

critical dance studies



Anna Leon

Expanded Choreographies – Choreographic Histories

Trans-Historical Perspectives
Beyond Dance and Human Bodies
in Motion

[transcript]

Anna Leon
Expanded Choreographies – Choreographic Histories

Editorial

The series is edited by Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein.

Anna Leon is a dance historian and theorist. She is theory curator at Tanzquartier Wien and postdoctoral fellow at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, where she researches 'peripheral' dance modernities through a focus on ballet in early 20th century Greece. She holds a BSc from the University of Bristol, an MA from Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne University and a PhD from the University of Salzburg. Her doctoral research is elaborated in the ongoing project *The Pervasion of the Digital*, co-developed with Johanna Hilari, which interrogates expanded choreography in the digital realm. She has taught at the Universities of Vienna, Salzburg and Bern as well as SEAD (Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance) and the Institut Français. She occasionally collaborates, as a dramaturg or historiographic adviser, with choreographers including Julia Schwarzbach, Florentina Holzinger and Netta Weiser.

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*To Niovi, with all the love I can muster for her.
And to my father, who keeps company with the trees.*

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Notes on translation

All quotations are given in the language of the source used. While this has largely been the original language (or a published translation juxtaposed to the original language), some sources are quoted in translation if that was the researched source used.

All quotations that are not in English are followed by a translation by the author. The treatises by Domenico da Piacenza, Guglielmo Ebreo da Persaro, and Antonio Cornazano constitute an exception, as published translations have been used (see Bibliography); deviations from these translations are indicated in the footnotes. Given the complexity of artistic, poetic, and context-bound connotations that may be inherent in them, titles of artworks are not translated. Titles of books and other written material, when mentioned in the text, are translated literally – this is done to facilitate the reader, even if such literal translations do not always do justice to the works.

Quotations integrate – as much as text formatting allows – the orthographic and typographic particularities of the material quoted.

Summary

From the staging of objects to motions in urban space, dance scholarship increasingly recognises choreographic expansions beyond dance-making and the moving human body. Additionally, the history of choreography encompasses practices ranging from notation to dramaturgy and composition. Against this background, this book activates the term “expanded choreography” to explore bidirectional relations between contemporary and historical instances of choreography not complying with a corporeal, kinetic, or dancerly focus.

This book juxtaposes nine case studies illustrating common problematics in different periods of European dance history: treatises predating the early-18th century, when the use of the term “choreography” was not synonymous with “dance-making”; practices from 20th-century modernity, when the relation between choreography, dance, and bodily movement was essentialised; and contemporary works surrounding the appearance of the term “expanded choreography”. In order to address relations between these periods, methodological tools from Dance Studies – Christina Thurner’s “spatialised” dance history model – and Art History – Mieke Bal’s “preposterous history” and Hal Foster’s treatment of the parallax – are used.

Based on the above analyses, *Expanded choreographies - Choreographic histories* presents expanded choreography as a field of diverse qualitative transformations of choreography, not limited to the transfer of physical-kinetic knowledge and practice to domains beyond dance. In parallel, it argues for the decentralisation of a dominant, historically-recent choreographic model based on dance-making, motion, and human corporeality in reading early-modern sources; and for the need to replace a discourse of corporeal/kinetic modernism in 20th-century choreography by admitting its multiplicity and including more diverse paradigms in its canon. In doing so, the book identifies the relevance of contemporary choreographic expansions for understanding historical practices – and vice versa – thus foregrounding the inscription of expanded choreography in a macro-historical framework. Viewing expansion as a territory in which the semantic scope of choreography can shift, it pleads for the necessity of recognising choreographic

plurality, with different conceptions of choreography forming – both in contemporaneity and in history – a constellation of multiple specificities.

Introduction

2012. The Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona hosted choreographer Xavier Le Roy's "*Rétrospective*", a performed exhibition. In parallel with the exhibition, and in collaboration with Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and Mercat de les Flors, a conference was organised: *Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects*, with the following description:

In the last few years the term "choreography" has been used in an ever-expanding sense, becoming synonymous with specific structures and strategies disconnected from subjectivist bodily expression, style and representation. [...] Choreography is today emancipating itself from dance, engaging in a vibrant process of articulation. [...] Simultaneously, we have seen a number of exhibitions in which choreography is often placed in a tension between movement, situation and objects.¹

A few months later, artist and writer Mårten Spångberg (who had also collaborated in the MACBA conference) published in *Spångbergianism*:

An expanded choreography owns the future. [...] The future belongs to choreography but only if it acknowledges its potentiality as an expanded capacity. Choreography is not the art of making dances (a directional set of tools), it is a generic set of capacities to be applied to any kind of production, analysis or organization.²

The term "expanded choreography" had been circulating for at least a few years before this exhibition and publication, in the most unexpected discursive contexts – ranging from a 2006 text on ethnographic approaches to education (noting that

1 Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects..., Conference presentation, MACBA 2012, <http://www.macba.cat/en/expanded-choreography-situations> (August 2020).

2 Spångberg, Mårten: Seventeen Points for The Future of Dance, 2012, <https://spangbergiansm.wordpress.com/tag/choreography/> (August 2020).

it ‘will have to include an expanded choreography of participatory stances³) to a rather surprising type of business-processing model implicating ‘an algorithm for expanding choreographies’.⁴

Expanded choreography is an elusive notion. There is no single, organised, expanded choreographic movement – no body of theorists or practitioners who claim a conceptual/artistic territory. There is no full consensus about the meaning of the term, and how one answers the question of what expanded choreography is indicates and reflects their view of choreography *tout court*. If choreography is related to a disciplinary arrangement of bodily motion, expanded choreography can be practiced by military officials and gender norms; if choreography is related to patterns of motion, expanded choreography can appear in the development of a fractal; if choreography is directed towards dancing bodies, expanded choreography can encompass the dance of non-human materialities. Moreover, as is the case with further widely-debated terms – “non dance”, “conceptual” dance, “post-dance”⁵ – the very construction of the expression “expanded choreography” subjects it to criticism; the adjective “expanded” implies both a core from which expansion occurs (raising the question of what that core may be) and the potentiality of limitless widening, where everything becomes (expanded) choreography, emptying the term of meaning. But despite such issues, expanded choreography has benefited from relatively wider acceptance than other terms – most notably, it has been used by practitioners, including Mette Ingvarstsen, Dragana Bulut, Dalija Acin, and Spångberg.⁶ Thus – in contrast to artists’ resistance to terms

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- 3 Powell, Kimberly: Inside-Out and Outside-In: Participant Observation in *Taiko* Drumming, in: Spindler, George & Hammond, Lorie A. (eds.): *Innovations in Educational Ethnography: Theories, Methods, and Results*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum 2006, p. 62.
 - 4 Decker, Gero: Process Choreographies in Service-oriented Environments, MA thesis, Potsdam: Universität Potsdam 2006, p. 41. In parallel, “Choreography” itself had been metaphorically activated in discourse about fields ranging from digital technology to biology: Parker, Philip M. (ed.): *Choreography: Webster’s Timeline History 1710-2007*, California: ICON Group 2009, pp. 35, 38, 43, 45, 47.
 - 5 On these terms cf. Adolphe, Jean-Marc & Mayen, Gérard: La ‘non-danse’ danse encore, 2004, <http://sarma.be/docs/784> (August 2020); Roy, Xavier Le & Cvejić, Bojana: To End with Judgment by Way of Clarification, in: Lepecki, André (ed.): *Dance*, London/Cambridge: Whitechapel Gallery/MIT Press 2012 [2005], pp. 93–95; Andersson, Danjel, Edvarstsen, Mette & Spångberg, Mårten (eds.): *Post-Dance*, Stockholm: MDT 2017.
 - 6 Ingvarstsen, Mette: *Expanded Choreography: Shifting the Agency of Movement in The Artificial Nature Project and 69 Positions*, PhD thesis, Lund: Lund University 2016; Bulut, Dragana & Linder, Adam: Mit dem Körper schreiben / Writing with the Body, in: *Jahresring* 61 (2014), p. 178; Acin, Dalija: Exercise Book for Choreography of Attention ‘Point of no Return’, undated, http://dalijaacinthelander.net/eng/work_exercise.html (October 2018); Spångberg: Seventeen Points for The Future of Dance.

such as “conceptual” dance – it persists, presenting the historian and theorist with a phenomenon to be addressed.

This book is not an attempt to pinpoint – to define, to stabilise – expanded choreography. Rather, in this lack of clear definition, this book multiplies conceptions of choreography. In this sense, expanded choreography may be seen as an encapsulation of the contemporary choreographic field’s open-ness to re-definitions of choreography – what Bojana Cvejić has called ‘*concept ouvert de chorégraphie* [open concept of choreography]’⁷ – not only widening already-existing notions but also asking what *else*⁸ choreography can do, what else it can work with, what else it may be. To be sure, other terms could have played the same role. “Expanded choreography” has, however, the advantage of avoiding dichotomous negations – as in the binarity of “not-dance” – replacing them with an opening of potentials. This avoidance of a negative definition reflects and coincides with a wider theoretical and practical interest in choreography “itself”, beyond its dance-making capacity. For example, in 2012, Elena Basteri, Elisa Ricci, and Emanuele Guidi developed a project titled *Rehearsing Collectivity: Choreography Beyond Dance*.⁹ In 2008 – four years before the MACBA conference – the journal *Performance Research* published an issue ‘On Choreography’ edited by André Lepecki and Ric Allsopp. A year before that, the research-oriented website CORPUS surveyed dance professionals on ‘What does “choreography” mean today?’;¹⁰ rather than converging on a single answer, the responses pointed towards multiplicity, or expansion.

It is not only in the present that this choreographic multiplicity can be discerned; it is also found in choreographic history. It is important to remember, in effect, that it was only from the 19th or even early-20th century that the main meaning of “choreography” came to be associated with the act of composing a dance.¹¹ Similarly, it was chiefly in the 20th century that dance-making – and by

7 Quoted in Knolle, Vera: *Du Visqueux au concept, avec retour possible. Plaidoyer pour une ‘dance (post)-conceptuelle’*, in: Cvejić, Bojana (ed.): *“Rétrospective” par Xavier Le Roy*, Dijon: Les Presses du réel 2014, p. 300.

8 The reoccurring question of “what else” is inspired by William Forsythe’s interrogation, ‘What else, besides the body, could physical thinking look like?’. Forsythe, William: *Choreographic Objects*, undated, <http://www.williamforsythe.de/essay.html> (August 2020). See also Manning, Erin: *Choreography as Mobile Architecture*, in: *Performance Paradigm* 9 (2013), <http://www.performanceparadigm.net/index.php/journal/article/view/134/133> (August 2020).

9 Basteri, Elena, Guidi, Emanuele & Ricci, Elisa (eds.): *Rehearsing Collectivity: Choreography Beyond Dance*, Berlin: Argobooks 2012.

10 CORPUS: Survey What does “choreography” mean today?, 2007, <http://www.corpusweb.net/introduction-to-the-survey.html> (Archive copy from October 2015).

11 Cf. Foster, Susan Leigh: *Choreographing Empathy. Kinesthesia in Performance*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2011, pp. 40, 43; Moal, Philippe Le: *Chorégraphe*, in: Moal, Philippe Le (ed.): *Dictionnaire de la danse*, Paris: Larousse 1999, p. 543 on the derivative “*chorégraphe*” [choreographer];

extension choreography – became essentially bound to a moving human corporeality.¹² The related definition of choreography as an organisation or arrangement of moving bodies in time and space – based on its association with the medium of corporeal movement, irrespective of the adherence to a norm of dance – is also historically situated in the 20th century. These points call attention to the historiographic fact that choreography as the arrangement of moving bodies in time and space can be dissociated from choreography as dance-making – and vice versa, choreography can be practiced as dance-making while not engaging with human bodies in motion. But, more crucial still is that the term “choreography” itself first appeared with an altogether different meaning, in the title of French dance master Raoul Auger Feuillet’s 1700 treatise *Chorégraphie, ou L’Art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs* [Choreography or The art of describing dance through characters, figures and demonstrative signs]. Within Feuillet’s treatise, its context, and for the following several decades, “choreography” literally signified the writing of dance, i.e. dance notation, while dance-making was practiced without the label “choreography”. Beyond a definition that renders choreography coextensive with a history of dance-making or the arrangement of bodily motion,¹³ therefore, even a cursory glance into choreographic history shows that these are only chronologically-situated parts to a more complex story.¹⁴

While historical accounts of choreography often focus on the passage from its function of writing to that of dance-making, these meanings of choreography are not exhaustive. Chronologically situated in the very “transition” from the early-18th century’s choreography-as-writing to the 19th and 20th centuries’ choreography-as-dance-making, Edward Nye has argued that, in the 18th-century theatrically-oriented genre of the *ballet d’action*, “choreography” acquired the meaning of “dramaturgical structure” or “dramatic composition” and “choreographer” was used as “composer of the dramatic action”.¹⁵ For example, he provides an excerpt from

Brandstetter, Gabriele : Choreographie, in : Fischer-Lichte, Erika, Kolesch, Doris & Warstat, Matthias (eds.) : *Metzler Lexikon Theatertheorie*, Stuttgart/Weimar : J.B. Metzler 2014, p. 54.

- 12 Cf. Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 44; Lepecki, André: *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2006, pp. 3-4.
- 13 The task of elaborating a choreographic history – overlapping but not identical with a history of dance – has indeed started to occupy the field of Dance Studies. Cf. Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, pp. 15–72; Klein, Gabriele: Essay, in: Klein, Gabriele (ed.) *Choreografischer Baukasten. Das Buch*, Bielefeld: transcript 2015, pp. 17–49.
- 14 For more information on points made in this paragraph see Leon, Anna: Between and within choreographies: An early choreographic object by William Forsythe, in: *Dance Articulated* special Issue *Choreography Now*, 6:1 (2020), pp. 64-88.
- 15 Nye, Edward: ‘Choreography’ is Narrative: The Programmes of the Eighteenth-Century *Ballet d’Action*, in: *Dance Research* 26/1 (2008), pp. 42–59, esp. pp. 42, 46, 48. Similarly, Susan Foster enumerates that, according to Noverre, elements ensuring the plot – including choosing the subject of a ballet, structuring its scenes, directing dancers’ actions – were crucial elements

a 1770 *ballet d'action* review to suggest that “choreography” may refer to the dramaturgical development of danced drama:

Mlle Allard plays the part of Medea, Dlle Guimard Creusa, and Sr Vestris plays Jason. The latter is without a mask, and surprised the audience by the energy of his performance, not only as a dancer, but also as an actor. He gives his character all the sublimity than one could wish for. The passions are painted on his face with a nobility, a truth, a diversity that is inexpressible, and which shows he has a singular talent for the stage. [...] Mlle Allard, for her part, has a vigorous spring [*une vigueur de jarret*], has hard and fiery eyes which characterise quite well the fury of a jealous woman, and the depravity governing every movement of Mlle Guimard's indicates the extent of her desire to please and to seduce. This choreography [*chorégraphie*] was devised [*imaginée dans le principe*] by Noverre, the man who has greatest genius in this genre.¹⁶

Thus, although Jean-Georges Noverre referred to choreography as notation – as did Gasparo Angiolini and many of their contemporaries¹⁷ – choreography may have been a far more complex notion in their context.¹⁸ Still more meanings of “choreography” might need to be added to these; Susan Foster, for instance, also identifies certain 19th-century uses of “choreography” referring to the teaching and learning of dance.¹⁹

of choreographic work, and presents the work of choreographers in the 18th century as both the staging of the ballet's story and its adaptation for a published programme: Foster, Susan Leigh: *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1998 [1996], pp. 75, 101–102.

- 16 Nye : 'Choreography' is Narrative, p. 45, translation by Nye; see p. 46 for his interpretation of the quote. Nye takes his argument a step further, suggesting that “choreography” may also have referred to the written ballet programme – a libretto-like document describing the danced narrative's plot. Nye, Edward : *Mime, Music and Drama on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: The Ballet d'Action*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, pp. 168–169. This aspect of choreographic history may have contributed to a persistence of narrative in (ballet) choreography, at least in France, for more than a century [Chapter 7].
- 17 Noverre, Jean-Georges : *Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets*, Lyon: Delaroché 1760, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k108204h/fi.item.texteImage.zoom> (August 2020) BnF, pp. 2, 362; Dahms, Sibylle: *Choreographische Aspekte im Werk Jean-Georges Noverres und Gasparo Angiolinis*, in: Klein, Michael (ed.): *Tanzforschung Jahrbuch 2* (1991), pp. 93–94, 108–109.
- 18 Slightly later, in the early-19th century, Jean Faget also spoke of choreography as ‘this art not only of notating the steps and figures of the dance, simple technical expressions, but of putting into action all the riches of pantomime, of composing for this mute language a story, a plot, an intrigue, a knot and an ending’. Quoted in Foster: *Choreography and Narrative*, p. 167.
- 19 Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 43, p. 226 note 56.

“Choreography” may then refer to an engagement with dance-making (whatever the dance product may be), or with the human body in motion, or both at the same time; it may also refer to practices, like notation, that cannot be subsumed under these definitions. Inversely, practices relevant to dance-making and arrangements of corporeal motions are parts of choreographic history without always being defined as “choreography” in their particular context. From dance-making to dance notation, from arrangements of moving bodies to composition, from the development of danced drama to practices that are choreographic without being called choreographies, a constellation of transformations points to the fact that choreography is better conceptualised as *choreographies* – not reducible to a singular meaning or practice but, rather, a network of historically-situated ones.

This plural choreographic history is not linear or sequential,²⁰ composed of a series of discrete paradigms replacing one another. Rather, different construals of choreography synchronously coexist; and, instead of pursuing a unidirectional chronology, they reappear at different historical moments, transforming in response to their diverse contexts. For example, choreography as a notational project re-emerges in the writings of modern dance artist Rudolf Laban [Chapter 8]; as kinetography, it integrates the 20th century’s focus on movement in the conception of choreography as writing:

choreography, means literally the designing or writing of circles. The word is still in use today: we call the planning and composition of a ballet or a dance “choreography”. For centuries the word has been employed to designate the drawings of figures and symbols of movements which dance composers, or choreographers, jotted down as an aid to memory [...] My study of some hundred different forms of graphic presentation of characters of the different alphabets and other symbols, including those of music and dance, has helped me with the development of a new form of choreography which I called “kinetography”.²¹

Choreography as notation – a writing that (pre)scribes the future performance of motion – has been employed more recently as well. Lepecki,²² for instance, refers to Thoinot Arbeau’s 1589 treatise *Orchésographie* – which also includes notations

20 For a criticism of a singular-, linear-, chronologically-organised history see Thurner, Christina: Raum für bewegliche Geschichtsschreibung. Zur Einleitung, in: Thurner, Christina & Wehren, Julia (eds.): *Original und Revival: Geschichts-Schreibung im Tanz*, Zurich: Chronos 2010, esp. p. 10 and Thurner, Christina: Time Layers, Time Leaps, Time Loss: Methodologies of Dance Historiography, in: Franko, Mark (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, New York: Oxford University Press 2017, pp. 525–532.

21 Laban, Rudolf: *Choreutics*, London: MacDonald and Evans 1966, p. viii.

22 Lepecki, André: Choreography as Apparatus of Capture, in: *TDR-The Drama Review* 51/2 (2007), pp. 120–123; cf. also Siegmund, Gerald: *Choreographie und Gesetz: Zur Not-*

and whose title prefigures Feuillet's term – in his theorisation of choreography as a practice of disciplining, ruling the body and/or dance – an 'apparatus of capture', the law according to which the dancing body should move. In this way, the historical association of choreography with a notational project contributes to a contemporary conceptual link between choreography and the disciplinary control of the embodied praxis of dance.

Moreover, different construals of choreography engage in frictions with the practices they are surrounded by and which they aim to describe. For example, while Feuillet's (pre)scriptive notational project was consistent and contextually associated with the aim to centralise power over dance matters (institutionalised through the foundation of the *Académie Royale de Danse*), it may also have offered a possibility of resistance to the control of dancing bodies [Chapter 2].²³ Similarly, the 20th century's focus on bodily motion as the primary characteristic of both dance and choreography was defied by scenographic, musical, and textual inputs in multimedia choreographic work; or by the dephysicalisation of movement through its technological mediation. Choreography may also allow positioning with respect to specific *kinds* of practice, privileging some over others. Thus, in the 19th century, August Bournonville argued that 'the choreographer who only composes according to a given programme is no more advanced than the musician who only orchestrates others' melodies'²⁴, implying that "just" developing dance steps is a less-worthy application of choreographic work. Likewise, in the early 20th century, while "choreography" meant "dance-making", it could also refer to specific genres of dance-making that were viewed negatively – writer Fernand Divoire,²⁵ for instance, used the label "choreography" to derogatorily refer to classical ballet, which he looked down on.²⁶

Therefore, contemporary "expanded choreography" appears as a non-centralised network of practices and ideas probing what "else" choreography may be, while choreographic history appears as a collection of interlinked – but not linearly, smoothly-connectible – paths. What choreography has been in Western dance history is therefore as variable and complex as contemporary (expanded) choreography; the two are at times in accord, at times in tension. This book is a

wandigkeit des Widerstands, in: Haitzinger, Nicole & Fenböck, Karin (eds.): *Denkfiguren: Performatives zwischen bewegen, schreiben und erfinden*, Munich: epodium 2010, p. 122–123.

23 Glon, Marie: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques: Les maîtres de danse européens au coeur d'un phénomène éditorial*, PhD thesis, Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2014, p. 219.

24 Bournonville, August: *Letters on Dance and Choreography*, London: Dance Books 1999 [1860, trans. Knud Arne Jürgensen], p. 58.

25 Divoire, Fernand: *Découvertes sur la danse*, Paris: Crès 1924, p. 34.

26 For the information in this and the preceding paragraph: Leon, Anna: *Between and within choreographies*.

historiographic exploration of the interval where these accords and tensions develop. It proposes a simple operation: to look at expanded choreography through its ties with choreographic history and investigate this history as potentially relevant within the contemporary “expanded” choreographic field. Interweaving present expansions with choreographic histories, this book considers how they can enrich one other. This includes how expanded choreography, with its lack of singular definition – begging the question of choreography’s own definition – can be addressed from a historical viewpoint, nourishing contemporary interrogations with insights provided by choreographic history; and, vice versa, how expanded choreography may contribute to, and foster, the recognition of a multiple choreographic history. Contrary to an insistence upon valuing novelty and a “forward” sense of history, this trans-historical approach seeks relations with the past as manifestations of a ruptured linearity – and thus points to long-term connections as signs of the contemporary relevance of the past.

Looking at the contemporary choreographic context in which “expansion” appears, as well as at a multiple choreographic history, this book notes the distance that both can take from dance-making and human bodies in movement. Contemporary choreographers’ – from William Forsythe’s ‘[c]horeography and dancing are two distinct and very different practices’²⁷ [Chapter 6] to Jérôme Bel’s ‘[c]horeography is just a frame, a structure, a language where much more than dance is inscribed’²⁸ – distance from dance is as widely discussed in contemporary choreographic theory as it is practically present in contemporary choreographic works. In parallel, recent historical studies – Nye’s arguments on *ballet d’action* and Marie Glon’s work on Feuillet are both cases in point²⁹ – also manifest historical distinctions between choreography and dance-making. A de-essentialised, non-dance-specific view of choreography in contemporaneity and a choreographic history not coextensive with dance-making are thus recognised. The historiographic links between them have not, however, been adequately discussed. Discourse on expanded choreography tends to insist on its presentness and perspective towards the future. For instance, when Spångberg writes that ‘[t]he future belongs to choreography but only if it acknowledges its potentiality as an expanded capacity’³⁰, the linearly-forward temporal aspect contributes to the perception of a rupture from a dance-centred choreographic past. A similar point can be made about choreography’s relationship with moving bodies. In the dance field of the early-21st century, immobility is widely accepted as valid choreographic material –

27 Forsythe: *Choreographic Objects*.

28 Quoted in Bauer, Una: Jérôme Bel. An Interview, in: *Performance Research* 13/1 (2008), p. 42.

29 Nye: *Mime, Music and Drama on the Eighteenth-Century Stage*; Glon: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*.

30 Spångberg: *Seventeen Points for The Future of Dance*.

from the staged stillness of Ivana Müller's 2006 *While We Were Holding It Together*, to the drug-induced, almost total lack of motion of Trajal Harell's 2009 *Tickle the Sleeping Giant # 9 (the Ambien Piece)*. As for choreographic motion, it is equally unproblematic in encompassing the non-human – be it animal as in Luc Petton's *Swan* (2012), or inanimate thing as in Clément Layes' *Things that Surround Us* (2012) and Ingvarstsen's oft-cited *The Artificial Nature Project* (2012) – and the non-performative realm – notably though the notion of “social choreography” and the application of choreographic concepts to the social realm and kinetic behaviour within it.³¹ Once again, however, the preponderance of the non-human and non-kinetic in historical choreographic approaches has yet to be fully interwoven into contemporary viewpoints. The contemporary world's overabundance in things, its struggles with ecological conscience and the advent of the Anthropocene, its “mobility turn”³² but also its critique of motion³³ have penetrated the choreographic field, expanding the range of entities and practices that are seen *as* choreography. The loosening ties of historical choreographies with moving bodies are, in this context, yet to be further interrogated and put in relation to contemporaneity.

To challenge – be it in history or contemporaneity – choreography's distances from dance, movement performance, and the human body undoes its association with elements that remain fundamental in the dance field's (and beyond) construction of choreography. But, it also raises crucial questions about the very conceptions of dance, body, and motion, interrogating the tacit equation of corporeality with humanity, motion with visible displacement, dance with any artistic or aesthetic canon. In the current context of ecological urgency – of realising our unavoidable entanglements with non-human agents – and of virtual, instantaneous exchanges, our understanding of the human body as an autonomous, unitary carrier of the subject, or of movement as a necessarily-incarnated process of physical displacement in space, are questioned. Against this background, gazing back to historical “expanded” choreographies can reveal diverse, non-essentialised conceptions of body and movement that have always rendered these notions malleable. The common study of historical and contemporary expansions can therefore point to the particularities and variabilities of choreographic frictions with dance, motion, and the body, interweaving a de-essentialised chore-

31 Cf. for example Klein, Gabriele: *Das Soziale choreographieren. Tanz und Performance als urbanes Theater*, in: Haitzinger & Fenböck: *Denkfiguren*, Munich: epodium 2010, pp. 94–103; Hewitt, Andrew: *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement*, Durham/London: Duke University Press 2005.

32 Cf. Wilkie, Fiona: *Performance, Transport and Mobility: Making Passage*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2015; Urry, John: *Mobilities*, Cambridge: Polity Press 2007.

33 E.g. Sloterdijk, Peter: *Eurotaoismus: Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1989.

ographic history with equally-complex genealogies of dance, corporeality, and movement.

By questioning the equation of choreography with the teleological function of dance-making and human corporeality as its primary medium – again, be it in the past or the present – the specificity of choreography is further detached from any ontological claim about singular, or essentially apt, means of artistic expression. In this way, choreography’s numerous interdisciplinary connections, as well as its co-evolutions with other art forms, are accounted for. Choreographic expansion is inscribed in a wider context, wherein choreography increasingly entered visual arts institutions; collaborated with scientists and researchers outside of the dance field; articulated its practice in academic contexts; and reacted, and moved towards, the digital, defying modernist claims of artistic “autonomy”. Recognising choreography’s plurality of media and forms of expression – as well as its interactions with other arts – from a trans-historical perspective integrates choreographic history with interdisciplinary art histories, recognising crosscurrents and common frameworks.

This de-essentialisation of choreographic conceptions is a methodological and historiographic imperative for dance studies. It is, however, paralleled by, and potentially akin to, choreography’s ubiquity; it seemingly moves towards an indiscriminate application of the term – much like, as Kirsten Maar³⁴ describes, has happened with terms like performativity and performance. This ubiquity can turn the notion of choreography from being plural – multiple specificities that are de-essentialised, shifting, in reinvention – to being vague and less-analytically constructive. An attempt to historiographically ground the plurality of choreographic ideas and practices by insisting on their concrete particularities contributes to viewing expansion as a collection of specificities, rather than an undefined space.

Undoing modernist claims to choreographic medium specificity and an attachment to the irreplaceability of dancing bodies also allows choreography – once more, both of today and of the past – to be seen as a practice defined not by its purportedly-autonomous medium of expression, but rather by complex interactions of aesthetic, artistic, educational, practical, institutional, sociocultural, and political factors that are always contextualised, situated, discursivised, and performed. Critical Dance Studies has provided fascinating analyses of the extent to which a claim of modernist autonomy has coexisted with unacknowledged (and, at times, highly-problematic) positionalities – as illustrated by Susan Manning’s writing on Mary Wigman’s “absolute” dance being inscribed in a con-

34 Maar, Kirsten: Exhibiting Choreography, in: Butte, Maren, Maar, Kirsten, McGovern, Fiona, Rafael, Marie-France & Schaffaff, Jörn (eds.): *Assign and Arrange: Methodologies of Presentation in Art and Dance*, Berlin: Sternberg Press 2014, p. 105.

text of proto-fascist aesthetics,³⁵ or Foster discussing U.S.-based white modern dance's claims of kinetic universalism.³⁶ Layering these thinkers' critiques, this book posits that choreographic politics is not limited to the – more-or-less disciplinary, more-or-less democratic – treatment of dancing bodies, but also needs to address the politics of a widely-construed, not-only-corporeal choreographic practice. A corollary of these claims is the problematisation of choreographic authorship; as will be made manifest in several of the chapters that follow, it is not only the creators of dance steps, or the organisers of bodily motions, that may be attributed the authorial role of choreographer.³⁷

Based on these considerations, this book identifies trans-historical echoes between contemporary and historical expansions, in order to illustrate common aspects in sources from different historical moments, thus developing choreographic histories that are not subsumed or reducible to a history of dance-making by putting the human body in motion. It is imperative to disentangle this project from that of developing “the” history of expanded choreography – a search for its “precursors”. Indeed, no direct continuity or deterministic causal connections are assumed; this diachronic approach was chosen not to *unite* what is apart in time, but rather to *juxtapose*.³⁸ Juxtaposition, here, is the creation of a particular relation – one that is based not on preconceived, *a priori* commonality, but on the view that it provides a space for the unforeseen to appear. In other words, the commonalities identified between contemporary and historical choreographic expansion are not taken as signs of an essential similarity, but generate, through unexpected togetherness, new perspectives on each of the elements involved. For the development of this approach, this book draws from Georges Didi-Huberman's notion of *dysposing* [*dysposer*]; this neologism admits the act of *disposing* in the sense of arranging – since ‘[o]n ne montre, on n'expose qu'à disposer [one can only show, one can only expose, by *disposing*]' – but troubles it by focussing on the selected elements' ‘*différences, leurs chocs mutuels, leurs confrontations, leurs conflits*’ [differences, their mutual chocs, their confrontations, their conflicts].³⁹ To *dyspose* may allow grouping historically-distant cases by embracing heterogeneity, and speculating on the generativity of considering them together.

35 Manning, Susan A.: *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press 1993.

36 Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 52.

37 Relatedly, Ana Vujanović writes that ‘choreography is being investigated today separately from dancing, leading towards a new authorial practice of performing art’. Vujanović, Ana: The Choreography of Singularity and Difference. *And Then* by Eszter Salamon, in: *Performance Research* 13/1 (2008), pp. 123–130, p. 130.

38 This use of juxtaposition is indebted to Didi-Huberman, Georges: *Quand les images prennent position: L'Oeil de l'histoire*, 1, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit 2009.

39 Ibid, p. 86.

There are dangers in circulating between present(s) and past(s) in this way. By using expanded choreography as a perspective through which to approach historical practices, this book activates contemporary concepts in the reading of the past, invoking the all-familiar figure of presentism – the projection of contemporary (choreographic) values and practices onto the past. Hans Belting warns: ‘it is worth making the distinction between the art historian [...] who wrote about the history of art in order to propose lessons for the art of his own day, and the art historian [...] who was merely unable to avoid seeing historical art with eyes trained from recent art experience’.⁴⁰ To maintain an awareness of the distance separating histories and contemporaneities, while simultaneously investing in this distance as creative historiographic territory, this book draws from Mieke Bal’s notion of a “preposterous history”, developed in her study of contemporary perspectives on baroque art, and introduced by Ramsay Burt to the dance-historical field.⁴¹ Bal writes:

Like any form of representation, art is inevitably engaged with what came before it, and that engagement is an active reworking. It specifies what and how our gaze sees. [...] re-visions of baroque art neither collapse past and present, as in an ill- conceived presentism, nor objectify the past and bring it within our grasp, as in a problematic positivist historicism. They do, however, demonstrate a possible way of dealing with ‘the past today’. This reversal, which puts what came chronologically first (‘pre-’) as an aftereffect behind (‘post’) its later recycling, is what I would like to call a *preposterous history*.⁴²

Both Burt and Bal refer to artistic practices “revisiting” or evoking the past, but preposterous history may also contribute to a historiographic methodology that admits the inevitability of present-influenced views of the past, and allows it to become an explicit object of research. It is indeed preposterous to look at, say, 15th-century dance practices through the lens of expanded choreography; the choice to do so is not an insistence on a nostalgic continuity of expanded choreographic history, but is, rather, based on the fact that this juxtaposition may multiply our present ways of seeing the past, thus making 15th-century dance practices relevant to contemporary expanded choreography. In this context, preposterousness is the expression of a desire to engage with history from the

40 Belting, Hans: *The End of the History of Art?*, Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press 1987 [1983, trans.Christopher S. Wood], p. 14.

41 Burt, Ramsay: *Undoing Postmodern Dance History*, 2004, <http://sarma.be/docs/767> (August 2020).

42 Bal, Mieke: *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*, Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press 1999, pp. 1, 6–7.

consciously-situated viewpoint emerging from the contemporary phenomenon of expanded choreography.

If expanded choreography is a historically-situated shift in our way of thinking about choreography, the historical (re-)reading that it allows is, to a certain extent, symptomatic of the present – it is an indication *about* this present. Hal Foster captures this bidirectional relationship between present and past when he refers to the notion of the parallax, defined as ‘the apparent displacement of an object caused by the actual movement of its observer. This figure underscores both that our framings of the past depend on our positions in the present and that these positions are defined through such framings’.⁴³ What is at stake here is not a repetition or “authentic” return of the past, but its very formulation as a factor in conceptions of contemporaneity. Instead of a *déjà vu* (a cyclical sameness), the specificity of the present’s newness can be understood in relation to the past, and not as an isolation or a break from it.

Circulating between past and present, and in order to acknowledge the potential bidirectionality of relations between contemporaneity and history, the chapters that follow are not organised chronologically. Part 1 discusses sources from the sparks of the macro-historical period of modernity to the turn of the 18th century – a period during which the term “choreography” was coined, although its use as “dance-making” was not yet in effect. Examining treatises from the Italian Renaissance [Chapter 3], and mid-17th- [Chapter 1] and early-18th-century France [Chapter 2], it discerns the limits of a dance, or moving-body, conception of choreography in pre-18th century sources, and identifies alternative conceptions of choreography contained within them, relating contemporary expandedness to historical eras in which currently-dominant notions of choreography were absent. Part 2 fast-forwards to the late-20th and early-21st centuries – the period surrounding and including choreographic expansion. Analysing performance [Chapter 5], video [Chapter 4], and installation [Chapter 6] works by contemporary choreographic artists, it articulates their manifested conceptions of choreography less as instances of a generalised and undifferentiated expansion than as a collection of specifiable, expanded choreographic singularities. This allows them to bidirectionally branch out to historical choreographies. Part 3 jumps back to the earlier-20th century, when dance-making and embodied motion became essentialised as core, definitional aspects of choreography, thus contributing to the dominant vision of choreography today. By investigating choreographic practices of the historical avant-gardes [Chapter

43 Foster, Hal: *The Return of the Real. The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1996, p. xii. For a methodological reflection on bidirectional relationships between past and present see also Thurner, Christina: *Time Layers, Time Leaps, Time Loss*, p. 525.

7], as well as modern [Chapter 8] and early post-modern [Chapter 9] dance, Part 3 addresses the multiplicity of coexisting choreographic conceptions – expanded and not – within 20th-century modernity. It thus replaces a discourse of choreographic modernism with one that relates 20th-century choreographic approaches to expanded aspects of (previous and subsequent) historical periods.

Given the constructed nature of historiography's periodising, this book accepts that any question a historian asks will influence the periodisation they pursue. This resonates with Isabelle Launay's words:

une des finalités du travail historique est de périodiser, c'est à dire de rechercher la cohérence d'une époque et de définir un moment de rupture annonciateur d'une nouvelle époque. Si périodiser constitue un puissant outil heuristique de la démarche historique pour poser des cadres et faire apparaître des problèmes, encore faut-il garder à l'esprit que ces périodes, en tant que telles, n'existent pas, et veiller à s'écarter de toute tentative de réification. [one of the aims of historical work is to periodise, that is look for the coherence of an era and define a moment of rupture, announcing a new era. If periodising constitutes a powerful heuristic tool in historical work in order to place frameworks and make problems appear, one must still keep in mind that these periods, as such, do not exist, and ensure that one keeps a distance from any attempt of reification].⁴⁴

Given, as well, the chronological scope of these sections, their content has been modulated by a radical focus on the particular – overall, they are nine micro-histories that populate a macro-historical argument; their juxtaposition creates an open territory to which further cases can be added. Each chapter is therefore purposefully written both as part of general and stand-alone arguments; with the exception of certain intratextual cross-references, the reader can meaningfully go through chapters individually and in any order. The specificity of each case means they do not function as “representatives” of a – chronological or other – “whole”; none purports to “stand for” the period it was situated in, even though each provides a vision of what that period may have been. That is why there are more than one case presented per Part. More specifically, Parts 2 and 3 address artists whose works have (partial) temporal overlap, illustrating the complexity inherent in specific shared moments – and aligning with Christina Thurner's proposal for a spatial model of history that explores the synchronous diversity effaced by chronological linearity.⁴⁵ Inversely, Part 1 includes examples that are not chronologically simultaneous, and their juxtaposition challenges the expectation

44 Launay, Isabelle: *A la recherche d'une danse moderne: Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman*, PhD thesis, Saint-Denis: Université Paris 8, 1997, p. 24, emphasis added.

45 Thurner, Christina: *Time Layers, Time Leaps, Time Loss*, esp. pp. 528–530; Thurner: *Raum für bewegliche Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 10.

that a chronological period is understandable through a generally applicable, singular, and linear tendency. The selected cases' irreducible particularity is paralleled by their not being exhaustive, as expansion is identifiable in other ways outside, or even within, the periods considered.

In telling this story of a multiple, expanded choreographic history, the geographical focus of this book is limited to (Western) Europe. Examples discussed include texts by French [Chapters 1 and 2] and Italian authors [Chapter 3] that have become mainstream in pre-20th-century European dance history; a piece by a Swedish company [Chapter 7] and the ideas of a Romanian artist operating in 20th-century France [Chapter 9]; the work that a modern choreographer born in Bratislava, active in Germany, did in the United Kingdom [Chapter 8]; a contemporary piece that a choreographer born in the United States, active in Germany, made the Netherlands [Chapter 6]; and, finally, 21st-century works by a Spanish [Chapter 5] and a French artist [Chapter 4]. This European focus is due to multiple reasons. Some are pragmatic, like the availability of sources within a sustainably-accessible range. The main reason is, however, the very notion of expanded choreography and the choreographic history to which it relates. Choreography is a culturally-sensitive notion whose understanding is never a-contextual; both expanded choreography and the multiple choreographic histories that serve as this book's departure points are products of a Western perspective, based on the words and practices of mostly Western artists and dance writers. While, then, this book does not approach expanded choreography as a Western phenomenon – it does not ask how the specific cultural, political, social, institutional, artistic, etc. context of the West formed choreographic expandedness – it assumes that this context is structurally present in the very notion of expanded choreography, without implying that non-Western choreographic practices cannot, or do not, include instances of expansion. The decision to select particularly European cases – as opposed to the wider notion of the “West” – recognises that, while there are several complicities and links between European and non-European Western choreographic history, these links are historically situated and contextualised as well; they cannot be assumed to be trans-historically constant and equally characteristic of all the historical periods discussed. This choice was also made based on a desire to re-locate specificities within the notion of the “West” without projecting an *a priori* unity. This European corpus is indeed, and crucially, but one among multiple dance-cultural *loci*, and does not purport to contribute to the universalising tendency that often characterises Western dance history. The European local, moreover,

does not refer to Europe as a postulated cultural totality but to several European sub-localities, only some of which relate to expanded choreography.⁴⁶

Even within this limited focus, what appears in contemporary expanded choreography and choreographic history is a momentous plurality – a profoundly anti-essentialist image of a choreographic field that is characterised by, and invites, historiographic acknowledgement of complexity, variety, and change. Indeed while the term “expansion” may, as noted above, imply a core – a stable state or starting point – from which to expand, if choreographic history is multiple, expanded choreography is not a step in a series of linear evolutions, but, rather, a collection of new dimensions in a multi-directional, complex territory. Inversely, by underlining a plural and expanded choreographic present, choreographic history may also be more fully understood in its plurality. Juxtaposing chronologically-distant but conceptually-associated examples, this book argues that expanded choreography does not mark a rupture or distance from the past, and that it is not reducible to the contemporaneity that invented the term. By identifying the historical bearing of expanded choreography, it stresses the need to de-centralise and de-essentialise choreography’s link to dance and/or human bodies in motion in historiographic discourse, and therefore the need to include practices not subsumed under these notions in choreographic history. Expanded choreography is an elusive notion, but it is also a territory in which the semantic scope of choreography can shift; what follows is an attempt to fill its elusive territory with a recognition of different conceptions of choreography forming – both in contemporaneity and in history – a constellation of multiple specificities.

