

“Our Caster” and “The Blade Runner”: ‘Improper’ corporealities cripqueering the post/apartheid body politic¹

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ABSTRACT

Caster Semenya and Oscar Pistorius were each selected to carry the South African national flag at the ceremonies marking the opening and closing of the London 2012 *Olympic Games*. Through this spectacle their individual bodies both represented, and somatechnically enfolded, the post/apartheid body politic. Semenya and Pistorius are globally recognisable and influential figures who inhabit, respectively, sex/gender variant and dis/abled bodies. Popular discourses about, and representations of, their bodies are characterised by a metaphoricity of bodily integrity. This metaphorical structure is predicated upon, and seeks to (re)secure, an assumption of compulsory somatic integrity. Numerous scholars, Jessica Cadwallader and Nikki Sullivan among them, have demonstrated how these ideas about corporeal integrity also condition metaphors of the body politic. Drawing on insights gleaned from somatechnics and crip theory I argue that Semenya’s and Pistorius’ bodies form an assemblage on the one hand, and explore how this assemblage is connected to the post/apartheid body politic on the other. In doing so I explain how a form of corporeal nationalism works with, and through, the athletes’ bodies to ensure that bodily integrity is a precondition for entry into the body politic. I further speculate on how the Semenya/Pistorius assemblage resists this manoeuvre by indexing an alternative metaphoricity of embodiment that cripqueers an idea(l) of the post/apartheid body politic.

Keywords: Caster Semenya, Oscar Pistorius, South Africa, Intersex; Dis/ability.

In place of the ontological separation of self and other, and even beyond intercorporeality, there is a need to think through the radical possibilities of assemblage where many different elements conjoin – and split apart – in never settled flows of energy. The task is to find representational strategies that rather than telling ‘one’ true story, acknowledge and start from the experience of disturbance. The issues uncovered ... mobilise the need to radically engage with,

1. I use the form post/apartheid both to acknowledge that apartheid is not post and to avoid reading South Africa in teleological terms.

and represent, the experience of concorporeality, perhaps by beginning to privilege the risky contangibility of hybrid bodies over the safe intervals implied by vision. At the limit, it is an ambitious call for a new cultural imaginary invested in Deleuzian notions of assemblage.

Margrit Shildrick, *Imagining the heart: incorporations, intrusions and identity* (2012:247).

Two Silver Medals

‘Just look at her’. This is what the Russian 800-metre athlete, Mariya Savinova, said to a reporter in early 2011 when asked whether she thought ‘[Caster] Semenya was a man?’ (Bull 2011:[sp]). Of course Semenya is the South African athlete whose victory in the 800-metre event at the International Association of Athletics Federations’ (IAAF) *World Championships* held in Berlin in August 2009 ignited a global debate about its sex testing regime.² Savinova’s comment, and *The Guardian’s* presentation of it, had complex performative effects. The curt but rhetorically productive statement re-staged the drama of suspicion that has enveloped Semenya’s body since her Berlin victory. The imputation being made was that one can tell “just by looking at her” that Semenya is in fact really a “man,” and thus should not be allowed to compete in women’s races because that gives “her/him” an “unfair advantage” over the “real” female athletes of which she, that is Savinova, presumably is one.³ The Russian athlete’s assertion, which a reputable media company with a global readership solicited and published, revitalised the network of surveillance technologies that continue to “enfreak” Semenya’s body by scrutinising her sex, her gender presentation, and her sexuality (see Amy-Chinn 2010; Behr & McKaiser 2013; Byerly 2009; Hoad 2010; Munro 2010; Schultz 2012a).⁴ This is not to suggest that *The Guardian* did so singlehandedly – the platform forms part of a larger mediatic framework, which continues to represent Semenya’s body in these terms (see Behr & McKaiser 2013; Kerry 2011).

I encountered Savinova’s remark in a report about Semenya’s return to form in the 800-metre semi-final at the IAAF *World Championships* in Daegu, South Korea in August 2011. Semenya won her heat in a time of 1 minute 58:07, beating Savinova into second place. The Russian athlete made the previously mentioned comment after the IAAF had ruled that Semenya could resume her athletics career. Although Savinova was interviewed some months before Daegu, this remark was inserted into an article published about Semenya’s return to form just as the championships in South Korea got underway. The report therefore exemplified how some global

2. See Amy-Chinn 2010; Behr & McKaiser 2013; Byerly 2009; Crincoli 2011; García 2010; Hoad 2010; Karkazis *et al* 2012; Kerry 2011; Lock Swarr *et al* 2009; Munro 2010; T Nyong’o 2010; Schultz 2011; Schultz 2012a; Schultz 2012b; Schumann 2009; Shani & Barilan 2012; Vannini & Fornssler 2011; Viloria & Martínez-Patino 2012; Wahlert & Fiester 2012; Winslow 2012. I use intersex rather than the newer term, “DSD” (Disorders of Sex Development), because, as Morgan M Holmes (2009:5-7; emphasis in original) explains, it signals both ‘the “ambiguous” character of intersex, and ... *intersex* as interjection’.

3. In this sentence I am making visible the logics that underpinned Savinova’s statement rather than forming a judgement about Semenya’s sex and gender myself. This paper is drawn from a much larger body of work and space constraints preclude detailed discussion of ethical considerations that are at stake when entering into a discussion about Semenya. Refer to de Robillard (2014) for elaboration. In her public statements about the affair Semenya has only identified as a ‘woman or lady’; she has never identified as intersex. Subsequent comments need to be understood in the light of these qualifications.

4. In the critical disability studies field the term “enfreak” refers to the conditions of visibility to which dis/abled bodies have been subjected (see Peers 2012). Similar conditions were evident in the Semenya event.

news media, a number of her competitors, and other constituencies, continue to treat with suspicion Semenya's body and the results she achieves – or does not achieve – on the athletics track (see Behr & McKaiser 2013; Schultz 2012a). These discursive events produce a web of entangled media flashframes, which trail Semenya like a constellation of after-images that she is not being allowed to outrun.

Semenya was not the only athlete competing under the South African flag whose body has been a source of anxiety for the IAAF. Oscar Pistorius, Semenya's teammate, made history at Daegu when he ran against able-bodied athletes in the individual 400-metre as well as the 4x400-metre relay heats (Ray 2011). Pistorius is a double-amputee who runs using carbon-fibre prosthetic "blades".⁵ He is the first athlete to qualify for competition in both *Paralympic* and able-bodied *Olympic Games*. As a consequence of this achievement, Pistorius became an international media personality whose celebrity rivalled Usain Bolt at *London 2012* (Ray 2011).⁶ Semenya and Pistorius both won silver medals at Daegu and both participated in this flagship meeting on the athletics calendar after having successfully challenged the IAAF rulings that had barred them from competition.

Unlike other athletes who have been in this situation, Semenya received robust support from senior members of the South African government when the IAAF took the decision to suspend her from competition until it had conducted "sex verification" tests. Semenya's victory evolved into a global media spectacle after she won the 2009 Berlin race finishing in 1 minute 55:45. Whispers about her sex and gender prior to the race prompted the IAAF's actions. Dee Amy-Chinn (2010:315) observes that rather than being about Semenya's 'startling times', the affair was actually instigated by her apparent 'failure' to 'allay suspicion about her sex through her performance of *gender*, with even the ANC (who were vocal in her support) acknowledging her masculine build' (see Behr & McKaiser 2013; Hoad 2010; Munro 2010; Schultz 2012a).⁷ Brenna Munro (2010:386) states that Semenya's ostensibly 'dramatic improvement' in the period following her victory at the *African Junior Athletics Championships* in July 2009 had 'raised suspicions of doping, even though she was benefiting from world-class coaching for the first time' and that 'her masculine appearance ... sparked rumours as it had throughout her life'.⁸ The IAAF's ruling in this instance was the slowest in its history (*The Citizen* 2012b:8). On 6 July 2010, the organisation eventually announced that it 'accepte[d] the conclusion of a panel of medical experts that she can compete with immediate effect' (*The Star* 2010:2). In what Semenya's lawyer described as a 'landmark decision', the IAAF further stated that there was 'no wrongdoing' on Semenya's part, and that she would retain the title, medal and prize money she won in the Berlin championship. It also ruled that the 'medical details of the case would remain confidential' (*The Star* 2010:2).

5. The "blades" in question are "Cheetah" flex-foot prostheses manufactured by Össur (Booher 2010:9).

6. No doubt the terms of Pistorius' celebrity status have changed since he was charged with Reeve Steenkamp's murder in February 2013.

