This distinction between choreographic assemblages and other types of multimedia work can be paralleled by an important shift in the conception of choreography, from the ontological question of what choreography *is* – the material on which it operates, be it the body or multiple media – to the pragmatically-oriented question of what it *does* – here, putting heterogeneous elements into relation.[26] Indeed, possibly building on its lack of attachment to any one physical medium, (expanded) choreography is often seen as act rather than a material type of product; a multiplicity of verbs and action-words are utilised to describe choreography as primarily characterised by what it *does*. These terms include organising (Mårten Spångberg: 'I'm a choreographer that is occupied with organising [among other things] dances';[27] Jan Ritsema: 'Choreography is thinking about the *organisation* of objects and subjects in time and space on stage' [28]), arranging (Ölme: 'The first choreographic act is thus to choose which items to engage with. The second choreographic act is how to arrange them in relation to each other, forming a new assemblage than the one they were singled out from' [29]) and – echoing Saint-Hubert [Chapter 1] – ordering (Klien, Steve Valk, and Jeffrey Gormly: 'Choreography (n.): order observed […] a process that has an observable or observed embodied order. […] Choreography (v.): act of interfering with or negotiating such an order' [30]). This composition-related vocabulary brings attention to the *act* described, while the object this applies to can be left open; from the compositional process of ordering bodies in spatial, temporal, and dynamic configurations, choreography becomes characterised by arranging itself, beyond *what* is being arranged. In this sense, the hierarchy between the dancer's body and other media in *Solo a ciegas* may not be of primary importance; viewing choreography as an art of assembling or arranging suggests moving the focus away from the materials being arranged towards the act of arranging. The product not of a specific mediality (or multiple mediali-

und Performance der Zukunft / Uncalled: Dance and Performance of the Future, Berlin: Theater der Zeit 2009, p. 285.

26 Cf. Sabisch: *Choreographing Relations*, p. 8.

27 Spångberg, Mårten: *Spangbergianism II* (first draft), Bologna: independent publication, 2013, unpaginated.

28 Quoted in CORPUS: Survey What does "choreography" mean today?, 2007, http://www.corpusweb.net/introduction-to-the-survey.html (Archive copy from October 2015). In the survey, Ritsema elaborates and questions this definition, for instance proposing choreography as 'thinking about the organisation of the *moving relations* between objects and subjects in time and space on stage'.

29 Ölme: *From Model to Module*, p. 30.

30 Klien, Michael, Valk, Steve & Gormly, Jeffrey: *Book of Recommendations: Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, Limerick: Daghdha Dance Company 2008, unpaginated.

ties), but of a specific praxis, Mesa's *Solo a ciegas* thus points to an expansion of choreography whose being may be its very doing.

Expanding choreography towards a praxis that applies to heterogeneous materials implicates reconsideration of choreographic authorship, including approximating choreographic making with other practices of *putting-together*. A focus on the art of arranging relations has indeed been underlined concerning dramaturgy, as proposed by Martina Ruhsam:

> Nowadays dramaturgy [...] doesn't necessarily refer to any dramatic text or action [...] The fact that contemporary performances are often hybrid forms of dance, performance, film, exhibition, lecture, media-art, and installation calls out for new strategies of staging and more importantly, for a new aesthetic of connection and relation – or, in other words, for new practices of connecting and relating.[31]

The same point can be made regarding curating, as noted by the editors of the relevantly-titled book *Assign & Arrange* when they speak of 'recent discourse in which choreographing and curating are increasingly being perceived and discussed as related practices of creating dynamic constellations, relations, collaborations and affective encounters'.[32] Establishing proximity between the choreographic, the dramaturgical, and the curatorial is related to the concurrent expansion that widens curating beyond the visual arts, and dramaturgy beyond its theatre background; their proximity with choreography marks dissolving discipline boundaries. In effect, what is at issue here is not just the comparability of different practices, but their qualitative transformation that converges towards relational praxis. Thus, at times the practice of choreography blends with that of dramaturgy, conceiving of choreography *as* dramaturgy; Gabriele Klein notes that '[c]horeography increasingly became a matter of dramaturgy; whereas the once close link between dance and choreography gradually loosened'.[33] Mesa's words on *Solo a ciegas* reflect this blend:

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31 Ruhsam, Martina: Dramaturgy of and as Collaboration, 2010, http://sarma.be/docs/2873 (August 2020). For an approximation between choreography and dramaturgy based on their relational approach, see also Cvejić, Bojana: Dramaturgy: A Friendship of Problems, in: *TkH (Journal for Performing Arts Theory)* 18 (2010), p. 50 and Laermans: *Moving Together*, p. 236.

32 Butte, Maren, Maar, Kirsten, McGovern, Fiona, Rafael, Marie-France & Schafaff, Jörn: Introduction, in: Butte, Maren, Maar, Kirsten, McGovern, Fiona, Rafael, Marie-France & Schafaff, Jörn (eds.): *Assign and Arrange: Methodologies of Presentation in Art and Dance*, Berlin: Sternberg Press 2014, p. 21.