46 On these points cf. Klein, Gabriele: Die Welt des Tanzes. Zur historischen Genese und politischen Relevanz von Universalität in der Tanzgeschichte, in: Thurner & Wehren: *Original und Revival*, pp. 81–90.

Part 1: Before choreography, expansion

Introduction to Part 1

In dance-historiographic discourse, any practice of dance-making may be referred to as choreography; one can say that 16th-century pavaues or early 17th-century court ballets were choreographed. At the same time, 16th-century pavaues and early 17th-century court ballets were produced in a context where the term “choreography” was not in effective usage – as a signifier of dance-making or at all. Indeed, dance history scholars¹ concur that the term “choreography” was put into common use around the turn of the 18th century. The 1700 text that is considered to have coined it (in French) – Raoul Auger Feuillet’s *Chorégraphie* – introduced it as a referent not for dance-making but dance notation: a literal manifestation of the etymology of “choros” – Greek for dance (also related to the dancing and singing chorus of ancient theatre²) – and “grafein”, or writing. Certain researchers also refer to the 16th century and Thoinot Arbeau’s associated term “orchestography”, still linking this to a practice of notation.³ Until at least the mid-18th century, then, dance-making and engaging with the human body in movement were practiced without being described as “choreography”;

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- 1 This refers to dance-historical sources in English, French, and German. Precise chronological positionings vary slightly: Gabriele Brandstetter refers to the late-17th century, while Philippe LeMoal to the context of Feuillet’s *Chorégraphie* (1700). Foster, Susan Leigh: *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2011, p. 16; Moal, Philippe Le: *Chorégraphe*, in: Moal, Philippe Le (ed.): *Dictionnaire de la danse*, Paris: Larousse 1999, p. 543; Brandstetter, Gabriele: *Choreographie*, in: Fischer-Lichte, Erika, Kolesch, Doris & Warstat, Matthias (eds.): *Metzler Lexikon Theatertheorie*, Stuttgart/Weimar: J.B. Metzler 2014, p. 54.
 - 2 Foster adds the meanings of rhythm and vocal harmony to translate the Greek *choreia*. Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 16.
 - 3 Claudia Jeschke quoted in CORPUS: Survey What does “choreography” mean today?, 2007, <http://www.corpusweb.net/introduction-to-the-survey.html> (Archive copy from October 2015); Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 17. Gabriele Klein sees the history of choreography as a writing of movement, encompassing the Renaissance: Klein, Gabriele: *Essay*, in: Klein, Gabriele (ed.) *Choreografischer Baukasten. Das Buch*, Bielefeld: transcript 2015, pp. 21–22.

inversely, for a fraction of this period the term applied to practices that were neither dance-making nor the arrangement of corporeal motion.

To say that 16th-century pavaues or early 17th-century court ballets were choreographed is therefore, strictly speaking, an anachronism. It is an anachronism that has significant strengths, as it allows dance-making to be considered in a trans-historical perspective, making historical practices comparable to more recent ones. Its application should nevertheless not hinder an understanding of historical practices' (choreographic) aspects that are not grasped by a subsequent notion of "choreography" – or even of "body", "motion" or "dance". Dislodging historical conceptions of movement from contemporary expectations, Bojana Cvejić points out that '[t]he idea of mobility with which the art of dance developed over a period of three centuries in Western Europe, before modern dance, was not necessarily bound up with the body of the dancer as its subject'⁴. Similarly, one can question the pertinence of applying a contemporary understanding of dance – as both an institutionally- and aesthetically-delineated form of artistic movement, related to, but not identical with, "everyday" motion – to pre-18th-century periods in which the boundaries between artistic and social dance were blurrier;⁵ or of applying a post-dualist conception of the body to pre-Cartesian sources.

While early modern dance-historical sources make us question the extent to which currently-dominant notions of choreography, corporeality, motion, or dance are applicable trans-historically, it also so happens that contemporary expanded choreographic practice, theory, and discourse have developed a crucial body of ideas that multiply choreography beyond a physicalised and kinetic dance-making. Based on this observation, the following three chapters operate a – preposterous⁶ – shift: they adopt an expanded choreographic perspective in the analysis of pre-18th-century dance, thus approaching sources from a period when the modern usage of "choreography" was absent through a contemporary viewpoint that also questions that usage. The point in operating this shift is not to describe an essential similarity between these sources and contemporary expanded practices – substituting one anachronism for another. Rather, it is to

4 Cvejić, Bojana: *Choreographing Problems: Expressive Concepts in European Contemporary Dance and Performance*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2015, p. 18.

5 Fabritio Caroso's *Nobilità di Dame* [Nobility of the Ladies] (1600), for instance, teaches, apart from dancing, "How Gentlemen Should Conduct Themselves When Attending Parties", "How a Gentleman Should Be Seated", "How a Lady Should Walk and How to Wear Chopines Properly" or "[The Behaviour of] Ladies Who Are Not Invited To Dance". Caroso, Fabritio: *Courtly Dance of the Renaissance* [translated edition of *Nobilità di Dame*], New York: Dover 1995 [1600, trans. Julia Sutton], pp. 135, 137, 141, 148.

6 Cf. Bal, Mieke: *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*, Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press 1999.

investigate the different ways in which the choreographic past may be relevant to choreographic presents. Echoing Hal Foster's argument, by investing in the distance between contemporaneity and early modernity, the analyses that follow admit that present positions influence framings of the past (and vice versa)⁷ – and, therefore, a multiplication of positionings in the present may enrich readings of the past. Reading “pre-choreographic” works through a perspective informed by expanded choreography therefore means decentralising a prominent choreographic lens, without affirming that another can fully replace it, recognising choreographic history's multiplicity.

Adopting an expanded choreographic perspective on early modern sources also implies looking for the relevance of past practices in – presentness-affirming and often-future-oriented – current choreographic mentalities. The relevance of early-modern performative and choreographic approaches for contemporary interests can be identified at many levels; from the use of non-frontal, non-proscenium stages to the preponderance of skilled but non-professional dancers, pre-18th century dance can be seen as a strikingly opportune dialogue partner for contemporary performance practices. Against this background, the chapters that follow tease out the specific forms that this relevance takes with respect to current debates about (expanded) choreography.

Chapter 1 examines Saint-Hubert's ballet-making treatise *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets* [The way to compose [ballets] and make ballets succeed] published in 17th-century France, which provides both theoretical and practical insights on the period's court ballet. Chapter 2 looks into Feuillet's canonical text – the *Chorégraphie* that used the term “choreography” to refer to the writing of dance. Chapter 3 focusses on the treatises of two of the loudest voices of Italian Renaissance dance – Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Persaro – whose writings provide a basis for understanding 15th-century dance culture south of the Alps. These chapters do not purport to argue that it is possible to track an “evolution” from Domenico and Guglielmo's 15th century, to Saint-Hubert's 17th century, and Feuillet's transition to the 18th century. Correspondingly, they are ordered thematically (rather than chronologically); Saint-Hubert will open the dance by casting doubt upon the centrality of – precisely – dance in ballet; Feuillet will take over by putting into question the place of corporeality in his notation; Domenico and Guglielmo will end the ball by suggesting, apart from a decentralisation of the human/physical body in dance, a reconsideration of the place and nature of motion in their choreography.

7 Cf. Foster, Hal: *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1996, p. xii.

In all three cases, the objects of analysis are written documents – treatises and, when relevant, associated publications (such as notation collections in Feuillet’s system). The fact that the treatises are, to a great extent, composed of text leads the following chapters to a highly discourse-based analysis, despite also focussing on visual aspects of the documents (e.g. Feuillet’s notational signs) and the indications of practice contained within them (e.g. elements of technique described by Domenico and Guglielmo). This is largely because pre-18th century sources are often limited to such written documents, through which practice can be glimpsed. The treatises considered here indeed constitute invaluable means through which to access historical, embodied, and performative practices. This value notwithstanding, this book’s approach is to treat them not as informants *about* further practices, but as objects of analysis in-and-of themselves, capable of proposing new ways of seeing choreography. Indeed, the conceptions of choreography identified in the treatises sometimes follow and sometimes are in friction with embodied practices of their time. From this perspective, Saint-Hubert, Feuillet, Domenico, and Guglielmo’s texts appear as parts of a dance culture that was not only performative and corporeal – that encompasses choreographic ideas in bodies and ballrooms – but also found in texts and images. It is this culture that these reflections seek to understand *as* (expanded) choreographic history.

Chapter 1: Monsieur de Saint-Hubert's expanded choreographic poietics

Monsieur de Saint-Hubert's *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets* was published in Paris in 1641; today, it is available in a facsimile edition preserving its original language.¹ In it, the author considers ballet and its components, ranging from dance and music to costumes and mechanical equipment. While his work is a canonical dance-historical source about European ballet history, not much is known about *La Manière de composer's* author. He had participated as a dancer and had been implicated in the production of ballets – as he repeatedly mentions in his treatise² – but was not widely known by his contemporaries and his work was published in relatively few copies.³ His reflections are nourished by the ballet culture of 17th-century France – notably under Louis XIII, who ruled until two years after the treatise's appearance – but are not accompanied by references to specific exemplar works (only one ballet is named).

Saint-Hubert's treatise is part of a wide corpus of historical sources on 17th-century court ballet as it developed in the French court and beyond, which will be referred to repeatedly in this chapter to contextualise his text. Some of these sources take the form of wide narratives blending theoretical principles about ballet with extensive descriptions of specific works, such as Claude-François Menestrier's 1682 *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre* [Of ballets ancient and modern according to the rules of the theatre]; others are works that pertain to dance technique applicable outside the realm of ballet, such as François de Lauze's 1623 *Apologie de la danse* [Apologia of dance]; while others focus on practical aspects of designing, producing, and performing ballets. It is to this latter category that *La Manière de composer* belongs. As such, Saint-Hubert's treatise gives threefold insight into the notion of (expanded) choreography with

1 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, Genève: Minkoff 1993 [1641].

2 Ibid., pp. 12, 20, 25.

3 Christout, Marie-Françoise: Introduction, in: Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, pp. 5, 28–29; Hourcade, Philippe: *Mascarades & ballets au Grand Siècle (1643-1715)*, Paris/Pantin: Desjonquères / Centre national de la danse 2002, p. 137.

respect to 17th-century court ballet: firstly, it provides clear principles of ballet aesthetics; secondly, it includes information about production processes and the agents implicated therein; and finally, it describes traits of the resulting works. Moreover, Saint-Hubert's text places specific emphasis on multimedia aspects of ballet and contains one of the most-complete presentations of an artistic figure – the *maître d'ordre* – that is directly relevant to this multimedia nature, thus providing material particularly relevant to an “expanded” view of court ballet.

La Manière de composer is more a booklet than a book, which nevertheless manages to pack a great wealth of advice about the art of 17th-century ballet into its roughly thirty pages. This advice is at times artistic/creative; the treatise gives suggestions for inventing adequate ballet topics or choosing machines and costumes, as well as reflections upon the dramaturgical structure of ballets. Furthermore, and to a considerable degree, the treatise contains pragmatic and production-oriented suggestions – for instance how many days ballets should be rehearsed⁴ or how to approach ordering elements of the production. The author also does not hesitate to propose his own ideas about ballet, since ‘*il est licite de corriger les anciennes reigles pour en faire de meilleures* [it is licit to correct ancient rules in order to make better ones]’.⁵ In these ways, Saint-Hubert offers a veritable *poietics* of ballet; a perspective on the art of creating, of *making*, ballets both as artistic process and pragmatic enterprise.

While the *poietics* of *La Manière de composer* advises about the creation of ballets, the projection of a contemporary understanding of the term “ballet” onto the text would be unfortunate, as Saint-Hubert's use of “ballet”, refers to the genre today termed “court ballet”. In this chapter, the term “ballet” is used in line with the vocabulary employed within the treatise itself, and disengages the word from the dominance of its contemporary connotations. A similar concern arises with respect to the word “choreography”, since Saint-Hubert was writing at a time when the term was not in common use (even more so in its later, dominant meanings). And just as *La Manière de composer* cannot be read through the perspective of the present-day dance-type “ballet”, this chapter argues that the treatise may only be partly readable with a notion of choreography relating to dance and the moving body. Investigating Saint-Hubert's portrayal of ballet as a multimedia, heterogeneous enterprise – emerging from interdisciplinary creative work and resulting in an anti-modernist dramaturgical assemblage – this chapter teases out its relevance for a contemporary expanded choreography.

4 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 17.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Of ballet and of dance

Saint-Hubert's treatise opens with a short defence of the practice of dancing. The author classifies dance as one of the three principal exercises (to be) pursued by the nobility, along with horse-riding and manipulating arms; argues that it is beneficial for increasing one's grace; counters the impression that it reduces one's valour (paralleling it with Mars' romantic entanglements with Venus which do not dampen his military ardour); and defends dance practice by referring to its preference by the nobility.⁶ These comments seem to generically refer to dance. The prominent, introductory position of such a passage in a ballet treatise is consistent with the fact that 17th-century France was characterised by a certain degree of continuity between stage/performance dance and ball dance; members of the nobility – non-professional dance practitioners – performed on stage, ballets were produced as part of court life, steps circulated from ballroom to stage and vice versa. However, at the same time that he highlights this continuity between ballet and non-performance-related dance, Saint-Hubert differentially refers to the *belle danse* – also associated with courtly social dancing – and to dancing representing specific characters (a magician, a student ...),⁷ thus introducing nuances that differentiate ball dance from ballet dancing. Menestrier, writing some forty years after Saint-Hubert, agrees with his precursor when he notes that ballets can be distinguished from other dances since they are not composed of simple corporeal positions and movements, but also include expressions “marking” different characters.⁸

Beyond its distinctions between ballet-dance and ball dance, it is important to consider that while Saint-Hubert's treatise refers to dance – including a chapter about it – *La Manière de composer* is not a text *about* dance, but about ballet. In other words, not only does Saint-Hubert not use the term “choreography”, but he also describes practices that are not exclusively assimilable to dance-making. In effect, when Saint-Hubert enumerates aspects of ballet-making, he does not treat the genre as one *only* characterised by dance. Dance is, rather, one of many – and not the first – elements he considers to be part of ballet: ‘[p]our faire vn beau Ballet, il y a six choses necessaires, sçavoir, le Subiet, les Airs, la Dance, les Habits, les Machines, & l'ordre [in order to make a beautiful ballet, six things

6 Ibid., pp. 1, 4.

7 Ibid., pp. 12–13. Saint-Hubert adds a further consideration of ability in this distinction; he notes that good dancers should be kept for ballet portions including *belle danse*, while other parts do not require technically-accomplished practitioners.

8 Menestrier, Claude-François: *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*, Paris: Guignard 1682, p. 158.

are necessary, that is the Subject, the Melodies, the Dance, the Costumes, the Machines, and the order!'.⁹

Indeed 17th-century treatises are identifiable – such as Saint-Hubert's and Menestrier's *Des Ballets anciens et modernes* – that tend towards a focus on ballet as a type of composite spectacle, in parallel to those – such as de Lauze's *Apologie* – which focus on the steps, technique, and execution of dances. Reflecting this theoretical distinction between ballet and dance, Michel de Marolles (in a lesser-known treatise published in 1657) differentiates his work on the ballet format from those on '*la danse et [...] l'art de sauter* [dance and the saltatory art]'.¹⁰ While, then, considerations about dance and ballet were related, and while reflections on dance were necessary parts of ballet treatises, it is an error to equate ballet with dance. As Marina Nordera points out about the 17th century, '[t]he term "ballet" is used [...] to indicate both the whole piece as an entity as well as the danced portions of it'¹¹ – but the two are not identical. While a ballet may today be seen as a type of dance work, in Saint-Hubert's universe it was not fully coextensive with dance.

Rather, ballet is presented by Saint-Hubert and his contemporaries as a multimedia spectacle. For example, Saint-Hubert argues that ballet's originality can increase through the *entrées* (which include dance) and non-dance elements (such as costumes).¹² His text also places dance in a relatively inferior position compared to other elements of the ballet; for example, he states that dance steps must be "subjected" [*asubietir*] to music and to the *entrées*,¹³ thus forming a hierarchical relationship in a composite ballet *poietics* that is not dominated by dance. Other 17th-century authors align themselves with Saint-Hubert; Menestrier speaks of ballets as multi-modal entities in which '*l'esprit, l'oreille & les yeux trouvent de quoy se divertir si agreablement* [the spirit, the ear and the eyes find agreeable entertainment]¹⁴. De Marolles, even though he prioritises dance, also acknowledges the ballet's multidisciplinary character, referring to it as

une Danse de plusieurs personnes masquées sous des habits éclatants, composée de diverses Entrées ou Parties qui se peuvent distribuer en plusieurs Actes et se rapportent agreablement à un Tout avec des Airs différents pour représenter un sujet inventé où le Plaisant, le Rare et le Merveilleux ne soient point oubliés [...] La Musique et la Symphonie

9 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 6.

10 Marolles, Michel de: Neuvième discours: Du ballet, in Hourcade: *Mascarades & ballets au Grand Siècle* [1657], p. 225.

11 Nordera, Marina: Ballet de cour, in Kant, Marion (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2007, p. 19.

12 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, pp. 8–9.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

14 Menestrier: *Des Ballets anciens et modernes*, p. 1.

des instruments et des voix y sont tout à fait de la bienséance, aussi bien que les Machines proportionnées aux Sujets et les changements de Scène ou de Théâtre quand il est à propos [a Dance of multiple masked persons under brilliant clothing, composed of diverse Entrées or Parts that can be distributed in multiple Acts and which are agreeably related to a Whole with different Melodies in order to represent an invented subject where the Pleasant, the Rare and the Marvellous are not forgotten [...] Music and the Symphony of instruments and voices are absolutely proper as are the Machines proportioned to the Subjects and Stage or Theatre changes when this is relevant].¹⁵

Consistent with this multimedia nature of the genre, dance masters functioning as choreographers for 17th-century ballets were not solely dedicated to the art of dance, but were also often the composers of the music for the *entrées*.¹⁶ Contemporary historians also agree that while sets may not have been necessary for ballets, other elements rendering them multimedia – most notably masks and costumes – were important and recurring features.¹⁷ For these reasons, ballet in the mid-17th century – despite its chronological proximity to the foundation of the *Académie Royale de Danse* by Louis XIV and its contribution to a modernist¹⁸ classification of dance (in opposition to arts such as music) – was a veritably interdisciplinary genre; it was more a multi-modal spectacle including dance than a “dance” work.

Beyond presenting ballet as a multimedia, artistic genre casting doubt upon a modernist conception of any one of its components – including dance – Saint-Hubert's treatise and other sources of/on the 17th century also question the possible autonomy of ballet's “danced portions”, to use Nordera's expression. The issue of dance's autonomy in Saint-Hubert's text can be examined through

15 Marolles: *Neuvième discours*, pp. 201–202.

16 Christout: Introduction, p. 17.

17 Hourcade: *Mascarades & ballets au Grand Siècle*, p. 59; Prunières, Henry: *Le Ballet de cour en France avant Benserade et Lully*, Paris: Laurens 1914, p. 159.

18 The term is used here – and in the remainder of this book – in association with an attachment to medium specificity and/or autonomy. This is, however, not to imply that a pre-20th century project of dance autonomy was exclusive to Louis XIV's actions or only achievable through a singular view of medium specificity. Mark Franko's appraisal of burlesque ballet (here focusing on burlesque ballets of the 1620s), for example, also identifies a choreographic autonomy: “[t]he body became a locus of allegorical meaning not only by carrying symbolic properties, but by projecting them physically into space as extensions of itself. This displacement of the organic body is also symptomatic of the concern for choreographic autonomy: the dancing figure becomes autonomous from the ‘natural’ body in a project whose artistic outcome is not bound up with assumptions about psychology and human action resumed in narrative”. Franko, Mark: *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*, New York: Oxford University Press 2015 [1993], p. 79.

his view on the interaction between dance and costume. As a first indication that costume may subvert dance's possibility of autonomy, the treatise suggests that dance should adapt to costume, thus introducing a potentially hierarchical relationship between the two:

Le ballet estant vne Comedie, muette, il faut que les habits & [sic] les actions fasset reconnoistre ce que l'on y represente. & le maistre à dancier doit faire les pas & les figures en sorte que l'on puisse dancier avec ce que l'on doit porter sur soy, & tout en sera beaucoup mieux. [Ballet being a silent Comedy, costumes and actions must make what is represented recognizable and the dance master must make the steps and the figures in such way that one can dance with what one needs to wear [or carry], and everything will be much better].¹⁹

A second indication is found in Saint-Hubert's treatment of dance and costume as media fulfilling the function of imitation. For the author, while dance contributes to the successful representation of characters – *'que chacun dancast suivant ce qu'il represente* [that each person dance following what he represents]²⁰ – this imitative function is not achieved through movement alone, as it needs to be complemented by costume. Saint-Hubert is a strict critic of dancers who leave their accessories mid-performance in order to dance unencumbered, reducing the spectators' ability to accurately recognise their character. If they do not keep their costume accessories,

on auroit besoin de leurs mettre vn escriteau sur le dos pour les faire reconnoistre, ainsi que font les mauuais peintres lors qu'ils ont fait quelque méchant tableau [we would need to put a label on their back in order to make them recognizable, like bad painters do when they've made a bad painting].²¹

Correspondingly, Saint-Hubert claims that if two dancers represent the same role, they must be dressed similarly;²² the costume cannot vary without varying the character. In these ways, dance does not appear to function autonomously, but, rather, in constant collaboration with costume; props and masks contribute to dancers' imitative role. Other 17th-century authors writing on ballet agree with Saint-Hubert: for de Marolles, ballet *'nest autre chose qu'une Comédie muette où toutes les actions se représentent par la Danse et par les habits* [is nothing else than a silent Comedy, where all the actions are *represented by Dance and by costumes*]²³; for Menestrier, *'comme le Ballet n'a que des Acteurs muets, il faut que leurs habits parlent pour*

19 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 16, emphasis added.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

23 Marolles: *Neuvième discours*, p. 202, emphasis added.

eux & les fassent connoistre aussi bien que leurs mouvemens [since the Ballet only has mute Actors, their costumes must speak for them and make them recognisable as much as their motions]²⁴; for Michel de Pure, '*si les habits sont mal ordonnez, il est impossible que les Entrées experiment bien ce quelles doivent exprimer* [if the costumes are badly arranged, it is impossible that the *Entrées* express well what they have to express]²⁵.

The collaboration of gesture and costume in the imitative work of dance may lead to an amalgamation of dancer and costume. Saint-Hubert writes that it needs to be prevented

que personne du Ballet ne paroissent dans la salle avec son habit auparavant auoir dancé [...] particulièrement en France, ou l'on ayme la nouveauté, & le changement [that someone from the Ballet appear in the room with their costume before dancing [...] especially in France, where we like novelty and change].²⁶

This injunction exists, as Saint-Hubert notes, because of a valourisation of variety; at the same time, it suggests that costume and dance movement form a conjunction. In this perspective, the performing figure²⁷ is not a site of "competition" between body/dance and costume, but a hybrid of both. This figure does not organically express or physically convey the character it portrays, including its interiority and intentions; rather, it symbolically or synecdochally *refers* to this character through a combination of gesture and costume. Character representation is achieved through typified gesture and signifying elements of costume. For example, Menestrier suggested continuous agitation for the motions of the Wind-character, and he provided a whole list of typical props and accessories, such as David with a crown and harp, Apollo with a lyre, and Hercules with a lionskin; de Marolles recommended a dress with different colours to highlight the passage of time (referring to its always-changing nature) and wings attached to its back and legs (to highlight how quickly time passes).²⁸ Frédéric Pouillaude concurs:

24 Menestrier: *Des Ballets anciens et modernes*, pp. 250–251.

25 Pure, Michel de: *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux*, Paris: Brunnet 1668, p. 287.

26 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 27.

27 For the notion of the figure see Haitzinger, Nicole & Leon, Anna: *The Body Suspended among Invisible Threads: Pavel Tchelitchew and the Ballets Russes' Ode* (1928), (in preparation).

28 Menestrier, Claude-François: *Remarques pour la conduite des ballets*, in: Christout, Marie-Françoise: *Le Ballet de cour de Louis XIV: 1643-1672: Mises en scène*, Paris: Picard 1967 [1658], p. 223; Marolles: *Neuvième discours*, p. 209; Menestrier: *Des Ballets anciens et modernes*, p. 140.

If the *ballet de cour* could only imitate through the support of annexed representational elements such as costumes, masks, decor, and text, this was precisely because it did not seek to show either individuals or affect, but to produce symbolic figures, instantaneous *signs*, which spectators would take pleasure in decoding and understanding. Thus one could, without risking a failure of verisimilitude, dance the Wind, the Sun, Anger, Peace or the movement of the Stars. [...] The court ballet was not concerned with expressive utterance, with emotion shown in its temporal development, but with an image offered as a snapshot, to be decoded [...].²⁹

If dance, as it appears in *La Manière de composer* and related sources, is an important component of a multimedia whole (but not fully equivalent to ballet), and not an autonomous medium of expression (but a contributor to a not-only-human, not-only-organic figure), then a choreography conception centred on dance-making as a corporeal practice is not fully adapted to a genre that expands beyond dance. In these ways, Saint-Hubert's *poietics* point to the need for an expanded notion of choreography – one that provides tools for the description and analysis of dance's relations with, and role within, a composite whole; one that is critical about its attachment to physicality, to allow the assembled bodies of court ballets to be recognised as such.

In this framework, the maker of dance (the artist referred to as a choreographer today) may not be a ballet's principal, dominant, or autonomous creator. In the interdisciplinary enterprise of ballet production, the dance master, as portrayed in the treatise, seems to have been the recipient of advice and directives from other practitioners: the author notes that a ballet's dance master must be told '*ce qu'il est besoin qu'il facent afin de faire les pas & figures suiuant le dessein* [what he needs to do in order to do the steps and figures following the plan].'³⁰ Saint-Hubert also advises alternating the numbers of dancers in each *entrée*, the number of figures, their duration, and the variety of their melodies and steps,³¹ all of which begs the question of whether or not such choices were open to dance masters. Marie-Françoise Christout points out that dance masters also

29 Pouillaude, Frédéric: *Unworking Choreography: The Notion of the Work in Dance*, New York: Oxford University Press 2017 [2009, trans. Anna Pakes], p. 183. Menestrier notes that '*quand le personnage paroît une seconde fois, il n'exprime rien de nouveau quant à la figure, & il faut que les mouvemens soient diversifiez, que l'on puisse entendre ce qu'il represente de nouveau* [when the character appears a second time, he expresses nothing new with regards to the figure and his movements must be diversified, so that we can hear what else he can signify]', suggesting if ballet figures function as signs, a single appearance of these signs may be sufficient. Menestrier: *Des Ballets anciens et modernes*, p. 142.

30 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 23.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 16–17.

had to adapt to the skill of their noble performers,³² instead of following unrestricted creative volition. The non-dominant role of the choreographer is also illustrated by Saint-Hubert's note that one dancing master is needed to do [*faire les pas*] and teach the steps for three to four *entrées*; given that – according to Saint-Hubert himself – a ballet had a minimum of ten *entrées*, one work must have required multiple dancing masters.³³ This is corroborated by contemporary historians who point out that a ballet could have several dance masters (a similar principle of collective, multiple authorship held for 17th-century painters and composers).³⁴ Based on this information, it seems that the non-equivalence between dance and ballet can be doubled by a non-equivalence between dance master and ballet *poiesis*. In effect, Saint-Hubert's text introduces an altogether different figure that may assume both practical and artistic/conceptual authorial responsibility for ballets – one that may be seen as an expanded choreographer.

A master of order

In Saint-Hubert's list of elements necessary for creating a ballet, his last point is termed “order” – presented as foundational for the success of a ballet: [*c'e n'est pas la plus grande despense qui rend les Ballets plus agreables, mais c'est quand l'ordre y est bien obserué* [it is not the greatest expense that renders ballets more agreeable, but when order is well observed]'.³⁵ The author then dedicates a whole chapter to the topic of order, personified in a figure he calls the *maître d'ordre*. In the same chapter, Saint-Hubert widens the scope of “order” by referring to the ballets of '*feu Monseigneur de Nemours* [the late *Monseigneur de Nemours*]'³⁶; this “monseigneur” is most probably Henri de Savoie duc de Nemours, who was involved in the production of ballets as their “*ordonnateur*” [roughly translated as “ordonator”]. Indeed, Saint-Hubert's references to the *maître d'ordre* bear similarities to information about *ordonnateurs* – courtiers or artists responsible for choosing the theme of ballets and supervising their production.³⁷ This “master” acquires great importance in the treatise – possibly because Saint-Hubert may

32 Christout: *Le Ballet de cour de Louis XIV*, p. 162.

33 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, pp. 5, 17.

34 Franko: *Dance as Text*, p. 93; Christout: Introduction, pp. 20–21; Christout: *Le Ballet de cour de Louis XIV*, p. 13.

35 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 20.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

37 Cf. Lecomte, Nathalie: Ballet de cour, in: Moal, Philippe Le (ed.): *Dictionnaire de la danse*, Paris: Larousse 1999, p. 528.

have operated in a similar role³⁸ and tended to valorise it – which states that everyone implicated in ballet-making should obey him.³⁹

The first type of work that the master of order does according to Saint-Hubert's vision is hands-on, pragmatic labour. He works before a ballet is presented, visiting the room in which it will be performed to decide issues such as where entrances will be made and where machines can be placed. He is tasked with finding the best artisans to create the machines and the best operators to use them. He is involved in the preparations of the baller's costumes and accessories. Saint-Hubert furthermore requires that he be present at all rehearsals and that he know the names of the dancers, indicating his familiarity with the members of the production.⁴⁰ The master of order is also active during the performance itself, fulfilling tasks that can be compared to those of today's stage managers, such as timing the entrances and exits of different *entrées* or telling the musicians when to play.⁴¹ The master of order is thus implicated in multiple pragmatic aspects of the process of production, staging, and performance.

At the same time, certain passages of the treatise suggest that the *maîtres d'ordre's* role was not limited to this. Indeed, they not only supervised the ballet's craftspeople and other artists but also mediated between them and the ballet's conception, explaining its plan and theme.⁴² What's more, Saint-Hubert's text discerns a creative space for those working on "order"; this included, for example, choosing the ballet's participating elements, such as masks and accessories.⁴³ The treatise further refers to choices made by the duc de Nemours as to whether there should be spoken word in ballet, thus indicating the *maître d'ordre's* role in a ballet's formal and media development.⁴⁴ The master of order thus performed conceptually- and artistically-relevant work, assuming an important function of creative authority within ballet *poiesis*. Saint-Hubert goes further: '[j]e voudrais que celui qui a composé le subiet, prist le soin de le faire executer luy mesme [I would like that he who composed the subject takes care executing it himself]⁴⁵ – in other words, the person who puts the ballet into practice may also develop its subject. If that person was a high-ranking member of the

38 Hourcade: *Mascarades & ballets au Grand Siècle*, p. 137

39 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 30. This source uses the male form.

40 Ibid., pp. 26, 21, 23.

41 Ibid., pp. 23–24.

42 Ibid., pp. 22–23; Hourcade: *Mascarades & ballets au Grand Siècle*, p. 149.

43 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 23.

44 Ibid., p. 25.

45 Ibid., p. 22.

nobility – a *grand Seigneur* – who did not wish to undertake the staging, they may delegate creative agency to a master of order.⁴⁶

This view of the master of order is compatible with the tasks of French *ordonnateurs*. For example, Nathalie Lecomte and Christout link the role of the *ordonnateur* with the selection of a ballet's general theme and the elaboration of the libretto, including choosing the poet who would write the lyrics.⁴⁷ The creativity in staging displayed by *ordonnateurs* and reflected by Saint-Hubert's *maître d'ordre* was also recognised by other 17th-century authors; for instance, Menestrier presents the *Ballet de la nuit*, performed twelve years after the publication of *La Manière de composer*, by paying tribute to its *ordonnateur*

*Monsieur Clément qui étoit incomparable en tous ces ouvrages d'esprit, s'y surpassa luy-meme, & il falloit posseder aussi bien que luy toute la science des Fêtes et des Representations, pour imaginer de si belles choses [Monsieur Clément, who was incomparable in all these works of the spirit, went beyond himself, and it was necessary to possess as much as he all the science of Feasts and Representations, in order to imagine such beautiful things].*⁴⁸

Nordera aptly describes such figures' work when she associates the *ordonnateur* with de Pure's "poet" – who went beyond poetry-writing and 'incorporated the functions of "auteur, inventeur, dessinateur, entrepreneur [author, inventor, designer, entrepreneur]"', highlighting 'a notion of the poet, which seems to return to the original Greek meaning of the word *poiein* (to make)'.⁴⁹ Today, court ballets tend to be attributed to their librettist, composer, and/or choreographer(s), be it because their work has left more material traces (librettos, musical scores, notations) or because of the importance that such roles have acquired. Nevertheless, this tendency conceals the potential – expanded – authorship of the master of order.

In both his more practical tasks and his more artistic/conceptual considerations, Saint-Hubert's *maître d'ordre* accomplishes interdisciplinary work, supervising practitioners from multiple fields including dance, costume, masking, music, and machinery. Sources chronologically surrounding *La Manière de composer* further attest to the master of order's multimedia creative role. An example is the libretto of *Les Noces de Pelée et de Thétis*, staged in 1654, dedicated to its *ordonnateur* (the count of Saint-Aignan); the dedication mentions the artists having worked on the verses and machines, but also

46 Ibid., p. 22.

47 Lecomte, Nathalie (referring to Christout): *Entre cours et jardins d'illusion: Le ballet en Europe (1515-1715)*, Pantin: Centre national de la danse 2014, p. 154.

48 Menestrier: *Des Ballets anciens et modernes*, pp. 176–177.

49 Nordera: *Ballet de cour*, p. 21; cf. Pure: *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux*, p. 215.

*Monseigneur, la richesse des habits, le choix des Airs et des Pas et l'assortiment merveilleux de tant de différentes pièces qui ont composé cet admirable tout, ne sont dus qu'à vous seul [Monseigneur, the richness of the clothing, the choice of Melodies and of Steps and the marvellous assortment of so many different pieces that composed this admirable whole, are only due to you].*⁵⁰

In this interdisciplinary role, Saint-Hubert's master of order also holds a particular position in relation to dance. Beyond mediating information to the dance master, *La Manière de composer* implies that the master of order may, themselves, dance in the ballet.⁵¹ In both these ways, they display more than an observer's understanding and a practical knowledge of dance practice.⁵² The artist composing a ballet's steps and motions was therefore not its sole or principal creator, while figures not specialised in dance – but touching upon it as part of their multidisciplinary practice – accomplished central tasks of ballet-making and were recognised in their contribution to the performance. This configuration of creative roles challenges a conception of choreography that solely associates the making of ballet with the making of its dances, and thus points to the need to integrate multidisciplinary figures practicing a non-dancerly ballet authorship into our understanding of court ballet.

Beyond *La Manière de composer*, the nature of the master of order's work can be more-appropriately read as part of a constellation of different figures of European pre-18th-century spectacle, who performed comparable duties. This constellation is geographically diverse (going beyond France) and chronologically wide (extending beyond Saint-Hubert's mid-17th century) – indeed, Roger Savage suggests '[t]he idea of one man taking overall responsibility for the staging of a dramatic event' can be traced back to the Medieval period.⁵³ In France, a figure such as Balthasar de Beaujoyeux (active as early as the late-16th century) was presented as '*l'inventeur du sujet, & en disposa toute l'ordonnance* [the inventor of the subject [who] disposed all the order]'; the only reason he did not create the *Ballet comique de la reine's* (1581) verses, music, and decorations was, positedly,

50 Quoted in Prunières, Henry: *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lulli*, Paris: Champion 1913, pp. 170–171.

51 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 26.

52 Henry Prunières goes so far as to suggest that there are cases where members of the nobility performed functions comparable to those of Saint-Hubert's master of order – in this case, the count of Saint-Aignan – and also functioned as choreographers contributing to the work of dance masters. Prunières: *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lulli*, p. 164.

53 Savage, Roger: *Staging an Intermedio: Practical Advice from Florence circa 1630*, in: Mulryne, J.R. & Shewring, Margaret (eds.): *Italian Renaissance Festivals and their European Influence*, Lewiston: Mellen Press 1992, p. 58.

because of a lack of time.⁵⁴ A further – and chronologically closer to Saint-Hubert – comparison is the Italian *corago*, primarily active in early opera.⁵⁵ The *corago*'s work is amply described in an anonymous treatise dating from the 1620s–1630s, in which they are attributed several spectacle-preparation tasks: command over different construction workers, knowledge about lights, production of costumes.⁵⁶ Like the *maître d'ordre*, the *corago* is also involved during the performance; the anonymous treatise ends with a “checklist”⁵⁷ of reminders to – among other things – make sure that all performers are dressed properly, machine operators are in position, extra help is available for performers with more than one role, musicians have prepared their instruments, machines are clean. The *corago* was also – like the master of order – a figure whose work spanned text, dance, music, costuming, architecture, acting, and lighting.⁵⁸ Mirroring the master of order's more creative work, the *corago* could give advice to, and collaborate with, the poet and the artists of the work they staged, in order to interpret the piece.⁵⁹ The English “Master of the Revels” (whose role was confirmed by patent in the English court in 1545) is another comparable figure, who oversaw performances, proposed ideas for entertainments, and engaged with costumes, props, constructions, transportation of materials, and lighting. Like *ordonnateurs* or the *maître d'ordre*, a revels supervisor ‘stood as producer and director who had financial, administrative, and aesthetic control under the king and council’.⁶⁰

54 Cahusac, Louis de : *La Danse ancienne et moderne ou Traité historique de la danse*, La Haye: Jean Neaulme 1754, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k108132g/fz.image> (August 2020), BnF, Tome 2, pp. 134–135. Cahusac's “information” comes from Beaujoyeux' own account: Beaujoyeux, Balthazar de : *Balet comique de la Roynne, fait aux nopces de monsieur le duc de Joyeuse & madamoyselle de Vaudemont sa sœur*, Paris : LeRoy, Ballard & Patisson 1582, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k110737> (August 2020), BnF, p. 2.

55 Anonymous: *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*, Florence: Leo Olschki 1983 [1620s–1630s]. Etymological possibilities for the word “*corago*” include the Greek *choregos* – a ‘moneyed chorus sponsor’ – and the Latin *choragus* or ‘props-and-costumes-man’. The term has also been associated with Aristotle's poetics. Savage: Staging an *Intermedio* p. 60; Fabbri, Paolo & Pompilio, Angelo: Introduzione, in: Anonymous: *Il corago*, p. 10, footnote 20. According to Savage, the term “*corago*” was at times used in the 17th century to refer to Jesuit college “stagers”. Savage, Roger & Sansone, Matteo: ‘Il Corago’ and the Staging of Early Opera: Four Chapters from an Anonymous Treatise circa 1630, in: *Early Music* 17/4 (1989), pp. 498–499.