7. Merck (2010:5) highlights that 'Semenya's winning Berlin time ... did not threaten the ... long-standing world record of 1:53:28'.

8. For additional perspectives on the Semenya affair see Merck (2010) and Ray (2009).



FIGURE **Nº 1**



This image illustrates how Semenya and Pistorius were represented as a kind of “couple” by the South African media. The athletes are persistently linked in reports and scholarly articles about the global sporting events in which they compete. Their pasts, futures, and bodies are therefore conceptually and mediatically interwoven into an assemblage (see Botton 2011; Crincoli 2011; Borzilleri 2011). (*City Press*, Let the games begin! 22 July 2012, Sports section feature:24.)

As Neville Hoad (2010:398) elucidates, when talking about Semenya, one’s ethical point of entry into the discussion is especially complex. My approach has been to assemble perspectival qualities that work to displace the critical gaze from Caster Semenya, the person, to a representational and epistemic system that framed her body in the terms just established. To this end, my purpose is not to try and “speak for” or “on behalf of” Semenya; nor is it to amplify “her voice” or “retrieve” it. For the moment, I am concerned with both reading and troubling an order of signification that staged her body as a question that needed to be answered. For this reason, I decline to present the kind of discussion that would attempt to establish “the truth” about her body.⁹ Rather, I want to approach otherly an epistemic framework that thought it necessary to determine if Caster Semenya is female, male, or indeed intersex.

9. See de Robillard (2014) for a more detailed exposition of this issue.

10. A larger context, which McRuer (2006:1) explicates through his formulation of a crip project that ‘theorize[s] the construction of able-bodiedness and heterosexuality, as well as the connections between them’ and ‘locate[s] both, along with disability and homosexuality, in a contemporary history and political economy of visibility’.

Drawing on insights gleaned from “somatechnics” and crip theory, I discuss how Semenya’s and Pistorius’ bodies formed an assemblage that was connected through visual, conceptual and rhetorical devices.¹⁰ Somatechnics is a neologism that refers to both ‘practices’ in the world and a ‘critical method’ (Sullivan 2009:314).

It reflects a ‘technological turn *in* and *of* queer studies’ that is ‘cognisant of the mutual enfleshment of technologies and technologisation of embodied subjectivities’ (O’Rourke & Giffney 2009b:xi; emphases in original). Put differently, it is ‘an awareness of the ways in which the technological (the object) and the body (human or nonhuman) are (in)formed *of* and *by* the other’ with neither term preceding the other (O’Rourke & Giffney 2009b:xi; emphases in original). Seen from this perspective, technologies are not confined to the instrumental, the machinic or the informatic; rather, they include epistemologies and discourses that can shape bodies in the same ways that a ‘surgeon’s knife’ can (Sullivan 2009:314).

Alina Bennett (2007:[sp]) says that crip theory is ‘concerned with the ways in which neoliberal capitalism ... does not simply stigmatize differences in bodies or sexualities’ but ‘in fact ... celebrat[es] these differences’. Contextualising McRuer’s crip interventions, Helen Meekosha and Russell Shuttleworth (2009:62) state that:

McRuer employs the critical self-reflexivity that is a hallmark of critical social theory. An implication of his argument for a ‘crip’ theory that would crip disability studies, similar to the way queer theory queers gay and lesbian studies, is a critique of the normalising tendency that underpins the structural critique of society espoused by previous socio-political models of disability. Similar to the post-structural approach of Judith Butler and the critical social theorist Margrit Shildrick, McRuer perceives a normalising orientation as necessarily entailing a demarcation of boundaries, of inclusion – exclusion and of ‘othering’. McRuer clearly articulates the ways in which crip theory and queer theory implicate each other and can thus inform each other.¹¹

McRuer (2006:1) emphasises that crip epistemologies ‘theorize the construction of able-bodiedness and heterosexuality, as well as the connections between them’ and that they ‘locate both, along with disability and homosexuality, in a contemporary history and political economy of visibility’.

I use assemblage in Jasbir Puar’s sense in which it is understood as a critical practice and not just as a form of connection. Puar (2011:[sp]) works with this Deleuzian concept by defining it as ‘a series of connections that then illuminate the entities that they are connected to’. The Semenya/Pistorius assemblage is both formed by and, in turn, generates an intricate latticework of connections, practices, epistemic frameworks and myth-making systems that have to do with bodies and a metaphor of the post/apartheid body politic (among other things). I therefore analyse how their individual bodies are brought into a relationship with this body politic. Exploring questions that arise when ‘historically excluded’ bodies move into the ‘public visibility’ of ‘highly charged political space[s] of cultural nationalism’

11. Like Sullivan and Murray (2009:4), while I acknowledge the ‘knotty association of queer with the sexual’, the questions addressed in this paper do not focus on matters ‘narrowly conceived as sexual’. As far as the nomenclature adopted in this article is concerned, I use the term *dis/abled* to ‘signal the social construction of ... subjects who are ‘*disabled*’ by their social and political contexts’ (Peers 2012: 312; emphasis in original). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2011:59; emphases in original) says that the ‘terms *impairment* and *disability* distinguish between bodily states or conditions taken to be impaired, and the social process of disablement that gives meaning and consequences to those impairments in the world.

and its normativities, I argue that the athletes' bodies are used to somatechnically enfold an "idea(l)" about the post/apartheid body politic (Betterton 2009:30).

In the context of this article the term 'body politic' is not understood as a definite article; instead, it is used to index a protean and contingent formation. Furthermore, I do not propose to map what the post/apartheid body politic is in a totalising register. Rather, I attempt to focalise how selected ideas about the body politic surface in what Lauren Berlant calls the 'National Symbolic'. No doubt this symbolic terrain is an imaginary, chimerical and affect-laden screen projection through which 'citizens venture to grasp the nation in its totality by', among other things, 'producing idealised national knowledge' (Berlant 1997:26, 40, 43, 47, 103). Since I am presenting theoretically inflected cultural analysis that clears some space for speculative thought, I do not claim to offer a comprehensive account of each of the political actors or social forces that are at play in the scene of this 'National Symbolic'. To do this work, I have had to create a contemporary archive that is incomplete and selective, as well as nomadic and splintered. Scholars including Ashwin Desai (2010) have evaluated how the post/apartheid state has used sport as a politico-symbolic resource to try and forge a common sense of nationhood within a fractured polity.¹² Brenna Munro (2010:383) notes that nations 'project power, win prestige and build patriotic feeling' through global sports events such as the Olympic Games'. These events, and the technologically mediated arenas through which they are screened, are spaces of national becoming; they are space-times in which fractious identity politics can *appear* to be recast by affectively induced bonds of national kinship. Needless to say, these effects are not immaculate, and they are ephemeral.¹³

Semenya and Pistorius, to borrow from Berlant (cited by Betterton 2009:39), are two affirming icons of post/apartheid 'national sentimental culture'. They are also construed as figures that inhabit, respectively, sex/gender non-conforming and dis/abled bodies. In different but also proximate ways, the athletes inhabit corporealities which many think are irregular, imperfect, improbable or generally 'improper'.¹⁴ In consequence, they have interrupted cultural imaginaries that regulate embodiment. The manner in which their bodies are thought to be 'improper' has something to do with the influential cultural ideal concerning bodily integrity.¹⁵ Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan (2009) describe how representations of and discourses about bodily integrity function as political technologies that shape the nation state's performance of sovereignty. I propose that the type of embodiment the Semenya/Pistorius assemblage indexes – or does not index – suggests a metaphor of corporeality that differs from the integrated somatic form through which political liberalism is generally imagined.¹⁶ This is why the assemblage

12. See also Desai and Ramjetan (2008).

13. Naturally, sport is not the only nation-making apparatus. Additionally, in its mediated forms, it collaborates with a larger network that Sonja Narunsky Laden (2008:129) calls a 'cultural economy'. What the cultural politics of post/apartheid nationalism has been able to secure is unclear. To this point David Bunn (2008:4) alights on the inconsistencies 'that arise from the effort to make modern politics in postmodern, neoliberal times'.

14. Refer to de Robillard (2014) for a detailed discussion of how and why their bodies are construed as such.

15. As Shildrick (2012) demonstrates, this is a pervasive cultural idea(l). Of course this is not to suggest that it is the only one.

