Sydney b-girl at the time of my research was b-girl Sass. Growing up in New Zealand and moving to Australia in 2012, b-girl Sass was introduced to breaking in 2005. Like many b-girls (including myself), this introduction was facilitated by her boyfriend. A member of Christchurch (New Zealand) crew 'Common Ground' and Sydney crew '143', Sass elucidates on how she negotiates maintaining her femininity while breaking. A close friend of mine, Sass went into the greatest detail regarding her difficulties and frustrations as a b-girl in breaking – both within the culture, and how people perceive her outside the culture.

Thus, my approach to my interviewee selections facilitated an oral account that spanned breaking's history in Sydney across different 'generations' – since its origins as a 'street dance' culture in the late 1970s, to its contemporary manifestation. It also enabled an examination of the culture from multiple perspectives, including event organizers, emcees, and breakers from different cultural backgrounds and areas of Greater Sydney. These interviews importantly shed light on Sydney's breaking history, which not only addressed current gaps in academic research, but also called attention to the role of breaking in Sydney. It provided accounts on *why* people break, and how the construction of the breaking body in Sydney can challenge normative narratives that regulate and constrict the capacities of bodies. As such, this research situates breaking culture in the broader Australian cultural assemblage, and enables an interrogation of how these two cultures interlock in the regulation of bodies.

Appendix D – Glossary of Breakdancing Terms

143 – pronounced 'one-four-three'. Abbreviated crew name for '143 Liverpool Street Familia'.

All-style – Any hip-hop dance style battling in the same competition, such as locking, popping, krumping, waacking, freestyle hip-hop, and so on.

B-boy/b-boying – The name for male breakers or male and female breakers, and the generic gender 'inclusive' name of the dance.

B-girl/b-girling – The name for female breakers, and the name of the dance when women perform it.

Backrock – Moves performed from resting on your back and feet, such as in the start of a sit up position.

Battle – Formalized or spontaneous competition between two parties (individuals or crews), which typically leads to one party winning, either through judges or through the participants simply 'knowing' who won.

Beef – Disagreement.

Bite/biter – Plagiarism/plagiarist; when a breaker copies another breaker's move without acknowledging the source or without individualizing the move to a sufficient level.

Breaker/breaking – The more neutral descriptor for the dancers and the dance/culture.

Breakdancer/breakdancing – The media term created in the 1980s to describe the dancers and the dance, was coupled with an obfuscation of various different dance styles, including popping and locking.

Call out – Initiating an informal battle with another breaker, if a breaker is 'called out', it is considered disrespectful for them not to battle.

Crash – Failing to execute a breaking move, typically in an obvious way such as falling to the ground.

Crew – Team, typically made of up local members who train together. A 'super crew' includes only high-level breakers, and may all be from different geographic locations.

Cypher – An informal circle of bystanders that spontaneously materializes around a breaker who is dancing, the breaker improvises for twenty to thirty seconds, and then someone else (from the circle) goes in.

Dope – Cool.

Drop – The transition from standing to floorwork. See Figures 4, 15, and 16.

Floorwork – Anything performed in close proximity to the floor. See Figures 1, 4, 8, 9, 12, and 13.

Footwork – Moves performed from a squat or bridge position. See Figures 1, 8, and 9.

Fresh – Cool, also usually new.

Freeze – Held pose. See Figures 3, 10, and 12.

Get down – Synonymous with 'drop', or can be used more broadly to refer to dancing.

Hip-hopper – Participants involved in all 'four elements' of hip-hop culture, such as Rap Attack and Mistery (see, also, Maxwell 2003). Contemporary breakers, who prefer to describe themselves as 'b-boys' and 'b-girls' respectively, rarely use this term.

Jam – An event that may not include formalized competition, but will feature music and dancing.

O.G. – Acronym for 'Original Gangster', and is a term applied to both pioneers and longstanding members of the hip-hop community.

Power – Typically spinning acrobatic/athletic moves such as headspins (see Figure 14); though some breakers argue that *all* moves can be power moves (if they are done 'powerfully'), thus footwork can sometimes be considered 'power'.

Props – Acknowledgement or recognition.

Round – Refers to when each side in a battle has taken a turn. Judging 'rounds' is a common method used to judge battles, i.e. which crew took (won) that round.

Set – A breaking performance, beginning when a breaker enters the dance floor to when they leave.