56 Anonymous: *Il corago*, pp. 22.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

59 Fabbri & Pompilio: Introduzione, p. 11; Anonymous: *Il corago*, p. 24.

60 Streitberger, William R.: *Court Revels 1485–1559*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1994, pp. 7–8. The German figure of *Oberhofmarschall* may also be comparable to these. See Stocker, Kathrin : *L'Altérité française en Europe : Appropriations, inclusions, échanges*,

Framing the presentation of Saint-Hubert's "master" with such examples is not intended to impose continuity upon diverse genres. Rather, the contextualisation of Saint-Hubert's *maître d'ordre* with figures such as these can – beyond widening the geographic and chronological scope of the notion – function as a reminder of the multidisciplinary nature of ballet-making, rendering it comparable with fields which are not primarily characterised by dance, such as early opera. It functions as an indication that pre-18th-century European spectacle (including 17th-century French ballet) challenges the medium specificity of modernism and thus enters into an interdisciplinary history of stage performance.

The preponderance of such creative roles attests to the formal and media characteristics of pre-18th century performance, as well as the social status of certain practitioners related to order. It was indeed often members of the nobility and/or court who organised and staged ballets. The power associated with such a position is illustrated by the case of the duc of Saint-Aignan who, after having functioned as an *ordonnateur*, was appointed by Louis XIV as the "vice-protécteur" [vice-protector] of the *Académie Royale de Danse*.⁶¹ (As with many *ordonnateurs*, the *corago* was also required to be related to the court.⁶²) Whether noble status allowed them to take a role *already* highly respected or the role *became* highly respected because of the noble status of most of its practitioners, 17th-century ballet-making included highly regarded, non-dance-specific makers. In this way, Saint-Hubert's *maître d'ordre* explicitly manifests the importance of looking for the interstices of historical works and creative processes in which social and political power may be lodged – and of acknowledging that this power is not exclusively exercised through choreographic instructions geared towards dancing bodies.

The distinction between ballet and dance shows that a more recent, dance-focussed conception of choreography is not fully applicable to Saint-Hubert's views. The master-of-order figure correspondingly indicates that a more recent, dance-focussed conception of the choreographer as sole or principal creator is not applicable to the ballet poietics that *La Manière de composer* proposes, either. Shifting the focus of creative work from any one medium to the pragmatic, but also artistic, and conceptual coordination between several media, the master of order performs work comparable to today's expanded choreographic practice.

in: Fabbriatore, Arianna Béatrice (ed.): *La Danse théâtrale en Europe: Identités, altérités, frontières*, Paris: Hermann 2019, p. 121.

61 Gatulle, Pierre: *Le Corps guerrier, le corps dansant et l'esprit galant*. François de Beauvilliers, duc de Saint-Aignan (1610-1687), in: *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles* (2013), <https://journals.openedition.org/crcv/12191> (August 2020).

62 Fabbri & Pompilio: *Introduzione*, p. 9.

The subject of ballet

Given a ballet is not strictly a dance work, and as multidisciplinary figures like the *maître d'ordre* participate in its creation in central ways, Saint-Hubert's treatise refers to a ballet-making that is neither primarily dance-based nor solely dance-oriented. This kind of making may be further understood through an element positioned at the very foundation of Saint-Hubert's *poietics*: the *sujet*, the first to be mentioned in his list of ballet's necessary elements. The subject is the topic of Saint-Hubert's first chapter after the introduction (the chapters follow the order of the list), which starts with a clear affirmation of its importance:

*Je commenceray par le sujet, duquel depend tout le reste, & a qui il faut exactement s'asubietir, aussi estce le principal pour faire vn beau Ballet, que de chercher vn beau subiet, qui est la chose la plus difficile [I will start from the subject, from which everything else depends, and to which one must be exactly subjected, so it is principal in order to do a beautiful Ballet to look for a beautiful subject, which is what is most difficult].*⁶³

It is not only the beauty and success of the ballet that depend on its subject, but its originality too:

*Quand ie dy qu'il faut faire vn Ballet, qui n'aye iamais esté veu, j'entends parler du corps du subiet seulement, car pour les entrées il est imposible d'en faire que fort peu qui n'ayent esté faites [...] Ce ne sont plus celles représentées aux autres subiets, mais celles necessaires au vostre, qui est tout contraire aux precedens, & vous vous en seruez parce quelles sont du corps de vostre subiet, & non parce quelles ont esté faites. [When I say that one must make a Ballet, which has never been seen before, I only mean to say this in relation to the body of the subject, since for the entrées it is impossible to make more than few that have not been done [...] It is not those that are represented in other subjects, but those necessary to your own, which is completely contrary to anterior ones, and you use them because they are of the body of your subject, and not because they have been done before.]*⁶⁴

Saint-Hubert thus suggests that his readers look for a 'beau subiet [beautiful subject]' of their own invention 'puis que c'est la mode maintenant; & que l'on ne dance plus les *Metamorphose* [sic] d'Ovide comme l'on faisoit le temps passé [since it is fashionable now and we don't dance Ovid's *Metamorphoses* anymore like we did

63 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, pp. 6–7.

64 Ibid., p. 8.

in the past]'.⁶⁵ The importance of the subject is coupled by difficulty in selecting and developing it:

*Je trouue quantité de parfaits Musiciens pour les Airs, d'excellés danseurs pour les entrées, des bos designateurs pour les habits, des ouuriers extremement adroits pour les machines, mais fort peu de gens qui sçachet accommoder vn beau subiet, & y obseruer l'ordre neces-saire [I find quantity of perfect Musicians for the Melodies, excellent dancers for the entrées, good designers for the costumes, extremely skilled workers for the machines, but only very few people who know how to accommodate a beautiful subject and observe the necessary order in it].*⁶⁶

The subject indeed forms a “rule” in ballet-making, as illustrated by the author’s treatment of mascarades: ‘*estant ordinairement sans subiet, aussi sont elles sans reigle [being ordinarily without subject, they are also without rule]*’.⁶⁷

Saint-Hubert’s attention to the subject is shared with other authors in the field of 17th-century ballet. Menestrier considers that ‘[*l*]out le secret de la conduite d’un Ballet consiste donc au choix du sujet [the whole secret of the direction of a Ballet therefore consists in the choice of the subject]’ and, like Saint-Hubert, ranks its invention first in the list of elements making up a ballet.⁶⁸ de Pure expresses his agreement in a wonderful passage:

*Le Sujet est l’Ame du Balet, qui foment la premiere Idée que le Poëte peut avoir conceuë, qui communique les esprits aux diverses parties, & qui leur donne enfin & la nourriture & le mouvement. Ce n’est pourtant pas une Ame parfaite qui soit toute, & toute entiere en chaque partie. C’est plûtost une seve materielle & interieure, secretement & separément répanduë dans chaque membre du corps, qui luy communique toute la chaleur necessaire pour vivre, & toute la vigueur pour agir. [the Subject is the Soul of the Ballet, which incites the first Idea that the Poet may have conceived, that communicates the spirits to the diverse parts, and that finally gives them both nourishment and movement. It is not however a perfect Soul that is in its entirety in each part. It is rather a material and internal lifeblood, secretly and separately spread in each member of the body, which communicates to it all the warmth necessary for life and all the vigor for action].*⁶⁹

According to *La Manière de composer*, the subject should influence how many *entrées* a ballet will contain; Saint-Hubert gives “standard” numbers of *entrées* for different kinds of ballets – thirty for a “grand” royal ballet, twenty for a

65 Ibid., p. 9.

66 Ibid., p. 7.

67 Ibid., p. 5.

68 Menestrier: *Des Ballets anciens et modernes*, pp. 92, 55–56.

69 Pure: *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux*, p. 216.

“beautiful” ballet, ten to twelve for a “small” one – but stresses that this rule is not strict, since it is the subject that will form the final criterion.⁷⁰ It is the subject that also decides the ballet's content; Saint-Hubert writes that no *entrée* should lie outside the subject, all of them have to be appropriate to it.⁷¹ Moreover, it is implied that the subject can help “make sense” of this content; Saint-Hubert suggests that the ‘*discours du subiet du Ballet, soit en Prose, ou en Vers* [discourse of the Ballet's subject, either in Prose or in Verses]⁷² be given to the spectators, in order to increase their pleasure, and understanding, of the work. Selecting the number of *entrées* and determining their content, the subject therefore assumes a dramaturgical role in Saint-Hubert's text.

Other 17th-century authors further imply that the subject's dramaturgical function concerned how contents of the ballet should be combined. Menestrier writes that ballet does not require unity of action, time, or space – like tragedy does – but does require that everything relate to the same theme;⁷³ ‘[*]a Fable des ballets [...] ne demande point d'autre unité, que celle du dessein, afin que les entrées différentes se rapportent à un Sujet* [the Fable of ballets [...] only requires the unity of plan/goal, so that the different *entrées* relate to one Subject].⁷⁴ He gives examples of how different parts of ballets can result from their subjects: a ballet on the world divided into sky and earth, a ballet on time divided into seasons...⁷⁵ De Pure similarly writes of the subject of spectacular entertainments (in this case, entries for kings and queens):

Il faut qu'il y ait un dessein, un point principal, un noeud mystereux qui d'une façon ou d'autre appartienne si precisement au sujet, & s'étende si naturellement à toutes les parties qui le composent, qu'il ne puisse estre appliqué à autre chose qu'à ce qu'il est destiné [there must be a plan, a principal point, a mysterious knot which in one way or another belongs so precisely to the subject, and stretches out so naturally to all parts composing it, that it can only be applied to that for which it is destined].⁷⁶

De Pure agrees that there is a difference between the scenes of drama and the *entrées* of ballets, since scenes need to be relate to each other while *entrées* need only be related to the subject.⁷⁷ In these authors' perspective, the subject provides a specific kind of dramaturgical coherence – one in which parts

70 Saint-Hubert : *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, p. 5.

71 Ibid., p. 7.

72 Ibid., p. 11.

73 Menestrier : *Des Ballets anciens et modernes*, p. 54.

74 Menestrier : *Remarques pour la conduite des ballets*, p. 222.

75 Ibid., p. 225.

76 Pure : *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux*, p. 205.

77 Ibid., p. 241. Cf. also Franko: *Dance as Text*, p. 84 for an elaboration on Pure's positions on the subject and the *entrées*.

(*entrées*) are not linearly articulated with each other but where a transversal topic guides their choice and common presentation. Saint-Hubert insists upon both the subject and the *entrée*-unit, although he does not describe specific ballets' structures sufficiently to allow a more explicit understanding of his dramaturgical model. On the one hand, he considers ballet themes that can be staged in a plot-based way (e.g. Homer's *Iliad* – despite never bringing it to the stage because of practical reasons) and refers to potentially-linear aspects of dramaturgy (such as the '*suite du subiet* [the continuation of the subject]⁷⁸'). On the other hand, however, his text subverts this possibility of linearity; it stresses the importance of alternating between grotesque and serious *entrées* and between different numbers of dancers in them,⁷⁹ freeing the *entrées* from a linear progression of plot or character development. He urges that inventing hitherto-unseen *entrées* can enrich a ballet,⁸⁰ indicating variability in the staging of the subject beyond a linearly-defined narrative. An *entrée*-based dramaturgical model formulated around a subject did indeed permeate 17th-century ballets, in particular the period between 1620 and 1650 when *La Manière de composer* was written.⁸¹ In her analysis of the treatise, Nicole Haitzinger speaks of a '*lose Handlungsdramaturgie* [loose plot dramaturgy]' – with the subject at its hierarchical top – as characterising the 17th century.⁸² For these reasons, there is support for the idea that the subject in Saint-Hubert's ballet *poietics* influences not only the selection, but also the combination and articulation, of ballet contents.

The idea that the subject might function as a guarantor of dramaturgical coherence in Saint-Hubert's – and his context's – ballet *poietics* is also supported by the role the *sujet* assumes in the ordering of a ballet's diverse media components. The ballet of *La Manière de composer* had (as already described) a heterogeneous, multimedia nature; dance, text, music, costumes, and machinery came together into a colourful whole, resulting in works that Mark Franko has described as 'potentially chaotic'.⁸³ Such a product was the result of not-always-organised interdisciplinary collaboration. Georgie Durosoir presents early 17th-century ballet-making as a wonderfully informal procedure – hinted at by

78 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, pp. 8–10.

79 *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 10.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

81 Paquot, Marcel: *La Manière de composer les ballets de cour d'après les premiers théoriciens français*, in: *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises* 9 (1957), p. 192.

82 Haitzinger, Nicole: *Vergessene Traktate – Archive der Erinnerung. Zu Wirkungskonzepten im Tanz von der Renaissance bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Munich: epodium 2009, p. 106.

83 Franko: *Dance as Text*, p. 1.

Saint-Hubert when he criticises spontaneous ballet creation practices (implying these were common practice) or when he suggests the number of days needed to rehearse a ballet (which seem strikingly short by contemporary standards).⁸⁴ Against this background, Saint-Hubert's text makes it clear that the subject should function as a directive towards multiple of the work's media. The subject directs costumes; one should, writes Saint-Hubert, focus less on the luxuriousness of the clothing than on their resemblance and suitability for the subject to be represented.⁸⁵ Similarly, the subject directs the choice of machines:

*Quand aux Machines, elles seruent d'un grand ornement aux Ballets, & les decorent extremement lors quelles sont belles, bien conduites, & mise à propos dans le subiet, de donner l'inuention de les faire cela ne se peut, que lors que le subiet est parfait, & que l'on sçait ce que l'on veut représenter avec icelles [as for Machines, they serve as a great ornament to Ballets, and they decorate them extremely when they are beautiful, well conducted, and relevant to the subject, to give the invention to make them can only be done when the subject is perfected, and that we know what we want to represent with them].*⁸⁶

Here, it is suggested that no task should be undertaken before the subject is finalised; if the artists or artisans start work without a complete idea of the subject, they will work randomly without being directed by what the subject demands. This is also applied to music; the treatise suggests that composers do not start their work before the subject is perfected and the *entrées* prepared, so that the music can follow the planned actions:

*[L]e Musicien reussira bien mieux de cette sorte, que de luy faire faire quantité d'Airs que l'on a apres bien de la peine à accomoder aux entrées & au subiet [the Musician will succeed much better in this way, than asking him to make a quantity of Melodies which afterwards we struggle to accommodate to the entrées and to the subject].*⁸⁷

(This point, it is important to note, is *all* that *La Manière de composer's* chapter on music contains.) In these cases, the subject's guidance upon ballet media is translated into the practical unfolding of the production process. The subject also directs the choice of whether the spoken word is accepted within the ballet; while some approve of its use and others do not, for Saint-Hubert this

84 Durosoir, Georgie: *Les Ballets de la cour de France au XVIIe siècle ou les fantaisies et les splendeurs du Baroque*, Genève: Papillon 2004, p. 11; Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, pp. 17–18.

85 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, pp. 18–20.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 11–12.

choice is dependent on the subject.⁸⁸ Dance, finally, also serves the subject; for Saint-Hubert, the large numbers of dancers available in *grands ballets* ‘*decorent extremement vn subiet y estant bien appropriiez, & lors qu'ils y sont necessaires pour faire voir la conclusion du Ballet* [extremely decorate a subject, being well adapted to it and when they are necessary in order to make the conclusion of the Ballet visible]’.⁸⁹ Guiding the choice and creation of such diverse elements as costumes, machines, music, text, and dance – the whole multimedia range of ballet – the subject (itself, crucially, not medium-specific) thus brings together the different art forms implicated in ballet-making.

A court ballet was an assemblage of dance, music, words, costumes, and complicated machinery, as well as – if not always coherently-connected – of scenes. This composite nature renders it indispensable to include, in ballet *poietics*, agents that can assume a compositional role – keeping these diverse parts of the assemblage together, guaranteeing its unity while preserving its heterogeneity. The master of order is, to a great extent, such an agent, but so is the subject; it is a pivotal element, a guiding principle whose “rule” concerns *how* and *what* the different *entrées* will represent, as well as, in great probability, how this content should be dramaturgically ordered. With this in mind, Saint-Hubert’s choice to title his final chapter ‘Of order’ is enlightening – while the chapter focusses on the personification of order in its master, it may be the art and act of ordering itself, via the subject, that is characteristic of Saint-Hubert’s ballet *poietics*. It is indeed telling that the rule of the subject has one striking exception for Saint-Hubert; before the ballet proper starts, the master of order can make an entrance ‘*hors du subiet* [out of the subject]’ and circle around the dancing space, as if to mark the ballet’s territory.⁹⁰ To those who pain to guarantee the subject’s application, Saint-Hubert offers an exception. It is also telling that Saint-Hubert chose to title his treatise by reference to the “composition” of ballets; his treatise describes a type of making underlied by com/position, putting together, ordering. Through the importance of the subject, ballet *poietics* may be understood as an art intertwined with invention and ordering, the latter two complementing each other, or even, at times, becoming one. The word “assemblage” in the opening of this paragraph is indeed not used anachronistically (despite its preponderance, with different connotations, in contemporary choreographic discourse). It is, rather, directly related to the treatise’s insistence on order; the 1694 (and first) edition of the Académie Française’s dictionary defines “ordre” as ‘arrangement, disposition des choses mises en leur rang [arrangement, disposition of things put in their place]’

88 Ibid., p. 24.

89 Ibid., p. 10–11.

90 Ibid., p. 26.

and “composition” as ‘assemblage de plusieurs parties [assemblage of multiple parts]’.⁹¹ Court ballet may thus be seen as an anti-modernist, dramaturgical, intermedia assemblage, a choreographic composition that is ungraspable through a conception of choreography specifically attached to the discipline of dance – but that can enter into juxtapositional dialogues with contemporary expansions that challenge that very same specificity.

Conclusion

Poiesis refers to the art of making – and Monsieur de Saint-Hubert's treatise is an exploration of the making of (court) ballets. It is an exploration of *what* is made in creating a ballet; not, strictly speaking, a dance, but a multimedia entity in which dance participates and interacts with other components. It is an exploration of *who* makes a ballet: a dance master – or several – to be sure, but also costume and scenography craftspeople, musicians, poets, as well as an interdisciplinary figure called “master of order”, who contributes both practically and conceptually. It is, as well, an exploration of *how* ballet is made – not through autonomous artistic practices, but in an interdisciplinary mix which creates a series of *entrées*, the heterogeneous whole held together by the subject. And it is, finally, an exploration of the *act* of making: of the construction and creation of costumes, masks, dance steps, but also, crucially, the praxis of com/posing, and ordering the dramaturgy of an assemblage.

A (court) ballet, in the present reading of *La Manière de composer*, was not solely characterised by dance. And, if choreography is equivalent to dance-making, the treatise's ballet-*poietics* is not about choreography. But, considering that its ballet was not choreographic because it was not principally characterised by dance presupposes that choreography is essentially associated with dance-making – an idea that both expanded choreography and Saint-Hubert's non-use of the term call into question. From this viewpoint, the perceived distance between Saint-Hubert and choreography only exists because of historically-subsequent associations of choreography with dance. An expanded choreographic perspective on his treatise, therefore, removes the focus from dance-making and pluralises an understanding of 17th-century ballet as a multimedia *choreographic* enterprise with interdisciplinary creative forces – a non-medium-specific approach to an assemblage-like entity.

De-centralising dance from the quest for the choreographic in Saint-Hubert's ballet also points to the striking relevance his treatise may have for a contem-

91 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1694, <http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/45> (August 2020).

porary expanded choreography. *La Manière de composer* is an example of interdisciplinary performance and authorship before the historical construction of rigid disciplinary boundaries; of a non-autonomous dance embodied by hybridised figures before the strict physicalisation of dance; of dramaturgy and intermedia com/position as core elements of ballet-making before the reduction of the choreographic to dance steps. In these ways, Saint-Hubert's treatise is a reminder of the very constructability and contingency of the essentialisms that contemporary expanded choreography also upsets.

Chapter 2: Choreo-graphy or the incorporeal inscription of choreography

1700. Raoul Auger Feuillet, a French dance master, published his *Chorégraphie, ou L'Art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs* [Choreography or The art of describing dance through characters, figures and demonstrative signs], which presented a system of dance notation. Today, the system is most often referred to as the Beauchamp-Feuillet notation, owing to Feuillet's possible use of previous work by Pierre Beauchamp(s). Feuillet's book proposes a graphic-representation method for social and theatrical dance of the baroque period; the movements of the *belle danse*¹ – developed since the previous century in French noble circles, and increasingly being practiced outside France and by other social groups – can be graphically notated. Dance treatises with notations had been published in Europe before 1700 – Feuillet admits to being acquainted with Thoinot Arbeau's work – but the *Chorégraphie* goes beyond publishing notated dances, by focussing on the notational system itself. Among the multiple sources available on the late-17th/early-18th-century *belle danse* and its non-French counterparts – notably the works of Pierre Rameau (in French), Gottfried Taubert (in German), or Kellom Tomlinson (in English) – Feuillet's treatise is of particular relevance because of its remarkable influence on the history of choreography as notation (that some of the aforementioned writers elaborated on) and because of its weight in the history of the very term “choreography”.

The Feuillet notation system deconstructs dance into steps, and steps into their constituent elements. A dance is presented by drawing its path through

1 The term “*belle danse*” was used by practitioners in the 17th and early-18th century; the expression “baroque dance” dates from the 20th century while it refers to the late-17th and early-18th century (this is the timeframe focussed on here, even though it is not the only one the term may refer to, see Franko, Mark: *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*, New York: Oxford University Press 2015 [1993], p. 3). For a clarification of this terminology see: Maurmayr, Bianca: De la « danse baroque » à la « *belle danse* » et retour. Usages d'une catégorie, in: *Recherches en danse* 5 (2016), <http://danse.revues.org/1563> (August 2020).

space as seen from above, annotated with a series of signs that encode the positions of the feet and the steps [Figure 1]. The starting position is indicated with a point, a line shows the step's path, and a stroke denotes the foot's ending position. On the step line, further smaller signs are added, corresponding to the different ways in which it may be executed: jumping, *élevé*, *plié*, slides, etc. [Figure 2]. Each dance is accompanied by a musical score; a system of bars on the dance path correlates with musical measures [Figure 1]. A typical notation is a few pages long and bears the title of the dance and, typically, that of its dance-maker. The *Chorégraphie* also provides extensive tables, including notations for the most important steps and their possible variations, as well as a collection of notated dances – compositions by Feuillet himself and by Guillaume-Louis Pécour, to whom the book is dedicated.

Figure 1: First page of a notation in the Beauchamp-Feuillet system. Source: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: IX. Recueil de danses pour l'année 1711, Paris: Dezais 1711, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k8586968/f67.item#> (August 2020), p. 72, BnF. No re-use without permission.

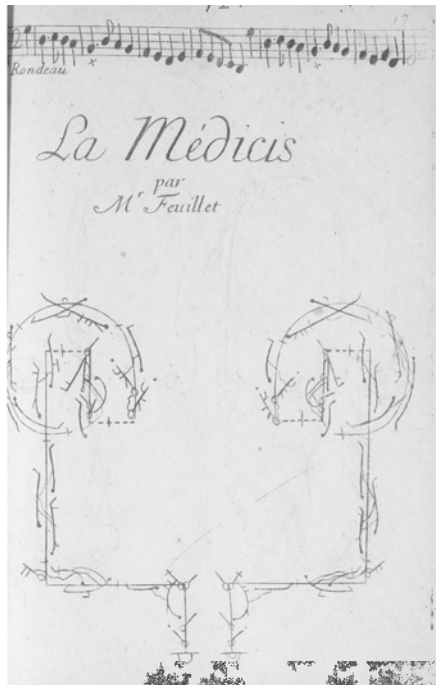
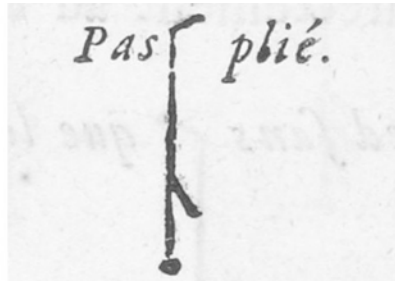


Figure 2: Representation of a step (here, a step forward in plié) in Feuillet notation.

Source: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *Chorégraphie, ou l'Art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs*, Paris: Brunet 1700, p. 11, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86232407/f1.image.r=feuillet%201700.langFR> (August 2020), BnF. No re-use without permission.



The Beauchamp-Feuillet system proved to be extremely popular; the treatise was translated multiple times, and its contents were used for the publication of further collections of notations. It thus contributed to the spread of new, fashionable dances and was employed by dance masters in other European countries. The possibility of creating multiple copies of the – mostly engraved – notations also contributed to dances being circulated across social contexts and between the theatre and the ballroom. Finally, it allowed exchanges among dance masters that played an important role in their establishment as a professional community.² The notation remained in use for several years, until it was progressively replaced in the later-18th century.

Feuillet's book also includes what is considered to be the first occurrence of the term "choreography", which, at the time, literally signified "writing dance". To distinguish between the two and to create distinction from contemporary meaning(s), in what follows "choreo-graphy" will indicate the notational practice,³ "choreo-grapher" the notation creator, and "a choreo-graphy" a specific

2 On these and other social functions of choreo-graphy see: Glon, Marie: "Danses Gravées" du XVIII^e siècle, ou la mobilité des frontières des arts de la scène, in: Martin, Roxane & Nordera, Marina (eds.): *Les Arts de la scène à l'épreuve de l'histoire. Les objets et les méthodes de l'historiographie des spectacles produits sur la scène française (1635-1906)*, Paris: Honoré Champion: 2011, pp. 253–260; Glon, Marie: Ce que la Chorégraphie fait aux maîtres de danse (XVIII^e siècle), in: *Corps 7* (2009), pp. 57–64.

3 Cf. Ann Hutchinson-Guest's term "choreo-graphics" in her book on notation: Hutchinson-Guest, Ann: *Choreo-Graphics: A Comparison of Dance Notation Systems from the Fifteenth Century to the Present*, New York: Gordon and Breach 1989.

notation. If contemporary expanded choreography challenges the essential association of choreography and dance-making, the *Chorégraphie* also implicates a dissociation between choreography (the period's dance masters' dance-making practice) and choreo-graphy (the practice of notating them). And, as expanded choreography challenges the necessity of choreography's corporeality, this chapter argues that the *Chorégraphie* may also implicate a second dissociation between the corporeal practice of baroque dance and choreo-graphic distance from embodiment. Oscillating between choreo-graphy's abstraction and objecthood, Feuillet's system displays an ambivalent relationship with dance's incarnation, which cannot be fully grasped by subsequent, still-dominant, embodiment-centred choreographic models.

The ambivalent place of the body

In a 1728 treatise drawing from the Beauchamp-Feuillet system, Giambattista Dufort defines dance as '*un'arte di muovere ordinatamente il corpo, affine di piacere agli spettatori* [an art of ordinately moving the body, in order to please spectators].⁴ But dance in the late-17th and early-18th centuries was not an isolated, compartmentalised practice of the body; rather, it was a corporeal experience inscribed in the social fabric. The *belle danse* that the *Chorégraphie* notated was an integral part of noble life, while life in court – beyond its balls – was intricately choreographed. In Nathalie Lecomte's account, it followed an etiquette which

à la manière d'une chorégraphie, implique pour chacun, en fonction de son rang, tel type de geste à accomplir, telle façon de se présenter, de se déplacer, de saluer, etc. C'est pourquoi l'ensemble des divers épisodes de ce cérémonial peut être perçu comme un magnifique ballet dont la société toute entière constituerait le corps, le souverain et sa famille les principaux solistes [like a choreography, implies for every one, in accordance with their rank, such or such type of gesture to carry out, such way of presenting oneself, of moving, of saluting, etc. That is why all the diverse episodes of this formal ceremony can be conceived as a magnificent ballet of which the whole of society would be the body, the king and his family the principal soloists].⁵

4 Dufort, Giovanni Battista: *Trattato del ballo nobile*, Naples: F.Mosca 1728, <https://archive.org/details/trattatodelballooodufo> (August 2020), p. 1.

5 Lecomte, Nathalie: *Entre cours et jardins d'illusion: Le ballet en Europe (1515-1715)*, Pantin: Centre national de la danse 2014, p.145.

Gestures, postures, and corporeal attitudes participated in a complex system that regulated court hierarchies,⁶ possibly emulated by the rising bourgeois class. Dance was therefore part of a more widely-reaching corporeal discipline, complemented by regulation of the body and public affect, leading to an elaborate performance of the self.⁷

Beyond the corporeal praxis of dance being embedded in a wider “social choreography”⁸ at the French court, dancing was perceived as an activity whose multiple use of, and effects on, the body rendered it a complex, multifaceted corporeal experience. Dance was seen as somatically beneficial. Taubert (German translator of the *Chorégraphie*) suggests it ‘prepares not only the male body for all chivalrous activities, but also refines the delicate female body and that of the small child’.⁹ Louis XIV explicitly recognised that dance can ‘former le corps, & luy donner les premieres & plus naturelles dispositions à toute sorte d’exercices, & entre autres à ceux des armes [form the body and give it the first and most natural dispositions for all kinds of exercise, including those of arms]’.¹⁰ In the German context in particular, dance was seen as having moral dimensions and pedagogical potentials as well. This can be illustrated by the expression “visible ethics”, used by Johann Pasch and Taubert to refer to the positive use of the body as ‘the outward expression of a disciplined spirit’.¹¹ Taubert also believed that the dancing body could be expressive: ‘to express oneself through the body, eyes,

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- 6 Cf. Elias, Norbert: *La Société de cour*, Paris: Flammarion 1985 [1969, trans. Pierre Kamnitzer & Jeanne Etoré], p. 71.
- 7 Cf. Devero, Lisa Christianna: *The Court Dance of Louis XIV as Exemplified by Feuillet’s ‘Chorégraphie’ (1700) and how the Court Dance and Ceremonial Ball were Used as Forms of Political Socialisation*, PhD thesis, New York: New York University 1991, p. 2; Elias: *La Société de cour*, pp. 107–108.
- 8 For the term see Klein, Gabriele: *Das Soziale choreographieren. Tanz und Performance als urbanes Theater*, in: Haitzinger & Fenböck: *Denkfiguren*, Munich: epodium 2010, pp. 94–103; Hewitt, Andrew: *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement*, Durham/London: Duke University Press 2005.
- 9 Taubert, Gottfried: *The Compleat Dancing Master: A Translation of Gottfried Taubert’s ‘Rechtschaffener Tanzmeister’ (1717), Vol. 2: Translation*, New York: Peter Lang 2012 [1717, trans. Tilden Russel], p. 193.
- 10 Louis XIV: *Lettres patentes du roy, pour l’établissement de l’Académie royale de danse en la ville de Paris* followed by *Discours académique pour prouver que la Danse dans sa plus noble partie n’a pas besoin des instruments de Musique et qu’elle est en tout absolument indépendante du Violon*, Paris: Le Petit 1663, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k76291j/f1.image> (August 2020), BnF, p. 4.
- 11 Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, p. 420 (Taubert is quoting Pasch). On this topic see also Haitzinger, Nicole: *Vergessene Traktate – Archive der Erinnerung. Zu Wirkungskonzepten im Tanz von der Renaissance bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Munich: epodium 2009, pp. 135–146.

arms, hands, feet, etc., instead of the tongue is a true masterpiece of art'.¹² In the English context, John Weaver (another translator of the *Chorégraphie*) writes of dance that 'fashions the Body, and unbends the Mind; it preserves the Health by its moderate Exercise; it is pleasing to the Young, agreeable to the Old and necessary for all, provided it be used modestly'¹³ – and further accentuates embodied gesture's expressive potential as a precursor of the *ballet d'action*. Finally, dance praxis was a multisensory experience for the practicing bodies; in social dance, this mainly pertained to the need for an understanding of musical rhythm; in dances performed in spectacular contexts such as ballets, the auditory-musical modality was accompanied – as prefigured by the analysis of Saint-Hubert's treatise [Chapter 1]– by complex visual and textual elements.

Feuillet's treatise on choreo-graphy distances itself from these composite experiences of the dancing body, remaining silent on dance's social inscription, beneficial effects, expressive potential, or the full extent of its multisensory complexity. Even if choreo-graphies participated in a social life mediated by dance – in France and England, dances were composed, notated, and published in autumn, to be learnt for the upcoming season¹⁴ – the system does not integrate dance's social dimension; communicative aspects (such as dancer relations) are only treated from the point of view of space (multiple, often gender-specific paths) and technicalities of hand-holding.¹⁵ Furthermore, there is no mention of somatically- or morally-beneficial effects; evocative movements, facial expressions, and imitative gestures of theatrical dance cannot be notated.¹⁶ Information about a dance's context in its theatrical-spectacular framework is limited to its title, choreographer, original dancers, (sometimes) venue/instance

12 Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, p. 451.

13 Weaver, John: *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing*, London: Tonson 1712, <http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cjt/id/5439> (August 2020), p. 43.

14 Brainard, Ingrid: *New Dances for the Ball. The Annual Collections of France and England in the 18th Century*, in: *Early Music* 14/2 (1986), p. 165.

15 Cf. Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *Chorégraphie, ou L'Art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs*, Paris: Brunet 1700, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86232407/f1.im. age.r=feuillet%201700.langFR> (August 2020), BnF, pp. 93–96.

16 Rameau indicates that he invented signs for movements of comic characters in Rameau, Pierre: *Abregé de la nouvelle méthode dans l'art d'écrire ou de tracer toutes sortes de danses de ville*, Paris 1725, <https://digital.library.yorku.ca/yul-192921/abr%C3%A9g%C3%A9-de-la-nouvelle-m%C3%A9thode-dans-l-art-d%C3%A9crire-ou-de-tra%C3%A7er-toutes-sortes-de-danses-de#page/1/mode/2up> (August 2020), p. 111.

of first performance,¹⁷ and the generic ‘*salle ou théâtre* [room or theatre]’¹⁸ where dancing may take place. The relationship between dance and music is discussed in the treatise, but contemporary historians note that its notation is not completely precise, and the combination of the two arts heavily relied on the performer’s musical understanding.¹⁹ The body in the *Chorégraphie* is, in all these ways, distanced from the complexity of the corporeal experience of dancing. A certain level of abstraction and decontextualisation may, of course, be inherent in any dance-notational project, suggesting Feuillet’s reduction of a complex bodily experience is unextraordinary. At the same time, this reduction may reflect an ambivalent relationship with the body.

Feuillet uses the term “*corps*” [body] and refers to different body parts – including feet, legs, knees, ankles, arms, and hands – in his text. His notation also allows the body to enter the dance’s visual depiction. The signs indicating positions are based on the structure of the human foot, subdivided into heel, ankle, and *pointe* [Figure 3]. Some signs, based on the articulations of the wrist, elbow, and shoulder, are given to describe *ports de bras* [Figure 4] – although these are scarcer, often left to the dancer’s discretion.²⁰

17 See, for example, certain notations in Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *Recueil de dances contenant un très grand nombre des meilleures entrées de ballet de M. Pécour tant pour homme que pour femmes dont la plus grande partie ont été dancées à l’Opéra*, Paris 1704, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85914682/f1/f1.item> (August 2020), BnF.

18 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 3.

19 E.g. Hutchinson-Guest: *Choreo-Graphics*, p. 21. For Feuillet’s discussion of dance and music and of the specific topic of castagnettes in the notation, see Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, pp. 87–91, 100–102. Feuillet adds a “treatise on cadence” and provides more information about music and duration in Feuillet: *Recueil de dances contenant un très grand nombre des meilleures entrées de ballet*.

20 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, pp. 6, 97; Feuillet also refers to the inner and outer parts of the foot, p. 13. For the use of the arms see also Tomko, Linda J.: *Dance Notation and Cultural Agency: A Mediation Spurred by Choreo-Graphics*, in: *Dance Research Journal* 31/1 (1999), p. 3.

Figure 3: A position of the foot drawn in terms of heel, ankle, and pointe in Feuillet notation. Source: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *Chorégraphie, ou L'Art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs*, Paris: Brunet 1700, p. 6, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86232407/f1.image.r=feuillet%201700.langFR> (August 2020), BnF. No re-use without permission.

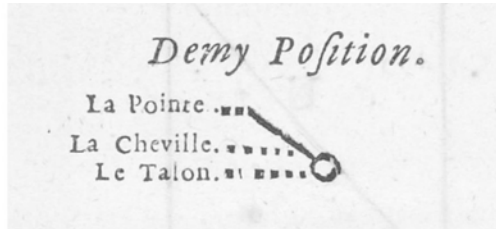
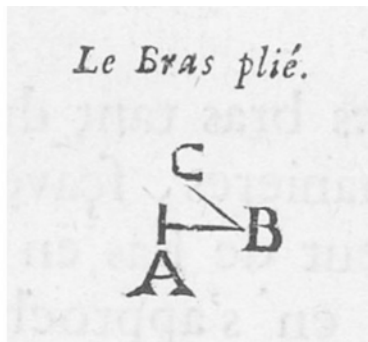


Figure 4: A bent arm, in Feuillet notation. Source: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *Chorégraphie, ou L'Art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs*, Paris: Brunet 1700, p. 97, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86232407/f1.image.r=feuillet%201700.langFR> (August 2020), BnF. No re-use without permission.



This choreo-graphic conversion of the body is, however, only partial: the *Chorégraphie* does not indicate the positioning of the torso (generally assumed to stay upright), pelvis, or head. Importantly, this does not simply mean that these core body parts are not *depicted*, but also that no information is given about them through non-figurative symbols – apart from what is gleaned indirectly through the action signs (in comparison to, say, Labanotation, which gives information about a body’s members through abstract symbols, but does not iconically depict the body itself). The body as a whole is referred to in the beginning of each choreo-graphed dance, with a specific sign that indicates its “presence”, i.e. its orientation in relation to the dancing space. Beyond this

starting notation, however, the body and its movements are reduced to traces of the feet. Some choreo-graphies do include full-body figures,²¹ but these are neither prescribed in the system proposed by the *Chorégraphie* nor are they integral parts of the notation. Inversely, they function as illustrative annexes that transmit corporeal information left vague by the notation. In this respect, it is interesting that the term “body” itself does not seem to refer to a clearly-defined entity in certain Feuillet-related sources; Tomlinson – in his *The Art of Dancing Explained* (1735) – uses the same word for the torso as an isolated unit.²² The *Chorégraphie* therefore allows the body to make its appearance as part of the graphic dance, without being fully present, exhaustively analysed, and represented.

Related to the ambivalent choreo-graphic presence of the body is the silence of Feuillet’s work regarding technique, training, and instruction in *how* bodies were to execute dance steps. Dance masters of the early-18th century – in many cases working with/on the Beauchamp-Feuillet notation – provide a wealth of information about how the dance was to be embodied. Technical instructions pertained to full-body carriage – head upright, shoulders back, abdomen in, torso vertical – and to proper use of the limbs – legs straight, coordination between arms and legs, feet turned out, handling of arms and hands.²³ Such considerations indicate that not only was corporeal style a cornerstone of the *belle danse*, but also that the apparently-rigid uprightness of the baroque-era dancer was more akin to a coordinated and engaged upper body. In contrast, the *Chorégraphie* includes very little information about bodily style and technique, apart from verbal references to turnout/in when describing the positions of the feet or connections between steps and positions of a defined step vocabulary; the Beauchamp-Feuillet system provides no tools for the depiction of technical and stylistic aspects of embodied dance. Presumably, notations were used in combination with lessons with a dance master and/or experience in the *belle danse* style, which provided adequate knowledge of how the body and

21 For instance in Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *L’Allemande dance nouvelle de la composition de Mons.r Pecour*, Paris 1702, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k8599296/f1.item> (August 2020), BnF.

22 Tomlinson, Kellom: *The Art of Dancing Explained by Reading and Figures*, London 1735, <http://www.loc.gov/item/20010870/> (January 2019), Library of Congress, digital collection ‘An American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals, ca. 1490 to 1920’, p. 22. Rameau, in his revision of the *Chorégraphie*, interprets the curve of the body-orientation sign (termed *presence* by Feuillet) as representing the back. Rameau: *Abregé de la nouvelle méthode*, p. 3.