16. This is not to say that the athletes have always been presented in this way. However, in the period before, and immediately after, the 2012 Olympic Games they were clearly brought together to form a compelling politico-symbolic assemblage. Refer to de Robillard (2014) for additional discussion of how this assemblage was constituted, and how it illuminated ideas about embodiment and nationhood in the post/apartheid setting.

cripqueers an idea about the post/apartheid body politic even as it used to signal the polity's corporeal "integrity". Through an analysis of how the athletes' bodies were connected to a popular consciousness of the post/apartheid body politic, it becomes clear that somatic integrity – particularly its absence and the necessity for its (re)construction – emerged as a significant political technology. Referencing a conceptual framework that evaluates how nationalisms can be imagined and expressed in corporeal terms, I identify intricate flows of normalisation and disruption within the unsettled/ing Semenya/Pistorius assemblage. I conclude that it reveals something about, and raises questions for, the heteronormative and ableist conceptions of the post/apartheid body politic to which it is connected, and which it is meant to embody, but which, instead, it fugitively cripqueers.

Body < - > Body Politic

Representations of the body are imbricated in the forms that the body politic takes (see Cameron, Dickinson & Smith 2013; Thacker 2011). Hence, changes in how the body politic is imagined must be understood in terms of shifts in representations of the body itself. Jessica Cadwallader (2009), as well as Stryker and Sullivan (2009), establish how ideas about corporeal integrity condition metaphors of the body politic. Cadwallader (2009:14) explains that 'imagining ... the state or the nation as a body has a long genealogy in western political philosophy, especially in the development of liberalism'. She points out that the idea that the political realm is a type of 'body' is productive and that it has particular (contingent) effects:

When the political corporation is described as a body, this is not an innocent claim, and nor is it an ahistorical one: it is a somatechnical one. Rather, it suggests that the political body ought to function in the way that "the body" is imagined to work – whatever is meant by 'the body' in any given time, and supposing there to be such a thing. In this way, a singular image of the body is made to stand in for the diversity of bodies which are, in fact, part of the body politic (Cadwallader 2009:16).

Through a discussion of transsexual surgery and self-demand amputation, Stryker and Sullivan (2009:50) explain how bodies, both individual and collective, are entangled with the 'metaphorical and metonymical functions of representation,' and webbed through a 'mutually generative relation between bodies of flesh, bodies of knowledge, and bodies politic – or in short, as somatechnics'. They posit thus the *somatechnical* interconnections of body with body politic:

Whilst many would argue that the body politic described by Hobbes has undoubtedly become increasingly dismembered, disarticulated, and differentiated, it seems to us that ideals of, and ideas about, bodily integrity nevertheless continue to (in)form current social imaginaries – that notions of integrity, in short, still create somatechnic effects on individual bodies, social bodies, and the relations between them ... The figuratively isomorphic relations between the collective body politic and an individual corporeality is ... not merely representational, but also material: somatechnologies function as “the capillary space of connection and circulation between the macro - and micro - political registers through which the lives of bodies become enmeshed in the lives of nations, states, and capital-formations” (Stryker, Currah & Moore 2008:14). The socially allowable formations and transformations of individual bodies are thus intimately related, in a non-analogical manner, to the forms and formulations of integrity through which society, as the body politic, coheres (Stryker & Sullivan 2009:51, 52).

Invoking Thomas Hobbes’ theorisation of the body politic in which ‘modern political anatomy’ is figured as ‘a sort of bodily unity’, Stryker and Sullivan (2009:49) model a theoretical anatomopolitics that works to dis/articulate the somatechnics of sovereign power by ‘cutting off the king’s head’; something, they argue, ‘political philosophy still must learn how’ to do. With these formulations in mind I now speculate about how Semenya and Pistorius’ disruptive/ing bodies cripqueered an “‘idea(l)’” of the post/apartheid body politic they were meant to represent by troubling a popular understanding of the political corporation, which is itself shaped by heteronormativity, sexual dimorphism and compulsory able-bodiedness (Betterton 2009).¹⁷

“Flagging”: Semenya and Pistorius assembling the post/apartheid body politic

It has been well established that sport can be a potent site for the formation, and transformation, of national identities. In South Africa the salience of sport to nationalist politics cannot be overlooked (see Desai 2010; Desai & Ramjettan 2008; Desai & Vahed 2010; Farquharson & Majoribanks 2003; Naidoo & Muholi 2010; Cottle 2011; Kersting 2007; Ndlovu 2010; Alegi 2007; Pelak 2010). Inasmuch as they have any force, some of the most popular ideas about “South African-ness” have been shaped by a sport-nation-body complex (see Desai 2010; Farquharson & Majoribanks 2003). Jayne Caudwell (2010:223) says that:

Both sport and sport skills are socially constructed to regulate sporting bodies. It is apparent that bodily performance of movements, gestures, sport skills, are read as gendered, sexualized, raced and in terms of

¹⁷. For evidence of how an able-bodied ideal is manifested, experienced, regulated, and contested in the post/apartheid milieu, refer to Watermeyer, Swartz, Lorenzo, Schneider and Priestley (2006). See Arsenault (2013:40; emphases in original) for a discussion of how figures that become emblems of national community orientate the post/apartheid nation around certain political as well as sexual ideals.

ability ... The categorization of sport and athletes' bodies extends beyond sex per se, with sporting rituals and discourses also categorizing gender, sexuality, 'race', ethnicity and (dis)ability.

Hence, if the sporting body is not perfectly able then it needs to demonstrate its capacity to become able: its capacity for perfectibility. Robert McRuer holds that sports events are 'show cases for able-bodied performance' and they are 'institutional sites where compulsory able-bodiedness and heterosexuality are produced and secured ... where queerness and disability are contained' (cited by Caudwell 2010:232). That sports arenas are heteronormative zones is axiomatic (Caudwell 2010).¹⁸ Sporting bodies are therefore produced, and regulated, by institutions like the IAAF in such a way that they are supposed to fabricate somatic categories and norms. That said, global sports events are spaces that have also 'changed people's ideas about race and nation in unexpected ways and on a grand scale' (Munro 2010:383). In effect, the sports-nation-body complex is a somatechnology through which individual bodies and bodies politic become mutually enfolded. These political effects were evident in the Semenya/Pistorius assemblage since the South African state used the athletes' bodies to challenge ideas about race, gender and embodiment, and, to embody an idea about a (post) modern post/apartheid body politic.¹⁹

Once the Berlin affair escalated into a global media event, a corporeal form of nationalism meshed Semenya's body with the post/apartheid polity (see Munro 2010; Hoad 2010; Schultz 2012a; McKaiser 2010). Upon her return from Berlin, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the so-called "mother of the nation", met Semenya at the airport to welcome her home. In the period that followed, Semenya and Pistorius each successfully challenged IAAF rules and became eligible for selection into the South African national team that competed at Daegu in 2011. The following extract from a media report about that meeting is worth quoting at some length because it illustrates how the athletes were first connected to one other and then the post/apartheid polity:

18. While it might be tempting to view the *Paralympics* or the *Gay Games* as events that necessarily disrupt normative logics and practices, this would not take into consideration their normative dimensions. See Peers (2012) and Davidson (2014).

19. See de Robillard (2014) for an extensive discussion of these processes including commentary about the statutory relationship between the state and SAS-COC, South Africa's Olympic Committee, who administer all arrangements pertaining to the country's participation in the *Olympic Games*. No doubt, state formations 'speak' in 'multiple registers' and one is not assuming that there might not be divergent ideological tendencies at work within it (Canada 2011:256).

The 100m world record-holder Usain Bolt and Britain's world heptathlon champion Jessica Ennis will be among those in South Korea over the next week but [Oscar] Pistorius is one of two South African athletes who will make the Daegu stadium the focal point of debates that go far beyond assessments of mere athletic prowess and into questions of human potential and gender differentiation. The other is Caster Semenya, the 800m runner who turned up in Berlin two years ago and, aged 18, destroyed her rivals in a final that took place a few hours after the media got wind of the IAAF's decision to subject her to a gender test. The next thing to be destroyed was a year of Semenya's career. The two South Africans run in the same colours and were born during the final years of apartheid, but their backgrounds could hardly

be more different. Pistorius was born in Sandton, then one of Johannesburg's most exclusive White suburbs. Semenya was born in Ga-Masehlong, a village in the northern province of Limpopo, where she grew up barefoot running on dirt roads ... "Having Oscar Pistorius excelling is a very good thing for the kids to be watching", Sebastian Coe, said yesterday. But many able-bodied athletes who would normally applaud Pistorius' courage and ability might not feel quite so generous were he to deprive them of a medal just as another success for Semenya would reawaken a sense of injustice among some of her rivals. Those without such a vested interest might feel that just as sport was an agent of social change when it played a role in ending apartheid, so this pair of athletes, by placing question marks against previously accepted boundaries, are pointing the way to a less prescriptive future for the human race (Williams 2011:[sp]).²⁰

This report narrativises the athletes' life histories in such a way that they are coupled not only by virtue of their shared nationality, but also through the difficulties they had to overcome to compete. The report presents their biographies as a redemptive, if not fully resolved, mythos as it reflects on how they were used to project a version of post/apartheid nation-ness that was being manufactured through/by their 'improper' bodies. 'Improper' bodies here imagined as a conduit through which traumatic South African histories could be transcended and a new cultural imaginary about the Republic anticipated. By linking Semenya's and Pistorius' individual struggles on the one hand, and their bodies and post/apartheid histories and futures on the other, Williams positions them squarely within the realm of the 'National Symbolic'. The text also alludes to apartheid histories in which sport and something called 'the South African nation' were connected to one another by bodies that do not signify in the ways that Semenya's and Pistorius' do: histories in which 'proper,' or rather, able-bodied, "white," heteromascu-line sporting bodies symbolised the polity (Farquharson & Marjoribanks 2003).