Thread – Where one body part makes a loop that another body part weaves through.

Toprock – The standing component of breaking, sometimes incorporates other styles of dance (such as uprocking). See Figures 6, 7, and 11.

Uprocking – Characterized by two opponents sparring using a series of steps, jerks, and mimes. Also referred to as 'rocking' and 'battlerock'.

Wack – Bad.

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Figure 1 – B-girl Raygun (author). *Freestyle Sessions:* Australian Qualifier. February 2, 2013. David Tang.

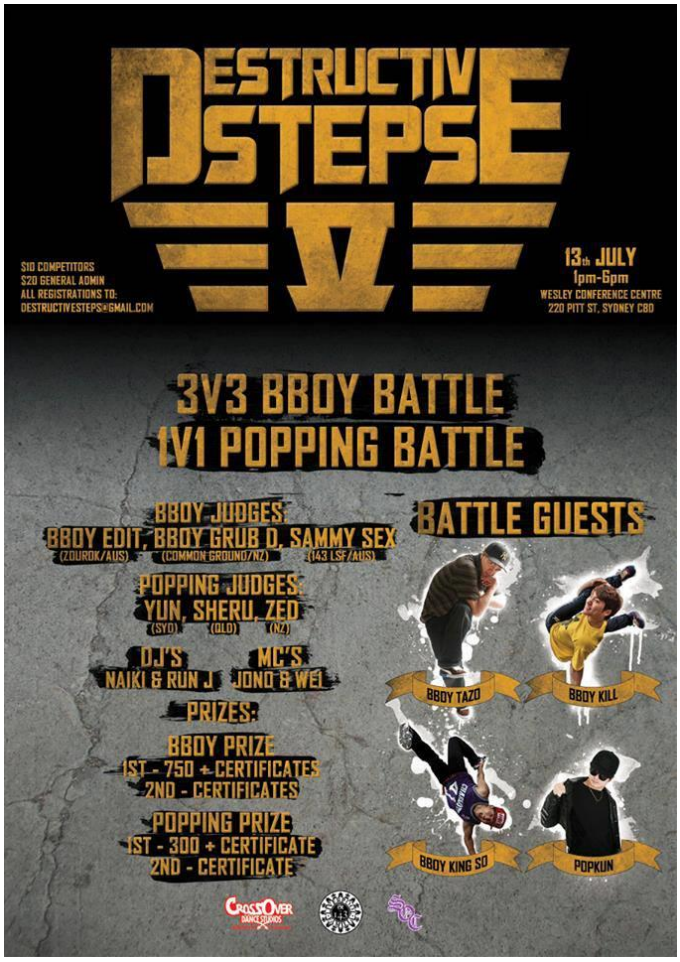

Figure 2 – Official Poster for *Destructive Steps V*. July 13, 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.destructivesteps.com

Figure 3 – B-boy Willastr8. *R16*: Oceania Qualifier. May 3, 2014. JNY Photography.

Figure 4 – B-boy Don. *Freestyle Sessions:* Australian Qualifier. February 2, 2013. David Tang.

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Figure 6 – B-girl Sass. *Sydney Bboy League*. April 4, 2014. JNY Photography.

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Figure 8 – J-One. *Freestyle Sessions:* Australian Qualifier. February 2, 2013. David Tang.

Figure 9 – B-girl Sass. *Destructive Steps 7*. July 18, 2014. JNY Photography.

Figure 10 – B-girl Queen Mary. *Red Bull BC One:* Bulgaria Cypher. April 4, 2015. Nika Kramer. Retrieved from: http://www.redbullbcone.com/en/blog/spotlight-queen-mary-first-red-bull-bc-one-b-girl-champ/

Figure 11 – B-girl Terra. *Chelles Battle Pro*: Baby Battle. March 2, 2013. *YouTube* screenshot. Retrieved from: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2287824/Six-year-old-B-girl-breakdancer-destroys-opponents-amazing-performance.html

Figure 12 – B-girl Catwmn. *R16*: Oceania Qualifier. May 3, 2014. JNY Photography.

Figure 13 – B-girl Sass. *Sydney Bboy League.* April 4, 2014. JNY Photography.

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Figure 16 – B-boy Willastr8. *JUSE Crew 15-Year Anniversary*. December 11, 2015. JNY Photography.