23 See Rameau, Pierre: *Le Maître à danser*, Paris: Jean Vilette 1725, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8623292z> (August 2020), BnF, esp. Part 1 Chapter 2 and Part 2 Chapter 6; Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, esp. pp. 205, 360–361.

its movements have to be moulded in order to enter the dance correctly.²⁴ In this respect, practice – dominant style, dance masters' teaching, ball etiquette – may have contributed to shaping the body and its practice more than the written choreo-graphy.²⁵ At the same time, however, Feuillet's work may have indirectly influenced dance technique; the notation's decomposition of dance into units had an effect on subsequent dance training, posing certain bases for ballet training.²⁶ Through this influence Feuillet enters, once more, into an ambivalent relationship with corporeality, excluding technical aspects of dance's embodiment yet indirectly contributing to their fashioning.

Baroque dance masters supported their technical requirements by training the body; precursors of the ballet barre were proposed in the early-17th century and mirrors were suggested to help correct performance.²⁷ Moreover, dance masters identified anatomical features of the human body that played a role in the correct execution of technique; Rameau insisted on starting one's turnout from the hips instead of the knees or ankles (showing a grasp of joint function), while Taubert stressed the importance of anatomical knowledge for dance masters (even if he did not consider it indispensable).²⁸ Against this background, the *Chorégraphie's* treatment of anatomy is as ambivalent as its representation of the body or its relationship with technique. As indicated above, Feuillet organises some of his signs based on the structure of body parts (the heel and *pointe* of the foot) or their articulation (the joints of the arm). Nevertheless – and despite Feuillet's probable understanding of the joints²⁹ – the notation is not conceived from an anatomical perspective, as illustrated by the signs indicating types of actions, but not which body parts execute them. For example, a *plié* is a downward-diagonal stroke on the step sign, instead of a movement articulating parts of the leg around the knee joint; the link to the knee is established only discursively, when Feuillet defines a *plié* as '*quand on plie les genoux* [when

24 In his revised version of the *Chorégraphie*, Rameau explicitly writes that he '*suppose que ceux qui feront usage de ce Livre, savent danser* [supposes that those who will make use of this book know how to dance]'. Rameau: *Abregé de la nouvelle méthode*, p. 50.

25 Cf. Glon, Marie: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques: Les maîtres de danse européens au coeur d'un phénomène éditorial*, PhD thesis, Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2014, p. 219.

26 Cf. Foster, Susan Leigh: *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2011, p. 43; Foster, Susan Leigh: *Choreographies and Choreographers*, in: Foster, Susan Leigh (ed.): *Worlding Dance*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009, p. 104.

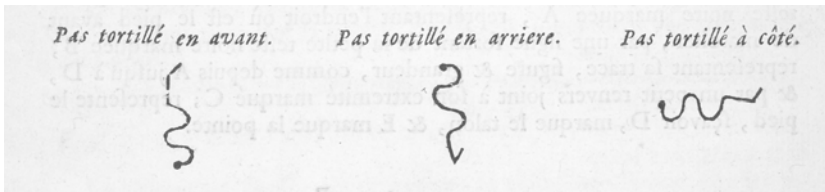
27 Lauze, François de: *Apologie de la danse et de la parfaite méthode de l'enseigner tant aux cavaliers qu'aux dames*, 1623, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1040284n> (August 2020), BnF, p. 28; Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, pp. 863–864.

28 Rameau: *Le Maître à danser*, p. 5; Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, p. 817.

29 Feuillet compares the arm (shoulder/elbow/wrist) and leg (hip/knee/ankle) joints. Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 98.

we bend the knees]'.³⁰ Other actions, such as a *tortillé* step (in which the foot twists), are presented in terms of their form in space – a wavy line [Figure 5] – and not of their anatomical basis – the ankle twisting.

Figure 5: A *tortillé* step forward, backward, and sideward in Feuillet notation. Source: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *Chorégraphie, ou L'Art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs*, Paris: Brunet 1700, p. 10, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86232407/f1.image.r=feuillet%201700.langFR> (August 2020), BnF. No re-use without permission.



Marie Glon notes:

[L]e point de départ n'est pas dans la forme du corps [...] mais bien dans le fait de se lancer dans des actions. [...] la désignation des actions remplace celle des membres [The point of departure is not in the body's form [...] but in the fact of launching oneself into actions [...] the designation of actions replaces that of body parts].³¹

The body's anatomy vies for attention, but does not fully gain it.

Similarly, kinaesthetic aspects of embodied-dance experience are relatively absent from the notation. Feuillet does introduce a kinaesthetic factor – weight and its relation to equilibrium – by referring to it in descriptions of steps (for instance, a *pas tombé* is when '*le corps est hors de son équilibre, & qu'il tombe par son propre poids* [the body is out of its balance and falls under its own weight]³²). Nonetheless, choreo-graphic steps are not understood as transfers of weight but as displacements in space; Feuillet defines a step as '*ce qui marche d'un lieu en un autre* [what walks from one place to another]³³ and notates steps in which the

30 Ibid., p. 2.

31 Glon: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*, p. 73.

32 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 2.

33 Ibid., p. 2. Weaver translates this as 'the Motions of the Feet from one place to another': Weaver, John: *Orchesography or the Art of Dancing by Characters and Demonstrative Figures*, London: Walsh 1706, <http://www.pbm.com/~lindah1/weaver/orchesography/> (Au-

foot changes position without the body changing its weight (e.g. the step ends on a pointed toe, weight on the back leg).³⁴ Any further notation of kinaesthetic information and dynamics is minimal at best – in contrast to other systems, such as Rudolf Laban’s Effort notation [Chapter 8].

While the body is present in the notation – partly depicted, influencing the construction of certain signs – the Beauchamp-Feuillet system is not conceived in terms of the body – its anatomy, shape, or technique. This suggests the relationship between embodied dance and notation may be more complex than a direct translation of what the body does into graphic signs. In effect, the idea of a notation fixating an ephemeral bodily movement in written form in order to archive it for posterity is a post-17th-century one; Feuillet was primarily interested in creating a communicable form that would allow dances to circulate in their contemporaneity.³⁵ In other words, the fact that “choreography” meant “dance notation” in his context does not imply that “dance notation” meant precisely what it does today. A double-pole model postulating a direct relationship between an embodied practice of dance and a choreo-graphic representation of a (primarily) corporeal motion may be insufficient to grasp the complexity of the object that was the *Chorégraphie*. In contrast, an expanded-choreographic perspective – one in which human corporeality is not primordial – may provide an approach to this complexity. By reading Feuillet outside the framework of a later view of choreography that demands its incarnation, such a perspective also acts as a reminder that transhistorically-projected expectations about the corporeal nature of choreography result from a relatively-recent historical context, impregnated in experiential awareness, kinaesthesia, and the use of bodily sensation. Such a perspective on Feuillet thus allows one to identify notions of body that may be contemporary projections not adapted to his system, and, in a parallaxic³⁶ movement, presents current views of the (place of) body as historical contingencies that both the *Chorégraphie* and expanded choreography question.

gust 2020), p. 2. Rameau defines a step as ‘porter le pied d’une position à une autre [bringing the foot from one position to another]’. Rameau: *Abregé de la nouvelle méthode*, p. 7.

34 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 12; cf. Lancelot, Francine: *Ecriture de la danse le système Feuillet*, in: *Ethnologie française* nouvelle série 1/1 (1971), p. 31.

35 Cf. Haitzinger: *Vergessene Traktate*, p. 15; Clon: *Les “Danses Gravées” du XVIIIe siècle*, p. 259.

36 Cf. Foster, Hal: *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1996, p. xii.

The space of the dance

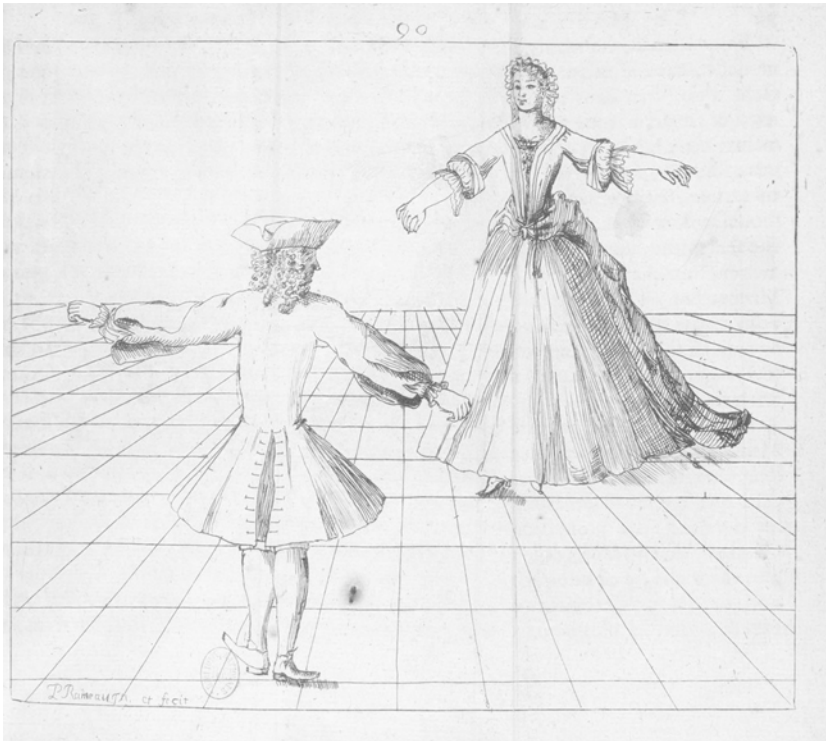
Feuillet notation privileges (over and above the writing of bodies) the representation of actions – a repertory of not-fully-anatomically-conceived choreo(-)graphic tasks to be given to bodies – and their formal results in space. Indeed, further insights into the ambivalence of the body in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation are found in the way it conceives of the dancing body's relationship with space – made all the more important because space is a primary organising factor of the notation, which was conceived to function as an almost-indispensable interface between the dancer and the space of the dance.

This choreo-graphic mediation between dancer and space is established by aligning the upper part of the notated page (its “top”) with the “top” of the room,³⁷ and requiring that the dancer follow this alignment. A “standard” notation page, however, includes no specific spatial indications; the path of the dance appears in an unmarked, abstract space the dancer refers to for their contextualised performance experience. The complexities that may have arisen in dancing in an abstractly-conceived space are reflected in treatises by dance masters of Feuillet's time; Tomlinson gives advice on how to use a dance-book in differently-shaped rooms and spatial contexts,³⁸ while Rameau's *Le Maître à danser* [The Dancing Master] (1725) includes a plate showing dancers in a space marked only by a square-grid on which they stand [Figure 6], which may have contributed to training dancers to situate themselves in an abstractly-conceived space. Choreo-graphy shows the *space* of the dance, but it does not show the *place* in which the body actually dances. This abstract space's relationship to the dancing body deserves further investigation.

37 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 33.

38 Tomlinson: *The Art of Dancing Explained*, pp. 18–21.

Figure 6: Dancers depicted on an abstract spatial grid in Rameau's *Le Maître à danser*.
 Source: Rameau, Pierre: *Le Maître à danser*, Paris: Jean Villette 1725, plate 90, <http://galli.ca.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8623292z> (August 2020), BnF. No re-use without permission.



The first element to consider in this relationship is the way in which space is measured. The length of a step in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation is determined through the *belle danse* foot positions; for example, the second position requires putting a foot's distance between the feet, and a step to the side corresponds to an opening to second position.³⁹ However, a single sheet of choreography may include signs for steps that seem shorter or longer than average. Feuillet reassures his readers that this should make no difference, since step size should always conform to the basic dance positions, defined in terms of the body (in this case, the foot).⁴⁰ But, when using the notation in practice, steps also need to be measured in proportion to the overall dance path, and (if applicable) the actions of a co-dancer. For the forms and symmetries of the dance path to

39 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, pp. 7, 43.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 105–106.

A second element of dance's spatiality to consider is orientation: the definition of directions in space. As the dancer is required to align with the notated page, and therefore the room, a spatial reference point situated outside of the body is created. Based on this, the dancer needs to organise their body around a vertical axis corresponding to the path of the notation, and to consider a "front" which may or may not coincide with their own front; indeed, as Frédéric Pouillaude points out, moving "forward" on the page does not necessarily mean the dancer moves forward in actual space.⁴³ The corporeally-counterintuitive – or counterintuitive to contemporary kinaesthetic experience – nature of this arrangement is further illustrated by Feuillet's complex instructions about how to perform turns without changing the orientation of the notation book, so as to always remain in relation to the artificial "top" of both the page and the room.⁴⁴ Susan Foster draws an illuminating parallel between a notation's spatial arrangement and the experience of navigating space by reading a map, based on the conflation of the terms "choreography" and "chorography" (a sub-field of geography related to mapping) in the title of a treatise by John Essex that applied the Beauchamp-Feuillet system to the English context.⁴⁵ A cartographic metaphor can indeed illuminate the *Chorégraphie's* un-corporeal perspective – as well as its distance from contemporary embodied experience. To grasp this point, compare the experience of following a map – aligning the map with the surroundings according to a specific reference point (North), keeping this alignment when turning, differentiating between one's own orientation and the one of the map – with the experience of following a GPS – which automatically assumes the embodied perspective of its user and shifts the orientation of the virtual map every time the user turns. In a GPS-like system of bodily perspective, the environment turns around the axis of the body (this is what happens in Labanotation,⁴⁶ a point that is of importance in Chapter 8); in Feuillet's

43 Pouillaude, Frédéric: *Unworking Choreography: The Notion of the Work in Dance*, New York: Oxford University Press 2017 [2009, trans. Anna Pakes], p. 174.

44 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, pp. 33–34. The difficulty of this arrangement is also illustrated by Feuillet's notations of the dancer's ending orientation, to make sure they have correctly followed the score, as in: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *IX. Recueil de danses pour l'année 1711*, Paris: Dezais 1711, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k8586968/f67.item#> (August 2020), BnF e.g. p. 69.

45 Foster, Susan Leigh: Chorography and Choreography, in: Haitzinger & Fenböck: *Denkfiguren*, pp. 69–75.

46 Hutchinson-Guest explains that in Labanotation '[t]he direction forward, established by the personal front of the performer, is that wall or corner of the room that s/he is facing when in the normal upright, untwisted position. [...] After each turn a new front is established and this becomes the new forward direction'. She notes that there is the possibility of using a "front" sign to indicate the performer's orientation in the room, but '[t]hese signs are placed outside the staff on the left at the start of a score':

mapping of dance, the body has to be placed in a pre-existing representation of space not following the embodied perspective of the dancer.

The bird's-eye-view format of choreo-graphies further implies that the dancer follows a pre-defined path by marking successive positions on it.⁴⁷ While physically being in the dance, the notation invites the dancer to disconnect from their situated perspective in order to imagine their body from an external (overhead) viewpoint, and conceive of their position in space in relation to all previous and following positions. This results in a perspective in which the embodied sensation of being in a specific place is combined with an external view of one's own body. A beautiful reflection of this can be found in *The Art of Dancing Explained*, in which plates show dancers on the choreographic path, projecting themselves onto the dance's form [Figure 8]. Choreography thus indicates a space not generated by the body, nor emanating from the dancer's embodied presence. Instead, a vision of spatiality is sketched out, in which the dance has a pre-existing spatial form wherein the body has to enter.⁴⁸

Hutchinson-Guest, Ann: *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement*, New York: Routledge 2005, pp. 370, 374.

47 It may be possible to connect this source of directionality outside of the body with the social context in which the *belle danse* was initiated: Devero points out that 'in the court dance, the dancer was other-directed, rather than self-directed. It was a dance of the exterior. This was in keeping with the ethos of the court for, as Madame states: "I can only act according to the will of others"'. Devero: *The Court Dance of Louis XIV*, p. 103.

48 Cf. Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 79.

Figure 8: Dancers depicted on a notation path in Kellom Tomlinson's *The Art of Dancing Explained*. Source: Tomlinson, Kellom: *The Art of Dancing Explained*, London 1735, plate BI. PV, Library of Congress, digital collection 'An American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals, ca. 1490 to 1920', <https://www.loc.gov/item/20010870/> (August 2020). No re-use without permission.



An indication of such a non-primarily-corporeal space can be found in the *Chorégraphie's* conception of the dance path. In order to understand how this may have been conceived, consider Feuillet's distinction between the "chemin" and the "figure". The *chemin* is 'la ligne sur laquelle on dance [the line on which we

dance]’ – i.e. the drawn path – and the *figure* is defined as ‘*suivre un chemin tracé avec art* [following an artfully-drawn *chemin*].’⁴⁹ While the *figure* is defined as an act (following), it is also observable [e.g. ‘*observer cette figure*’] before being enacted;⁵⁰ one needs to see it on paper to follow it. The *figure*, therefore, seems to be the spatial form created when the dancer takes up three-dimensional space on the *chemin*. The correspondence between these elements can be seen from two perspectives in a model of notation that directly translates embodied dance to paper: the danced *figure* leaves a trace which takes the form of a *chemin* (on the notation) or, vice versa, the notated *chemin* is transposed into the ballroom as the *figure* (when danced on). While choreo-graphies allow both these processes to happen – the former in the notation of a pre-existing dance and the latter in performing with a notation at hand – it may be a conceptual leap to equate the *chemin* with a choreo-graphic trace or generator of the *figure* (itself equated with embodied action). This is because of Feuillet’s insistence – he comes back to this point at least three times in the treatise – that a *chemin* is both an indicator of the *figure* and, at times, a simple support for the writing of step signs.⁵¹ This happens when the dancer is moving on the spot – the *chemin* continues in order for the steps to be written, but without displacement in space, no *figure* arises – or upon returning to a path already taken – a second *chemin* is drawn, parallel and connected to the first by dotted lines⁵² [Figure 9]. In such cases, the *chemin* is not an exact trace of the embodied dance’s path. And, inversely, strictly following the *chemin* in real space would make for a mistaken *figure*. The Beauchamp-Feuillet system’s *chemin* thus allows an imaginary visualisation of the *figure*; one can see the postulation, but not the indexical trace, of a three-dimensional spatial form in the *chemin*. The *figure* is in a liminal position between the body in space and the graphic representation of space; comparable to an expanded choreography interested in spatial-kinetic patterns beyond their human incarnation, Feuillet’s *figure* is a spatial form materialised and instantiated by the body, and translated and represented by the notation – but is not reducible to either.

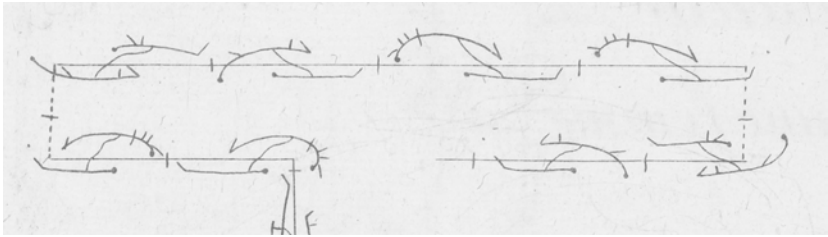
49 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, pp. 2, 4.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 95, 103–105.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Figure 9: Detail from a choreo-graphy. The dotted lines indicate a return upon a chemin already danced upon. Source: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *Recueil de dances contenant un très grand nombres des meilleures entrées de ballet de M. Pécour tant pour homme que pour femmes [sic] dont la plus grande partie ont été dancées à l'Opéra, Paris 1704, p. 2, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85914682> (August 2020), BnF. No re-use without permission.*



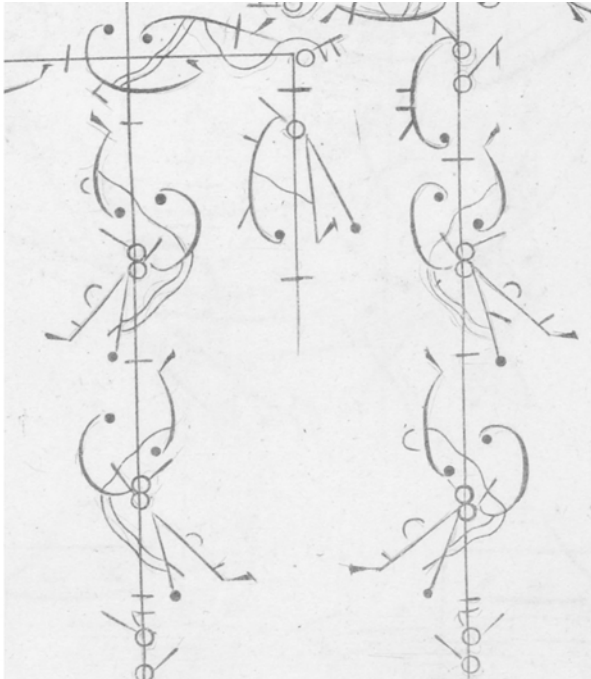
Feuillet's disconnections – between a spatial form of the dance to be mentally and imaginatively grasped and the physical position of body therein; between a universal, abstracted body and the reality of particular bodies implementing projected dance forms; between the disembodied eye of the self and its own executing body – were made at the close of the century that saw the publication of René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) and its qualitative division between body and mind. Feuillet's distance from the body can therefore be read as a symptom of his context's conception of corporeality. As such, it also manifests his distance from later approaches to the dancing body that countered precisely this conception, by insisting on incarnated experience as the proper trait of dance, thus contributing to the establishment of a physicalised view of choreography widely held today – and questioned by expanded choreography.

A graphic dance on paper

If the *Chorégraphie* proposes a vision of dance not exclusively and fully attached to the human body, its notations can be seen and valued as objects in-and-of themselves, and not merely as secondary tools supporting and documenting the embodied practice of dance. In effect, when one looks into the notations' contents, one is first and foremost confronted with the signs as graphic elements that form page compositions, whose layout has an aesthetic interest, separate from its meaning-carrying function. While the *Chorégraphie* can be seen as developing a "language" of dance that one must learn to read, the signs used in it are graphically interesting – just like type-fonts pose a graphic interest beyond

their depiction of letters. Indeed, apart from possible variations in the notation of the same dance – potentially corresponding to diverging interpretations of it⁵³ – different graphic styles of notation are also discernible; for example, some notations have thicker lines, and more defined and angular forms than others [Figures 10 and 11]; a notation's graphic aspects have aesthetic specificities. Supporting this view of the notation, Marie Glon proposes that the elegance of such a '*composition graphique* [graphic composition]' played a role in the success of choreo-graphy.⁵⁴

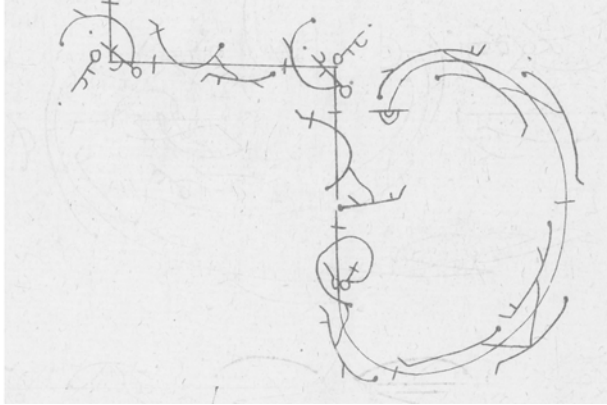
Figure 10: Detail from a choreo-graphy. Source: Gaudrau, Michel: Nouveau recueil de Dance de Bal et celle de Ballet contenant un très grand nombres [sic] des meilleures [sic] entrées de ballet, Paris 1715, p. 16, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8623248j> (October 2018), BnF. No re-use without permission.



53 Glon: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*, pp. 429–430; Cf. also Pierce, Ken: *Choreographic Structure in Baroque Dance*, in: Nevile, Jennifer (ed.): *Dance, Spectacle and the Body Politick 1250-1750*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2008, p. 185.

54 Glon: *Ce que la Chorégraphie fait aux maîtres de danse*, p. 57.

Figure 11: Detail from a choreo-graphy. Source: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: Recueil de dances contenant un très grand nombres des meilleures entrées de ballet de M. Pécour tant pour homme que pour femmes [sic] dont la plus grande partie ont été dancées à l'Opéra, Paris 1704, p. 2, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85914682> (August 2020), BnF. No re-use without permission.



The importance of the *Chorégraphie's* “graphic” aspect is also discernable in the way it spoke to its users, not only as an abstract set of symbols, but also as an iconic presentation of the dance – identifiable in the dance paths and the depiction of the steps – if not the body. Feuillet himself stressed this aspect of the notation by choosing to subtitle his treatise *L'Art de décrire la danse* – referring to the art of describing (*décrire*) with graphic symbols, and not of writing (*écrire*).

Corresponding to this aesthetic importance of signs beyond their meaning-carrying function, the Feuillet system not only had the capacity to attribute authorship to dances through their notation, but was also protected as an authored entity itself. Indeed, the six-year royal privilege that gave Feuillet the right to engrave and print dances stipulated that no other notator reproduce the engraved dances, and that others could only use the signs themselves with Feuillet's permission;⁵⁵ choreo-graphy protects the authorship of choreography, and itself.⁵⁶ Relatedly, Glon identifies a double authorship through the practice of choreo-graphy – the dance master who created a choreography was not

55 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, unpaginated.

56 After Feuillet's death in 1710, Dezais continued his work, before other dance masters start publishing in choreo-graphy. Cf. Glon: *Ce que la Chorégraphie fait aux maîtres de danse*, p. 58. Taubert provides further evidence for this protectionism of the notation when he explains that French masters hid it from foreign pupils. Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, pp. 602–603.

necessarily the dance master who created the choreo-graphy.⁵⁷ The figure of the notator is prefigured, but can also be attributed a status of authorship which is, at times, absent from contemporary notational work. Like Saint-Hubert's master of order [Chapter 1], choreo-graphers of the early-18th century troubled the association of choreographic authorship with the sole making of dances.

Apart from being understandable as artistic works in themselves, notations were also objects treated as such, both as carriers of contents and in their proper materiality and aesthetic relevance. Notations could, in effect, be physically manipulated – they were objects with which to dance, if we are to believe the instructions about turning while holding the book (mentioned above). These objects – printed dance partners – had an aesthetic aspect, beyond their utility in teaching dance. Tomlinson goes so far as to suggest that the plates accompanying *The Art of Dancing Explained* (which include Beauchamp-Feuillet notations),

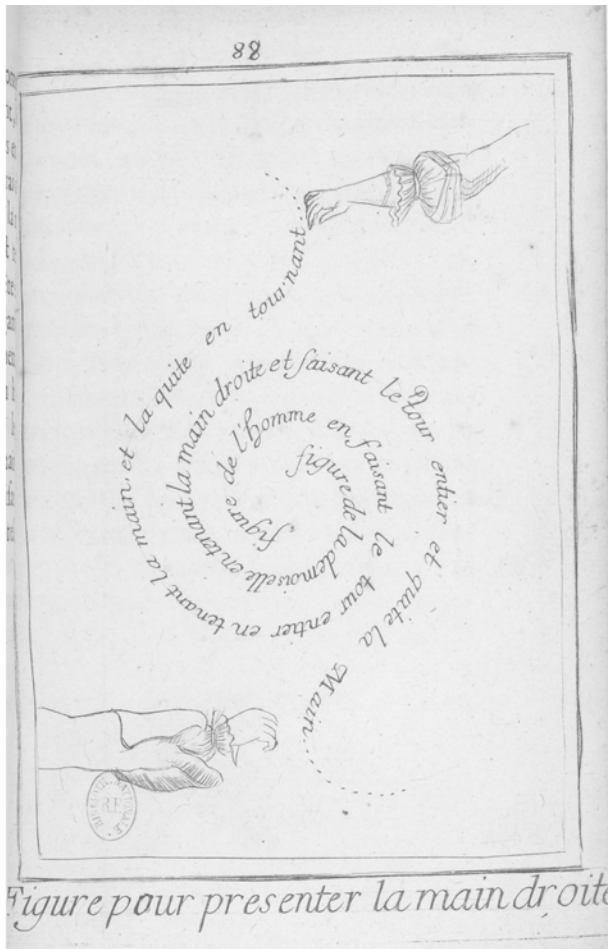
were originally designed not only for the better *Explanation & Understanding* of my Printed Book [...] but likewise to be proper *Furniture* for a *Room* or *Closet*, being of themselves an *intire* and independent *Work*, for if put in *Frames* with *Glasses*, they will not only show the *various Positions* or *Postures* at one *View*, but be very agreeable and instructive *Furniture*.⁵⁸

These points provide further support to the idea that choreo-graphy was not a secondary document of an essentially- and primarily-physical practice, but, rather, a manifestation of choreography in parallel, complementary media. This points to the possibility of dance's materialisation in different substrates. Imagery surrounding the *Chorégraphie* provides illuminating manifestations of this transmedia materialisation of dance; in Rameau's post-Feuillet *Maitre à danser*, for example, a series of plates presents writing in curves, following the shapes of movements referred to in the book [Figure 12]. Thus, the reader is invited to approach the text not only as a meaning-carrier, but also as a manifestation of movement-content. Both in Feuilletian figures and in Rameau's graphically-rendered texts, the reader interprets what is on the page, while simultaneously viewing it as a graphic dance. Choreo-graphies and associated illustrations thus represent but also, to a certain extent, perform dances; the representation of the dance on paper cannot be reduced to a secondary object referring to an "original", as it can also be seen as including a non-embodied dancerly quality that is printed.

57 Glon: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*, pp. 421, 429–30.

58 Tomlinson: *The Art of Dancing Explained*, frontispice to the plates.

Figure 12: Detail from *Le Maître à danser*. Source: Rameau, Pierre: *Le Maître à danser*, Paris: Jean Villette 1725, plate 88, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8623292z> (August 2020), BnF. No re-use without permission.



As paper versions of dances, notations seem to have had a specific life of their own. Beyond their immediate use as teaching and learning tools, notations circulated and travelled. It is Feuillet himself who connects this notation circulation with the separation from embodiment, when he notes in the introduction to the *Chorégraphie* that his system would allow dances to be ‘envoy[ées]

dans une Lettre ainsi qu'on envoie un Air de Musique [sent in a Letter, like one sends a Melody of Music]'.⁵⁹ For Glon, choreo-graphy indeed provides

*la possibilité d'une autonomie de la danse gravée par rapport au corps: il ne s'agit plus seulement d'un outil annexe [...] mais d'un objet qui remplit, de façon autonome, sa propre fonction sociale. Et cette fonction reside, essentiellement, dans le fait de circuler [the possibility of an autonomy of the engraved dance from the body: it is not a question of an annex tool [...] but of an object that accomplishes, autonomously, its own social function. And this function essentially resides in the fact of circulating].*⁶⁰

By circulating choreo-graphies, it was therefore possible to circulate choreographies but also to exchange objects which contained the dance in graphic form, rendering its transmission independent from human incarnation.

In effect, Feuillet's subtitle acts as a reminder that his system could be used so that the reader '*apprend facilement de soy-même toutes sortes de Dances* [easily learn by oneself all sorts of Dances]',⁶¹ thus illustrating his hope that it could be employed without the intermediary translation of a dance master. While it is doubtful whether this idea was realised – notations were primarily used by dance masters, who were also capable of transmitting technical and stylistic information not included in choreo-graphies⁶² – the notation seems to have been conceived with this possibility in mind. This autonomy of the dancer from the master through a potentially-direct interaction with the page was taken up by other dance masters in the Feuillet universe, notably Taubert and the anonymous author I.H.P., whose 1705 treatise *Maître de danse oder Tanz = Meister* [Dance Master]⁶³ includes a simplified version of the Beauchamp-Feuillet

59 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, unpaginated preface. The musical parallel was also noted by external observers such as the *Mercure*, whose January 1700 issue repeats the possibility of using Feuillet's publication to decipher dance like notated music. *Mercure Galant*, January 1700, Paris: Brunet 1700, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6262137b/f298.image> (August 2020), BnF, pp. 234–235. Weaver also takes up the musical metaphor, writing of 'Orchesography or the Art of writing down Dances in Characters, whereby Masters are able to communicate their Compositions [...] and which is brought to as great a Perfection as that of Musick'. Weaver: *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing*, p. 171.

60 Glon: Les "Danses Gravées" du XVIIIe siècle, p. 259.

61 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, title page.

62 Glon: Ce que la Chorégraphie fait aux maîtres de danse, p. 62.

63 Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, p. 274; I.H.P.: *Maitre de danse oder Tanz=meister*, in: Schrödter, Stephanie, Mourey, Marie-Thérèse & Bennett, Giles (eds.): *Barocktanz im Zeichen französisch-deutschen Kulturtransfers. Quellen zur Tanzkultur um 1700*, Hildesheim: Olms 2008 [1705], p. 123.

system.⁶⁴ I.H.P. makes the relationship between dancer and page explicit, by presenting choreo-graphic books as graphic dance masters – as paper versions of the embodied act of showing, transmitting, teaching dance; ‘*What does this book contain?*’ The author rhetorically asks, only to answer, ‘A dancing master, who informs on paper’.⁶⁵

If the student/dancer can do without a master by using the *Chorégraphie*, the master can also do without a student/dancer. The Beauchamp-Feuillet system conceptualises composition through inscription in the literal sense, instead of inscription in the human body that is subsequently transformed into a notation. Understanding and learning how to use the *Chorégraphie* was presented not only as a skill of deciphering and performing dances, but also as a tool for composing them. Feuillet argues that if one practices his notated dances, one ‘*acquerrera la facilité d’en écrire d’autres [dances] & même à en composer [will acquire the facility to write other [dances] and even compose them]*’.⁶⁶ Although, once again, its actual occurrence is doubtful, it is possible to not only compose *assisted* by choreo-graphy, but also to compose *in* choreo-graphy, without the intermediary of a dancer’s body. The author of the *Chorégraphie* did compose a dance – the *Madalena*, in 1703, to be offered to the duc of Mantua – which, seemingly, had not been danced before being put onto paper; additional dances may have been composed “for” paper as choreo-graphic gifts.⁶⁷ Bodiless composition was also entertained by other writers, one of whom proposed that dance masters be evaluated by sending the Royal Academy works they had composed on paper, alone in a room, like students during an examination.⁶⁸ This recommendation – championed by some in the early-18th century – would be ridiculed by Jean-Georges Noverre in the later 1700s; in his *Letter* on choreo-graphy, he writes of the

*erreur que de penser qu’un bon Maître de Ballets puisse tracer & composer son ouvrage au coin de son feu [...] Ce n’est pas la plume à la main que l’on fait marcher les Figurants [error of thinking that a good Ballet Master may trace and compose his work next to his fireplace [...] it is not with a pen at hand that one makes Figurants walk].*⁶⁹

64 Bennett, Giles: The Dance Book Authors as Transmitters of Dance Practice, in: Schrödter, Mourey & Bennett: *Barocktanz im Zeichen französisch-deutschen Kulturtransfers*, p. 465.

65 I.H.P.: *Maitre de danse*, p. 124.

66 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 105.

67 Glon: Les “Dances Gravées” du XVIIIe siècle, pp. 258–259; *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*, pp. 283–285.

68 Laurenti, Jean-Noël: La Pensée de Feuillet, in: Louppe, Laurence (ed.): *Danses tracées: Dessins et notation des chorégraphes*, Paris: Dis Voir 1994, pp. 110–111.

69 Noverre, Jean-Georges: *Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets*, Lyon: Delaroché 1760, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k108204h/f1.item.texteImage.zoom> (August 2020), pp. 387–388.

The existence of notations as graphic and physical objects – as well as their potential use independent from the embodied process of transmission between master and student – supports the view that choreo-graphy implemented a choreographic politics of discipline; a dance master is not needed to normativise embodied practices, as printed signs can direct bodies. It is, however, doubtful that this disembodiment of choreographic discipline was successful. Glon goes so far as to suggest that the *Chorégraphie* offered a possibility of resistance to the technical, disciplinary control of dancing bodies:

la Chorégraphie semble ouvrir une brèche: on peut la voir comme une voie concurrente, qui vient résister à cet encadrement (ou qui implicitement et peut-être même à l'insu de Feuillet et ses successeurs, ouvre une telle possibilité de résistance); ou encore comme un outil différent qui vient s'ajouter à une pratique de la danse réglée par ailleurs, par les soins d'un maître à danser [the Chorégraphie seems to open a breach: one can see it is a rival approach, which resists this framing (or that implicitly and maybe even without Feuillet and his successors' awareness opens such a possibility of resistance); or as a different tool that is added to a dance practice otherwise regulated by a dance master.]⁷⁰

In a comparable way, while the existence of dance on paper through choreography may have been intended as a means of propagating French national style and cultural supremacy in a colonialist context,⁷¹ it is also possible it allowed bidirectional exchanges, less strictly-aligned to Louis XIV's preferences.⁷² Taubert, for instance, notes that choreo-graphic tables were useful to a master

not only to teach himself easily those French dances that are composed every year in Paris at the *Académie royale de danse* by the best masters in the whole world and published in the form of certain symbols and figures but also to set down on paper dances learned elsewhere or composed by himself along with the music that goes with them and to mail them to distant places.⁷³

In other words, the “fixation” of dance on paper opens the potential of an authoritarian, homogenising norm, but it is also in choreography's paper materiality (and the circulations thereof) that resistance to this norm may be found.

As graphic designs, paper dances, and objects of dance, Feuillet notations claim their autonomy from the performing body. Their capacity to mediate the transfer of dance knowledge, to form a territory for the negotiation of

70 Glon: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*, p. 219.

71 For instance, Laurenti: *La Pensée de Feuillet*, p. 108; Foster: *Choreographies and Choreographers*, pp. 103–104.

72 Cf. Glon: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*, p. 315.

73 Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, p. 600.

choreographic politics or for the emancipation of student from teacher, is not there *despite* this autonomy, but as a *result* of it. Existing and manifesting their agency in several media, choreo-graphies can thus contribute to more recent, expanded-choreographic endeavours by providing glimpses of choreographic alternatives to physicality.

A choreo-graphic logic

While it is doubtful that bodiless composition was applied in practice, its very formulation suggests that some practitioners considered that dance could be composed through choreo-graphy. To better understand this, it is useful to look into the tools that allowed composition through choreo-graphy, which provided the means for the analysis of dance and, therefore, its construction. Looking into these tools – while juxtaposing them with the ways in which practice may have bypassed or ignored them – is one last way in which the *Chorégraphie*'s not-fully-corporeal, abstract dance-thought, can be illustrated.

The Beauchamp-Feuillet notation is based on a decomposition of dance into basic constituent units, replacing the representation of entire steps or sequences (found in previous notational attempts) and forming a classificatory-analytical system. By combining steps with action types, varying the direction of steps, and creating compound movements, it is possible to develop a complex dance vocabulary. The reduction of dance to a restricted number of elementary units, capable of producing theoretically limitless variation, was a project explicitly recognised by Feuillet when he wrote that while dance steps were '*presqu'innumbrable, on les réduit néanmoins à cinq, qui ne serviront icy que pour démontrer toutes les différentes figures que la jambe peut faire* [almost innumerable, we nevertheless reduce them to five, which will only serve here to show all the different figures that the leg can do]'.⁷⁴ The endless combinations were not lost on users and adapters of the notation; Tomlinson remarks that such units – position, sinking, stepping, rising, etc. – were 'of the very same Use in *Dancing* as the *Alphabet* in the *Composition of Words*'.⁷⁵ Certain dance masters seem to have adopted this analytical approach in their explanations of dance steps. For example, Rameau's *Le Maître à danser* (published in the same year as his book elaborating the Beauchamp-Feuillet system) includes verbal analyses of dance

74 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 9; cf. Laurenti: *La Pensée de Feuillet*, pp. 115–116.