When returning to South Africa from Daegu, Semenya and Pistorius were met with flag-swathed national euphoria. From that point on a repertoire of discursive and optical devices fashioned by the media and the South African state stitched together even more tightly the athletes' bodies and the national body. This is not to say that mainstream media and the state were working together in an orchestrated way. In January 2012, a few months after her Daegu success, the leading national newspaper, the *Sunday Times*, reported on Semenya's twenty-first birthday celebrations (Maphumulo 2012). The article was placed on the prime page three niche and surrounded by reports concerning the African National Congress' (ANC) centenary commemorations. Juxtaposing these stories had the effect of consolidating associations that were being made between Semenya and revisionist

20. While they were symbolically connected the athletes are differentially situated. This is a question I excavate elsewhere. See de Robillard (2014).



FIGURE N^o 2



Here we see Semenya leading the South African team into the Olympic stadium in London (2012) with Oscar Pistorius at the image's centre, the fourth athlete to her left. In the days leading up to the event the press had speculated about who would be chosen to carry the South African flag with most commentators noting that it would either be Semenya or Pistorius (*City Press*, 29 July 2012:1).

national histories – references to Sara Baartman being a case in point (see Munro 2010; Schultz 2012a).²¹ In highlighting that ANC government officials had attended her function as representatives of 'the nation,' the paper underscored this linkage (Maphumulo 2012). A few weeks later in his annual State of the Nation address televised on 9 February 2012, President Jacob Zuma commended Pistorius to the nation as follows: 'Fellow South Africans we must perform better in sports this year. *Our* star performer Oscar Pistorius has set the standard for the year by winning the 2012 Laureus Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability Award. Congratulations for this achievement'.²²

What is more, by linking Semenya and Pistorius in the nationalist iconography staged during the parade of nations at the opening ceremony of the *Olympic Games* in London, and by presenting their bodies as transfigurative national symbols, an image of South African (post)modernity was presented to counter the racist treatment Semenya received at the hands of both the IAAF and the international media.

In the parade of nations' scenography, "the nation" is performatively constituted and symbolically represents itself to its subjects and to other nations from which it seeks to differentiate itself. Through the carefully constructed optics of Semenya, flanked by Pistorius, leading the South African contingent into the stadium, the

21. Some commentators depicted Semenya as a contemporary Sara Baartman, a well-known figure of racial trauma. In the post/apartheid setting, Baartman's remains have been used to do different kinds of political work such as embodying a form of nationalism that, in Meg Samuelson's terms, 'dismembers' the female subject just as her body is ostensibly being 'remembered'. See de Robillard (2014: 285-289) for a lengthier exposition of how Baartman became salient in this scene.

22. State of the Nation Address by His Excellency Jacob G Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa on the Occasion of the Joint Sitting of Parliament. <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=5674>. Consulted 20 February 2012.

post/apartheid nation was staged as *if* to say: “Look! See how inclusive we are. *Our* modernity exceeds yours. *We* distinguish ourselves from the rest of you through *our* lived futurity. A hard won futurity that has been forged through difficult histories”. Upon entering the stadium Semenya raised her arm while clenching her fist: a gesture that signifies in particular ways in South Africa’s political grammar.²³ Semenya’s selection as flag bearer was conceived both as a defiant, and transcendent, resolution to the Berlin debacle. This spectacle was supposed to make visible an idealised post/apartheid body politic, just as the polity was meant to grasp the particular terms through which the Semenya/Pistorius assemblage performatively constituted “the nation”. If the following statement by a respected journalist is anything to go by, it would appear that “the nation” interpreted the scene as it was supposed to. Verashni Pillay (2012:[sp]; emphasis added) wrote, ‘*We’re* the kind of country that can produce an Oscar Pistorius and a Caster Semenya. When they run, labels like cripples, hermaphrodite and others lose their meaning’. One is provoked to ask, for whom do these labels lose their meaning? Well intentioned as it might be, this statement exposes the difficulty with presenting Semenya’s and Pistorius’ bodies as symbols of national cohesion and reconciliation in the ways already indicated. As the analysis to follow will demonstrate, the perils of a thin kind of tokenism are laid bare in this scene.

Semenya won a silver medal in the 800-metre race in London and she was part of a small group of medal-winning athletes that Fikile Mbalula, South Africa’s sports minister at the time, *fêted*. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela again joined the welcoming committee when the athletes returned. While congratulating the medallists, Mbalula drew attention to Semenya announcing: ‘Caster represents the greatest guts for women. It doesn’t matter where you come from, you represent a symbol of courageous women in South Africa’ (*The Citizen* 2012a).²⁴ Pistorius, who did not win a medal in London, but who received more media attention than did Semenya, was positioned at the centre of the patriotic spectacle when the Paralympic team departed for London. For example, he was selected to carry the national flag at the opening ceremony for the *Paralympic Games*. As the nation’s flag bearers, then, Semenya and Pistorius became citizens who were ‘the bearers of the sovereignty of the nation and the state’ (Hansen & Stepputat 2005:36). In consequence, they opened a window onto how South Africa currently wants to produce its subjects as well as the kinds of bodies it deems suitable to represent it (Betterton 2009).

23. The gesture is associated with the anti-apartheid struggle.

24. It should be noted that Mbalula is the person who compared the woman who laid a rape charge against Jacob Zuma to Lucifer.

In the period under analysis, the athletes were frequently represented in front of, next to, or as bodies enveloped by the South African flag. Patriotic iconography, a keystone in nationalist myth-making, enmeshes bodies and nations in intricate ways. Recalling Sullivan’s argument about the somatechnical capillary, and not

just analogical, connections between individual bodies and nation states, I would say that the connections between Semenya's and Pistorius' bodies and the national flags in which they were sensuously enfolded, had the effect of somatechnically enfleshing the body politic. To elaborate it would be instructive to refer to how Emily Grabham (2009:64) uses *flagging* as a concept to explain corporeal nationalism's procedures. Informed by work that probes how 'bodies relate to the social' and the ways in which skin becomes a 'site of corporeal inscription', Grabham explores how 'bodies relate to nationalism through different forms of surgery' and posits that 'just as the nation is imagined and produced through everyday rhetoric and maps and flags, it is also constructed on the skin, and through bodies, by different types of corporeal flagging' adding that:

"Flagging" has been conceptualized as a set of rhetorical techniques and practices that reiterate nationalism within everyday encounters; the consistent use of clichés in political speeches; repeated use of the words "us", "we", "the people", "society"; arguments about the nation's destiny which do not question the nation's parameters or existence; and the perpetuation of national stereotypes. In his well-known work on nationalism, Michael Billing (1995:6, 40, 50) points to examples such as flying of flags outside public buildings ... and a photograph on the front of *Paris-Match* of a soldier in French army uniform saluting the Tricolour. Using the concept of flagging to refer to the significance of corporeal change draws on these insights and also responds to recent work investigating the capacity of the skin not only to be marked by but also to contribute to marking or 'flagging' difference (Ahmed & Stacey, 2001). It also draws on the concept of 'somatechnics' by which technologies 'enflesh' social and national symbols already in circulation (Sullivan 2006). Corporeal flagging therefore has rhetorical, as well as fleshy effects, embedding the nation on the body (Grabham 2009:64).