75 Tomlinson: *The Art of Dancing Explained*, p. 23

steps that deconstruct complex steps into simple ones and simple steps into actions and displacements of the feet.⁷⁶

However, several sources indicate that this analytical approach, grasped for the purposes of notation, did not fully transfer to practice; dance masters – including those using the notation – allowed their dance and that of their students to exceed this rigorous framework. Contrary to the Beauchamp-Feuillet system's analysis of elementary units, compound dance steps were generally referred to with a name (e.g. *pas de menuet*) that designated them as wholes, rather than as a result of (notational) decomposition; '[j]ust as a word is only one word, no matter how many letters or syllables [...] it consists of; so too each compound step is considered only one step no matter how many single steps [...] are included within it'⁷⁷ writes Taubert. Similarly, Edmund Pemberton's 1711 *Essay for the further Improvement of Dancing* provides a symbol that "summarises" a frequently-used, complex step.⁷⁸ Moreover, even if the *Chorégraphie* provided the means for potentially-infinite recombinations of steps, the actual *belle danse* repertoire included a limited number of steps, rather than a wealth of new inventions.⁷⁹

By identifying elementary units capable of building an entire dance lexicon, Feuillet's classification points towards an exhaustiveness that can – in the manner of the classical *episteme*⁸⁰ – allow it to attain universality; it can define a universe bound by its representationability. In effect, Feuillet's treatise's very title promises to offer signs '[a]vec lesquels on apprend facilement [...] toutes sortes de Danses [with which one can easily learn [...] all sorts of dances]'.⁸¹ Based on this potential exhaustiveness, steps could not only be known and

76 Rameau: *Le Maître à danser*; see, for instance, Part 1, Chapters XX and XXI on the *demi coupé* and the *pas de menuet*, respectively. For Marie Glon, the *Chorégraphie*'s list of actions did eventually manage to impose itself, approaching dance as a whole and not only its notation. Glon: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*, p. 136.

77 Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, p. 430.

78 Pemberton, Edmund: *An Essay for the Further Improvement of Dancing*, London: Walsh 1711, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=134//musdi134.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/musdibib:@field\(NUMBER+@odt\(musdi+134\)\)&linkText=0&presId=musdibib](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=134//musdi134.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/musdibib:@field(NUMBER+@odt(musdi+134))&linkText=0&presId=musdibib) (August 2020), Library of Congress, digital collection 'An American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals, ca. 1490 to 1920', unpaginated section "explanation".

79 Pierce: *Choreographic Structure in Baroque Dance*, pp. 184–185.

80 Cf. Foucault, Michel: *Les Mots et les choses*, Paris: Gallimard 1966, p. 76. Researchers including Marie Glon and Frédéric Pouillaude have drawn a link between Feuilletian thinking and Foucault's classical *episteme*. See Glon: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*, pp. 119–120; Pouillaude, Frédéric: *D'une graphie qui ne dit rien. Les Ambiguïtés de la notation chorégraphique*, in: *Poétique* 137 (2004), pp. 109–110.

81 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, title page, emphasis added.

practiced, but also understood as parts of a system with an all-encompassing mode of function; the notation invites its users to see the ways in which dance is organised beyond the diversity of practice.⁸² Indeed, the *belle danse* notated in choreo-graphies incorporated steps from foreign and regional dances which could be translated into choreo-graphic terms, smoothed out and homogenised – partially through the *Chorégraphie*'s standard lexicon – in what Foster illuminates as a quasi-colonialist project of cultural dominance.⁸³ The notation's potential exhaustiveness thus provided a springboard for the control of dance. Indeed, the *Chorégraphie*'s system's development is contextually associated with the *Académie Royale de Danse* – an institution founded by Louis XIV in 1661 that aimed to centralise power over dance matters, authorise censorship, and control the dance master profession in order to '*perfectionner, & corriger les abus & défauts* [perfect and correct the abuses and defects]⁸⁴ in dance activity.

But once again, contrary to the *Chorégraphie*'s posited exhaustiveness – and consistent with its resistance to an authoritarian choreographic politics to which it partly contributed – movements were practiced that fell outside its limits. New dance forms – developed in the following decades of the 18th century – were less adapted to representation in the Beauchamp-Feuillet system, although attempts were made to adjust it to the *contredanse*.⁸⁵ Even before the notation was completely eclipsed (due to changing dance practices), variations were present; Taubert claims that 'every dance, even the most insignificant, always undergoes a lot of variation from one place to another, indeed from one master to another who dances it differently as a result, sadly, of following the French instructions poorly',⁸⁶ thus pointing to the limits of notational homogenisation.

A final aspect of the *Chorégraphie*'s dance-compositional thinking is that it proposes a specifically dance-focussed set of signs, related to, but not amalgamated with, other information. This was most notable with music; dance and music's signs were juxtaposed but not fused – they were related to, but not bound with, each other.⁸⁷ The *Chorégraphie* may thus have contributed to a process in which dance's autonomy from other arts was associated with its specificity as a discipline. This idea was present in the treatise's publication

82 Cf. Laurenti: *La Pensée de Feuillet*, p. 113.

83 Foster: *Choreographies and Choreographers*, pp. 101–104. See also Laurenti: *La Pensée de Feuillet* pp. 108, 113.

84 Louis XIV: *Lettres patentes du roy*, p. 8.

85 Already in: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *Recueil de contredances mises en chorégraphie*, Paris 1706, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1048519k/f1.item> (August 2020), BnF.

86 Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, p. 333.

87 Musical notation and indications of bodily movements only come somewhat closer in the proposed method for notating the *castagnettes*, a practice found between the two modalities. Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, pp. 100–102.

context; Louis XIV's *Académie* was founded 'à l'instar de celles de Peinture & Sculpture [following the example of those of Painting and Sculpture]',⁸⁸ in a disciplinary – in both senses of the word – classification of dance. This classification was affirmed as an institutional recognition of dance practice and its non-subordination to *les violons*.⁸⁹ For Glon, Feuillet's work is '*l'un des éléments tendant à valoriser la partie de la danse qui n'est pas réductible à la musique, et les compétences propres à un spécialiste de cet art* [one of the elements that tend to valourise the part of dance that is not reducible to music and the skills proper to a specialist of this art]'.⁹⁰ Crucially, given the incorporeal nature of the notation, the irreducible traits of dance exemplified in the *Chorégraphie* are not found in its physical medium but, rather, in the systematic dance-thought mediated by its signs. Once again, however, practice did not fully follow such classifications, as the performance of the *belle danse* required an appreciation of music in relation to the steps, which was not exhaustively present in the notation.

Just like it is caught between the presence of the body and a potentially-disembodied view of dance, Feuillet's work is also caught between choreo-graphic thinking and lived praxis – between, one could argue, Cartesian rationalism and Enlightenment empiricism. This ambivalent position is captured by a fascinating passage towards the end of the book, in which Feuillet advises prospective notators that if they cannot notate a step, they can simply examine it to decide what type of step it is, then refer to the corresponding table in order to find its notation.⁹¹ In other words, an experienced or talented notator can break down the step into the constituent parts (that will compose its notational symbol), but a less-able one can simply represent the empirically-known step name with one of the book's compound signs. The *Chorégraphie* offers both the translation of previously-named steps into signs, and the possibility of using notation to deconstruct steps and invent new steps and dances. In this way, Feuillet's text acknowledges that certain practitioners may decline adopting a choreo-graphic logic, *and* highlights the possibility of conceiving dance through it. While the practice of dance only partially adopted the combinatorial game

88 Louis XIV: *Lettres patentes du roy*, p. 13.

89 The *Discours académique pour prouver que la Danse dans sa plus noble partie n'a pas besoin des instruments de Musique, & qu'elle est en tout absolument indépendante du Violon* [Academic discourse in order to prove that Dance in its most noble aspect does not need these instruments of Music and that it is in everything absolutely independent from the Violin], attached as an appendix to Louis XIV's *Lettres patentes*, explicitly distinguishes dance from the auditory-sensory modality of music. Appendix to Louis XIV: *Lettres patentes du roy*, p. 38.

90 Glon: *Les Lumières chorégraphiques*, p. 391.

91 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 103.

proposed by Feuillet, the notation sketched out the possibility of conceiving of – and therefore composing – dance in terms of choreo-graphy.

Indeed, the very distance of the notation from practice confirms that it was not an indexical trace of lived, embodied action, but a system with a specific mode of thinking, through which dance could be understood and practice would – or not – follow. Reflecting this appreciation of the notation as a system of signs, in whose framework it is possible to think of dance, Michel Foucault writes that

[à] l'âge classique, rien n'est donné qui ne soit donné à la représentation [...] Les représentations ne s'enracinent pas dans un monde auquel elles emprunteraient leur sens; elles s'ouvrent d'elles-mêmes sur un espace qui leur est propre [in the classical age, nothing is given that is not given in representation [...] Representations are not rooted in a world from which they borrow their meaning; they open by themselves towards a space that is their own].⁹²

In a comparable vein, the *Chorégraphie* can be seen as an invitation to think of dance *in* its representation. This is not to imply that choreo-graphic thought was, or could be, fundamentally disconnected from the reality its signs represented; choreo-graphic signs were not free-floating entities, completely detached from actual dance movements. It implies that the notation was a framework in which thought about dance movements could emerge independent from embodiment.

La tâche fondamentale du 'discours' classique, c'est d'attribuer un nom aux choses, et en ce nom de nommer leur être. Pendant deux siècles, le discours occidental fut le lieu de l'ontologie. [the fundamental task of classical "discourse" is to attribute a name to things, and in this name to name their being. For two centuries, Western discourse was the place of ontology]⁹³

writes Foucault. Beauchamp-Feuillet notation can be seen as a (not fully-successful) ontological project; its terms, in Foster's words, 'authenticat[e] the existence of the step'.⁹⁴ Effectively conflating choreo-graphy and dance, Feuillet speaks in his preface of having provided '*l'explication des Principes & des Elemens* [the explanation of the Principles and Elements]⁹⁵ of dance itself – and not the signs referring to them. Similarly Weaver, in his English translation of the *Chorégraphie*, transforms the original title's *the art of describing dance* into *The Art of Dancing by Characters and Demonstrative Figures* – thus indicating that the notation may have occasionally blended with its object of representation in the minds of its

92 Foucault: *Les Mots et les choses*, p. 92.

93 Ibid., p. 136.

94 Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 34.

95 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, unpaginated preface.

contemporaries. Conflating dance and choreo-graphy, the *Chorégraphie*'s "internal logic" proposes a system in which dance can be conceived through signs. Feuilletian dances are embodied by dancers and materialised in notations, but are also conceivable in their being-sign, as (expanded) choreo(-)graphic objects. In other words, the *Chorégraphie* may be – more than a notational system disembodimenting a corporeal dance practice – a system of choreo(-)graphic thinking that conceives of dance as a not-necessarily-embodied domain – like contemporary expanded choreography and contrary to an essentialism of a physicalised dance.

Conclusion

The Beauchamp-Feuillet notation establishes an ambivalent relationship with corporeality and dance praxis. The *Chorégraphie* presents a dance practiced by bodies, partially conceived through corporeal characteristics, inscribed in a rich context of social uses of the body – but not wholly formulated in terms, or from the perspective, of the body. The choreo-graphic conception of dance therefore relates to and influences, but also enters in multiple frictions with, embodied dance practice – a practice that relies on training the body and exploring its anatomy; playing with dance codes, steps, and styles; and a very-real relationship between master and student. These frictions can be seen as the notation's attempt, and potential failure, to fully grasp a lived corporeal reality, in order to mould it into its own terms. But, from an expanded-choreographic perspective, they can also be seen as resulting from the fact that the *Chorégraphie* displays a conception of dance and choreography not emanating from, anchored in, and solely understandable through, reference to corporeal praxis.

If a modern(ist), body-focussed conception of choreography does not apply to the Beauchamp-Feuillet notation, subsequent notions of body and dance – the sensorial, physical, experiential, organic understanding of an embodied dance bequeathed by the 20th century – are not fully applicable either. A similar claim can be made about later concepts of notation, grounded in fixating a corporeal practice in a document that would be secondary to the practice itself. Comparatively, the Beauchamp-Feuillet system – neither reducible to a graphic transcription of what the body does nor to a disciplinary prescription of what it is to do – gives rise to notations that are authored works in themselves, in *other*, rather than secondary, media. Complexifying choreo(-)graphic authorship beyond the praxis of dance-making, such notations shift the terrain of choreographic politics onto paper and signs, turning them into sites of discipline as well as resistance.

Raoul Auger Feuillet's choreo-graphy is the vehicle of a transmedia and abstractable choreo(-)graphic practice. Producing forms that exist in both mental representations – in objects of thought, like a figured form in space or a combination of signs – and material entities – like ink and paper –, the *Chorégraphie* constitutes a deviation from, or subversion of, an essentially-physicalised dance; as such, it also constitutes a historical site where contemporary interrogations of what *else* choreography may be can find hints of a reply. Thus, Feuillet's publication acts as a reminder that all essentialisms that present-day choreographers are gradually undoing – about dance, corporeality, notation, choreography itself – are, in effect, post-18th-century constructs, thus anchoring contemporary expanded choreographical debates in a macro-historical framework.

Chapter 3: Stillness in nature's dance: expanded choreographies of the Italian Renaissance

Contemporary knowledge of 15th-century Italian dance largely comes from the writings of three figures: Domenico da Piacenza (knighted dance master); Guglielmo Ebreo [the Jew] da Pesaro, known as Giovanni Ambrosio after converting to Christianity (student of Domenico and also knighted dance master);¹ and courtier Antonio Corna(z)zano (another student of Domenico). Since Cornazano's dance treatise includes several notions already developed by Domenico, the focus here is on the latter's *De arte saltandi & choreas ducendi* (*Of the Art of Dancing*, 1450s, in A.W. Smith's Italian transcription and English translation), and Guglielmo Ebreo's *De pratica seu arte tripudii* (*On the Practice or Art of Dancing*, 1463, in Barbara Sparti's Italian transcription and English translation, at times juxtaposed to Smith's).² Domenico and Guglielmo's theories partially overlap, but also diverge; here, they are treated as complementary, non-mutually exclusive manifestations of 15th-century Italian-dance culture.

The two treatises are among the earliest written sources on Western dance, contributing to their canonical status in the historiography of Renaissance dance and their particular position in the pre-history of choreo(-)graphy. While other treatises of the 15th and 16th centuries include material on notation (whereas Domenico and Guglielmo provide descriptive instructions), dance technique, and/or steps too, Domenico and Guglielmo's treatises are relevant here because they elaborate notions that refer to "expanded" aspects of choreography – for

1 For a short biography see Sparti, Barbara: Introduction, in: Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica seu arte tripudii*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993, pp. 23–25.

2 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi & choreas ducendi*, in: Smith, A. William (ed.): *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico da Piacenza*, Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press 1995 [1450s, trans. A. William Smith], pp. 10–67; Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica seu arte tripudii*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993 [1463, trans. Barbara Sparti]. The translation by William A. Smith in the edition indicated above was also used. The treatise attributed to Guglielmo should be seen as having been written by him in a non-literal sense; the actual writing was done by a scribe. See Barbara Sparti's introduction to her translation of *De pratica*, p. 6.

example, motionlessness. Through notions such as *misura* and *fantasmata* (analysed below), Domenico and Guglielmo allow one to distinguish early dance-historical sources' relevance to expanded choreography not through the contemporary focus on negation (e.g. the *lack* of motion) but as positively-defined parts of choreographic theory and practice.

The treatises are indeed composed of a combination of dance theory and practice – in the case of Guglielmo, a series of exercises – reflecting a permeability between them, and corresponding to their authors' multiple activities: teaching, theorising, choreographing, composing music, performing. Notably, the theoretical parts of the treatises enumerate the characteristics dance should display and skills dancers should acquire – presumably with the help of a dancing master. These include *misura* (analysed below), *memoria* (memory of movements), *concordantia* (Domenico) or *partire* (Guglielmo) *di terreno* (awareness of the dancing space and positions therein), as well as notions expressing stylistic and technical specifications, such as *maniera* and *aiere*. The texts then provide verbal descriptions of dances along with their music, which function as bases for contemporary reconstructions of Renaissance dance – even though they are not exhaustive (e.g. steps are named but not fully described), presumably because they assume pre-existing knowledge.³ The most prominent type of dance represented is the slow and dignified *bassadanza*, but multi-rhythm compositions (*balli*) are also included.

The dances Domenico and Guglielmo refer to are those primarily practiced by the nobility of Italian Renaissance society. Vernacular forms were not documented with the same assiduity; however, a circulation of dance forms across socioeconomic classes can be hypothesised, beyond what the texts suggest.⁴ In this context, the dances functioned, as Jennifer Nevile has explained, as a means for social marking and 'ritualised courtship'.⁵ As the boundaries between

3 Barbara Sparti considers the possibility that these descriptions may be mere "skeletons" to be enriched by ornamentation in practice: Sparti, Barbara (auth.), Giordano, Gloria & Pontremoli, Alessandro (eds.): *Dance, Dancers and Dance-Masters in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, Bologna: Massimiliano Piretti 2015, p. 145. Cornazano does purport to set the dances down in writing '*che l'arte già insegnata non sia vana* [so that the art already taught might not be lost]': Cornazano, Antonio: *Libro dell'arte del danzare*, in: Smith (ed.): *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music* [1465], p. 85.

4 Dances like the *piva* were practiced outside of the courts, but the fact remains that the dance culture not concerning the nobility is excluded from written sources. Sparti: Introduction, p. 58; Nordera, Marina: Pourquoi écrire la danse? Italie XVe – XVIe siècles, in: *La Notation chorégraphique: Outil de mémoire et de transmission: Etats généraux de l'atelier baroque*, Alfortville: L'atelier Baroque/Compagnie Fêtes Galantes 2007, p. 17.

5 Nevile, Jennifer: *Dance and Society in Quattrocento Italy*, in: Nevile, Jennifer (ed.): *Dance, Spectacle and the Body Politick 1250-1750*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2008, p. 81.

social and theatrical dance were not fully entrenched, these dances' steps may have been transferred to spectacular situations – such as dramatically-inclined *moresche*.⁶ While Domenico and Guglielmo's dances characterise the 15th century, they remained in circulation until the early 16th; similarly, while they were mainly practiced in the courts of the Italian peninsula, the presence of Italianised Spanish and French *basses danses* in Guglielmo's collections – as well as the fact that his treatise was brought to France by Louis XII – point to a wider European circle of influence.⁷

By composing sequences of corporeal movements, Domenico and Guglielmo practiced choreography as an art of making dances. However, when referring to dance-making, they used the terms “*compositione*” [composition] and “*fabricatione*” [fabrication] (Guglielmo also speaks of “organising” and “preparing” celebrations including dance); they used the term “notation” (e.g. “*balli notati*”) for their writing.⁸ Building on this discursive distance from “choreography”, this chapter adopts an expanded-choreographic perspective in order to investigate the gaps remaining in understanding courtly dance in Renaissance Italy, if “choreography” is understood as revolving around a physical body, the singularity of human creativity and performance, and the primacy of motion.

Corporeal interstices and correspondences

Dance was an undoubtedly corporeal affair for the Italian Renaissance, as reflected in Domenico and Guglielmo's treatises – contrary to Raoul Auger Feuillet's one [Chapter 2]. The body often enters their discourse, with Domenico talking of the ‘*motto corporalle mosso da luoco a luoco* [bodily motion through space]’ or dance's ‘*motti corporali* [corporeal movements]’ and Guglielmo devel-

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- 6 Sparti: Introduction, p. 54, note 21. Sparti also reports that two of Domenico's choreographies include pantomimic gestures and facial expressions and Smith that Guglielmo also created more theatrical dances. Sparti, Barbara: Antiquity as Inspiration in the Renaissance of Dance: The Classical Connection and Fifteenth-Century Italian Dance, in: *Dance Chronicle* 16/3 (1993), p. 377; Smith (ed.): *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music*, p. 109.
- 7 Sparti, Giordano & Pontremoli: *Dance, Dancers and Dance-Masters*, p. 308; Wilson, David Raoul (ed.): *The Basse Danse Handbook. Text and Context: Seventeen Original Sources*, New York: Pendragon Press 2012, pp. 127, 129–130; Sparti: Introduction, p. 7.
- 8 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 12, 16, 26; Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 84, 104, 118, 176, 251. (Guglielmo's references to “organising” and “preparing” celebrations are found in a second treatise he published under the moniker Giovanni Ambrosio.) Barbara Sparti does use the label “choreographies” to name the verbal descriptions of the dances.

oping a principle he refers to as ‘*movimento corporeo* [body movement]’.⁹ Both considered a healthy and able body to be a pre-requisite for dance. For example, in Guglielmo’s passage on the aptly-named *movimento corporeo*, he writes that

[I]e qual cose sonno molto piu facili & suave a chi dal summo cielo ha la sua natura & complexione gentile a cio disposta & ben proportionata colla sua persona libera. sana. & expedita senza alchuno manchamento di suoi membri: ma giovane. formoso. destro. legiero. & di gratia bene dottato: in cui tutte le preditte parti si possano con piu longa delectatione liberamente exercitando dimostrare. Impero che in persone de suoi membri defectose non possano haver luogho, come sonno zoppi. gobbi. stropiati. et simili genti: perche queste tal parti | vogliono & consisteno nello exercitio et movimento corporale [these things are far easier and more amenable for those whose nature and noble make-up have been disposed to it by the heavens above, and whose well-proportioned bodies are pliant, healthy and agile, with no feebleness of limb; that is, the young, the shapely, the nimble, the lightsome, and those well-endowed with grace, in whom all the aforesaid elements can, through liberal study, be demonstrated with more lasting delight. Thus there is no place for them in persons whose limbs are faulty (like the lame, the hunchbacked, the crippled, and such people), because these particular elements require and have their very essence in exercise and body movement].¹⁰

Domenico concurs:

[N]iuna creatura creata che habia in se de natura mancamento de questo motto zentille capace sia [...] zopi gobi guerci de tutti li ministerii aprensun sono Salvo che de questo operandose seria frusta. Adomque li bisogna prosperita de fortuna che e beleza [no creature who has natural defects is capable of this refined motion [...] lame, hunchbacked, or maimed people of all callings will not succeed in this. One needs good fortune – which is beauty].¹¹

Stylistic and technical aspects of dance are also particularly connected to the body; for example, *aiere* [air] is presented as a rising motion of the body and *mayniera* [manner] as a turning of the body.¹² Guglielmo’s text includes a specific chapter on the proper bearing of female dancers as a ‘*humile & mansueto* [humble and meek]’ bodily movement, with a dignified carriage, head ‘*dritto suso & alla persona respondente* [upright, aligned with the body]’.¹³

9 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 10–13; Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 98–99.

10 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 98–99.

11 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 10–11.

12 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 96–99.

13 *Ibid.*, pp.108–109.

But this body, however present it may be, is not a solely-physical entity. In a pre-dualist perspective – in which material and spiritual aspects of the person are not fragmented – reflections on the characteristics, postures, and capabilities of the body are complexified by references that expand beyond the physicality of a dancing corporeality. Guglielmo's text refers (apart from physical motions) to *movimenti spirituali* [movements of the soul] and to human spirits being moved,¹⁴ widening the scope of his practice to the non-material. He presents the virtue of dance as '*una actione demonstrativa di fuori di movimenti spirituali* [an outward manifestation of the movements of the soul]¹⁵ through physically-instantiated movements. According to *De pratica*, harmonic music can have an effect on a person's intellect and affections; these non-corporeal aspects of the person are put into '*dolci commovimenti* [sweet commotions],¹⁶ which struggle to become exteriorised through action. Through Guglielmo's connection between outward physical motions and inner movements of the soul, dance becomes a sign of the dancer's inner nature:

La quale aglinamorati & generosi cuori et agli animi gentili per celeste inclinatione piu tosto che per accidentale dispositione e amicissima & conforme. Ma aliena in tutto & mortal inimicha di vitiosi & mechanic plebei: i quali le piu volte con animo corrotto & colla scelerata mente la fano di arte liberale & virtuosa sci|enza : adultera & servile [This [art of dancing] most favours and befits those whose hearts are loving and generous and those whose spirits are ennobled by a heavenly bent rather than by a fortuitous inclination. But it is completely alien to, and the mortal enemy of, vile and rude mechanicals, who often, with corrupt souls and treacherous minds, turn it from a liberal art and virtuous science into something adulterous and ignoble].¹⁷

At the same time, Guglielmo points to dance as functioning in the inverse direction – from outer action towards inner being; it is possible for external movement practice to influence the interior workings of the mover. In a short poem inserted between the theoretical and the practical parts of his treatise, he writes that '*Il bel danzar che con virtu s'acquista / Per dar piacer all'anima gentile / Conforta il cuor & fal piu signorile* [the beautiful dancing which with virtue is acquired / to give pleasure to the gentle soul / comforts the heart and makes it

14 Ibid., pp. 88–89, 106–107. This conception of movement between the incorporeal and the corporeal was shared by Renaissance practitioners of other arts, most notably Leon Battista Alberti: Procopio, Patrizia: 'Danzare per fantasmata': L'immagine del movimento nell'arte coreutica del primo Rinascimento, in: *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 16/2 (2010), p. 563.

15 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 88–89.

16 Ibid., pp. 88–89.

17 Ibid., pp. 90–91.

more noble]'.¹⁸ In his theoretical exposition about dance, the master accordingly argues that

non solamente gli huomini virtuosi & honesti fa tornare gentili & pellegrini: ma anchora quegli sonno male acostumati & di vil conditione nati, fa divenir gentili & d'assai [not only does it ennoble and refine virtuous and esteemed men, but even the ill-mannered and the base-born become most noble minded].¹⁹

Dance not only reflects the soul but also – if practiced properly – acts upon the person's interiority through physical actions. Between "movements of the soul" and outwardly-visible dance steps, the dancer's actions appear to be those of a multi-faceted, not-solely-material being. Similarly, dance itself – more than an organic, incarnated practice – is situated at the interstice of the physical and the spiritual.

It is crucial to take this interstitial position into account when attempting to understand the choreographic politics of the Italian Renaissance. Treatises like Domenico and Guglielmo's were aimed at social distinction and therefore social stratification; both focus on dances of the nobility, potentially contributing to a marginalisation and/or assimilation of dances practiced outside of politically-, socially-, and economically-dominant classes' context and aesthetics. Guglielmo claims that the lower socio-economic classes – the '*mechanici plebei* [rude mechanicals]²⁰ – are those whose vile nature leads them to practice a less-worthy – dangerous, even – dance:

ne descendano molti homicidij. peccati. et altri mali, questo non niegho, & cio quando tal arte e fatta et exercitata da huomini dissoluti. mechanici. plebei. et voluptuosi. [...] Ma quando e exercitata da huomini gentili. virtuosi. & honesti, dico essa scienza & arte essere buona et virtuosa et di commendatione & laude digna [I do not deny that many murders, sins and other evils come of it; that is, when this art is performed and practiced by dissolute, vile, base and lecherous men [...]. But when it is practiced by noble, virtuous, and honest men, I affirm this science and art to be good, virtuous and worthy of commendation and praise].²¹

As evidenced by the low economic status of certain dance masters in the Italian 15th century (at times holding multiple jobs), and the possibility that dances

18 Ibid., pp. 122–123, author translation based on Smith.

19 Ibid., pp. 114–115.

20 Sparti notes that *mechanici* is used as a synonym for "base", while Smith translates the expression as 'unimaginative underclasses'. Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 90–91 footnote 7; Smith (ed.): *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music*, p. 128.

21 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, p. 114–115. "Gentile" is not precisely associated with a noble class – Smith translates it as "gentle", and uses "noble" as the translation of "signorile": Smith (ed.): *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music*, p. 152.

intended for noble circles were taken up by other social classes,²² it is possible that the attempt to present a specific dance practice as characteristic of a noble nature and class did not wholly succeed. Be it successful or not, however, the function of dance as a social stratifier goes beyond its instantiation in the physical body; Italian-Renaissance dance culture did not read the body as a purely-material space of social capital projection, but, rather, as a manifestation of a person's inner moral and – or therefore – social worth.

The non-solely-physical nature of the body and dance in the treatises is paralleled, particularly in Guglielmo's text, by a non-dichotomy between the human being and non-human entities – a non-anthropocentric view of the human being. Guglielmo's treatise establishes a relationship of correspondence between the four voices of music, the four humours (yellow and black bile, blood, phlegm) of the human body, and the four elements (fire, earth, air, water).²³ In *De pratica*, he writes:

quando [...] manca in noi una di queste quattro sustanze principale chiamate elementi, de li quali siamo composti et formati: subito mancharia la propria vita. [...] et cosi similmente le quattro voci principali & formative della dolce melodia intrando per lo nostro auditore quando hanno le sue debite & misurate concordanze porgeno a i nostri spiriti di singular dolceza una nuova et delectevole vita [if [...] one of these four principal substances called elements (of which we are composed and formed) should be lacking, then our life would cease at once. [...] And so likewise, when the four principal voices which form sweet melody have their proper and measured concordances they bring, entering our ears, a new and delectable life of singular sweetness to our spirits].²⁴

The correspondence between these tetrads – sometimes expanded to include the four seasons of the year – was widespread in Renaissance thinking, possibly through filtered Pythagorean thought.²⁵ Against this background, the writings

22 Nordera: *Pourquoi écrire la danse?*, p. 19; McGowan, Margaret: *Dance in the Renaissance: European Fashion, French Obsession*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press 2008, p. 35; Sparti: Introduction, p. 58. Barbara Sparti has written on Guglielmo's multiple attempts to social ascent, which were not fully successful. Sparti, Barbara: *The Function and Status of Dance in the Fifteenth-Century Italian Courts*, in: *Dance Research* 14/1 (1996), pp. 49–50, 52.

23 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 86–87, 106–107 see also footnote 5, p. 87 and Smith, A. William: *Structural and Numerical Symbolism of Fifteenth-Century Italian Dance*, in: *Fifteenth Century Studies* XIX (1992), pp. 246–247.

24 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 106–107. On this topic see also Smith: *Structural and Numerical Symbolism* pp. 246–247.

25 Cf. Heninger Jr., S.K.: *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics*, San Marino: The Huntington Library 1974, in particular pp. 151–176; Rygg, Kristin: *Masqued Mysteries Unmasked: Early Modern Music Theatre and its Pythagorean Subtext*, New

of Guglielmo – like those of Leonardo da Vinci²⁶ – assume a continuity between the microcosm of human beings and the macrocosm of their surroundings, that is both ontological (the elements that compose a person) and structural (their relative quantities).

The non-corporeally-founded, non-anthropocentric dancing subject sketched out in these early Renaissance treatises is mirrored in later Renaissance dance writing, illustrating the conviction that dance, as well as music, were identifiable beyond the human realm. In 1528, Baldassare Castiglione wrote that ‘the universe was made up of music, that the heavens make harmony as they move, and that as our own souls are formed on the same principle they are awakened and have their faculties, as it were, brought to life through music’.²⁷ In 1550, Rinaldo Corso spoke of the universe as engaged in rhythmical dance in a *Dialogue on Dance*.²⁸ In 1588, Thoinot Arbeau incited his reader to ‘make yourself a worthy companion to the planets who are natural dancers’.²⁹ Eleven years later, Arcangelo Tuccaro argued that when humans dance, their movements resemble those of the celestial spheres.³⁰ For Guglielmo as well, music had ‘*al mondo fatto singularissimi effetti et meravigliosi movimenti* [wrought extraordinary changes and marvellous motions in the world]’;³¹ the dancing master saw music as inciting spiritual and (therefore) physical motions in people, as well as enacting a transformative power upon non-human entities:

È i sassi È i monti faccia per la sua gran dolcezza dalla propria sua natura ad altra piu benigna transmutare. Similmente si scrive dell'antichissimo Amphione: il quale chome vogliono i poeti, alla citta di Thebe col vago suono della sua cithara faccia le pietre da gli alti monti scendere: et quelle per se medesme nella fabricatione dell'alte mura

York: Pendragon Press 2000, pp. 89–92; Berghaus, Günter: Neoplatonic and Pythagorean Notions of World Harmony and Unity and their Influence on Renaissance Dance Theory, in: *Dance Research* 10/2 (1992), pp. 43–70.

- 26 Cf. Haitzinger, Nicole: Embodiment of Planetary Knowledge, in: BMfB (ed.): *Endangered Human Movements*, Volume 1, Vienna: Nadaproductions 2015, p. 274.
- 27 Castiglione, Baldassare: *The Book of the Courtier*, London: Penguin 2003 [1528, trans. George Bull], pp. 94–95.
- 28 Quoted in Berghaus: Neoplatonic and Pythagorean Notions, pp. 61–63.
- 29 Arbeau, Thoinot: *Orchesography*, Hampshire: Noverre Press: 2012 [1588, trans. Mary Stewart Evans], p. 195.
- 30 Quoted in McGowan, Margaret: *L'Art du ballet de cour en France 1581-1643*, Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 1963, pp. 20–21. Several analysts also see, in the figured dance of early French court ballet and English court masques, a reflection and enactment of cosmic order on Earth. For example: Carter, Françoise: Number Symbolism and Renaissance Choreography, in: *Dance Research* 10/1 (1992), p. 26; Hening: *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, p. 178.
- 31 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 88–89.

miracolosamente comporsi [The great sweetness [of music] also transmuted the very nature of rocks and hills into a more kindly one; as in the tale of Amphion of yore who, according to the poets, with the fair sound of his cithara, made the stones descend from the high hills and arrange themselves miraculously into the building of the high walls of the city of Thebes].³²

Guglielmo uses mythological parallels to reinforce this view. He refers to how the lambs of Pan were ‘*quasi dalla forza di quella melodia commosse* [as if moved by the power of his melody]’; and how Pluto and other deities, animals, and beasts were soothed by the sound of Orpheus’ music.³³ Humans may also employ music to intervene in realms that exceed humanity, including the divine:

È in gran parte conforme per la virtù et | potenza della qual già si commosse il celestiale onnipotente idio dagli humani divotamente pregato: i quali nei sancti sacrificij con alta melodia cantando & con dolci instrumenti & sancti tripudij danzando obtegnevano la domandata gratia: chome già piu volte si chome si lege il sapientissimo Salamone fece quando contra lui & il suo populo vedeva l'alto idio turbato. & chome anchora fece il glorioso re David: il quale piu volte collo suo amoroso & sancto psalterio & agionto insieme il tribulato populo con festevole & honesto danzare, & col harmonia del dolce canto commovea l'irato & potente idio a piatosa & suavissima pace [because of [music's] virtue and power almighty God in heaven was moved by the devout prayers of men who, by singing lofty music, [playing] sweet-sounding instruments, and tripping sacred dances during the holy sacrifices, obtained the grace they had beseeched. We read that wise Solomon did this many times when he saw God on high vexed with him and his people. And so also did glorious King David who, many times, with his lovely and sacred psaltery, drew the troubled people together with festive and decorous dance, and through the harmony of his sweet song moved an irate and powerful God to a merciful and most gentle peace].³⁴

Dance and music, then, do not solely (or primarily) concern the human community; rather, the dance of the humans is part of a dance that exceeds them. Therefore, it is only possible to project “choreography” on Domenico and Guglielmo if that choreography recognises and conceptually encapsulates a corporeality that is not solely physical and not singularised in its humanity; a dance that is, similarly, not defined by its humanity or physicality; an art practice that is performed by, and has effects beyond, humans – in other words, an expanded choreography that accepts continuities with the non-human realm of which the

32 Ibid., pp. 86–87.

33 Ibid., pp. 86–87.

34 Ibid., pp. 88–89.

person and their dance are part. This choreography's author and creator is, likewise, not a singular-, autonomous-, wholly-human being.

The choreographies of music and of nature

The treatises' fundamental detachment of dance from the sole actions of human bodies particularly concerns its indebtedness to music. Guglielmo's "true" definition of dance includes music – and not the human body. His art '*altro non e, che un atto dimostrativo concordante alla misurata melodia d'alchuna voce overo suono* [is none other than an outward act which accords with the measured melody of any voice or instrument]'.³⁵ This anchoring is so essential that music is presented as the source of dance:

danzare sia tratto & originato da essa melodia chome atto dimostrativo della sua propria natura. Senza la qual harmonia overo consonanza, l'arte del danzare niente seria, ne fare si poria [dancing is drawn and born from this melody as outward show of its true nature; [and] without this harmony or consonance, the art of dancing would be nothing, nor would it be possible to do].³⁶

Correspondingly, in a short passage providing advice for composition, Guglielmo suggests that dance-makers start their choreographic process by composing their work's music – and only then can they engage in other aspects, such as the partitioning of the ground.³⁷

Guglielmo does admit that it is possible to dance without music:

siando in un ballo otto o diece persone et ballando quelle coi passi concordatamente & misuratamente insieme senza suono e cosa naturale [when eight or ten people are performing a ballo and are dancing without music but with steps which are measured and in accord with each other, this is something natural].³⁸

However, this musicless dance – a collectively-rhythmed practice of human dancers – is 'something natural', juxtaposed to the author's conception of an artificial dance, based on music: '*sonando doppo il sonatore & misurando et concordando quelli ballano i lor passi col ditto suono e accidentale* [when the player plays and the dancers accord and measure their steps to the said music, this is artifice]'.³⁹ In this way, Guglielmo creates a dichotomy between the natural dance

35 Ibid., pp. 92–93. See also the poem pp. 84–85.

36 Ibid., pp. 108–109.

37 Ibid., pp. 104–105.

38 Ibid., pp. 112–113.

39 Ibid., pp. 112–115.

that humans perform without musical assistance and the artifice that is possible through the contribution of music. Here “natural” dance can be associated with crudeness; for Sparti the term is associated with “*dolceza*”, meaning simple, instinctive, sensual.⁴⁰ The transformation of this raw activity into artifice occurs through the dancers’ accord with music, a process based on practice and intellectual engagement; recognising and following the musical *misura* ‘*e segno di buona intelligenza et principio della vera pratica* [is the mark of keen intelligence and the beginning of serious practice]’.⁴¹ In other words, while both “natural” and “artificial” dance are human endeavours, it is the presence of, and accordance with, music that guarantees the artistic status of dance, rather than merely being a *human* activity.

At the same time, some passages by Guglielmo shed doubt on a dichotomy between a music-based artificial dance and a musicless, natural one. For instance, the master writes of the four musical voices that

quando hanno perfettamente la sua com[p]ositione consonante & bene accordata colle debite & natural sue misure fanno agli ascoltanti commovere tutti i sensi in suavis[sima dolceza [when they are so composed as to be in perfect harmony, and accord well with their proper and natural measures, they move all the senses of the listeners with the sweetest pleasure]⁴²

– and lead them to dance. While he has established that the presence of, and concurrence with, music renders dance artificial (as opposed to natural, non-musically-accompanied dance), Guglielmo suggests here that the harmony of music leading to dance also depends upon “natural” measures. It is in the combination of naturalness and artificiality that the value of dance can be found; ‘*[e]ssendo tal scienza di danzare cosa naturale et accidentale adoncha e perfetta & meritamente commendativa* [since this science of dancing is something [both] natural and artificial, it is perfect and deservedly commendable]’.⁴³

Placing dance in an interstitial realm between the natural and the artificial, such passages are informative about the position of the human being in the creation of dance. When Guglielmo speaks of the harmonisation of the musical voices according to their “natural” measures (above), he uses the same word – *compositione* [composition] – as when he speaks of arranging a dance and its music.⁴⁴ While he does not explicitly specify who composes the voices in question, it is plausible he is speaking of a process of human/artificial composition

40 Sparti, Barbara: Glossary, in: Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, p. 223.

41 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 100–101.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 106–107, emphasis added.

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115.

44 Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 104–105.

guided by natural, proper measures. In this reading, musical composition – and, by consequence, the choreography founded upon it – is “natural” through an (artificial) adherence to a natural harmony that exceeds or precedes the human practitioner. The passage is not detailed enough to confirm such a reading; nevertheless, several points do support the idea of an art-making guided by nature. Within the treatise, passages indicate a doubling of dance composition by a “natural” derivation from music; Guglielmo writes that

diremo essa arte et scienza del danzare esser virtute et scienza naturale composta & naturalmente tratta & cavata della melodia over suono d'alchune concordante voci [we can affirm this art and science of dancing to be a virtue and a natural science, composed and in a natural fashion derived and drawn from the melody or sound of some concordant voices].⁴⁵

Elsewhere, he indicates that the postural presence of the dancer should be ‘*chome quasi per se medesme la natura insegna* [as nature itself – as it were – teaches us]’;⁴⁶ and considers technical aspects of the dance, such as *aiere* [air], to be necessary, lest the dance look ‘*imperfetto & fuori di sua natura* [imperfect and unnnatural]’.⁴⁷ Guglielmo also portrays nature as a creator when referring to birds’ song that results from ‘*gran maestra di natura* [Nature’s great mastery]’.⁴⁸ Other artists of the Italian Renaissance also believed that nature could be seen as a model for artistic creation; for example, both Leon Battista Alberti and da Vinci saw a guide, painter, teacher, and artist in nature.⁴⁹ This is supported by contemporary historians. Hartmut Böhme explains that even if this was not the sole paradigm of understanding nature in the Renaissance, certain practitioners held that

[d]ie Natur ist ästhetische Ordnung. Davon lassen sich Künstler, Ästhetiker, Wissenschaftler, Ärzte, Astronomen, Ingenieure leiten [...] Artificielle Schönheit ist organisiert nach Regeln, in denen die Natur selbst concinnitas hervorbringt. Wenn Kunst wie die Natur operiert, dann heisst dies, dass sie wissenschaftlich und gesetzlich arbeitet [Nature is aesthetic order. Artists, aestheticians, scientists, doctors,

45 Ibid., pp. 108–109, emphasis added.

46 Ibid., pp. 108–109.

47 Ibid., pp. 96–97.

48 Ibid., pp. 88–89.

49 Alberti, Leon Battista : *De Pictura*, Paris : Allia 2010 [1435, trans. Danielle Sonnier], pp. 25, 43–44, 51; see also on Leonardo da Vinci : Wetzel, Michael : Autor/Künstler, in : Barck, Karlheinz, Fontius, Martin, Schlenstedt, Dieter, Steinwachs, Burkhardt & Wolfzettel, Friedrich (eds.): *Asthetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, Vol. 1, Stuttgart: Metzler 2002, p. 507.

astronomers, engineers, are guided by this [...] Artificial beauty is organised according to rules in which nature itself produces concinnitas. When art operates like nature, that means that it works scientifically and lawfully.⁵⁰

Here, the notion of nature is complexified, moving beyond its status as a counterpoint to artistic-, musically-measured dance, and towards an agent that has operant choreographic functions.

Domenico's use of the term "*naturale*" introduces a further nuance, compatible with human choreographic engagement with a "natural" order. Possibly reflecting an Aristotelian categorisation,⁵¹ Domenico distinguishes between "natural" and "incidental" [*naturali / accidentalii*] movements.⁵² "Incidental" movement can be translated – according to contemporary translators of Renaissance dance discourse – as accidental or incidental, but also as artful, artificial, man-made, ornamental, contrived; "natural" movements can mean basic (as in Guglielmo's first use of the term) as well as essential (which may correspond to Guglielmo's 'proper and natural measures').⁵³ *De arte saltandi* thus suggests that certain movements are "naturally" determined, with an essential character, while others '*non sono necessariii segonde natura* [are not necessary according to nature]'⁵⁴ – they are ornamental additions to the dance. Dance is composed of a set of "necessary", natural movements complemented by man-made, incidental ones; the essence or necessity of nature is complemented by human ornament.⁵⁵ Once again, it is in this complementarity that the goodness of dance is found. Domenico agrees with his student when he states that virtue is not only found in artifice, as

50 Böhme, Hartmut: Natürlich / Natur, in: Barck, Karlheinz, Fontius, Martin, Schlenstedt, Dieter, Steinwachs, Burkhart & Wolfzettel, Friedrich (eds.): *Asthetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, Vol. 4, Stuttgart: Metzler 2002, pp. 476–477. The author associates this view with a Platonic-, mathematically-, and geometrically-focussed conception of nature.

51 Nordera: Pourquoi écrire la danse?, p. 18.

52 According to *De arte saltandi*, the natural movements are nine and are performed on the musical "*pieno*" [whole; here: strong beat, down-beat]; inversely, the incidental ones are three and are performed on the "*vuodo*" [empty, void; here: weak beat, up-beat]. Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 14–15. For the explanations of the terms *pieno/vuodo* see Sparti: Glossary, pp. 223, 228.

53 Sparti: Glossary, pp. 217, 223; Procopio, Patrizia: *Il De arte saltandi et choreas ducendi di Domenico da Piacenza*, Ravenna: Longo Editore 2014, p. 132; Smith (ed.): *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music*, p. 13 note 10. For Guglielmo's quote: Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 106–107.

54 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 14–15.

55 For a more-systematic overview of the way in which the Renaissance and later periods developed ideas of mastering nature, and the progressive mechanisation of the concept of nature, see Böhme: Natürlich / Natur, pp. 475, 481–485.

‘[e]l savio Aristotele [the wise Aristotle] identified ‘in tutte le cosse e alcuna buntade naturalmente [in all things is some natural goodness]’.⁵⁶

Both Domenico and Guglielmo’s treatises underline the importance of authorship in dance; the former explicitly states he composed all the dances in his work, while the latter places his own or his master’s name next to the title of each dance in his text. At the same time, however, an understanding of choreography as an art stemming from an autonomous human intention and (therefore) attributable to a human author’s will is not applicable to their writing.⁵⁷ Be it through the effect of music or a compositional/choreographic engagement with nature, the treatises suggest that choreographic authorship must be decentralised away from the human. Indeed, contemporary analysts of Renaissance dance support the idea that dance-making was conceived as a response to a realm exceeding the human practitioner. For example, Smith parallels Domenico’s list of twelve movements composing dance with the number twelve as a numerical value ‘seen to reflect a universal truth’.⁵⁸ A choreography is thus sketched out that is non-human-centred, illustrating Domenico and Guglielmo’s possible overlaps with a contemporary expanded choreography that also challenges that centredness.

Choreography in a world of proportion

If nature is an artist – as Alberti and the idea of a “naturally-informed” dance suggests – then nature can give rise to art-making principles. This possibility is reflected in Domenico and Guglielmo’s notion of measure – one of the main notions a dancer-to-be needs to grasp. Indeed, the *misura* has its source in nature; Domenico claims that different measures acquire their arrangement from nature, while his student identifies measures that are ‘*debite & natural*

56 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 12–13.

57 It was during the transformations that secularisation and the introduction of the printing press gave rise to that the Renaissance view of human artists as mediators of divine creation progressively moved towards the idea of individual human authorship; Domenico and Guglielmo’s attribution of authorship while maintaining the guardrails of nature can be read against this background. Cf. Wetzel: *Autor/Künstler*, pp. 502–505.

58 Smith: *Structural and Numerical Symbolism*, pp. 248–249. Marina Nordera agrees that this number of movements is symbolic because the choreographies include more steps. Nordera: *Pourquoi écrire la danse?*, p. 18.

[proper and natural]'.⁵⁹ Both agree on the *misura's* importance, referring to it as the 'foundation' of dance.⁶⁰

Measure is applied to dance in multiple ways. According to Domenico's explanation, one of its uses is to '*mexurare el movimento del corpo cum la prompta del pede* [measure the motion of the body with the footstep]';⁶¹ his definition of *misura di terreno* refers to '*mexura legiera e questa e quella che fa tenere el mezzo del tuo motto dal capo ali piedi* [a subtle *misura* requiring that you maintain the middle of the motion from head to feet]'.⁶² Cornazano also refers to a motion-directed *misura* when he writes that

nel danzare non solamente s'observa la misura degli soni ma una misura la quale non e musicale anzi fore di tutte quelle che e un misurare l'aere nel levamento dell'ondeggiare cioe che sepre s'alci a un modo che altrimenti si romperia misura [in dancing not only does one observe the misura of the music, but also a misura which is not musical and on the contrary lies beyond it. This is an orderly arrangement of the aire in the elevating of the ondeggiare, that is, one always rises in one way, otherwise one would destroy the misura].⁶³

Guglielmo further applies the notion of measure to the spatial organisation of movement; a dancer must '*considerare il luogho ella stanza dove si balla: & quella nel suo intelletto ben partire & misurare* [tak[e] account of the place and room for dancing, and carefully *apportio[n]* and *measur[e]* it in one's mind]'.⁶⁴ Although these apply to the body and its placement in space, however, the *misura* is not solely concerned with corporeal motion.

In effect, as Cornazano's quotation suggests, measure is profoundly related to music. At a most literal level – but without exhausting the term's technical complexity⁶⁵ – it corresponds to the relationship between dance and music, based on the rhythm or metre of the latter:

Misura [...] se intende una dolce & misurata concordanza di voce & di tempo partito con ragione & arte: il qual principalmente consiste nello strumento citharizante o altro

59 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 20–21, Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 106–107.

60 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 102–103; Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 12–13.

61 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 16–17.

62 Ibid., pp. 12–13.

63 Cornazano: *Libro dell'arte del danzare*, p. 90.

64 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 94–95, emphasis added.

65 For further meanings of the *misura* see Franko, Mark: *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography*, Birmingham: Summa Publications 1986, pp. 60–63. Combining rhythmical and physical aspects of the *misura*, Franko proposes that it refers to 'that motion in dance which rises slowly and drops back quickly', p. 63.

suono [...] bisogna che la persona che vuole danzare, si regoli et misuri, & a quello perfettamente si concordi nei suoi movimenti si et in tal modo, che i suoi passi siano al ditto tempo et misura perfettamente concordante, & colla ditta misura regulati [measure [...] means a sweet and measured accord between sound and rhythm, appor-tioned with judgment and skill, the nature of which can best be understood through the [playing] of a stringed or other instrument [...] the person who wishes to dance must regulate and gauge himself, and must so perfectly accord his movements with it and in such a way that his steps will be in perfect accord with the aforesaid tempo and measure and will be regulated by that measure].⁶⁶

Renaissance dance is characterised by the prevalence of four *misure*, or rhyth-mical structures – *bassadanza*, *quadernaria*, *saltarello*, *piva* – each related to a corresponding movement and tempo. For Domenico, performing a movement in its ‘essential’ manner [*lo suo essere*] means performing it in time with the cor-responding rhythm; the essence of movement is dependent upon its alignment with musical measure.⁶⁷

Characterising both music and dance, measure is itself characterised by proportion. Notably, Domenico established a system of proportional relations between the four *misure* of dance. For example, the *quadernaria* is ‘*piu stretta dela bassadanza uno sesto* [a sixth shorter in distance than that of the *bassadanza*]’ and the *saltarello* is ‘*piu stretta dela quadernaria uno altro sesto* [more narrow by a sixth than *quadernaria*]’.⁶⁸ Governed by calculable proportional relations, the *misura* can therefore be seen as a structural, numerically-analysable principle. As such, this principle is transferable across different types of phenomena – it can travel from the domain of musical rhythm to the field of corporeal movement. In effect, dance practitioners were invited to display their skill and demonstrate their grasp of the measured relation between music and movement by playing with this auditory and kinetic proportion, performing steps out of their “essential” rhythm; for example, combining *bassadanza* movement with

66 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, 92–93. For more information about the associations of the *misura* with music see Sparti: Glossary, pp. 222–223.

67 E.g. Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 20–21 & note 7.

68 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 16–17. Cornazano perpetuates this relational conception of the *misure* when he writes that ‘[t]utte le dicte misure si altarano e si fan l’una sul’altra al modo [dicto] [...] Quanto crescino et calino alterate al modo dicto per la figura della dicta Scala e manifesto [all of the aforesaid *misure* are exchangeable, and they are mutated in the manner described. [...] How much they increase or decrease when exchanged is evident by the aforementioned ladder.]’ Cornazano: *Libro dell’arte del danzare*, p. 93. Barbara Sparti, in her introduction to Guglielmo’s treatise, notes that both he and his master Domenico had ‘tried to notate *misura* relationships and changes of tempo’ and points to the use of proportion signs in musical notations. Sparti: Introduction, p. 69.

quadernaria rhythm, increasing the speed of the dance, or dancing counter to the musical measure to draw attention to its tempo.⁶⁹ Domenico used spatial terms when explaining the proportional relations between the four principal *misure* – the *bassadanza* is the '*piu larga* [widest]' *misura*, the *piva* is '*piu stretta* [narrower]'⁷⁰ – further illustrating the transferability and the double, musical-kinetic nature of measure. "Measured" movement may, therefore, be seen as indirectly resulting from music, but also sharing measure with music as a transversal characteristic. In effect, Guglielmo writes of dancers' gestures being '*alla ditta misura, et secondo il suono concordante* [in accord with the measure and music]',⁷¹ implying that the *misura* can also be understood as a principle "external" to both. Measure, then, is neither primarily kinetic – it is not fundamentally defined in relation to movement or dance – nor primarily physical – it applies to the body as well as conceptions of space and music. In other words, if the *misura* is a major choreographic principle in the treatises, it is a principle of a choreography that is not fully defined by – and, therefore, not fully understandable through – the body in motion. Rather, it is transmedially applicable, allowing compositional translation between different artistic fields.

In effect, the principle of measure applies to more than art's physical-kinetic and auditory modalities; through measure, dance movement enters a wider frame of reference shared with other domains (including, but not limited to, music). Guglielmo explicitly claims that the *misura*'s practice in the dance realm fosters '*ogn'altra scienza alla qual s'apertegna di havere misura* [every other science where mensuration has a place]';⁷² measure was shared with other artistic disciplines of the Italian Renaissance, such as painting.⁷³ Further transferring the notion from art practice to a performance of virtue, Domenico rhetorically asks: '*operando questo dilecto per fugire tristezza e molesta domque e virtu ma non sapiamo noi che la mexura e parte de prudentia et e nele arte liberale* [using this art to escape sadness or boredom therefore is a virtue. Don't we know that the *misura* is part of prudence and of the liberal arts?]'⁷⁴

Moreover, the *misura* is linked to phenomena beyond human activity. Nevile summarises this expanding sense of the *misura* when she writes of it as

69 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 22–23; Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 100–101.

70 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 16–17.

71 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 92–93.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103.

73 Alberti, for instance, saw the *misura* as the basis of perspective: Sparti, Giordano & Pontremoli: *Dance, Dancers and Dance-Masters*, p. 102.

74 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 14–15. Prudence or *phronesis* is an Aristotelian notion seen as a path to truth, related to both measure and memory. Sparti: *Antiquity as Inspiration*, p. 376.

a proportioning of the space around a dancer's body through the movements of the body, a proportioning of the ground on which the floor patterns were traced out, and a proportioning of the music. It is this concept of proportion that linked the art of dance (and the other arts) to the Pythagorean and Platonic idea of the nature of the cosmos.⁷⁵

Given the prevalence of Pythagorean thought filtered through to the Renaissance, the proportionality of measures might be related to Pythagorean principles of numerical proportion, according to which music expressed ratios and harmonies governing the cosmos.⁷⁶

This supra-human “governance” also applies to choreographic politics; the social stratification reflected by dance is mirrored by the non-dance-specific, structural principle of measure. For example, when Domenico orders the *misure* in a diagram, he starts with *bassadanza* as their ‘*regina* [queen]’, followed by the *quaternaria*, the *saltarello*, and finally the *piva* – the ‘*piu trista* [saddest]’ of the *misure*.⁷⁷ This hierarchy directly parallels the inequalities in the world experienced and lived by the treatises’ authors and readers. The *piva*, notes Domenico, is the saddest of the *misure* because it is practiced by villagers; in contrast, the *bassadanza* is only accessible to a select few – presumably those who have access to a dance master.⁷⁸ Cornazano agrees with his master in observing a hierarchy between *misure*, and provides an illustrative diagram too; once again, it is the *piva* that is at the base and the *bassadanza* at the top of the hierarchy. Cornazano explains that one must ascend from one level to the next by increasing one's skill (again, this presumably requires access to master-mediated knowledge). Cornazano similarly describes the *piva* as ‘*tanto minore* [lesser]’ because it is a country dance, derived from the hornpipes of the shepherds; it is only through the refinement of the intellects that it could be practiced by dancers of his age and context.⁷⁹

The principle of the *misura* replaces the specificity of the physical or the kinetic in choreography by traversing different media. At the same time, it points

75 Nevile, Jennifer: *The Eloquent Body: Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2004, p. 78.

76 Sparti: *Antiquity as Inspiration*, p. 376 (at the same time, however, Sparti has also referred to ‘[t]his unusual proportion, purely notional for some scholars, based on Pythagorean ratios for others’, Sparti, Giordano & Pontremoli: *Dance, Dancers and Dance-Masters*, p. 102); Nevile, Jennifer: *The Relationship between Dance and Music in Fifteenth-Century Italian Dance Practice*, in: Nevile: *Dance, Spectacle and the Body Politick*, p. 158; Nevile: *The Eloquent Body* p. 110.

77 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 18–21. The diagram is reproduced in the same edition, p. 4.

78 *Ibid.*, pp. 18–21.

79 Cornazano: *Libro dell'arte del danzare*, pp. 91–92 and p. 68 for the diagram.

towards a choreography governed by artistic and aesthetic principles as well as ethical and possibly-political ones. In these ways, it illustrates a choreography – and a dance – that is not delimited by the autonomous realm dreamt by modernism. As examples of a pre-modernist choreographic practice, Domenico and Guglielmo's treatises posit the contingency and (therefore) reversibility of that dream – the direction to which contemporary expanded choreography is also tending.

Choreographies of the non-kinetic

The not-primarily-physical, not-primarily-kinetic principle of the *misura* introduces a parameter to dance that casts further doubt on dance's kinetic focus. This is found in a short section of Domenico's text that has generated a great deal of research interest; it is the injunction that one

bisogna danzare per fantasmata e nota che fantasmata e una presteza corporalle la quale e mossa cum lo intelecto dela mexura dicta imprima disopra facendo requia acadauno tempo che pari haver veduto lo capo di medusa como dice el poeta cioe che facto el motto sii tutto di piedra in quello instante et in instante mitti ale como falcone che per paica mosso sia [needs to dance according to fantasmata. Note that fantasmata is a physical quickness which is controlled by the understanding of the misura first mentioned above. This necessitates that at each tempo one appears to have seen Medusa's head, as the poet says, and be of stone in one instant, then, in another instant, take to flight like a falcon driven by hunger].⁸⁰

According to Sparti, *fantasma* – in contemporary Italian, “ghost” – is etymologically connected with the Latin word for “image” and derives from the Greek “to appear”⁸¹ (Patrizia Procopio translates *per fantasmata* as ‘con l'ausilio delle immagini [with the aid of images]’⁸²). Multiple, non-mutually-exclusive interpretations have been given of this metaphorical, imagery-filled term. Cornazano presents his teacher's idea by talking of an *ombra phantasmatica* (translated by Smith as a ‘ghostly shadow’), in which the dancer follows a tempo of motionlessness with an ‘aeroso modo quasi come persona che susciti da morte a vita [airy style like a person who revives from death to life]’.⁸³ In the field of contemporary dance history, Procopio has focussed on *fantasmata* as an exteriorisation of the soul's

80 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 12–13.

81 Sparti: *Antiquity as Inspiration*, p. 377.

82 Procopio: *Il De arte saltandi et choreas ducendi*, p. 137.

83 Cornazano: *Libro dell'arte del danzare*, p. 88.

state through movement.⁸⁴ Other scholars have concentrated on how *fantasmata* describes the performance of movement itself; for Nevile, it refers to ‘an infinitesimal pause at the end of a step, and then a resumption of movement in an incredibly light and airy manner’;⁸⁵ for Sparti, it describes a ‘holding and releasing of breath or energy’;⁸⁶ for Mark Franko, it is ‘an alternation of motion and pose in which one is constantly overtaking, indeed invading, the other, both sequentially and spatially’,⁸⁷ drawing connections between *fantasmata* and measure.

The first impression given by *fantasmata*, then, is that of an oscillation between movement and pose or pause; an alternation between displacement (the darting falcon) and stillness (the petrifying medusa). Domenico’s choreographies include two steps – *posa* and *posada* – which can be interpreted as a conventionally-understood pau/ose; Ingrid Brainard relates these to *fantasmata*.⁸⁸ But, arguably, *fantasmata* has a wider reach than these choreographed pau/oses; *posa* and *posada*’s relatively-limited occurrence – they appear in seven out of 23 choreographies in *De arte saltandi*, sometimes placed towards the end of the dance or phrase – differentiates them from *fantasmata*, which is presented by Domenico (and contrary to Cornazano) as a general principle of ‘*spirando el corpo* [placing the body]’ to be practiced ‘*acadauno tempo* [at each tempo]’, i.e. throughout the dance.⁸⁹ Thus, Domenico describes a quality imbuing the dance itself, instead of specific steps. In effect, the phrase “*danzare per fantasmata*” can be translated as “to dance through or with *fantasmata*”. This interpretation inscribes the stilling of motion in the dance’s form; dance is not a practice of motion, but an alternation between motion and its absence – it can be present where movement is not.

It may be possible to add a further layer to this reading, in which movement and stillness are not opposed components of the dance. Indeed, while the definition of *fantasmata* suggests performing stone-cold stillness and flight of movement consecutively and alternatingly, the fact that it instructs to do so

84 Procopio: *Il De arte saltandi et choreas ducendi*, p. 137.

85 Nevile: *The Eloquent Body*, p. 70.

86 Sparti, Barbara: ‘Artistic’ Theory of Dance in Fifteenth-Century Italy, in: *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 35 (2003), p. 184.

87 Franko: *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography*, pp. 63–64.

88 Brainard, Ingrid: *Die Choreographie der Hoftänze in Burgund, Frankreich und Italien im 15. Jahrhundert*, PhD thesis, Göttingen: Georg-August-Universität 1956, p. 285.

89 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 10–13. For the references to *posa* and *posada* in the choreographies, pp. 33, 45, 57, 59, 61, 65; a further possible reference may exist in the dance *Zoglioxa*, p. 67, cf. footnote 2. For a further discussion of the relation between pause and pose see Franko: *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography*, p. 64, commenting on Brainard.

'*acadauno tempo*'⁹⁰ – Franko translates this as 'each bar'⁹¹ – implies both occur in a single musical unit. Several scholars correspondingly suggest *fantasmata* allows a non-oppositional view of motion and stillness. Brainard discerns a dynamic pose interval, in which the silencing of movement brings new energy and preparation for the next pose. While she sees a contrapunctual opposition between silence and movement, she presents their *Spannungsverhältnis* [relationship of tension] as allowing a liveliness to enter into pose and a statuary plasticity to imbue movement – accentuating both, instead of mutually erasing them.⁹² Nicole Haitzinger analyses Cornazano's *ombra fantasmatica* by metaphorically opposing death/revival in movement; '[d]ie strukturell gedachte Bewegungsformierung bleibt trotz eines Augen-Blickes des Stillstandes im Fluss [the structurally-conceived movement formation remains in flow despite the instantaneous stillness]'.⁹³ Franko speaks of *fantasmata* as an interstitial, transitional territory:

Measure signifies the relationship between movement and the pose which is neither one nor the other but each in their transition to the other. This transitional moment is called "fantasmata" by Domenico. [...] *fantasmata* is not a quality peculiar to either movement or the pose, but rather one inherent in their interplay [...] *Fantasmata* denotes movement as the phantom of itself, about to stop but not yet in stasis.⁹⁴

In a more abstract interpretation, Rudolf zur Lippe sees a kinetic equivalent of a dialectic process in this alternation of pause-in-movement and movement-in-pause, in which pause is not an *interruption* of motion but a *synthesis* of consecutive movements. For zur Lippe as well, the falcon does not contradict the medusa; the bird is motionless but perpetually prepared for movement – dance can be found in the moments where no (externally-visible) motion can be seen.⁹⁵ In this sense, stillness can be viewed as related, not opposed, to movement: a movement suspended, but still there, or a stillness that includes motion potential. Cornazano, explaining his master's concept, points to a *pau/ose* without referring to immobility *per se*: he speaks of '*tacere* [silencing, omitting]' a tempo and '*star lo morto* [being as if dead]'.⁹⁶ Both expressions approach the notion

90 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 12–13.

91 Franko: *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography*, p. 64.

92 Brainard: *Die Choreographie der Hoftänze*, pp. 288–292.

93 Haitzinger, Nicole: *Vergessene Traktate – Archive der Erinnerung. Zu Wirkungskonzepten im Tanz von der Renaissance bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Munich: epodium 2009, p. 66.

94 Franko: *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography*, pp. 64–65.

95 Lippe, Rudolf zur: *Naturbeherrschung am Menschen I. Körpererfahrung als Entfaltung von Sinnen und Beziehungen in der Ära des italienischen Kaufmannskapitals*, Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat 1974, pp. 167, 169, 172.

96 Cornazano: *Libro dell'arte del danzare*, p. 88, author translation.

of stillness – a silencing, turning-off of kinetic flow, a lifeless state – without explicitly affirming an absence of movement; they instruct to still movement without establishing a clearly oppositional view of (im)mobility. Thus, *fantasmata* could refer to a proximity between movement and stillness, the tension of a stillness ready to move and a movement on the verge of being contained – instead of one's emergence depending on the other's absence.

In a “weak” sense, then, *fantasmata* could point to a dance that remains present in the absence of movement; a dance not founded upon incessant motion. In a “strong” reading, *fantasmata* could imply that momentary lack of displacement is not dichotomously opposed to movement. Domenico's references to the concept are too scarce for solid interpretation; in both cases, however, *fantasmata* casts doubt upon the association of dance – and choreography as dance-making – with constant displacement and the necessary performance of *kinesis*. Occupying the interstitial space between stillness and motion, *fantasmata* questions the dichotomy that turns stillness into a refusal of dance – or even movement. Renaissance dance-making conceives of a dance that is founded not on incessant bodily motion or a refusal of movement, but on a non-dichotomous blending of the two. This reading is supported by how movement terms are used in the treatises. Certain occurrences of the term “*moto*” in *De arte saltandi* seem to correspond to dance in general, with the author referring to ‘*questo motto zentille* [this refined motion]’ or ‘*questo motto de danzare* [this motion of dancing]’ in a generic sense.⁹⁷ Uses of the term “*movimento*” similarly refer to the way in which the body acts in dance in general; practitioners are advised by Guglielmo to ‘*perfettamente si concordi nei suoi movimenti* [perfectly accord [their] movements]’ with the musical tempo.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, instances of Domenico and Guglielmo's movement-related terms also indicate that dance was equivalent to a succession of steps, not to a process of unfolding undifferentiated movement.⁹⁹ “*Moto*” and “*movimento*” function as generic signifiers of “step” – in the sense of codified assemblages of actions – or denote specific types of steps, such as the “*moto quadernario*” or the “*moto del Saltarello*”,¹⁰⁰ therefore contradicting the idea of undifferentiated, generic motional flow. In this sense, movement is at interplay

97 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 10–11, 16–17.

98 Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *De pratica*, pp. 92–93.

99 Three manuscripts relating to Guglielmo's theory even include a definition of dance as a succession of discrete steps; arguably, dancing (*ballare* or *danzare*, depending on the source) consists of knowing the steps making up the dance (*continentie, riprese, sempi, doppi...*), as well as the way and *tempi* in which they are performed. Smith (ed.): *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music*, p. 200.

100 Domenico states that *memoria 'e texonera de tutti Li motti corporali* [stores all of the corporal movements] and enumerates the twelve “movements” of the art of dance. At times, *movimento* also corresponds to a particular step unit in Domenico's text, one Guglielmo

between continuity – the “motion of dancing” – and discreetness – its steps. The treatises provide a glimpse of reconciling discreetness with flow in movement.

This refusal of fully-fledged motion acquires an ethical aspect. Domenico's description of *agilitade* and *maniera*, for instance, advises dancers not to go extremes but

tenire el mezzo del tuo movimento che non sia ni troppo ni poco (ma) cum tanta suavitate che pari una gondola che da dui rimi spintan sia per quelle undicelle [maintain the mean of your movement that is – not too much nor too little. With smoothness, appear like a gondola that is propelled by two oars through waves].¹⁰¹

In these ways, Domenico and Guglielmo's texts question the primacy and essential place of the kinetic in choreography, admitting principles that reduce, regulate, and contain motion without following a specifically-motional logic. In this construal, a notion of choreography – even one expanding beyond the human – which is founded on its kinetic character and the performance of motion may not be fully adapted to *De pratica* and *De arte saltandi*. An expanded notion of choreography can inversely draw attention to Domenico and Guglielmo's dance's pauses as non-kinetic – but nevertheless choreographic – material.

Conclusion

Choreography – if choreography is understood as dance-making – was practiced by Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, *balli* abounding in their writings and their students' ballrooms. But, if choreography conceives of dance as an activity that is disconnected from other human endeavours, it cannot grasp dance as a practice of ethics – targeting beauty as much as virtue – and as a socially-embedded practice which actively participates in definitions – or at least negotiations – of social stratification. And, if choreography is a practice of putting the human body into motion, then choreography was, again, practiced by Domenico and Guglielmo through specifications of corporeal technique and style, and combinations of steps and figures. But if choreography is assimilated to a solely physical/organic bodily practice, specific to its human performers, or to the authoring gesture of an autonomous human agent, it cannot grasp the spiritual in dance, the treatises' supra-human conception of

takes up and sometimes refers to as *scosso*. Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 12–15, 22. Cf. also Sparti: Glossary, p. 223.

101 Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandi*, pp. 12–13. The notion of moderation, here in its kinetic version, is associated by Domenico with virtue: '*per la mediocritade [...] sia conducta questa virtu singolare* [through moderation [...] this exceptional virtue is found]', pp. 14–15.

anthropos, or dance creation guided by nature. And, if that choreography is founded upon the particularity of the kinetic, it excludes the treatises' trans-media principles and their embracing of stillness. In all these ways, *De Pratica* and *De arte saltandi* illustrate the shortcomings of essentialised conceptions of (physicalised) dance, (necessary) motion and the (human) body that have crept into choreographic discourse until today.

As is the case in certain manifestations of contemporary expanded choreography, Domenico and Guglielmo's distance from a choreography based on human corporal motion is not the result of a refusal of the body, human element, movement, or dance. Instead of a focus on the physical or spiritual, the treatises occupy a non-dualist territory, where both the former and the latter are concurrent aspects of the dancer and of dance. Instead of a unique focus on the human being or what lies beyond it, the treatises expand the human body and place the person in a universe structurally and qualitatively continuous with them. Instead of existing uniquely in movement or resisting movement, the treatises relativise the place of the kinetic as a performance mode and as a principle of choreographic creation. Between the physical and the spiritual, the human and the natural, motion and stillness, Domenico and Guglielmo's choreography illustrates a profoundly-ethical position that avoids extremes; an expanded-choreographic perspective thus points to and deconstructs the dichotomies projected upon their texts. This reading of the two dance masters acts as a reminder that if contemporary choreographic production is drawn to the non-human (as opposed to anthropocentrism), stillness (rather than motion), interdisciplinarity (as an alternative to medium specificity), or a decentralised-horizontal authorship (rather than singular authorial intention), this is also because it is bound to respond to constructed dichotomies that need not be. Pointing to a non-anthropocentric performance and authorship, the potentiality of translations between different media and fields, and a conception of motion that does not exclude its containment, Domenico and Guglielmo invite expanded choreography today to enter into a game of relationalities, correspondences, and transversalities, rather than one of negation – be it of dance, motion, or human corporeality.

Conclusion to Part 1

In 15th-century Italy, Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro made dances for the nobility and developed dance technique to be embodied by human movers; in 17th-century France, Saint-Hubert wrote about ballets with dances performed by human beings embodying steps and gestures; a little over half a century later, Raoul Auger Feuillet's *Chorégraphie* notated (and possibly composed) dances, referring to certain body parts and motions in its graphic signs. Domenico, Guglielmo, Saint-Hubert, and Feuillet are thus relevant to choreography as dance-making and to choreography as a practice of the human body in motion. But, choreography's association with dance diverts attention away from Saint-Hubert's multimedia, heterogeneous view of ballet; his non-identification of dance and ballet; and the role of practitioners – such as the “master of order” – who were creative forces without being “choreographers”. Further, choreography's association with human corporeality diverts attention away from Feuillet's imagining of a dance residing on paper, and the *Chorégraphie*'s logic of space representation, not conceived from the perspective of the embodied subject. And, finally, this vision of choreography diverts attention away from Guglielmo and Domenico's *misura* as a fundamental dance-making principle which is not, however, essentially kinetic; Domenico's notion of *fantasmata* and the containment of movement as part of dance; as well as Saint-Hubert's *sujet*, a non-physical and non-kinetic basis for ballet-making. While the texts analysed here do not negate a dance-, movement-, and/or human body-based conception of choreography, they are not fully describable by it either.

To use the same examples as Part 1's introduction, the claim that 16th-century pavaues or early-17th-century court ballets were choreographed is not historiographically problematic because it is an anachronism; rather, it is historiographically problematic if it is a dominant anachronism that obscures the complexity of historical practices. Proposing an expanded-choreographic

framework for reading such practices preposterously (in Mieke Bal's terms¹) activates contemporary ideas as tools to decentralise that dominance. To be sure, Domenico, Guglielmo, Saint-Hubert, and Feuillet are part of choreographic history because – even if they did not use the word “choreography”, or its later meaning(s) – their work was related to bodily, kinetic, dance practices. At the same time, contemporary expanded choreography widens what choreography may be, and what “counts” as choreography, thus suggesting that the sources studied here are also part of choreographic history because this history is *not* limited to such practices. It therefore points to Saint-Hubert's intermedia spectacle, Feuillet's figured abstraction, and Domenico's performance of stillness as choreographic in themselves, rather than as peripheral aspects of a primarily-dancerly, -physical, or -kinetic choreography.

Beyond drawing attention to these sources' multiple inscriptions in choreographic history, an expanded choreographic perspective illustrates their relevance for contemporary (expanded) choreography. In his book *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* – which greatly contributes to an awareness of the relevance of pre-18th-century dance practices in contemporaneity – Mark Franko notes: “[t]he historicist tendency to see the old in the new is characteristic of reconstruction. Its master conceit is to evoke what no longer is, with the means of what is present. [...] Seeing the new in the old, on the other hand, is a pinpointing of radical historicity in former production.”² The possible links between Domenico, Guglielmo, Saint-Hubert, Feuillet, and expanded choreography are not meant to imply that there is “still” a trace of the Renaissance or the baroque in contemporary choreographic expansions; dance practices from several centuries ago do not necessarily transmit a fragment of their authenticity to the present. Rather, such links suggest that certain pre-18th-century dance practices were as radical as (certain) contemporary ones – and that contemporary choreographic expansions, without necessarily bearing traces of the past, can branch out and find their place in relation to it. The historiographic and artistic importance of this fact is non-negligible; it implies that expanded choreography should be placed in a macro-historical framework, and that its practice can inscribe itself in vertical, transhistorical networks beyond horizontal and synchronous ones.³

1 Bal, Mieke: *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*, Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press 1999.

2 Franko, Mark: *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*, New York: Oxford University Press 2015 [1993], p. 133.

3 On the interaction of these axes see Foster, Hal: *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1996, p. xii.

Placing contemporary expanded choreography in such macro-historical frames of reference highlights common problematics in historically- and contextually-distant sources, and in so doing constructively feeds contemporary debates. In the context of a contemporary choreographic field affirming – in practice and performance, but also in funding applications and institutional requests – its desire for interdisciplinarity, one must remember that modernist discipline classifications in the arts are – recent – historical constructs; that in the 17th century, Saint-Hubert and his fellows did not doubt the intermedia nature of performance and the interdisciplinary work of its creators. In the context of a contemporary choreographic practice and theory grappling with the subversive, yet relieving, effects of staged stillness, one might consider the quantity of ink dedicated to understanding Domenico's inclusion of danced pose and pause as a symptom of later ideological changes that equated dance with motion.⁴ In the context of contemporary choreography being transferred to non-corporeal media – for example, William Forsythe's *Synchronous Objects* (2009), which responded to an all-too-physical view of dance – one is reminded of Feuillet's choreographic figures, conceivable without the body. In the context of a contemporary expansion of choreography pushing against the prevalence of human bodies or physicalised dances, an expanded choreographic perspective on pre-18th-century sources indicates that this oppositional dialectic is the result of essentialised and entrenched, but *contingent*, dichotomies; it is an undoing of what had not yet been done, and that, as such, can become the making of something else.

A corollary to questioning these contingencies is the variability of the terms with which “choreography” has been co-defined in the sources considered here and the dance cultures surrounding them. If a dancerly, physical, or kinetic conception of choreography is not fully applicable to these texts, this is because this specific conception of choreography's entanglement with dance and/or bodily motion is only partly adequate, but also because the terms that define this conception vary in their context. Saint-Hubert's conception of dance as a non-autonomous part of a multimedia whole is as symptomatic of his context's pre-modernist approach to performance as a modernist “autonomous” dance is symptomatic of the 20th century. Feuillet's dualist body is as much a marker of his peri-Cartesian French framework as current organic and sensorial conceptions of the body are markers of a response to such a framework. Guglielmo's human being reflects a pre-industrialised rapport with nature, just as pushbacks to this rapport are relevant in today's world facing ecological urgency.

4 Cf. Lepecki, André: *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2006.

Beyond recognising the plurality of choreographic history and feeding into contemporary interrogations, the decentralisation of a prominent choreographic conception – through an expanded choreography perspective – in the reading of these sources points to future directions within the historical study of choreography. These necessitate undoing the expectations imposed by subsequent, entrenched choreographic mentalities (i.e. a physicalised nature of dance, an organic nature of the body, the necessity of visible displacement in dance, or the medium specificity of both choreography and dance). This undoing need not imply a focus on the absence that meets such expectations, but, rather, a push towards the development or reactivation of terms that name and describe what is present. Rather than looking for motion or its absence, look for *fantasmata*; rather than looking for embodiment or disembodiment, look for a choreographic *figure*. Such a shift reconsiders the study of choreography, so as to examine composite performances where intermedia relations are prioritised over medium-specific creation, or transfer and translation processes across artistic formats, as choreographic material. It re-evaluates who the agents practicing that choreography may be, incorporating mediators of interdisciplinary work like the *maître d'ordre* and creators of non-corporeal formats like choreographers. Additionally, it rethinks choreography's frame of inscription, broadening it to encompass performance and aesthetics but also politics and ethics. It is such choreographic histories that an expanded-choreographic perspective on these sources develops; and it is in such histories – rather than in a break from them – that the contemporary works examined in Part 2 are inscribed as well.

Part 2: Expanded choreographies of the now

Introduction to Part 2

Choreography goes beyond the production and performance of dance. Money follows choreographic paths in its endless exchanges from person to person (Peter Stamer and Daniel Aschwanden have tracked its choreography in *The Path of Money*, 2008). Information forms choreographic patterns in its spread. A car engine is choreographed by its designers. Religious rituals give rise to collective choreographies. Smartphone users execute the swiping and tapping gestures choreographed by their devices. Thoughts move around in choreographic – improvised or not – circles, jumping from one idea to the next, in a cognitive interiorisation of the hyperlink. Groups of fish migrate, water flows, and air forms currents in an endless choreography of nature. This entrance of choreography into diverse, expanded domains is recognised by multiple voices in the dance field. Gabriele Brandstetter asks:

What could a choreography beyond dance look like? [...] Choreography – a moving arrangement of bodies in space and time: the formation and movement of a procession or parade, the decoration of a gala dinner, the curatorial organisation of space for an exhibition's visitors, or the ebb and flow of people in a city's streets and public spaces.¹

Susan Foster provides another possible response:

Sometimes designating minute aspects of movement, or alternatively, sketching out the broad contours of action within which variation might occur, choreography constitutes a plan or score according to which movement unfolds. Buildings choreograph space and people's movement through them; cameras choreograph cinematic action; birds perform intricate choreographies; and combat is choreographed. Multiprotein complexes choreograph DNA repair; sales representatives in call centers engage in improvisational choreography; families undergo-

1 Brandstetter, Gabriele: *Choreography Beyond Dance: A Dance Promise*, in: Basteri, Guidi & Ricci: *Rehearsing Collectivity*, p. 45.

ing therapy participate in choreography; web services choreograph interfaces; and even existence is choreographed.²

This expansion of choreography is not only a metaphorical activation, but symptomatic of an interrogation of choreography's boundaries, applicability, and relevance. One response to this interrogation is the insistence on the physical and kinetic nature of choreography in continuity with its recent history. This is supported by responses to the 2007 CORPUS survey that suggest choreography is 'organization of movement in time and space' (Tim Etchells), 'the arrangement of movement in space' (Michael Stolhofer), 'the organisation of elements in space-time, that is, the organisation of movement' (Thomas Lehmen), 'Operationalisation of Body Movement' (Claudia Jeschke), 'a set of rules which organises body movement in time and space' (Julia Wehren).³ These definitions consider choreography to be a physical and kinetic practice that may or may not participate in fields beyond dance. Another response takes the path of widening, through choreographic expansions, what the posited "dancerly", "kinetic", or "physical" nature of choreography may be – what *counts* as dance, motion, and a body. After the years-long debates in which the European dance field engaged with (and critiqued) such terms as "conceptual dance" and "non-dance" – insisting that dance encompass (what is normativised as) its Other, incorporate non-human performers, or engage with immobility – the expansion of choreography contributes to a diversification of the very terms that form part of choreography's essentialised definition. Inversely, another response is to negate the necessity of choreography's relation with corporealities and motions, as reflected in the programmatic Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) text that pushed the term "expanded choreography" into the discursive forefront and claimed that (expanded) choreography was becoming 'disconnected from subjectivist bodily expression'.⁴

Nevertheless, beyond such an interplay of choreography expanding *as* a corporeal, kinetic practice, or in a negation of that very practice, a multiple choreographic history is a reminder that choreography is not only defined in relation to these notions. This implies a step away from applying existing conceptions of choreography to new kinds of entities and contexts – to objects and thoughts, urban spaces or architecture, animals or information – *and* from

2 Foster, Susan Leigh: *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2011, pp. 2–3; see p. 219, note 1 for the sources from which these terms come.