Using flagging as a conceptual lever, Grabham (2009:65, 66) details how prosthetic surgeries 'restore' bodily integrity for amputee soldiers returning to the United States from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to trace how 'the surfaces, shapes and capacities of bodies come to have nationalistic significance' by 'embedding' the nation on the body. Discussing how heroic narratives about amputee war veterans are produced in 'a context in which ... stories about prosthetic limbs' fuel 'resurgent nationalism and patriotism in the US following the events of 9/11 and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq', Grabham (2009:63, 72) argues that the 'boundaries of the nation are also delineated on and through bodies, through the fitting of prostheses'. Thinking with Sullivan's propositions about discourse as a body-shaping technology, my sense is that the somatechnical procedures Grabham outlines are techniques through which Semenya's and Pistorius' bodies enflesh the post/apartheid body politic inasmuch as the nation

is 'delineated on and through' their bodies (Grabham 2009:63, 72). Statements that were designed to create a sense of belonging through the patriotic phrases "Our Caster" or "Our Oscar" thickened and secured this body/nation assemblage. Crucially, the cultural idea(l) of bodily integrity provided the somatechnical habitat within which this form of corporeal nationalism was made to do its work. To evaluate how, and to what effects, an idea of bodily integrity was mobilised I will establish how and through which terms Semenya and Pistorius' bodies were understood, named and represented.

'Improper' corporealities cripqueering the body politic

In his autobiography, Pistorius (2010) says that he had double transtibial amputations before his first birthday.²⁵ Surgery was completed by the time he was six months old so he learnt to walk using prostheses. Pistorius' athletic sprinting talent became apparent during a rehabilitation programme for a knee injury he sustained while playing rugby. Prior to his battles with the IAAF, he had numerous successes in the Paralympic arena including winning medals at the Athens and Beijing Games and multiple dis/ability sports world records.²⁶ Pistorius' performances in these events made him eligible to compete in able-bodied meetings, but his desire to do so brought him into conflict with the IAAF. On March 26 2007, after he had for the first time raced in able-bodied events, the IAAF amended one of its rules, which relates to the use of 'technical devices' that give the 'user' an advantage over athletes 'who do not use those devices' (IAAF cited by Booher 2011:4). This rule change had the effect of barring Pistorius from able-bodied competition since it paved the way for the IAAF to announce on 14 January 2008 that the "Cheetah" prosthetics gave Pistorius a 'demonstrable mechanical advantage' and that his blades were 'technical aids in clear contravention of IAAF rule 144.2' (Booher 2011:5).²⁷

Pistorius contested this ruling. Presenting scientific research that refuted the IAAF's findings he lodged an appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) who overturned the IAAF's earlier decision. He became eligible to compete at the 2008 *Beijing Games* but did not achieve Olympic qualifying times and was therefore not selected for the South African team. In mid-2011, he qualified for the 400-metre event at both the 2011 *World Championships* in Daegu and *London 2012*.²⁸ While he did not qualify for the men's 400-metre final he advanced to the semi-final heat. Pistorius did, however, win a silver medal in the 4x400-metre relay despite not running in the final. Although Pistorius has many supporters, he has

25. Pistorius had congenital bilateral fibular hemimelia, 'wherein his body developed only two toes on each foot but not fibulas (shin bones) or ankles' (Draper cited in Booher 2011:4).

26. For additional details about this period in his career refer to Booher (2011), McCallum (2012) and Pistorius (2010).

27. See Booher (2011) and Pistorius (2010) for a comprehensive account of the IAAF's handling of his entry into able-bodied competition, the steps it took to monitor and subject to "scientific" scrutiny his performance on the track and the terms within which his body and its abilities were coded by the IAAF, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and Pistorius himself.

28. See 'Oscar Pistorius Defies Logic', *Oscarpistorius.com*, URL (consulted 28 July 2011): <http://Oscarpistorius.com> and "Blade Runner Qualifies for Olympics", *IBN Live*, URL (consulted 28 July 2011): <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/blade-runner-qualifies-for-2012-olympics/169434-5-23.html>.

always had detractors, with some athletes alleging that he was only selected for *London 2012* for political reasons.²⁹ In other quarters, he is viewed as a cheat.³⁰ For instance, prominent South African sport scientist, Ross Tucker, criticised Pistorius when deducing that the biomechanical effects athlete's prostheses generated translated into a 'significant advantage over able-bodied athletes' (cited by de Villiers 2011:[sp]). Tucker called for a 'review of the CAS decision', which, he alleged, was based on 'incomplete information' (cited by de Villiers 2011:[sp]). Here Tucker made reference to findings that two other scientists published eighteen months after the CAS appeal, which concluded that Pistorius had a '10-second advantage' (cited by de Villiers 2011:[sp]). The scientists in question were Peter Meyard and Mathew Bundle, both of whom had provided research that Pistorius used when appealing the IAAF's rule change. Tucker claimed that Bundle and Meyard's findings were 'not new' but that 'for some reason, they did not mention it, and the court did not ask for it', noting that 'this is like someone going to court accused of continuing a crime and the lawyers "forgetting" to bring up evidence of fingerprints or DNA ... scientific integrity got destroyed in that testing process' (cited by de Villiers 2011:[sp]). The imputation being made was that there was something criminal about Pistorius' participation in able-bodied competition.

The Pistorius affair has generated considerable bioethical reflection. Although one is aware of these ethical debates they cannot detain me here. It will suffice to note that some scholars have contested how the IAAF produces and activates the idea of "unfair advantage" as a technology that has material, as well as ethical, effects for the bodies their metric systems cannot accommodate (see Booher 2010; Booher 2011; Swartz & Watermeyer 2008). For my purposes the salient point is that Pistorius' body has caused the kind of 'ability trouble' that McRuer theorises (cited by Caudwell 2010:231).³¹ While there is considerable scholarly analysis of the relationship between Semenya and post/apartheid nationalism, to date I have not found similar scholarship about Pistorius.³² In the main, research about the athlete has been located within bioethical and critical disability studies frameworks. To understand how it is that Pistorius' soma cripqueered the post/apartheid body politic, it is necessary to identify how his body is connected to "the nation" and why it has been understood, discussed and represented in divergent ways in different contexts.

Prior to his current notoriety, the state used Pistorius' dis/abled body as a symbol of post/apartheid nationhood. For instance, in the months following the 2010 FIFA *World Cup* he featured in a Tourism South Africa advertising campaign dubbed '*Leave Ordinary Behind*'.³³ This campaign addressed global tourism markets. Its imperative was to (re)brand South Africa as a cosmopolitan and Afropolitan destination. One of the commercials in the series was called '*My South Africa by*

29. Refer to de Robillard (2014).

30. See de Robillard (2014).

31. McRuer says that dis/abled bodies "trouble" compulsory able-bodiedness just as Judith Butler (1990) has demonstrated that gender non-conforming bodies enact a kind of "gender trouble".

32. Popular forms of analysis that more explicitly made this connection only started to develop when he was on trial for murder.

33. See de Robillard (2014) for details about Tourism South Africa's statutory relationship with the state.



FIGURE N° 3



As this advertisement for a South African bank featuring Pistorius and other South African Paralympians demonstrates, athletes usually come into public visibility through frameworks designed to recast, if not efface, dis/ability as ability.

Oscar Pistorius'.³⁴ Detailed analysis of this text cannot be presented here, but what should be noted is that the advertisement used a series of compositional and editing devices through which Pistorius' flag-draped athletic body merged with the then named "Calabash" soccer stadium in Johannesburg.³⁵ The text's visual rhetoricities suggest that Pistorius is the nation figured as a body. Hence, an individual body and the body politic (represented by the Calabash) are assembled into a composite image. The manner in which this text visualises Pistorius's body is revealing. He is seen to be in a state of almost perpetual and frenetic motion: either sprinting around a racetrack or speeding through Johannesburg on a motorcycle. Being at pains to highlight Pistorius' agility and athleticism, the advertisement establishes his *ability* rather than dis/ability. Consequently, Pistorius is seen to be fit to represent the nation in terms of ability.

The 2010 *World Cup* was designed as a showcase for a transforming post/apartheid nation. It was what Rosemary Betterton (2010:45) would call 'a national space of becoming'. Writing about the sculptures displayed in Trafalgar Square in London, Betterton (2010:45) assesses that it functions as a 'national site' that was always 'encoded as heroic and masculine, and signified as such by Nelson's column'. The square, and the sculptures with which it is populated, Betterton (2010:33)

34. *My South Africa: Oscar Pistorius*. 2011. Tourism South Africa advertisement.