3 All quoted in CORPUS: Survey What does "choreography" mean today?, 2007, <http://www.corpusweb.net/introduction-to-the-survey.html> (Archive copy from October 2015).

4 Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects..., Conference presentation, MACBA 2012, <http://www.macba.cat/en/expanded-choreography-situations> (August 2020).

negating, in a closed-circuit dialogue, those conceptions. In other words, a multiple choreographic history invites consideration not of the expandability of a stably-defined choreography, but the expandability of what choreography can be, how it can itself change. Part 2 of this book seeks *this* expanded choreography, by allowing non-dancing, non-moving, and/or non-human bodies to trouble what choreography itself is and does. Choreographic history is a reminder that if choreography changes, it does so in a non-linear collection of diverse and, at times, synchronous paradigms. Correspondingly, looking at expanded choreography from the perspective of a multiple choreographic history implies looking not for a new-but-stable definition, but for multiple, small or large shifts. Thus, Part 2 explores the diversity of “what else” (expanded) choreography may be – its multiple, coexisting, and interlinked (but not identical) expansions.

An understanding of choreographic history as multiple also reminds us that different historical configurations of choreography do not linearly succeed each other, but, rather, recur, adapting to new cultural, artistic, and aesthetic contexts. Current expansions cannot be understood as ruptures, or new “chapters” of choreographic history that replace previous ones. Rather than being disconnected from previous models, they are, in their contemporary specificity, relatable to choreographic histories. In effect, if a reading of Saint-Hubert, Raoul Auger Feuillet, Domenico da Piacenza, and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro through an expanded choreographic lens prompts the development of alternative choreographic histories [Part 1], it is also true that contemporary expanded choreographies – gazed at parallaxically⁵ from the past they help conceive – can appear both as challenges to dominant and entrenched choreographic models, and as parts of these alternative choreographic histories. In this sense, Parts 1 and 3 of this book are the result of an expanded choreographic perspective, while also feeding into view(s) of the present developed in Part 2. This bidirectional connection between the present and the past does not imply a history of continuities, re-creations, or exact reflections; what today’s choreographic expansions perform are *other* responses to questions that historical expansions pose about the necessity of a dancerly, kinetic, physical choreography.

Part 2 fleshes out these responses through three case studies that illustrate contemporary, theoretical and practical, shifts in choreography and their historical relatability. Chapter 4 examines a series of videos made with a kinect camera by French artist Mathilde Chénin – pieces where the moving human body appears in the process of production and then disappears, to be replaced by lines and planes on a screen. Drawing from contemporary choreographic

5 Foster, Hal: *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press 1996, p. xii.

theory – including Stamatia Portanova’s view of a radically-disembodied choreography resulting from digital culture and Márten Spångberg’s programmatic views on the media expansion of choreography – Chapter 4 seeks the choreographic within the videos and their digital-creation process. Arguing for an ontological multiplication of choreography in diverse materialities, Chapter 4 constitutes a potential contemporary response to Feuillet’s construal of choreographies as more-than secondary, peripheral, documentary elements [Chapter 2]. Chapter 5 looks at a stage work by Spanish choreographer Olga Mesa, in which the choreographer/performer’s moving, dancing body is caught in a multimodal network of sounds, texts, objects, screens, reflections, music, and light. Here, contemporary activations of assemblage theory in the analysis of choreography – by Petra Sabisch and Rudi Laermans, among others –, Ana Vujanović’ identification of the choreographic between (non-dance) media, and theorisations of choreography’s proximity to dramaturgy, allow present reconfigurations of Saint-Hubert’s ballet’s problematics [Chapter 1] to appear. Finally, Chapter 6 considers a public-space installation created by U.S.-born choreographer William Forsythe, embodied by apparently-immobile plants and water. Referring, among others, to concepts of Deleuzian philosophy that Erin Manning introduced in the analysis of (his) choreographic installations, the chapter reads Forsythe’s work as an ecology performing virtual motion – thus branching out to Domenico and Guglielmo’s non-anthropocentric, non-primarily kinetic, choreographic compositions [Chapter 3]. Like their historical counterparts, these chapters move beyond choreography’s general expandability – for example, as a result of its association with omnipresent motion – or an undifferentiated description of its being – for example, as a result of its negative definition as *not* (only) dance or *not* (only) kinetic – towards a collection of distinct, but interrelated, specificities.

Chénin, Mesa, and Forsythe’s works are related to choreography in diverse ways; in some cases nominally, by being referred to as choreographic by their creators; in others contextually, by being related to choreographic training and pedagogy, having been presented in choreographic institutions and venues, and being related to other choreographic works; conceptually, by being related to ideas relevant to choreographic practice; and/or practically, by being produced by artists engaging with choreographic praxis. Based on the heterogeneity of expanded choreography and its non-authoritative function as a term, the selection of these works was not limited to pieces that are called “expanded choreographies”, thus resisting the transformation of a malleable notion into a stable grid or a categorical “labelling”. These three works illustrate three different modes of being of (expanded) choreography – as a stage performance (Mesa), a physically-present but not-theatrically-framed installation (Forsythe), and a (digital) screen

work based on a mass of data (Chénin) – thus also illustrating the multiplicity of choreographic expansion.

Since these works were available to be watched or visited, Part 2 shifts the focus of analysis from written documents (treatises) to choreographic works. Nevertheless, the possibility of “directly” experiencing these pieces troubles notions of liveness and physical co-presence as bases for accessing choreography – while Mesa’s work is a performance and experiencing Forsythe’s piece means visiting the installation, walking around it, touching it, and being in it, in the case of Chénin, there is an “indirect” experience of watching the work online, in a small web-video window. The chapters that follow are therefore not construed as analyses of staging or performance (as opposed to analyses of text), but engage with the works’ different materialities and medialities, including text when relevant (e.g. in Mesa’s piece, text is spoken). In these non-exclusively performative or corporeal sources, what follows identifies the relationality of the present with a past whose paper and textual sources are as much indicators of an embodied dance praxis as they are illustrations of a choreography that outflanks it.

Chapter 4: Programming (as) choreography: a series of kinect videos by Mathilde Chénin

A simple video format is presented online – no transfer to monitor or large-scale projection for an exhibition space, just a link, a click, and a small-sized window typical of video-sharing web platforms. White, flat backgrounds. On them, coloured lines appear and disappear, sometimes too quickly for the eye to follow. They join to temporarily form planes that will twist, shift, and disband, replaced by a different form a few seconds later. The shapes constantly change but do not radically vary, remaining in a state of continuous but undifferentiated novelty, neutralising any appreciation of new-ness. No sound accompanies their movements, which end as abruptly as they start after a few minutes of activity.

In the early 2010s, visual artist Mathilde Chénin was interested in certain aspects of choreographic practice – most notably scoring – and in ‘*pratiques algorithmiques* [algorithmic practices]’,¹ including programming in object-oriented languages.² These concurrent interests led her to explore their interrelations in a series of video works using kinect cameras: *Prototype distance* (2011), *Danse pour deux dans la cuisine, petit déjeuner* (2012), *Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche* (2012), and *CLOb* (Collective Large Object, 2013).

As a visual artist, Chénin is an example of the choreographic field’s expansion, integrating practitioners that come from educational/training backgrounds that are not (solely) corporeally and kinetically focussed. In this way, her work exemplifies how (expanded) choreography has migrated towards artistic fields beyond dance, as well as the methods, approaches, and aesthetic paradigms implicated by such a migration. This migration can be understood in a context which has seen choreography come closer to the visual arts, resulting in novel formats, modes of presentation, and production/reception processes. Therefore, while Chapters 5 and 6 investigate expanded works by artists firmly anchored within a choreographic frame of reference – be it through their education, biography, artistic methods, or presentation formats – Chénin’s positionality

1 Cf. for instance Chénin, Mathilde: Untitled Research Project, undated, unpublished, p. 1.

2 Chénin, Mathilde: Interview with the author (July 2016 and September 2017).

provides insights into translations that occur when choreography is reactivated but also *transformed* within other artistic fields. As outlined below, her series of kinect videos touches upon cornerstone notions in choreographic history and theory – notably scoring, notation, and writing – thus manifesting the way such notions may be interrogated from an interdisciplinary position.

Kinect cameras are motion-sensing and motion-capture devices; they were mainly conceived as commercial technology (e.g. for gaming), but they have been appropriated in ways that deviate from commerce-related applications. They collect data on movement in two ways: skeleton tracking – the camera recognises a human skeleton and follows its movements across time – or the creation of “depth maps”.³ To create a depth map, the kinect camera emits an infra-red laser beam that hits and bounces back from objects; the camera can then infer the distance and hence the position of the object in space. Doing this for all surfaces in its scope, a kinect camera generates a “map” with coordinates of depth-positions. To create her series of videos, Chénin placed people moving in front of (a) kinect camera(s) and programmed the camera(s) to collect different kinds of information – including the position of specific parts and limit-points (i.e. the highest, lowest, further right and left points) of each body – and to update this information as long as the bodies remained within its/their scope.⁴ In her videos, this information is translated into visual forms made of lines and planes. These forms may represent the distance between points within a single body – e.g. neck to wrist joint [Figure 13] – or what the artist calls the ‘*espace limite* [liminal space]’ of bodies – i.e. the form defined by the highest, lowest, furthest-right and furthest-left points of a single body; or the distance between the bodies of two different users [Figure 14].⁵

3 Technical information about kinect cameras was provided by Mathilde Chénin and only relates to the version of the kinect she used. Kinect cameras also have RGB sensors. Ibid.

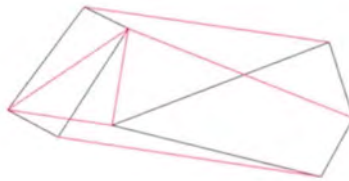
4 Ibid.

5 Chénin, Mathilde: Email to the author, June 2016.

Figure 13: Video still from Mathilde Chénin's *Prototype distance*. A central point (head or neck) is connected to other body parts. Source: Chénin, Mathilde: *Prototype distance*, 2011 variable durations, <http://www.mathildechenin.org/proto/prototype-distance/> (August 2020). No re-use without permission.



Figure 14: Video still from Mathilde Chénin's *Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche*. The planes formed by the black lines represent the “liminal space” of each user, while the red lines represent the distance between the two users. Source: Chénin, Mathilde: *Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche*, Québec: *La Chambre Blanche* 2012, 01:47, <http://www.mathildechenin.org/proto/danse-pour-deux-dans-un-escalier-un-dimanche/> (August 2020). No re-use without permission.



Therefore, the source of the videos is the human body and its actions; at the same time, however, the result presents no anthropomorphic form and, without knowledge of the production process, it is possible to completely overlook the connection to a human body figure. The works are related to dance nominally (through the titles of two of the videos), but their performance of dance remains metaphorical, replaced by low-key, abstract video art. Based on these discrepancies, this chapter interrogates how Chénin's series of videos are choreographic and, consequently, what conception of choreography is ac-

tive within them. Drawing on an analysis of the videos themselves – as well as a series of discussions with the artist and a review of her writings – it presents the works as enacting a qualitative transformation of choreography through its existence in media including, but not limited to, the (dancing) body – rather than through a focus on the loss, absence, or technological mediation of corporeality. This transformation uncouples choreography and embodiment by investing in a multiple choreographic ontology, also displayed by Feuilletian choreo-graphies in their multiple, (im)material forms [Chapter 2].

A corporeal source of reference that is lost

The starting point for all the videos considered here is bodily movement. In *Prototype distance* and *Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche*, these movements are simple improvisational dance motions performed by Chénin herself and an uncredited second person [the “users”]. In *Danse pour deux dans la cuisine, petit déjeuner*, as may be expected, they are “everyday” motions of two people taking breakfast. In *CLOb*, they are the movements of a group of people collectively trying to build a dome structure out of individual pieces [Figures 15 and 16].

Figure 15: The dome of CLOb in construction. Photograph: Ouidade Soussi-Chiadmi and Pierre Friour. Source: Chénin, Mathilde: CLOb (Collective Large Object), undated, <http://www.mathildechenin.org/clob/clob-collective-large-object/> (August 2020). No reuse without permission.



Figure 16: The completed dome of CLOb. Photograph: Ouidade Soussi-Chiadmi and Pierre Friour. Source: Chénin, Mathilde: CLOb (Collective Large Object), undated, <http://www.mathildechenin.org/clob/clob-collective-large-object/> (August 2020). No re-use without permission.



In the case of *Prototype distance*, the camera “knows” that the objects in its optic field are human bodies, as the programme Chénin created requires the kinect to track skeletons. Here, the camera recognises human bodies by following their joints’ movement across time; this includes how each person’s joints relate to each other and to another person’s joints in space.⁶ Even when skeleton recognition is not active – i.e. when the camera only registers the body as one more volume that bounces back laser beams – the videos contain information drawn from the bodies that acted in front of the camera, including how the “limit” points of each person form geometric shapes (*Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche; Danse pour deux dans la cuisine, petit déjeuner; CLOb*), or via the form created in the space between two different bodies (*Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche; Danse pour deux dans la cuisine, petit déjeuner*). Chénin confirms this basis in the movements of the human body by connecting her thinking when developing her programmes with Rudolf Laban’s notion of the kinesphere – a visualisation and conceptualisation of the space around the body.⁷ A Labanian influence is also identifiable in the notion of the “*espace limite*” – the two-dimensional plane occupied by a single body and defined by its extremities – that is visually similar to Laban’s vertical and horizontal planes.

Even if the videos are based on people moving, some of them expand to also capture the movement of non-human, inanimate presences in the kinect camera’s field. For example, in *Danse pour deux dans la cuisine, petit déjeuner*,

6 Chénin: Interview.

7 Chénin: Untitled Research Project, p. 5.

objects used in breakfast were captured by the camera even if this was not Chénin's intention.⁸ In *CLOb*, it was one of the work's aims to introduce inanimate objects and record their interactions with human users; the artist and her collaborators Bachir Soussi-Chiadmi and Sarah Garcin programmed the camera to also capture the positions of the coloured sticks manipulated by the participants in order to form the dome.⁹ Such simultaneous treatments of animate and inanimate, human and non-human performers reveal the kinect's camera's telling confusions between the two. In the case of the breakfast scene – where objects were not purposefully recorded – the camera sometimes interpreted them as extensions of a human body, amalgamating them with their user. In other words, since its skeleton tracking system was off, it could not tell whether or not the object in question was a human being. Even when the skeleton tracking system is on, the camera can miss the human figure; in order for it to recognise a body in an unusual position – for instance bent in two or performing a headstand – it would have to track its movements from a standard starting position (standing upright with arms in the air).¹⁰ In the case of the dome construction, the double interest in the motion of human and non-human entities was translated into practice by instructing the camera to use different programmes for each; it projected its infra-red beam to create a depth-map recording human movements, while simultaneously applying a colour-recognition programme to capture the sticks – a complex procedure whose results were not fully representative of the scene.¹¹ In other words, in the world of the kinect – especially in cases where no skeleton recognition is used – the limits between animate and inanimate bodies, human and non-human ones, are fuzzy.

Apart from bringing the representation of human and non-human movements closer, the creation of the visualisations includes dephysicalisation; the movement in the videos is detached from the material, organic, living medium which initially moved. Consequently, the videos marginalise the purportedly-fundamentally corporeal mode of reception that emerges in response to dance as a bodily act, relating to what John Martin termed “metakinesis”.¹² The videos' disembodiment render corporeally-empathetic processes of reception inadequate. Moreover, the videos display a depersonalisation of motion through abstraction; the users are visualised by generic lines, with no correspondence to their specific identities or situations. While using motion-capture technology,

8 Chénin: Interview.

9 Chénin: Email.

10 Chénin: Interview.

11 Chénin: Email.

12 Martin, John: *The Modern Dance*, Princeton: Dance Horizons 1989 [1933], pp. 12–15.

therefore, the videos are opposed to one of the main traits of choreographic applications of such technologies, as explained by artists Martine Epoque and Denis Poulin:

[M]otion capture (Mocap) makes it possible to cut off dance from one of its fundamental characteristics: the obligatory presence of [sic] physical human body. But if Mocap permits to release the dance of the dancer's body, undoubtedly it does not allow releasing the dancer himself. On the contrary, while making it possible to extract his "motion signature", which is quite as specific and representative as his figure, it restores his presence not by his morphology but by his particular way of moving.¹³

Here, not only is the physical body absent, but the individual "signature" – the specificity of the performer – that Epoque and Poulin describe is deviated from as well. Any expression, individual colour, or mood in the movements of the kinect's users are erased in the final product. In these ways, the videos both undo a vision of dance as a primarily-embodied practice and respond to a view of expanded choreography as being 'disconnected from subjectivist bodily expression, style and representation. [...] not a priori performative, nor [...] bound to expression and reiteration of subjectivity'.¹⁴ Through dephysicalisation, depersonalisation, and abstraction, the videos are distanced from the initial corporeal medium. This distance is a concern present in dance notation and scoring, implicating the translation of corporeal motion into, for example, drawing, graphic sign, or letter/text (notation) and vice versa (score). However, while the videos share this consideration with scores and notations, their relationship with embodied (dance) action reveals that they are not reducible to either.

The first reason why the videos fail to function as documentations or notations of corporeal actions is that they *cannot*; quite simply, the kinect camera makes far too many mistakes for a reliable notation.¹⁵ At times, as described above, the camera cannot differentiate between separate objects, creating amalgams of users and their object-extensions (the same issue may arise if two people move in very close contact). At other times, the camera mistakes elements in the background for humans, tracking users who are not there or, inversely, misregistering that a user has left its field of capture when they

13 Epoque, Martine & Poulin, Denis: Nobody Dance. An On-screen Choreography Introducing 'Dance Without Body', in: Tercio, Daniel (ed.): *TeDance - Perspectives on Technologically Expanded Dance*, Cruz Quebrada: Faculdade de Motricidade Humana 2009, p. 74.

14 Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects..., Conference presentation, MACBA 2012, <http://www.macba.cat/en/expanded-choreography-situations> (August 2020).

15 Information about these technical limitations was provided in Chénin: Interview.

have only increased their distance from the camera. The light illuminating the scene, the number of background objects creating visual noise, and high-speed movements can all interfere with the camera's function too. Other obstacles of accurate representation are not related to the camera as hardware, but to the visualisation of its data; the "original" movement speed cannot, for example, always be reliably translated in the video due to technical-display limitations. By concealing the exact durations of the movements, the video is incapable of transmitting their dynamics, replacing them with the dynamics of its own geometrical performers.

These issues may be due to the limited technical knowledge of the artist – who is not a specialised kinect user – and may have been resolved in more-recent and technically-advanced cameras. Nevertheless, even if there was technical proficiency and capacity to accurately represent the actions in front of the camera, Chénin has made specific choices that indicate this was not her aim; the videos are not notations also because they purposefully undermine movement reconstructability. The lines and planes in the works do not visually resemble the body's forms; this may be a characteristic of several notation systems – Labanotation being a prime example – but, in contrast, Chénin's de-anthropomorphised forms do not allow us to *infer* the body's posture, either. Visualisations connecting different joints of a single body provide no information as to which parts of the body are concerned – and therefore thwart reconstructing the body's position. Similarly, a plane defined by the highest, lowest, furthest-left, and furthest-right points of a body provides no information about the position the body is in. A rhombus-shaped plane could correspond to a figure defined by a head, two spread arms, and two feet together on the ground; or to a figure with one arm over the head, one arm spread to the side, one foot on the ground and one leg lifted to the other side. The artist sees this vagueness as positive – valuing the fact that each shape could correspond to multiple postural possibilities – since the representation of corporeal posture is not her goal: *'le corps n'est pas représenté dans les vidéos justement pour brouiller la hiérarchie habituelle des parties du corps* [the body is not represented in the videos precisely in order to blur the habitual hierarchy of body parts]'.¹⁶ Beyond postures, the videos also render it impossible to understand the body's positions in space: in Figures 17 and 18, black lines draw the liminal spaces of users and red lines connect body parts of one user to another. In Figure 17, one cannot know if the small plane means that one user is behind their fellow user. Figure 18 could mean that the two users are directly in front/behind one another (their liminal spaces coinciding), or that one user has left the camera's field.

16 Chénin: Email.

Figure 17: Video still from Mathilde Chénin's *Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche*. Source: Chénin, Mathilde: *Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche*, Québec: *La Chambre Blanche* 2012, 01:47, <http://www.mathildechenin.org/proto/danse-pour-deux-dans-un-escalier-un-dimanche/> (August 2020). No re-use without permission.



Figure 18: Video still from Mathilde Chénin's *Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche*. Source: Chénin, Mathilde: *Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche*, Québec: *La Chambre Blanche* 2012, 01:47, <http://www.mathildechenin.org/proto/danse-pour-deux-dans-un-escalier-un-dimanche/> (August 2020). No re-use without permission.

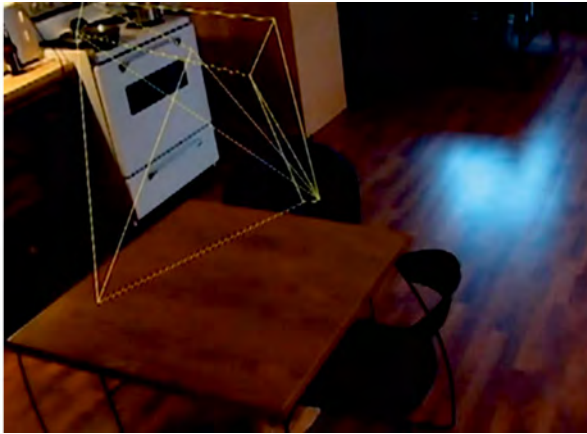


To intensify the viewer's incapacity to reconstruct movements, Chénin purposefully decontextualises her moving forms, presenting them in most cases against a white background, without any indication of scale.¹⁷ Only in *Danse*

¹⁷ Ibid.

pour deux dans la cuisine, petit déjeuner – in which the kinect principle is applied to having breakfast – is the video superimposed on a photograph of the “real” breakfast table; the moving forms becoming foreign to their context [Figure 19].

Figure 19: Video still from Mathilde Chénin's *Danse pour deux dans la cuisine, petit déjeuner*. Source: Chénin, Mathilde: *Danse pour deux dans la cuisine, petit déjeuner*, Québec: *La Chambre Blanche* 2012, 01:50, <https://vimeo.com/39841965> (August 2020). No re-use without permission.



Therefore, the videos are the result of what bodies are doing, but are not accurate or complete representations of these actions. They contain neither a deincarnated visualisation of their movement – an iconic representation based on resemblance – nor a symbolic encoding of information that allows access to the “original” action. In other words, the videos’ forms do not function as bodily signifiers.¹⁸ Rather, they function as quasi-signs; their capacity to signify and represent is not fulfilled, yet they exist as disconnected references to body parts and to relations between body parts or bodies.

Just as they are not notations, the videos are not scores, either – even if Chénin’s creative process did consider that the pieces could function in a generative way, like scores: ‘*mouvement données { objets partition } interprétation*

18 In effect, the artist takes care to differentiate between her visual forms and language, since she does not consider their capacity to signify, or ‘code’ reality, is sufficiently precise: all occurrences of each sign (point, line, or plane) of this could-be language do not correspond to the same signified, therefore making it impossible to fully decode/read the videos’ content. Chénin : Interview.

mouvement] [movement data { objects score } interpretation movement]'.¹⁹ This interest in scoring parallels the artist's desire to reduce the importance of subjective expression in her choreographic work:

La contrainte, la règle qui dit quoi faire – et non pas comment faire – permet de désubjectiviser la pratique quelle qu'elle soit. Au sein d'une pratique d'improvisation chorégraphique [...] la contrainte, la règle, la partition permettent de créer des états de corps et de présences différents de ceux qui sont produits par une improvisation complètement libre, et qui en arrive presque inévitablement à une primauté de la sensation personnelle, du ressenti. [The restriction, the rule that says what to do – and not how to do – allows a de-subjectivisation of the practice, whatever that practice may be. In the framework of a practice of choreographic improvisation [...] the restriction, the rule, the score, allow creation of corporeal and presence states different from those that can be produced through completely free improvisation, and which thus almost inevitably leads to a primacy of personal sensation, of feeling].²⁰

But the idea of using the videos' lines and planes as scoring material was never realised, partly due to the artist's hesitations about the artistic interest of interpreting visual forms through movement.²¹ This choice points to the fact that the criterion for the (non)use of the videos as scores – moving from images back to bodily physicality and performance – was not their initial connection with the body, but, rather, the specificity of the videos' forms as a new *kind* of (visual) material to be interpreted by dancers.

The videos, then, are not notations – if notations represent the body or its actions, and form reliable bases for the reconstruction of corporeal movement – and they are not scores – they do not aim to generate incarnated movements. They exist neither as a preliminary causal source nor as an aftereffect of physically-embodied performance; they are not secondary to performance. In this sense, the issue here is not the loss or postulation of embodied, phenomenologically-accessible performance, but the possible creation of a new type of object, not subordinated to its relationship with the body. The videos, in this reading, are not choreographic because they represent or mediate the choreography performed by a body, or because they generate choreography in bodies; they are – expanded – choreographic works capable of existing in multiple media. As such, they reflect contemporary interrogations about the necessity of choreographic embodiment – such as William Forsythe's question whether 'choreographic practice is not destined for another domain, not exclusively live

19 Chénin: Untitled Research Project, p. 4.

20 Chénin, Mathilde: *Ici : un titre*, MA thesis, Cergy : Ecole nationale supérieure d'arts de Paris-Cergy 2011, upaginated.

21 Chénin: Untitled Research Project, p. 5.

performance'.²² But they also reflect Feuilletian choreo-graphies' own distance from the necessity of embodiment. Feuillet notations cannot be understood through a contemporary view of notation; they are not documentation of an essentially-corporeal practice [Chapter 2]. And, it is precisely this latter view that the kinect videos reject, forming a critical response to a post-Feuilletian conception of (choreography as) notation, one to which Raoul Auger Feuillet's choreo-graphy also provides an alternative.

Body, video, code – multiple choreographies

If the videos' forms as signifiers lose their link to the body, this is partly because they do not represent the body *per se*, but, rather, relations developing within it (one body part to another) or between it and other bodies. Similar to how the physicality and specificity of the body's action may seem lost in the realm of video, such relations may seem abstract as well – as illustrated by the last work in the series, *CLOb*. In this project, the artist was primarily interested in creating and observing a moment of participants being-together, and a moment between participants and materials. Invited to cooperate on the construction of a dome (based on designs by architect and author Richard Buckminster Fuller) – which would become a collectively-run greenhouse for a garden in northern Paris – participants interacted and exchanged, were and did together, and took part in a common space.²³ It was the reality of these interactions – this state of being together – that led to the work being the last in the kinect series. Apart from its multiple technical difficulties, the motion capture procedure did not detract from the experience of actually *being* together by drawing attention to the abstract representation of this togetherness.²⁴ The embodied, lived relationality thus seems ungraspable by the digital procedure. Yet, the video choreographies' relations are not devoid of reality.

In effect, while the experience of interpersonal (or object-personal) relations may be absent in the videos, there is a form of between-ness – of relationality – that is present in them. Paradoxically, this is not most evident in the video resulting from *CLOb*'s collaborative format – it does not trace lines among participants or between participants and objects – but in older pieces, where

22 Forsythe, William & Hennermann, Célestine: Interview 11/2012, in: Hennermann, Célestine & deLahunta, Scott (eds.): *Motion Bank: Starting Points & Aspirations*, Frankfurt am Main: Motion Bank/The Forsythe Company 2013, p. 14.

23 Cf. Chénin, Mathilde: *CLOb* (Collective Large Object), undated, <http://www.mathildechenin.org/clob/clob-collective-large-object/> (August 2020).

24 Chénin: Interview.

interactions may have been unintentional. The lines connecting body parts of different people in *Danse pour deux dans la cuisine, petit déjeuner* and *Danse pour deux dans un escalier, un dimanche* define a space that is not seen by the artist as “negative” or empty, but fully concrete and real; these lines mark a territory filled with a relation. Two people coexisting in space are not, in this perspective, divided by a gap; their being together creates a new form, a new volume in space, which, although immaterial or projected, bears witness to their interaction.²⁵ The videos make this immaterial, relational reality visible through a plane or a line; they show what is there, present between two physical beings – a fully real, but invisible, entity. In this sense, when a line appears in the video, it represents *and* embodies the relation between the kinect users. Relations – as Brian Massumi, referring to William James, would have it – ‘are no less fundamentally given, no less directly given, than discrete objects and their component properties. That they are directly given means that they are directly perceived. Relation is immediately perceived *as such*.’²⁶ The videos make the existence of the relation-as-such visible – often to the detriment of representing its poles. Consistent with this, while Chénin stopped working with kinect cameras – partly because her interests shifted towards collective forms of being – she does not see this move as a negation of, or in opposition to, her kinect experiments.²⁷ In other words, the relations that the kinect works visualise can be seen as building blocks for pieces focussing on experiences of *actually* being together. The lines in the videos – far from being empty abstract shapes – are ways of thinking of co-presence and co-being, of relation as something real.

If the forms in the videos represent, or even perform and embody, a reality, they may also have effects in their viewer’s experienced reality. In an unrealised elaboration of her kinect cameras series, Chénin planned to help spectators actually feel their existence in this in-between relational territory. For this project, she imagined an immersive space, wherein kinect cameras would collect positional data from a group of people moving in a room. Abstract visual representations of the inter-personal, dynamic space would be projected on the walls: ‘[l]es lignes apparaîtraient alors reliant littéralement les corps des personnes présentes dans l’espace de la pièce [the lines would therefore appear to be literally connecting the bodies of the people present in the space of the room]’.²⁸ If this project had been realised, it would have provided a feeling of the reality of

25 Ibid.; Chénin : Email.

26 Massumi, Brian: *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham: Duke University Press 2002, pp. 230–231.

27 Chénin : Interview.

28 Chénin: Untitled Research Project, p. 9.

relational movement. However, the four videos studied here are mediators of real experiences too, their forms acting less as traces of an absent – because of being mediated, digitised, virtual – body and act, than as presences that can make new forms emerge.²⁹ This possibility is based on rupturing the strict relationship of signification between video forms and body; since the lines and planes do not function as a stable system of reference to bodily actions, they acquire an openness of interpretation, allowing unintended and unexpected action/relation images to appear. A quotation concerning scoring from one of Chénin's texts helps elaborate this thought:

*Je propose [...] des partitions chorégraphiques, gestuelles ou relationnelles, qui peuvent ou non donner lieu à des interprétations collectives. Ces dernières existent avant tout comme des textes-objets, des textes-dessins, contenant dans leur matière même l'ensemble des possibles auxquels ils peuvent donner corps [I propose [...] choreographic, gestural or relational scores, which can or not give rise to collective interpretations. These exist first and foremost as text-objects, text-drawings, containing in their very matter the totality of possibilities which they can engender].*³⁰

Applying this perspective to the videos, the focus is not on what actions they have (not) given rise to, but on the actions or relations that *could* be generated from them – a choreographic practice that allows relational choreographic options to appear, whether or not the body ever incorporates them. This idea shifts focus from the videos as actual generators of real action/relation – viewed from the perspective of their tangible results – towards the videos as containers of – equally real – potential action/relation.³¹ In this sense, the videos affect reality by generating real experiences of non-realised relation and/or action, as opposed to real experiences of real relation and/or action.

If Chénin's pieces take their starting point in real, experiencing, (dancing) bodies, they themselves depict the reality of an immaterial relation and may, furthermore, have effects in the real. Describing her work through these two poles, however, excludes a further, equally-real and -active, component: the code. Indeed, while Chénin's series of kinect works are video choreographies, the project has very little to do with video as a medium; as mentioned above,

29 Cf. for instance *ibid.*, p. 2.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 3, emphasis added.

31 Chénin sees these potential actions as virtualities residing within scores: '*le virtuel ne s'oppose pas au réel dans le sens où le corps y serait absent, mais il constitue au contraire une structure nouvelle – qui répond à ses propres règles et possède ses propres objets – dans laquelle le corps peut s'inscrire et s'investir* [the virtual does not oppose itself to the real in the sense of the body being *absent*, but on the contrary constitutes a new structure – which follows its own *rules* and possesses its own *objects* – in which the body can inscribe and engage itself'. Chénin: *Ici: un titre*, unpaginated. On the concept of virtuality see also Chapter 6.

the pieces are not framed as video works, but are only available online – more as illustrations, one is led to think, of the process that gave rise to them. It is in this respect that, despite the resulting video format, the kinect project is not essentially or primarily a choreographic-video work, but a choreographic-algorithmic one. The transformation of moving bodies to visual video forms is the result of combining kinect technology – the way in which the camera-object functions – and algorithmic “instructions” – what the artist has programmed the camera to do. Chénin very explicitly refers to choreographic and algorithmic *practices*,³² indicating her focus on the process of programming, rather than the specific medium in which the programme is manifested. And, while an algorithm does need an interface to present results, it can also be considered independently of these results – in whatever medium they manifest. This is the proposition of Stamatia Portanova and Luciana Parisi, who argue for an aesthetic valourisation of code beyond its generative capacities, and beyond the ways in which it is perceived through an interface. Against an insistence on the productivity of code, ‘an operative mode of thinking “in” and “through” matter, in the sense of presupposing a corollary of material realizations [...] where an abstract code is always in need of being concretely *doing something*’,³³ the two researchers suggest concentrating on

the autonomy of code, “code in itself” [...] the very possibility for digital algorithms to be seen as what they primarily are, i.e. mechanisms for the processing and calculation of quantities of data, rather than instruments for the production of qualities/effects. It is mainly to this quantifying capacity that we ascribe the aesthetic value of software, a value that we want to associate not to sensorial perception but to something that we define as “thought”: a thinking not relatable to any subjective or conscious reflection but to the automated, abstract dimension of numbers.³⁴

The possibility of concentrating on the code itself as choreographic material is supported by Chénin; she has expressed interest in presenting her algorithms themselves, and not their video-rendering. There are obstacles to this, mostly practical; many audiences cannot read code, raising questions of accessibility, and the programme includes code passages that are under protected copyright

32 For example Chénin: Untitled Research Project, p. 1.

33 Parisi, Luciana & Portanova, Stamatia: Soft Thought (in Architecture and Choreography), in: *Computational Culture* 1 (2011), <http://computationalculture.net/soft-thought/> (August 2020), emphasis added.

34 Ibid.

(and therefore not openly publishable).³⁵ However, barring these issues, Chénin's works could be presented as lines of code to be read themselves, rather than videos resulting from lines of code. This would allow the reader to understand how their syntax can be generative of visual forms and how the algorithm arrives at its results. It would also allow an appreciation of the code for its own aesthetic and choreographic value. As Portanova and Parisi put it, numbers (and algorithms) 'do not have to produce something, and do not need to be transduced into colours and sounds, in order to be considered as aesthetic objects'.³⁶

Just as the code's abstract existence and aesthetic value can be recognised, the algorithm's presence in the real is discernible too. This is again possible through a reflection on the code as a score which never functioned as one; the algorithm's generativity is the source of the video's multiple virtual, dormant options. It is interesting to consider the way in which these options may be grasped *as such* – not as physically-instantiated and accessible, body-residing events, but as abstract entities, which are nonetheless *there*, within the code. The experience of code and its content "as such" is compatible with Parisi and Portanova's incitation to focus on 'the numerical aesthetic of code with a more "abstract" kind of feeling, the feeling of numbers indirectly felt as conceptual contagions, that are conceptually felt but not directly sensed'.³⁷ It can also be related to Chénin's own writings, which indicate an interest in an experience of the abstract, the immaterial, by asking: '*[q]uelles sont les conséquences kinesthésiques, sociologiques, culturelles et politiques, du rapport inédit avec des données immatérielles [...]?*' [what are the kinaesthetic, sociological, cultural and political consequences of the novel relationship with immaterial data [...]?].³⁸ By being open to experiencing an abstract, immaterial – but, nonetheless, existing – entity, the multitude of possibilities of relation within the code's structure can be grasped. In this construal, the algorithmic choreography is not opposed to an embodied, lived reality, but has a reality of its own; it is not relegated to an inaccessible realm of incorporeal abstractness, waiting for embodiment in order to become real, but may be sensed as a purveyor of real experiences of potential relation. The programmes are not scores generating actual action, but territories in which virtual potentials can be experienced as such.

In this view – like how Feuillet notations circulated between bodies, pages, and signs [Chapter 2] – Chénin's works are tripartite, and oscillate between

35 Chénin: Interview. Chénin has, similarly, been interested in scores as "plastic forms" in themselves. Chénin: Untitled Research Project, p. 1.

36 Parisi & Portanova: *Soft Thought*.

37 *Ibid.*

38 Chénin: Untitled Research Project, p. 8.

body, video, and code. And, like paper choreo-graphies were used by bodies and carried signs that communicated motions, the three parts of Chénin's kinect works are interconnected and influence each other, too: the camera has technical particularities limiting the code, the programme tells the camera what to do, the body provides input... However, while certain hierarchies do exist in Chénin's project – the body and code are “effaced” by the video – if one follows the above argument about the non-subordination of the video to bodily action; or Portanova and Parisi's arguments about the non-subordination of code to its (here, visual) expressions; or, for that matter, Feuillet's contemporaries' conception of choreo-graphies as aesthetic objects valid in themselves, beyond their communication value towards dancers; then choreography seems to equally exist in three different media, as three distinct, yet interconnected, entities. All three – body, video, code – are examples of choreography's multiplicity – manifestations of a plural choreographic ontology. A choreography can exist in bodies, videos, graphic/visual shapes, or code; these are not shadows of each other but parallel, interconnected, *different* ways of choreography's being that place it in a transmedia plane, undoing post-Feuilletian choreographic-corporeal essentialisms.

Adaptive choreographic data

The multiplication of choreographic media seen in Chénin's work has been prominent in the years surrounding the appearance of a notion of expanded choreography. The choreographic field has seen the emergence of choreographed books (Dalija Acin, *Exercise for Choreography of Attention – “Point of no Return”*, 2012), choreographed exhibitions (Xavier Le Roy, “*Rétrospective*”, 2012-; Mathieu Copeland, *Chorégrapheur l'exposition*, 2008),³⁹ choreographed texts and ideas (Noé Soulier, *Idéographie*, 2011), choreographed postcards (Emilia Gasiorek, *Ghostcards*, 2014),⁴⁰ and choreographed sounds (MAMAZA & Nikel Ensemble, *The Nikel Project – Songs & Poems*, 2012). Similarly, the “foundational” MACBA text on choreographic expansion proposed that choreography ‘needs to remain inclusive’ of those choreographic artists who are ‘expanding towards cinematic strategies, documentary and documentation and rethinking publication, exhibition, display, mediatization, production and post-production’.⁴¹ Choreographer Rasmus

39 Cf. Cvejic: “*Rétrospective*” par Xavier Le Roy; Copeland, Mathieu (ed.): *Chorégrapheur l'exposition*, Dijon: Les Presses du réel 2013.

40 Cf. Gasiorek, Emilia: *Ghostcards*, in: Caspao, Paula (ed.): *The Page as a Dancing Site*, Lisbon: Ghost Editions 2014, pp. 23–32.

41 Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects...

Ölme has noted that '[c]horeography can engage in curating, production design, dramaturgy and image making'.⁴² If choreographers can practice such an expanded choreography, their role as creative agents also becomes multiple, like choreo-graphers of the early-18th century – some of whom were dance makers, dancers, notators, editors, and graphic artists all in one [Chapter 2].