35. The stadium hosted the opening and closing matches and ceremonies of the *World Cup*.

adds, function as ‘somatechnologies through which the relationship between individual bodies and social bodies is revealed’. Through analysing what transpired in British national debates when Marc Quinn’s marble sculpture, *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, was revealed ‘on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square in September 2005’, Betterton (2010:29) explores how ‘recent changes in public culture ... might queer the ideal of a national body through an engagement with different somatic identities’.³⁶ Betterton (2010:30) writes that, ‘Lapper’s limbs and pregnancy can be seen to threaten the masculine and imperial domain of the nation and, simultaneously, bring to light what has been naturalised as an “invisible, unmarked and undeclared somatic norm (Puwar 2004:8)”’. She adds that:

The entry of this corporeality into a privileged location raises aesthetic and political questions about which bodies are deemed appropriate for representation in national sites and what symbolic forms these might take. In making a critical reading of the statue I explore the questions raised by the representation of a somatic other ... within a national space previously inhabited in sculptural terms by white male unmarked bodies ... I ask which somatic norms can embody national citizens in post-imperial times? What does it mean for an historically excluded body to enter into public visibility, and in what ways can this queer national space? ... I engage with the project of queering somatechnics in the public sphere (Betterton 2009:30).

Using the questions Betterton asks I reflect on what type of corporeality Pistorius’ body signifies and what his entry into the nationscape does to the unmarked somatic norms through which corporeal nationalism does its work.³⁷ In a critical reading of the IAAF’s initial ruling and Pistorius’ subsequent appeal to the CAS, Amanda Booher (2011) plots how his body and situation expose the difficulties associated with defining bodies. Booher (2011:1) notes that Pistorius was variously defined as ‘disabled’, ‘abled’, ‘superabled’ and ‘normal’. It must be emphasised that, up until his court appearances for Reeva Steenkamp’s killing, Pistorius tended not to identify as a dis/abled person when making public statements about his identity (Pistorius 2010).³⁸ In fact, his media identity, on which the Tourism South Africa advertisement was clearly premised, was shaped by the triumph-over-adversity script that would have a person with “disadvantages”, in Pistorius’ case a dis/abled person, autonomously transcending their circumstances through their individual tenacity – and prostheses.

Booher (2011:6) highlights that Pistorius’ self-definition as ‘not disabled’ put him at odds with the IAAF but also ‘potentially the disabled community’.³⁹ However, Booher says, Pistorius’ self-definition needed to be read in context as a political disposition that resisted the IAAF’s corporeal taxonomies. During the appeal to the CAS he

^{36.} Alison Lapper is an artist who had a media presence that was, up to that point, derived primarily from her identity as a ‘highly articulate dis/abled working class mother’ (Betterton 2009). A giant recreation of this sculpture featured during the opening ceremony of the 2012 *Paralympic Games* in London. Both Lapper and Pistorius, then, were present at the event as recognisable dis/ability politics icons. Quinn’s sculpture was of a dis/abled and pregnant Lapper both rendered visible (and destabilised) somatic norms conditioned through racial, gendered and ableist codings.

^{37.} Refer to Debbie Epstein (1998) for a discussion of how the “white” male body functions as a somatic norm in South Africa.

^{38.} This discursive shift is the subject of another paper that is forthcoming.

^{39.} Refer to Chew (2012) and Ndopu (2013).

challenged the IAAF's institutionally- located power to define his body and therefore determine where and how he could use it. Booher (2011:5, 6) elaborates:

Pistorius challenged the competitive distinction between abled and disabled bodies through his participation in events specified for each group. The purpose of such a distinction is to create an equal playing field for disabled athletes, based on the presumption that abled athletes would have clear advantages; however, Pistorius' successes brought abled-advantage into question – so much so that the scales tipped in the opposite direction. The IAAF's ruling attempted to create another distinct line in the sporting sand, placing “natural” bodies on one side and technologically enhanced bodies on the other. But by ruling Pistorius ineligible ... the IAAF created a problematic dual construction. Pistorius as both dis-abled and super-abled. This is a curious definitional position, rhetorically and practically: because of his amputation and his perceived lack (both anatomically and in presumed ability), his body is labelled “disabled”, because of his prosthetics, he is perceived to have leapfrogged “abled”, moving directly to “advantaged”. Being on both sides of these lines – outside of “abled” – has implications beyond the right to compete.

Booher proposes that, when viewed from another angle, Pistorius' self-definition is more rhetorically and politically challenging than the statement “I am not disabled” suggests. Pistorius' statements about his prostheses did not simply re-ground normalising logics nor, as Booher shows, did they necessarily reaffirm a body (or “nature”) and technology split. This is because Pistorius has not only said ‘I’m not disabled’, he also expressed this more enigmatic sentiment in which he ‘eschew[ed] any distinct label of ability’: ‘I’m not disabled, I just don’t have any legs’ (Booher 2011:6). To Booher’s insights I would add that there were times when Pistorius associated himself with the post/human connotations on which the “Blade Runner” brand identity trades, while at other times he distanced himself from them. At other times still, he described his prostheses as strictly therapeutic devices whilst simultaneously suggesting that they placed him in proximity to technology in ways that were not merely therapeutic but that evoked their capacities for enhancement. For instance, in this response to an interviewer, he stated:

The medical companies we work with are medically based; they’re not trying anything superhuman. But they do cool stuff with feet. One company makes an advanced foot worth thousands of pounds. It can make 55 readings a second, so if you’re walking uphill it senses the incline and lifts the [prosthetic] foot higher. It also has a USB in it, which I noticed when they asked me to test it ... I plugged my iPod into it (Pistorius cited by McRae 2011:53).

Reflecting on these terminological complexities, Booher (2011:6) concludes that Pistorius' apparently equivocal comments were 'both intriguing and potentially dangerous' and that they each needed to be 'read in context'. Even when one reads them in context, I would argue, Pistorius' statements are rhetorical handles that can open quite different interpretive doors. That said, I concur with Booher's (2011:7; emphasis in original) call for interpretations that view his 'relationship with his prosthetics' as 'foundational and formative' since:

His first steps were taken in prosthetics, as were (*sic*) every step since, all of his training and athletic performances happen with prosthetics. Having never walked on "natural" legs, Pistorius' prosthetic experience is his experience of his body, of locomotion. As such his experience conflicts with constructions of his body socially and by the IAAF However, for Pistorius, he – his body and prosthetics – are "natural" or more specifically "normal".

Booher further dissects the IAAF's position and the CAS' ruling, something I am unable to pursue here.⁴⁰ For my purposes what needs to be emphasised is that sporting bodies are produced and regulated in such a way that they are supposed to (re)produce definitive somatic categories and norms. Pistorius' body surfaces the 'norm-defining' practices that Rosemarie Garland-Thomson 'traces ... back to Aristotle' when she reminds us that:

Without the monstrous body to demarcate the borders of the generic ... without the pathological to give form to the normal, the taxonomies of bodily value that underlie political, social, and economic arrangement would collapse (cited by Booher 2011:2).

These norms and definitions can be difficult to sustain as the Semenya and Pistorius examples illustrate. Like Pistorius, Semenya's participation in professional sport has troubled the corporeal norms that subtend this social practice. The Semenya/Pistorius assemblage therefore illustrates Jayne Caudwell's (2010:231) claims about queer/ing bodies in sport:

40. Booher (2011:7) concludes that the IAAF prejudged the question of Pistorius' 'unfair advantage' before it had undertaken a 'prior study of the issue'. Booher (2011:8; emphasis in original) also holds that the IAAF was not concerned with any disadvantages Pistorius demonstrated and that it was 'only interested in any advantage' he might have rather than "an overall net advantage" that could be deduced'.

Inability to imagine bodies and competition beyond notions of the "natural", the "fair" and "the unfair" and "the truth", by those in competitive sport, means that it is women's bodies that are tested and become the object of surveillance [in the case of sex testing]. For Cavanagh and Sykes such regulation of the social is connected to the psychic and involves anxiety to define bodies via neatly organised criteria. What we know is that bodies do not exist in this way and any attempts to materialise them, in the name of fair competition, produces a fiction or illusion.



FIGURE N^o 4



Left: C Labuscagne Sarie, June 2011:36-37. This article, titled “Oscar perfume’s superhero”, reported on Pistorius’ appearance in a series of print and television advertisements for A*MEN, the Thierry Mugler fragrance. The global A*MEN campaign consolidated the athlete’s “Blade Runner” identity (GQ Style South Africa, “A*Men: Beyond Fragrance” (Spring/Summer 2012/2013:31), Thierry Mugler advertisement).

Notwithstanding his acts of self-definition, or rather, because of the ambiguous forms they take, I would say that, instead of (re)grounding the natural-normal-ordinary, Pistorius’ dis/abled-not-dis/abled body puts into play an epistemic query. By “restoring” his bodily integrity, Pistorius’ prostheses do more than “normalise” his body as they are *perceived* to be a technology that enables the athlete to do extraordinary things, hence the “The Blade Runner” alias. For some, Pistorius is the quintessential supercrip who hurdles over normative embodiment into the post/human category (see Swartz & Watermeyer 2008; García 2010). According to the latter reading, as “The Blade Runner”, he becomes the prototypical post/human figure made flesh. Cultural representations of post/human figures are capable of triggering anxieties about the (fragile and illusory) boundaries through which the human and non/human categories are supposed to be held in quarantine from each other. Pistorius countered arguments about his performance being enhanced by his prostheses while he simultaneously embraced the “Blade Runner” identity and all of the post/humanist allusions with which it is freighted (Figure 4).⁴¹

41. For instance, it is the title of his autobiography. This association between Pistorius and the post/human is made frequently. See also Jacobs and Modise (2011:4) who report as follows: ‘But Pistorius wasn’t the first athlete to use technology, Peter McKnight wrote in the Vancouver Sun: “no one batted an eye when Tiger Woods had Lasik (eye) surgery and improved his vision to 20/15. (Pistorius) is simply the latest product of the posthuman condition”’.

42. In its aesthetically distinctive terms Blade Runner evinces one of speculative fiction’s pre-eminent tropes by reflecting on the meaning and limits of the category “human”. See de Robillard (2014) for elaboration.

The term “Blade Runner” is, of course, taken from the influential film of the same name. Annette Kuhn (1990) discerned how the film poses questions about a human - post/human polarity.⁴² Pistorius has been such a compelling and, to some, threatening personality precisely because he is a figure who has, however unwittingly,



FIGURE N^o 5

Cover *Men's Health*, August 2012.

shown how mutable some somatic norms and categories can be. In forcing the IAAF to accommodate his ability-troubling body, Pistorius shifted, albeit incompletely, a normative ideal about embodiment which resonates beyond the context of Olympic sport. In contradistinction to commentators who have said that Pistorius has altered

perceptions about dis/ability, I think that exactly what it is that Pistorius has represented and effected is more complex than is often assumed. This is due to the epistemic uncertainty his body induces. For reasons that cannot be enumerated within this paper, I would argue that his recent notoriety has compounded this uncertainty.

As Pistorius had been censured for “cheating” during the course of his athletics career, one must emphasise the distinction that needs to be drawn between Pistorius the athlete who, the CAS ruled, did not use prostheses that put him at an advantage over other athletes, and a mythos (in which he partakes) about his apparently post/human body. This distinction can be difficult to sustain because of how he is mobilised in popular debates about the human body-self’s futures.⁴³ Pistorius’ body forms a somatechnical assemblage in which the able-bodied, dis/abled, and post/human categories co-habit in a dense and fluctuating arrangement. Despite stating that he did not think of himself as dis/abled, the necessary implication to be drawn from the claim that his performance at the 2012 *Olympics* would mark a shift in social perceptions of “people living with dis/ability” was that his body was meant to represent dis/abled persons and that therefore he is a person experiencing an ‘impairment’ that is socially coded as a dis/ability. Read from Nikki Sullivan and Samantha Murray’s perspectives on somatechnics in which debates about bodies are understood as technologies that can shape corporeality, then, I am not suggesting that any of the aforementioned terms adequately describes what it must feel like to live as his body. Limitations to the prevailing vernacular are thrown into relief. This being said, it is essential to reflect on what kind of corporeality Pistorius’ prosthetised body was supposed to index when it was used to embody the post/apartheid polity.

Evaluating media reports about Iraq war veterans with amputations returning to the United States, Grabham (2009:63) observes how coverage of soldiers with ‘prosthetic limbs circulate ... narratives of heroism and patriotism’. The reports ‘position disabled’ soldiers as ‘national archetypes of hope and regeneration specifically through their access to prosthetic limbs ... Bodies with prosthetic limbs are ideal examples of survival in this context, having survived and even transcended amputations’ (Grabham 2009:72). Grabham (2009:72-73) concludes that these somatechnical procedures connect ‘anxiety around disabled bodies with a fetishizing impulse to put athletes with prostheses forward as examples of triumph against adversity’. Adding that ‘the war veterans embody patriotic sacrifice, and what makes their stories so compelling is the sense of accomplishment and the narratives of regeneration that accompany the media coverage’ since ‘a focus on prosthetics can privilege a notion of the body’s ideal ‘wholeness’’ (Grabham 2009:72-73). For Grabham (2009:73), then, a ‘paradox is obviously at work’ because

⁴³. For example, debates about bionic soma.

‘the veterans are “maimed” but also heroically, physically strong’ so, through ‘gaining prosthetics, they gain visibility, and this visibility is routed through rhetorics of national unity, and national recovery and resilience’. Just as the prosthetised war veterans are used as ‘archetypes’ of national ‘recovery’, mainstream media outlets and the state, through SASCOC, used Pistorius’ body as a symbol of national inclusion and integration. By symbolically integrating his body into the nationscape, Pistorius’ regenerative capacities somatechnically produced an “idea(l)” about the post/apartheid body politic’s integrity (Betterton 2009). Put otherwise, his body was supposed to symbolically constitute national integrity, or wholeness, in the face of unresolved fractures within the polity. Through fetishising his athletic body, post/apartheid nationalist optics staged the drama of a “once-impaired” body now made whole. Effectively, he was presented in the ‘cripspiration porn’ idiom; a genre that addresses able-bodied publics rather than articulates dis/ability politics (see Chew 2012; Ndopu 2013). In this representational scheme, Pistorius was seen to regain the integrity all bodies are required to have. Consequently, bodily integrity was constructed as both the figure and the ground of a post/apartheid body politic.

The means by which Pistorius’ body has entered into visibility illustrates McRuer’s thesis about the interconnections of compulsory heterosexuality with compulsory able-bodiedness. In his exegesis of crip theory, McRuer (2006:1) assesses what compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory able-bodiedness are connected. He postulates that the ‘system ... which in a sense produces disability, is thoroughly interwoven with the system of compulsory heterosexuality that produces queerness: that, in fact, compulsory heterosexuality is contingent on compulsory able-bodiedness and vice versa’. Presenting Semenya’s and Pistorius’ bodies as spectacular symbols of inclusiveness and diversity surfaced what McRuer (2006:2) views as a distinctive feature of our neoliberal times:

The relatively extended period ... during which heterosexuality and able-bodiedness were wedded but invisible (and in need of embodied, visible, pathologized, and policed homosexualities and disabilities) eventually gave way to our own period, in which both dominant identities and nonpathological marginal identities are more visible and even at times spectacular. Neoliberalism and the condition of postmodernity, in fact, increasingly need able-bodied, heterosexual subjects, who are visible and spectacularly tolerant of queer/disabled existences.

Seen from this vantage point, then, rather than being stigmatised and excluded, the “crip” is celebrated and appears to be integrated into the polity but, for McRuer, under current neoliberal conditions, these acts of ‘inclusion’ can have depoliticising

effects. My sense is that depoliticising impulses of this kind exist in an unresolved tension with the cripqueering dimensions of the Semenya/Pistorius assemblage. The athletes were used as symbols of the body politic because they were supposed to index the incorporation of “difference” and using them in this way was meant to model a radical form of post/apartheid inclusivity, social cohesion and postmodern Afropolitanism. This notwithstanding, procedures that tried to efface – however unintentionally – the somatic categories the athletes were supposed to represent were evident in this patriotic scene. Rather than actively destabilising an epistemic regime through which somatic norms are produced, the nationalist rhetoric (in linguistic and visual forms) at work in the Semenya/Pistorius assemblage tried to reinscribe the metaphor of bodily integrity through the reproduction of compulsory able-bodiedness and sexual dimorphism. In effect, while indexing sex/gender variance and dis/ability, Semenya and Pistorius had to not really be either sex/gender variant or dis/abled.

Conclusion

The athletes’ bodies were deemed fit to represent the body politic only once they could demonstrate, or approximate, bodily integrity. So, they had to be somatechnically (re)shaped to become proper and whole. Corporeal integrity was therefore re-instated as a precondition for inclusion into the body politic. For further evidence of these politico-symbolic effects we might look at how Pistorius’ body was staged as heterosexual wish material and the terms within which Semenya’s prominent benefactors defended the athlete.