The process of choreographing varying media – be it a video, exhibition, sound, text, or (beyond the examples given above) a building, piece of clothing, or furniture – implicates applying knowledge, practices, and methods based on dance and the body in motion to media not habitually associated with dance and choreography. It is in this sense that one of the central claims of the MACBA text on expanded choreography – characterised as an 'open cluster of tools that can be used in a generic capacity'⁴³ – can be understood; and it is in this way that some of the works referred to above function. While applying a physical-kinetic choreographic thinking to other fields has been widely emphasised, the inverse contributions of other media and materialities to choreography's thinking modes can also be examined. Portanova's *Moving without a Body: Digital Philosophy and Choreographic Thoughts* (2013) studies how technology – notably, digital technologies – may think, or incite thinking, choreographically;⁴⁴ it therefore, in the present case, invites an investigation of what kinds of choreographic thinking a camera and a code may generate. It is these contributions that are examined in the remainder of this chapter, as a basis for understanding the "being-choreographic" of Chénin's videos.

The passage from bodily movement to kinect recording to algorithmic processing to video visualisation implicates successive transformations, in which the links between steps are partly lost. The physical body moves, but what the kinect camera "sees" (especially when not using skeleton-tracking) is not a moving body, but a collection of points forming volumes and repositioning themselves in spacetime. In this initial transformation, corporeal movement loses its inscription in a coherent body image, its possible gestural signification, and its eventual intentional expressivity; it becomes volume and points. The position points registered by the camera then enter a second transformation through the artist's programme; they are turned into lines, forming planes from which knowledge about volumes or positions in space is only partly recoverable. Each stage of transformation follows a particular logic; the units – from body

42 Ölme, Rasmus: *From Model to Module: A Move towards Generative Choreography*, PhD thesis, Stockholm: DOCH University of Dance and Circus/Stockholm University of the Arts/KTH Royal Institute of Technology 2014, p. 40.

43 Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects...

44 Portanova, Stamatia: *Moving without a Body: Digital Philosophy and Choreographic Thoughts*, Cambridge/London: MIT Press 2013.

part to position points to two-dimensional form – are processed differently in each stage.

This transformation has implications about how choreography is processed at each stage as well. When people see bodies moving, most think in terms of persons, limbs, actions, intentions, and gestures; when the camera sees bodies moving, it “thinks” in terms of position coordinates and points, and therefore does not – unless using skeleton tracking – see *bodies* moving. In effect, without skeleton tracking, the camera’s only way of knowing a body is present is through a process of “background subtraction”, wherein it distinguishes the pixels of moving figures from the pixels of an immobile background.⁴⁵ Similarly, if the camera thinks in terms of position and points, the video resulting from the code functions in two-dimensional geometrical forms – sets of lines – and only makes those forms visible. Kinect technology conventionally creates three-dimensional representations of the captured scenes; here, in contrast, the programme explicitly diverges from this and shifts the resulting image towards abstract forms. Each step of the transformation thus implicates a different way of thinking choreographically, rather than an exportation of physical thinking to new media.

Indeed, in discussions with Chénin, she frequently referred to the ways in which the kinect “thinks”, “sees”, or “perceives”; the user does not simply “make” the camera “do” things, but also needs to follow the camera’s logic, seeing material from its perspective. While kinect devices augment the range of what it is possible to do with the capture and recording of bodily movement, they also impose their own rules and limits on motion capture practices. There are three important points that emerge from this. Firstly, if the videos are expanded choreographies going “beyond” the human body, this is not only due to the dancing bodies being dematerialised and transformed; it is also partly because the human artist loses their position of control with respect to the media they utilise. In other words, it is not only the dancing subject that is abstracted and de-subjectified; it is also the author-subject that becomes multiple and partially non-human. Secondly, as a corollary, the influence of the kinect on the transformation of choreography draws attention to the limitations imposed by any medium, including the body. The idea that the artist has more control over the process by working with a body is a partial illusion, undone by the experience of working with the camera. Thirdly – and most importantly in the present discussion – the agency and effects of the kinect (the fact that it imposes its own particular logic) imply that choreography follows a logic that takes into account the camera’s specificities, behaviours, reactions, limits, capacities – and its mode of functioning, or “thinking”. Introducing discreteness into movement

45 Chénin: Email.

is one such specificity of the kinect (and other cameras); it registers a series of separate motion-instants, therefore “cutting up” a continuous flow of motion into chunks or “kinetic snapshots”. This is a feature shared with cinema that has gently haunted movement concepts since Eadweard Muybridge’s photographic studies, here transposed into a digital process.⁴⁶ In the case of Chénin’s videos, the camera needs to decide, from a continuous train of motion, when to update data about bodies’ positions; the moments when the depth map will shift its landscape, creating *its own* train of motion. This occurs no matter how close the kinetic snapshots may be to one another in time; movement still needs to be cut into discrete bits for the depth map to update. Interestingly, the camera both imposes a “snapshotting” of movement before data is extracted, and partially determines the frequency at which this will happen: while the user can define the frequency at which the depth map’s coordinates will be “refreshed”, the choices are limited by the camera’s technical constraints.⁴⁷ The programmed camera, then, “sees” movement differently from human observers, transforming this movement into numerical information, and gathering and processing this movement information as discrete objects, rather than motional flow. The camera “thinks” in chunks, and it is this thinking that is visualised in the videos. Thus, the work “thinks” choreographically in a way introduced by the camera, and invites the viewer to do so as well.

If the camera thinks choreographically, the algorithm can do so too. Chénin has been interested in the ways in which computational processes, or algorithms, can become choreographic logics or ways of thinking. Notably, she has considered how algorithmic principles themselves organise thought, and how that information can be used choreographically. An example of this is her reflection on the transposition of programming syntax (based on Boolean connectives) to action, considering the possibilities of enacted responses to the “AND”, “OR” or “NO” values used in programming.⁴⁸ In a comparable way, one of media artist Mark Coniglio’s projects thought of choreography through principles drawn from computation, rather than merely adding computer technology to an already-defined choreographic practice.⁴⁹ For the 2009 piece *Loopdriver* – developed with the company Troika Ranch – a filmed dance sequence was processed, complexified, and lengthened with a looping tool software; the numerically-looped version was given as a score to dancers to perform with/in their bodies.

46 Portanova: *Moving without a Body*, pp. 57, 74.

47 Chénin: Email.

48 Chénin: Untitled Research Project, p. 4.

49 Coniglio, Mark: Conclusion. Reflections, Interventions, and the Dramaturgy of Interactivity, in: Sutil, Nicolas Salazar & Popat, Sita (eds.): *Digital Movement: Essays in Motion Technology and Performance*, Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2015 [2013], pp. 280–281.

Comparable to Chénin's reflection on choreographing through Boolean connectives, Coniglio 'adopted a rigorous process of composition that was, down at its core, technological in nature'⁵⁰ – one that thought choreographically through an algorithm, even though it was not performed by technological agents.

What is being sketched out here is a shift from choreography *using* digital technology to choreography functioning *through* modes of thinking attributable to computing – to a camera and code. Reflecting the need for such a shift, Coniglio has formulated a severe critique of “technologically-enhanced” dance, precisely because ‘it has not led us to any significant shifts in choreographic practice’; it has not allowed choreographers to conceive of their practice differently, but merely to ‘rely on an established choreographic practice and attempt to “splice in” the technological elements’.⁵¹ In contrast, the process of successive transformations implicated in the production of Chénin's videos allows choreography to change, penetrated by the functioning and thinking of video and algorithms. Here, the technology is not an add-on to a corporeal choreographic practice, but is a medium through which choreography is invited to think anew. The skills necessary for choreographic practice are correspondingly modified; an acquaintance with the body and technical corporeal work are de-centralised, while an experience with, or knowledge of, non-corporeal, non-kinetic media (such as coding) becomes an expanded-choreographic skill.

Such shifts in choreographic thinking and practice are not, of course, limited to the digital; they apply to any medium or materiality that could contribute to an expanded choreographic practice. In this sense, choreography is un-attached to any specific medium and therefore applicable and adaptable to diverse ones. Mårten Spångberg provides a notion that resonates with this conception of the choreographic when he notes that ‘it's not a question of mixing and collaborating across media and disciplines, but *specifically doing choreography by way of* other media and disciplines’⁵²; to describe such a practice of choreography, he proposes “media-multi” replace the term “multimedia”. Choreography is thus not (only) multimedia, but is also expanded by its adaptive capacity to take diverse forms *in* different kinds of media and materials.

This adaptability of choreography does not implicate its dissolution into “other” media, as expected by equating the choreographic with the posited, original, embodied practice; rather, it is the basis for a necessary shift in our

50 Ibid., p. 281.

51 Ibid., p. 276.

52 Quoted in: Hoogenboom, Marijke: Who's Afraid of (Art) Education? Some Indecent Proposals, in: Melzweg, Ulrike, Spångberg, Mårten & Thielicke, Nina (eds.): *Reverse Engineering Education in Dance, Choreography and the Performing Arts*, Berlin: b_books 2007, p. 76, emphasis added.

conception of choreography itself. Chénin's transfer from bodies to points and from points to geometrical forms is not a translation of a fixed choreographic structure in non-bodily media – turning an entity that would be choreographic into an “other” entity. Rather, it is an extraction of choreographic *data* which can be processed differently in various media. The specificity of the kinest choreographies is not found in any one type of manifestation – be it body, video, or code – effaced by others, but in the informational content they carry. Thus, choreography is not a physical practice transformed *into* non-bodily media, but an art whose products comprise bundles of information – data that can be materially manifested *in* diverse media.

Again, in this respect, Chénin's work is comparable to contemporary choreographic projects, such as the exemplary 2009 interdisciplinary initiative *Synchronous Objects*,⁵³ which collected data from Forsythe's dance piece *One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2000) and used them to create digital visualisations of its complex, contrapuntal choreographic organisation. Specific pieces of information about the embodied performance of *One Flat Thing* – including positions in space and cueing between dancers – were gathered and transmitted to/by non-corporeal media. While some of the “synchronous objects” provide simple visualisations of the dance's organisation, others use the dance's data as material for creating new *kinds* of objects (akin to Chénin's project). For example, one named *Performative architecture* takes the choreographic organisation of the dance as a starting point for the invention of dynamic furniture models.⁵⁴

Along with this contemporary inscription, Chénin's work is once more also comparable to Feuilletian choreography, which is both a process of transferring dance onto paper – thereby causing the loss of physical choreographic attributes – and a system of transferability of information between forms of embodiment and a language of signs [Chapter 2]. Chénin's work translates information conceived from the perspective of the digital, using numerical data points, while Feuillet's choreography translated a taxonomic *episteme*, using classifiable

53 Cf. *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced* by William Forsythe, 2009, <https://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/> (August 2020).

54 Stephen Turk explains the thought process behind such objects as a search ‘for a way to make a non-literal translation of the table dance [i.e. *One Flat Thing*] by taking into account the effects of the piece and finding parallel architectural phenomena in which they could be re-inscribed. Our goal was not to produce a simple one to one transposition between the notational and contrapuntal analyses and an architectural object but rather to produce a space that was performative and combinatorial in a resonant way with *One Flat Thing, reproduced*’. Turk, Stephen: *Tables of Weights and Measures: Architecture and the Synchronous Objects Project*, 2009, [https://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/assets/object s/furnitureSystem/TurkTablesOfWeightsandMeasures.pdf](https://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/assets/object%20s/furnitureSystem/TurkTablesOfWeightsandMeasures.pdf) (August 2020).

formal units; their differences are found *within* their conception of choreography as abstractable material transferable across media.

Conclusion

Just a link, a click, and a small-sized window. Mathilde Chénin's kinect series is related to choreographic practice but does not conform to the expectations habitually associated with it. Her videos may find their source in the moving and, at times, dancing human body, but through multiple processes of transformation they lose their connection to it, refusing to become signifiers of corporeality or secondary generators of action. This transposition of choreography from body to video is characteristic of a contemporary expanded choreographic field in which films – as well as sounds, books, exhibitions, and buildings – can be choreographed.

A body dancing but never seen; a video, and a code presentable in its own right. Chénin's work implies no subordination of digital moving image to live performance, or of algorithmic source to digital performance in video. Rather, her work develops three concurrent, connected, but different choreographies; choreographic expansion becomes synonymous with plurality. The kinect works thus display a non-hierarchical, horizontal, multiple choreographic ontology that spans bodies as well as other (im)materialities and (in)tangible entities, and that decentralises choreographic authorship away from dance-specific skills. A body dancing but never seen; a video and a code presentable in its own right: three choreographic entities, each with its own mode of existence, anchored in the real.

Transformed into non-signifying visual forms, choreography enters the video format. In this process, it changes: its speed and dynamics become subject to the technical limitations of internet connections and streaming software; discrete chunks are cut from the continuous flow of motion experienced by, or seen in, the body, inviting a recognition of motion's equally-multiple conceptions; its forms are algorithmically translated into the two-dimensionality of a screen. In the process of these transformations, the units, functioning, and mode of thinking of choreography shift as well, allowing new medialities to interfere with its conception, authoring, and performance: choreography thinks and develops through the material limitations and technical particularities of the camera, screen, and programmes. In this way, the videos illustrate that applying choreography to non-dance products and non-corporeal or -kinetic media may include the transfer of a choreographic structure – of a dance-, motion-, or body-based mode of thinking – to a new materiality, but can also implicate an exploration of how the specific materiality and mediality of a

code, book, sound, video, installation, or drawing may transform choreographic practice and thinking. This *adaptive* choreography – entering, interacting with, influenced, and transformed by different materialities and technologies – constitutes a shift in the very conception of choreography, from practice inscribed in (any) mediality to *informational content* transferable across different media.

In its refusal to be aligned with either score or notation as a secondary document subservient to embodied performance, Chénin's series of videos echo early-18th-century conceptions of Feuillet notations as paper dances [Chapter 2]. In their tripartite nature and circulation between embodiment, video, and code, the kinect works echo Feuillet's dances' own circulation between dancing body, page, and signs. In their widening of choreographic skill from corporeal technique and dance composition to coding, they form an echo, too, of choreographers' functions as notators, dance-makers, teachers and, at times, editors. In their thinking of choreography in non-corporeal ways – extracting data out of a physical performance – Chénin's works echo the possibility of using Feuillet notations for abstract choreographic thinking in a choreo-graphic language. Avoiding an illusory historiographic teleology, these echoes are not indications that Feuillet was a determinist precursor of Chénin. They are, first and foremost, results of a juxtaposition of heterogeneities that allow unexpected relevance to emerge. But, this relevance is, in itself, an indication of a contemporary choreographic practice expanding away from an essentialised choreography, which the early-18th century had not yet fully internalised; contemporary expansions and early-18th-century choreo-graphies therefore both serve as counterexamples to that essentialisation. The common problematics identifiable in a largely-successful, early-18th century, European system of dance writing and three online videos made by a contemporary artist are neither coincidental nor causally related; they indicate that both are inscribed in common macro-historical frameworks, that both are outliers to entrenched conceptions of choreography, and that both could be part of common alternative choreographic histories. Adopting an expanded choreographic perspective led to the identification of the potentially-neglected, disembodied aspects in the *Chorégraphie* – and as the notions of the parallax (Hal Foster) and preposterous history (Mieke Bal) warn,⁵⁵ this perspectivalisation implicates a return of the historical gaze towards the present, by activating a distant past in the reading of a present not isolated from it.

55 Foster, Hal: *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1996, p. xii; Bal, Mieke: *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*, Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press 1999.

Chapter 5: A choreography of the in-between: Olga Mesa's *Solo a ciegas (con lágrimas azules)*¹

As the spectators enter the performance space, a still, sole figure is standing on the foremost part of the stage, her eyes closed, seemingly concentrating and taking in the situation. Once the audience is seated, she opens her eyes and goes to the side of the stage – a stage practically bare, save for a light console, microphone, a few objects, a film projector without a screen, and a set of mirrors. ‘Can I start?’ she asks; an invisible man’s voice replies ‘Whenever you want’. She starts speaking into the microphone slowly, calmly.

[...] *Y justo en ese momento comienzo mi práctica preferida no visible. Cierro los ojos, y me preparo a hacer el gran salto. Veo lo imposible, y esto me recuerda que la luz puede apagarse, de repente, como un blackout. Y respiro, y me tumbo en una esquina. Me imagino observando una guerra en miniatura. A menudo pienso en mi cuerpo atraído por los espacios que desaparecen; en mis gestos, aun no, constituidos; y en el sentimiento importante, que me gustaría traer a esta historia. Siento el deseo de escribir en la obscuridad* [At that very moment, I start my favourite practice of non-visibility. I close my eyes and prepare myself to take the great leap. I see the impossible, and this reminds me that the light can suddenly be turned off, like a blackout. And I breathe and lie in a corner. I imagine myself watching a miniature war. I often think of my body, attracted by spaces of disappearance; of gestures that are not yet constructed; of the important feeling that I would like to bring into this story. I feel the desire to write in obscurity.]²

In the approximately one hour that follows, much of this will be translated onto the stage: the solo figure will play with the limits of visibility – at times

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- 1 Some first thoughts about this chapter were developed in: Leon, Anna: Now and Then. Contemporary and Historical Instances of Intermediality on the Choreographic Stage, in: Haitzinger, Nicole & Kollinger, Franziska (eds.): *Überschreitungen: Beiträge zur Theoretisierung von Inszenierungs- und Aufführungspraxis*, Munich: epodium 2016, pp. 14–21 (e-book).
 - 2 Mesa, Olga : *Solo a ciegas (con lágrimas azules)* [DVD], Cie. Olga Mesa/Association Hors Champ – Fuera de Campo 2008, 41:19.

her actions will escape the audience's view; she will spend time in stillness, breathing, and explore gestures and movements. The lights will black out; sounds of war will be fleetingly heard. And, the figure will dance – some movements will be classifiable in a widely-construed “contemporary dance” vocabulary, others will stem from Argentinian tango. She will shout and resemble a fable creature – half woman-half animal, wearing a goat mask. Sounds will emerge from unknown sources, texts will be read, the light will change multiple times, film images will be shown.

The spectators will find themselves faced with what Olga Mesa – the lone figure on stage and choreographer of the piece – has described as an ‘*objet dramaturgique inattendu* [unexpected dramaturgical object]’.³ *Solo a ciegas (con lágrimas azules)*, created in 2008, is unexpected, in a very literal sense. The spectator has little to help them navigate what is shown, and needs to connect sometimes-startlingly diverse elements in order to follow the piece. The work is dedicated to the choreographer's grandfather Antòn – “*El Argentino*” – but no clear biographical line is discernible; the artist seems to draw material from diverse sources and memories to construct its universe. The piece contains excerpts from Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966), the persistent humming of the *Coro a bocca chiusa* from Giacomo Puccini's 1904 opera *Madama Butterfly*, Robert Walser's 1901 rendition of *Snow White* read in voiceover by Sara Vaz, and tango songs such as Celedonio Esteban Flores' *La Comparsita* – all parts of a fleeting, kaleidoscopic whole.

Mesa is a figure that is dually inscribed in the continental European contemporary-dance scene at the turn of the 21st century. On the one hand, her work is relevant to choreographic approaches that were – not wholly aptly – termed “conceptual” dance: questioning the posited limits of dance; anchoring the work in both sensorial and theoretical understandings of the body; integrating text and immobility; and focussing on the relationality with, and acknowledged co-presence of, the audience. On the other hand, her approach exemplifies the integration of technology and multimedia dispositifs by implicating artistic methodologies and tools from other (here, cinematographic) artistic disciplines; through corresponding strategies of dephysicalisation of the body; and, in certain pieces, presenting installation works outside of the theatrical context. *Solo a ciegas* makes this dual inscription manifest; firstly, as a theatrical presentation of a layered and socio-politically-framed embodied subject engaging in more-than-kinetic ways with its audience, and secondly, as a multimedia endeavour, reframing a technologically-mediated bodily presence. Looking for the expanded

3 Cie Olga Mesa – Association Hors Champ/Fuera de Campo: Publicity Material for *Solo a ciegas (con lágrimas azules)*, 2008, unpaginated.

choreographic aspects of this piece is a way of identifying expanded choreography's positionality within the turn-of-the-century dance landscape, situating it between a "conceptual" challenge to the limits of dance and the use of (new) technologies to reconsider choreography's relationship with corporeality, physicality, and presence.

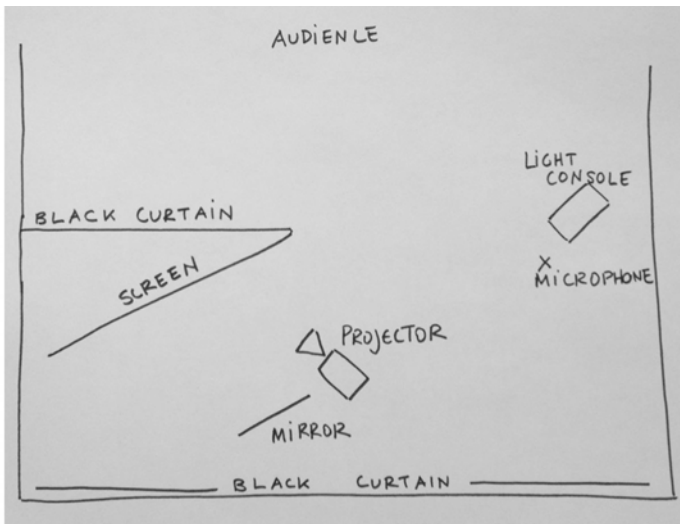
Solo a ciegas includes danced phrases, some of which challenge what dance could be; several sequences minimise movement or remove it altogether, and there is a great emphasis on media other than the human body. Watching the piece does involve watching the actions of a human body in movement, but cannot be reduced to that; in creating the piece, Mesa's choreographic activity cannot, similarly, be reduced to the arrangement of corporeal movements. In these ways, the *Solo* performs a decentralisation of dance in a composite performance framework that aligns with Saint-Hubert's multimedia ballet [Chapter 1], and undoes subsequent conflations of dance and choreography. Against this background, and in order to identify what "else" choreography may be in Mesa's work, this chapter draws from the performance itself (both as experienced in the theatre and in video recording), production and press material around the work, a series of discussions with the artist, and secondary sources about her. Reading *Solo a ciegas* as a relational arrangement of materials, actions, subjects, temporalities, and locations out of which a fragile universe is built, this chapter identifies an expanded choreography not characterised by the kinds of entities (human-corporeal or other) that it applies to, but by the act and process of assembling a multifaceted whole, made from heterogeneous relations between heterogeneous elements.

Body, text, sound, film, lights - in relation

Solo a ciegas has an unmistakably corporeal aspect. In Mesa's acts – breathing audibly; rolling, running, and kicking; placing herself in proximity to the spectators, physically acknowledging co-presence; using her voice to emit cries – the performer constantly reaffirms her bodily experience of the piece and the situation. Her corporeality is at the same time found – like dancing bodies in Saint-Hubert's ballets [Chapter 1] – in a framework composed by the presence and action of multiple media. There are moving images; a video-projector on stage transmits film material to a screen outside of the spectators' view, who have only indirect access to the – sometimes blurry, sometimes unidentifiable – images through an on-stage mirror [Figure 20]. There is text, spoken by the performer but also emitted through speakers that the audience cannot see. There are non-linguistic sounds: those produced by the performer's actions and emitted through her body, and those that come from invisible speakers (a light

tap of footsteps, music), blending with the sound of the film. There is light and subtly-changing colour, which extinguishes itself in blackouts. The light is active and present – white lights combine with projectors fitted with blue filters; some lights periodically dim.⁴ There are objects that, once used, affirm their presence as indispensable parts of the work; and there are objects that are constantly active – for example, small mirrors placed on different parts of the stage, reflecting both aspects of the action and members of the audience.

Figure 20: The main elements of the on-stage scenographic-technical setup of *Solo a ciegas* (con lágrimas azules). By the author based on production notes. No re-use without permission.



The human body and other media are put into coexistence, interaction, and relation within the *Solo*. In this process, the body does not shadow other media, but, rather, brings attention to them as such. By passing in front of the projector and casting her shadow on the mirror image, manipulating the light console in real time on stage, and breathing into the microphone, Mesa's physicality becomes a reminder of the presence and mode of function of the diverse media on stage. Beyond accentuating the physicality of other media through the dancer's body, there are moments in *Solo a ciegas* when – despite its direct presence – certain body actions are partly mediated. After her prologue, the

4 Mesa, Olga: Interview with the author (August 2017).

performer makes her first reference to war by alluding to Paul Verlaine's poem *Chanson d'automne* – which was used, after being slightly transformed, as a radio signal to the French resistance during the Allied landing in Normandy. Mesa announces 'I will tell you the words of the secret code' – but the altered code words are only secondarily spoken. They are firstly written in a notebook held so close to the microphone that the audience can hear the sound of tracing words on paper; this plays with their long-since-lifted secrecy, and provides a moment of intimacy that is only partly and indirectly accessed through the mediation of writing into the microphone. In other moments, Mesa's body's actions are taken up by non-human performers – the sound of her footsteps and words are, for instance, repeated by the speakers. The sound re-performs Mesa's actions, re-inserted at moments when she has moved on, dividing her presence into a visible body and an invisible sound source. (In each performance venue where *Solo a ciegas* is presented, the sound of Mesa's footsteps is recorded, to be added to the soundtrack and double her actual footsteps as a mediated shadow.⁵) The '*temps réel* [real time]' of the body's actions is blended with the '*temps différé* [delayed time]' of the recording,⁶ blending present and past and inscribing the body's actions into the depth of memory. At other moments, the body is effaced by the media surrounding and mediating it. Mesa moves behind a black curtain which also hides the screen from view, and her actions become accessible only indirectly, on the opposite mirror, where the film is also projected; she is superposed and blends with the film, exiting the definite space of the stage and moving towards a space that is not entirely concrete. Or, she performs small, subtle movements while a weak spotlight provides mere glimpses of her. Through projection, light, and sound, her body oscillates between directly-present physicality and mediated reflection, echo, and trace. There are also points in the work where what the body does is completed by, and creates a complex whole with, what other media are doing. For example, at one point the performer is at the front of the stage, moving, at times emitting sounds and fragments of text, accompanied by sounds from *Uccellacci e uccellini*; establishing a connection with the film, she cries out one of the film's lines – '*Papà, corre!* [Dad, run!]', She runs across the stage, and continues to move while the film image on the mirror alternates; a female voice, repeating parts of *Solo a ciegas*' prologue speech over the speakers, blends with the *Uccellacci e uccellini* dialogues – this time, with a poverty-stricken mother lying to her children that daylight has not come to avoid them getting up and asking for food she does not have. The body's twisting, running, and stilling is juxtaposed to, and imbued with the urgency of the young boy warning his father to run, the desperation of

5 Mesa: Interview.

6 Ibid.

Pasolini's mother figure, the slightly-disturbing effect of unidentifiable footage, the solo performer's own questions, repeated by a possible spectre of her previous self through the speakers. Through interaction, mediation, concealment, juxtaposition, or association, Mesa's body constantly forms, dissolves, and re-establishes diverse relations with the surrounding media.

In such ways, *Solo a ciegas* does not simply combine the human body with other media functioning separately from the action, or illuminating it as secondary scenographic elements; it is "carried" by them as much as it is embodied by a performer it expands beyond. It forms a framework in which the human body is present, indispensable, but, on its own, insufficient. Indeed, while Mesa has written that she has '*toujours compris le corps comme la base, c'est-à-dire d'abord il y a le corps, ensuite le mouvement, la parole, le geste. Le corps est le point de départ* [always understood the body as the basis, that is, first there is the body, then movement, speech, gesture. The body is the starting point]',⁷ she has also mentioned that she considers the film projector to be the "heart" of *Solo a ciegas* and noted that the body is not the work's protagonist.⁸ The artist talks of her body as being extended through the technical *dispositif* surrounding it, connected with the other media on stage in feedback loops; and proposes terms such as '*mécanique de la sensation* [mechanics of sensation]'⁹ which can be taken to describe this process of interaction between a sensing, active body and the technical – among other – elements with which it shares the stage. In other words, while the body, its physicality, and its sensations are necessary here, so is the presence of other media and, particularly, the cinematographic element. Rudi Laermans perfectly grasps this type of performance:

Putting human and non-human capacities to move or to not-move on par implies that the second no longer serves the first [...] Sound waves or light rays no longer just emphasise bodily actions, adding or subtracting possible meanings, but interact with them as movements displaying their own characteristic physicality.¹⁰

But the piece is not limited to relations of the performer's body with different media; links are also established on stage that do not include the human

7 Mesa, Olga & Sanchez, José A.: La Danse commence avec le regard, in: Ruiz de Infante, Francisco (ed.): *Olga Mesa et la double vision: Expérimentations chorégraphiques avec une caméra collée au corps*, Strasbourg: Les Editions des Actes Manqués 2016, p. 14.

8 Mesa: Interview.

9 Mesa: Interview. Mesa considers the camera – often used in real time in her performances – as a further extension of the body. Mesa, Olga: Esquisse de Vocabulaire à la frontière de la vision, in: Ruiz de Infante: *Olga Mesa et la double vision*, p. 27.

10 Laermans, Rudi: *Moving Together: Making and Theorizing Contemporary Dance*, Amsterdam: Valiz 2015, pp. 230–231.

being directly – a reminder that non-human agents and their links exist “in themselves” without necessary reference to “us” as a centralising factor. One of the choreographer’s comments on the *Solo* was indeed that she had

construit un système émergent de codes secrets à travers une architecture de l’écoute, autonome de la vision et des déplacements et des décisions que mon corps réalise en temps réel [constructed an emergent system of secret codes through an architecture of audition, autonomous from vision and from the movements and decisions that my body realises in real time].¹¹

In the scene described above where the body’s actions are part of a whole – in which lines from Pasolini’s film blend with *Solo a ciegas*’ recorded prologue – these sound elements enter into layered, overlapping dialogue. A recorded female voice poses the prologue’s question – ‘Can I begin?’; repeating the words from the opening, the performer responds ‘Whenever you want’, but she seems like an intruder in the dialogue, since the invisible person asking the question waits until a male voice from the speakers also acquiesces; this dialogue is overtaken by voices of children from *Uccellacci e uccellini* calling their mother; the dialogue switches and the female voice re-starts her prologue text; the mother from the film responds, the two interactions woven together. At another moment, Mesa’s body is completely invisible behind the curtain, while the sound dialogues continue to perform. At times, the technical tasks of the different media relate to each other, too; for example, the film projector may function as such only indirectly – through the mirror – but also operates as an additional source of light, complementing the spotlights [Figure 20]. Different media support each other’s actions. At one moment, the lights black out, allowing the film image to become more intense; although its images are not sharp, Pasolini’s use of footage from the funeral of Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti is discernible (although not ascertainable); a male chorus hums a solemn tune while the performer’s body is only present through its sounds and the fragmentary snapshots permitted by a slight reflection. Here, the relations between film images – Pasolini’s use of newsreel footage in his film and Mesa’s use of Pasolini’s film projects the event twice-removed – are doubled by the relationship between the film, the gravity of the sound, and the starkness of the lights’ absence. Furthermore, the stage setup that partially blocks spectators’ visibility also allows a dialogue to be established between each medium’s physicality/technical function and its perceived result. For instance, the film image the spectator sees reflected in the mirror refers to its source in the screen, itself referring to its source in the projector, which refers to the

11 Cie Olga Mesa – Association Hors Champ/Fuera de Campo: Publicity Material, unpaginated, emphasis added.

original images that have been re-edited for the piece. The stage setup similarly refers to the film it contains; in *Uccellacci e uccellini*, the two protagonists hear a voice which initially comes from an invisible source – later discovered to be a speaking raven – just as invisible sounds emerge in *Solo a ciegas*. Finally, the intricately-constructed timeline of the *Solo* is marked by the film's editing; thus, media other than the body have the capacity to trigger events on stage.¹² The body therefore relates to different surrounding media but also exists in a multi-faceted space created by them and *their* inter-relations.

This type of performance situation – composed of relations between a human body and other media, coupled by relations between these media themselves – corresponds to a shift in the reception attitude of the spectators, who must widen their kinaesthetic response to choreography towards the heterogeneous, multiple objects of relational choreography. Indeed *Solo a ciegas* demands – and generates – cross-modal perception, something underlined by the choreographer when she notes '*je propose des questions audiovisuelles au corps et des questions physiques à la caméra* [I propose audiovisual questions to the body and physical questions to the camera]'.¹³ (Even in actions contained within the performer's body, this cross-modal relationality remains present; kicking her leg high, Mesa emits a shout, giving the action a kinetic, auditory, and visual element that emerges from the simultaneous, multiple uses of the body as medium.) Moreover, Mesa's piece introduces a double aspect in spectatorship, in which experiencing the cross-modal effects of on-stage actions or relations is continuously counterbalanced by trying to decipher how they come about. The film screen is invisible, but the presence of the projector on stage explains how a deviated, indirect image reaches the viewers; most speakers are out of sight but the presence of the microphone indicates a process of recording the performer's voice to be re-broadcast – parts of the dispositif are visible, thus indicating how invisibility is created. Beyond decoding how each element on stage functions, the audience is given clues to decipher how different elements are related. The performer controls the light console herself, in full view; a spoken action – 'blackout' – may announce and/or prefigure the dimming of the lights; the *hors-champ* – a cinematographic concept referring to what lies outside the camera's scope – of the film prefigures an *hors-champ* of the moving body, which will also disappear from view; the lights interacting with the mirrors on stage both achieve and illustrate the process of creating limited visibility; the lights dim, to let the projector illuminate a part of the stage and thus draw attention to its function as a light-source that interacts with the spotlights. Other parts of the action are more difficult to decipher and the spectator is left with questions: do

12 Mesa: Interview.

13 Mesa & Sanchez: *La Danse commence avec le regard*, p. 20.

they hear the soundtrack of the film or is sound coming from an independent source synchronised with the images? Is it the performer who just sighed, or did the sound come from the speakers? While there are no clues to help one find an answer, the very formulation of these questions incites the spectator to think of the piece in terms of intermedia relations.¹⁴

An equivalent claim of relationality within the work's reception can be made about its production. Indeed, Mesa's role as a choreographer was not limited to the creation of bodily (dance) actions delegating non-corporeal work, but expanded to this multiple constellation that includes the body. *Solo a ciegas* is a work in which interdisciplinary collaboration (including a film editor, sound technician, and collaborator in lighting design) was necessary; moreover, Mesa's authorship expanded to the co-conception and -creation of the lighting design, writing of text, and choosing of music and film.¹⁵ The work's intermedia nature necessitates a type of choreographic authorship that is both collectively and individually interdisciplinary – not only in the types of skills and practices involved but also in the process of interweaving them, authoring what happens between them. Indeed, Mesa's process of work – as illustrated by the assignments given to her collaborators – reflects this; for example, *Solo a ciegas'* sound technician Jonathan Merlin was tasked not so much with composing the sound, but, rather, with the technical definition of when, and from where, sound emerged,¹⁶ thus shifting his focus to the ways in which the sound relates to the rest of the stage action.

Mesa's choreography decentralises the human body as a dominant performer, and dance as a primary medium of expression, shifting the role of non-human media to active and meaning-carrying performers. Her relational treatment of diverse materials situates the choreographic not in a human-specific performance supported by non-human media, but in the arrangement of relations *between* both. This expands choreographic authorship to an interdisciplinary endeavour whose results are experienced cross-modally. By doing so, *Solo a ciegas* responds to a contemporary interest in non-human materialities and the forms of coexistence, interaction, and hybridisation between human subjects and non-human agents. At the same time, in these very ways it also mirrors Saint-Hubert's non-autonomous view of ballet as a composite spectacle, and the

14 Rudi Laermans adds a highly interesting dimension to this kind of spectatorship; he considers that questions of dance criticism may not, in "expanded" cases, only focus on what a performance may mean (what he calls a 'hermeneutical or interpretative paradigm') but also on how it works. Laermans: *Moving Together*, p. 235.

15 For technical information and roles see Cie Olga Mesa – Association Hors Champ/Fuera de Campo: Publicity Material, unpaginated.

16 Mesa: Interview.

interdisciplinary role of his master of order. In return, this mirroring challenges the exclusions that result from a sole focus on dance as choreographic material in Saint-Hubert's ballet [Chapter 1].

Doing choreography

The construction of *Solo a ciegas* as a complex web of non-hierarchical relations between an (un)moving body, text, sound, film, objects, and light points to a choreography that orchestrates and brings together the actions of different media, including the body. In effect, the choreographer uses multiple terms – often borrowed from non-dance disciplines – which focus on the importance of putting together; for example, the cinematographic term of montage and the visual-arts-based notion of collage recur in her discourse.¹⁷ By proposing a view of choreography as an art of forming relations between different elements, *Solo a ciegas* is associated with a wider discourse about, and conception of, choreography as a process and praxis of “putting in relation”, developed in the decade following the piece's premiere. This was evident in artists' discourse – such as Michael Klien's proposal that ‘choreography can assume the creative practice of setting [...] relations, or set the conditions for [...] relations, to emerge’,¹⁸ or Rasmus Ölme's idea that ‘choreographic work re-articulates the relations between the items’ of choreographic *dispositifs*¹⁹ – and in theoretical approaches to choreography – as in Kirsten Maar's link between choreography and topology, ‘which, being the theory of structures and relationships, describes relational spaces’;²⁰ or Petra Sabisch' view of choreographic works as ‘an assemblage of specific relations: relations to objects, to music, to bodies, relations between bodies, relations of visibility, relations between forces, relations of movement and rest, etc.’²¹

17 Cf. Anonymous: *Lexique incomplet*, in: Ruiz de Infante: *Olga Mesa et la double vision*, p. 23.

18 Klien, Michael: *Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, PhD thesis, Edinburgh: Edinburgh College of Art 2008, unpaginated abstract.

19 Ölme, Rasmus: *From Model to Module: A Move towards Generative Choreography*, PhD thesis, Stockholm: DOCH University of Dance and Circus/Stockholm University of the Arts/KTH Royal Institute of Technology 2014, p. 29.

20 Maar, Kirsten: *Uncanny Connections. William Forsythe's Choreographic Installations*, in: Fischer-Lichte, Erika & Wihstutz, Benjamin (eds.): *Performance and the Politics of Space: Theatre and Topology*, New York: Routledge 2013 [trans. Michael Breolin & Saskya Iris Jain], pp. 253–254.

21 Sabisch, Petra: *Choreographing Relations: Practical Philosophy and Contemporary Choreography*, Munich: epodium 2011, p. 7.

Talking about her work on *Solo a ciegas*, Mesa has also described choreography as an art of *assembling*.²² The notion of the assemblage also became prominent in the years surrounding the premiere of her work. While the term is not reducible to this reading, in contemporary choreographic theory it is primarily Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's vision of the assemblage that is encountered. Manuel DeLanda quotes Deleuze: 'What is an assemblage? It is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of a co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a "sympathy"; and comments: 'in this definition, two aspects of the concept are emphasised: that the parts that are fitted together are not uniform either in nature or in origin, and that the assemblage actively links these parts together by establishing relations between them'.²³ This notion of assemblage – a *relational entity* composed of *heterogeneous materials* – has theoretically grounded two points that are relevant here and are illustrated by the writings of Laermans. Laermans introduces the assemblage as part of his quest for a less anthropocentric, "post-humanist" choreography:

the performative qualities of human as well as non-human actions [are treated] as being equal. Besides physical movements also lightning, sounds, props, text fragments or video images are all deliberately deployed as active agents, as components that do something and therefore co-define the overall performativity of a dance piece.²⁴

But crucially, this decentralisation of the human in choreography – through the notion of the assemblage – is presented as a way of conceptualising contemporary choreographic work including heterogeneous media, *as opposed to* other multi- or intermedia approaches. Laermans and Carine Meulders write:

[t]o a great extent, the contemporaneity of dance has to do with the making of new middle zones, of *heterogeneous assemblages* – of always particular couplings between for instance music, image and movement that produce completely different operative and perceptual frameworks than what we know from interdisciplinary or multi medial work.²⁵

22 Mesa: Interview.

23 DeLanda, Manuel: *Assemblage Theory*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2016, p. 1f.

24 Laermans, Rudi: 'Dance in General' or Choreographing the Public, Making Assemblages, in: *Performance Research* 13/1 (2008), p. 11.

25 Laermans, Rudi & Meulders, Carine: The Body is the Re/De-Presentation: Or, What Makes Dance Contemporary?, in: Gareis, Sigrid & Kruschkova, Krassimira (eds.): *Ungerufen: Tanz*