Mutually constitutive imperatives for compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory able-bodiedness converged in the figure of Pistorius. Observe how he was represented as a heteromasculine sex symbol: burnished skin and sinuous musculature secreting the place of bodily dis/integrity (Figure 6).⁴⁴ Ability is indexed through his performance of exalted heteromasculine norms. Unlike Semenya, Pistorius therefore enacted forms of embodied gendered and sexual personhood that are premised on the cultural ideals of able-bodiedness and heterosexuality.

After the Berlin victory, Semenya’s supporters espoused patriotic pieties that barely concealed their panic about the athlete’s sex, gender and sexuality (see Munro 2010; Amy-Chinn 2010; Hoad 2010; T N’yongo 2010; Byerly 2009; Schultz 2012a). Antje Schumann (2009:22) noted that ‘the western media’ failed to confront the histories of the racist and sexist framings of ‘black wom[e]n’s bod[ies]’, while the patriotic terms within which Semenya was defended demonstrated a ‘narrow

44. While it is widely understood that *Men’s Health* magazine has a large readership who self-identify as ‘gay’, the text nevertheless presents itself in a heteronormative idiom. Other commercial media in South Africa had also depicted Pistorius as the country’s most eligible heterosexual bachelor and sex symbol (de Robillard 2014). Naturally, this does not mean that homoerotic – or other - forms of identification and desire did not swirl around these materials (de Robillard 2014).



FIGURE N° 5



This was the scene when sports administrators, politicians, the media and citizens met Semenya at the Oliver Tambo International Airport after the Berlin race. The newspaper's layout illuminates how Semenya's body was impinged upon by a discursive system and focalised within a surveillance network (*Saturday Star*, 12 September 2009, News page layout, p.4).

understanding of the diversity within femininities and masculinities'.⁴⁵ The event exposed how colonial race-sex systems texture the present. Put differently, it was a caesural moment produced by the collision of colonial race-sex systems, global intersex activism, post/apartheid expediencies and an international media-sport-business complex. Rhetoric that invoked the terms "racist" and "imperialist" to describe media discourses about Semenya, while apposite, reproduced normative sex/gender formulations and did not adequately consider how gender, sex and race have historically been linked in South Africa (see Hoad 2010; Munro 2010; T N'Yongo 2010). Amanda Lock Swarr (2009:526), for example, excavates connections between imperialism and *intersexuality* within South African colonial and apartheid histories:

45. Schultz (2012b:32) stresses that 'the last two athletes who made headlines for "failing" their sex tests, Santhi Soundarajan and Caster Semenya, are women of color' and that 'we cannot and should not ignore the abhorrent neo-colonial mediated discourse that surrounded them'.

A historical analysis of South African scientific and medical discourses and practices under colonialism and apartheid reveals racialized understandings of intersexuality and the body; clearly, colonial racism marked black bodies as essentially different from white ones, while it simultaneously marked female as different from male. Not only did this mean that essentialist dualisms were produced and integrated

into dominant ideologies, but colonial racism also marked as abject the “mixed” or “third” categories of race and gender – such as colored and intersexual – that would become important windows into the politics and cracks of such systems.

The ways in which Semenya’s body was discussed produced what Amy-Chinn terms *epistemic injustice*. An injustice that has to do with how Semenya was linked to the term hermaphrodite or the more current ones *intersex* and DSD.⁴⁶ For example, in the following statement the ANC Youth League made: ‘Even if a test is done, the ANCYL will never accept the categorisation of Caster Semenya as a hermaphrodite, because in South Africa and the entire world of sanity, such does not exist’ (*The Weekender* 2009:16). By virtue of her race, then, Semenya was embraced and incorporated into the nation imagined as home, but her body was left at the front door because of her disavowed (but simultaneously perceived) sex and gender variance. She was made to embody national unity while the bodies that she represented (but did not really represent) were symbolically extirpated. Moreover, Semenya’s own body was felt to be unassimilable without rhetorical re-integration. In other words, her body could be used as a resource to construct an idea(l) of the post/apartheid body politic as long as its hormonal/chromosomal “integrity” was assured. To the best of my knowledge Semenya has never identified as intersex, nor has she ever used the term in public comments about the Berlin affair or its aftermath.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, it cannot be disputed that Semenya came into global visibility under the sign intersex, or that, her preferences notwithstanding, she continues to circulate under it (see Kerry 2011; Lock Swarr, Gross & Theron 2009). The unease intersex bodies can elicit has much to do with the sense that they are incomplete. Intersex bodies, Michael O’Rourke and Noreen Giffney (2009:ix) write, are ‘bodies as events’ or ‘not-yet-subjects’:

[t]his is why intersex bodies, which present such a challenge to what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson calls the normate, must be cut, inscribed upon ... rendered incontestably ‘normal’. This interpellative work (“it’s a boy!”, “it’s a girl!”) ... necessarily fails since the intersex body, both pre- and post - surgical inscription, is still, always already, a site of contested being, a locus of “embodied becoming” (Roen). The intersex body is not ontological, but rather hauntological.

46. The terms hermaphrodite and intersex are not interchangeable although they were frequently, as Kerry’s (2011) analysis demonstrates, used as though they are. Not all subjects who might be construed as having an intersex “condition” identify as intersex.

47. As I have previously mentioned, for the purposes of space and coherence it is necessary to bracket off the ramified questions entailed in this nomenclature and how it is that Semenya does, and does not, have a relationship with it. I pursue this discussion elsewhere. See de Robillard (2014).

While I appreciate the distinction Grabham (2012) makes between the social disease intersex and prosthetised bodies can induce, my sense is that, patriotic optics aside, Pistorius’ body exceeds the kind of prosthetised soma she describes. This is evidenced by the epistemic queries the athlete’s body generates. Like the hauntological intersex ‘body as event’ that O’Rourke and Giffney discuss, Pistorius’

body appears as a complex form always in the process of becoming; always moving with – or from – one somatic category to another and yet another. In a similar vein, Semenya's intersex (but not intersex) body intensifies the 'hauntological' effects about which Garland-Thomson writes. I would say that these 'body events', that come together as an assemblage, do not simply index individual intersex or dis/abled identities or embodiments. Instead, the assemblage suggests the kind of unsettled 'flows', 'concorporealities' and 'hybridities' that might help induce the 'new cultural imaginary' for which Shildrick (2012) advocates. After Shildrick, perhaps something of the nomadism and 'contagion' the assemblage could foster is evident in the way at least one 'disability justice activist' responded when writing at the 'Cripchick's blog':

As disability justice activists, we must connect how ableism gets leveraged in service of heteronormativity, in service of white supremacy, in service of misogyny. Ableism gets used all the time to divide us and we must fight it at every turn. How do we begin to understand that it was Caster's ... able-bodied and gender-non-conforming abilities that threatened notions of gendered bodies ... Our voices are crucial because people who reflect Caster Semenya and reflect us are listening and learning what it means to have extraordinary bodies ... (Cripchick's Blog 2011:[sp]).

At this juncture I should underscore that I have not wanted this analysis to be tethered to Caster Semenya or Oscar Pistorius as persons in the world, hence my insistence upon the assemblage as a representational, imaginative and critical device. Viewed from this perspective the Semenya/Pistorius assemblage emblematises multiple challenges to a dominant cultural imaginary of corporeal integrity (see Blackman 2010; Martin 2010; Slatman & Widdershoven 2010; Sobchack 2004). As such, it co-habits with other cripqueering technologies in a somatosphere in which corporeality is being re-metaphorised (see Blackman 2010; Martin 2010; Shildrick 2012).⁴⁸ Furthermore, by interrupting the unmarked somatic norms associated with the South African body politic the assemblage instigated an epistemic drama that dislocated the cultural 'idea(l) of bodily integrity' it was meant to (re)install (Betterton 2009). Although nationalist tactics wanted to limit these 'body events' cripqueering potential, the assemblage nonetheless produced what McRuer, following Jacques Rancière, might call 'the dissensual politics of the crip' (O'Rourke 2008:[sp]). That is, a dislocation of sovereigntist metaphors of embodiment that, in turn, have the potential to undo sovereigntist formulations of the body politic. Expressed differently, the assemblage consorted with somatechnologies that cut off 'the king's head' (Stryker & Sullivan 2009). Now while these 'dissensual' cripqueering effects were obviously not decisive, neither

48. See de Robillard (2014) for further evidence in support of this claim.

were the normative mechanisms that laboured to contain them. That the bodily integrity ideal had to be so insistently activated was a measure of the assemblage's 'hauntological' properties.

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