33 Klein, Gabriele: Dancing Politics: Worldmaking in Dance and Choreography, in: Klein, Gabriele & Noeth, Sandra (eds.): *Emerging Bodies: The Performance of Worldmaking in Dance and Choreography*, Bielefeld: transcript 2011, p. 21.

> *Mon travail est très lié à la construction de la narration, à la question même de la dramaturgie. Dans ce solo, il y a un texte fragmenté, il y a des éléments sonores extérieurs qui dialoguent avec ce que je dis moi-même et il y a du movement* [my work is very much linked to the construction of narrative, to the very question of dramaturgy. In this solo, there is a fragmented text, there are external audio elements in dialogue with what I say myself, and there is movement].[34]

Once again, the expansion of choreographic authorship aligns with shifts in spectatorship. Beyond tracking and deciphering the relations that compose the piece, the spectators of *Solo a ciegas* actively form them. While they are not called upon to participate in the performance, they are an inescapable pole in its construction; the performance is not just arranged in order to be presented *to* them, but *through* their very presence and gaze. Disrupting the frontal, ideally-complete viewpoint of the spectator, the black curtain hides the actual film screen, and its reflection depends on each spectator's position [Figure 20]; mirrors placed on stage create reflections not visible to all spectators. Thus, the piece's on-stage disposition and the performer's situation are construed in relation to each other, *as well as* to individuated spectators that are positioned at different angles with respect to the action. The choreographer notes:

> *Ce hors-champ me permet de questionner le cadre de la représentation dans une double configuration, du point de vue du spectateur et du point de vue inverse du plateau. Aujourd'hui, je ne peux plus aborder la question du regard et de la perception uniquement de manière frontale. Il me faut déplacer, détourner les éléments de la scène comme si le regard était passé à travers un prisme afin de changer le rapport entre les choses et les individus* [This hors champ allows me to question the frame of the representation in a double configuration, from the viewpoint of the spectator and from the inverse viewpoint of the stage. Today, I cannot approach the question of the gaze and of perception in a uniquely frontal manner anymore. I have to move, to divert the stage elements as if the gaze had passed through a prism, in order to change the relationship between things and people].[35]

Several theorists – including Laermans, Sabisch, and Bojana Cvejić[36] – have indeed suggested that choreographic assemblages are not only made up of "internal" relations, but also implicate relations with audience members; the spectator is both external observer and active part of what they are watching.

34 Mesa, Olga & Lavigne, Aude: Interview, 2011, http://mutualise.artishoc.com/bastille/media/5/dp_solo_a_ciegas.pdf (October 2018).

35 Mesa & Lavigne: Interview, p. 5, emphasis added.

36 Laermans: 'Dance in General', p. 13; Sabisch: *Choreographing Relations*, p. 7; Cvejić, Bojana: *Choreographing Problems: Expressive Concepts in European Contemporary Dance and Performance*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2015, p. 71.

If Mathilde Chénin's kinect videos allow a conceptualisation of a multiple choreographic ontology [Chapter 4], Mesa's *Solo a ciegas* and its choreographic assemblage of relations illustrates that the choreographic is identifiable, beyond ontological claims, in its praxis. This shift, amply reflected in the contemporary choreographic theory referred to above, has significant consequences both for choreographic authorship – approximable to other relational practices characterised by their type of *doing* – and spectatorship. This shift also has consequences for how choreographic history is conceived; a contemporary expansion of choreography to praxis reverses a long-standing attachment to (any, one, or many) materiality and reconsiders non-medium-specific practices of "putting-together" *as choreographic*. Saint-Hubert, a few centuries ago, argued for the importance of complementing an ontological understanding of ballet – what it is composed of – with the dramaturgical processes that arrange this composition – personified in the transmedially-relevant master of order [Chapter 1]. Contemporary choreographic expansions, like those discussed here, allow us to relocate choreography in Saint-Hubert's work beyond the materials that compose ballets to acts of ordering and the persons practicing them.

Of what is related

If, as Laermans' position suggests, the relational choreography of *Solo a ciegas* is more than a form of intermediality, it is necessary to consider what else this relationality applies to. If Mesa links a movement with a sound, an object with a light change, a film image with an action, she is not just creating material or technical associations – of substances and modes of communication – but is also, and primarily, forming associations that contribute to the work's purposefully-intimate and almost-confidential treatment of its polymorphous subject. In effect, *Solo a ciegas* is not – only – a piece about the way in which light relates to movement, the human body relates to film, or sound relates to image; it is a piece about memory and loss – and, particularly, the memory of war, childhood, and their intersections – treated through a choreography of relational arrangements.

The topics of war, loss, or memory are not clearly articulated in the work; they reveal themselves progressively through associations of bits of information, fleeting images, and sounds. Shots from Hiroshima after the nuclear explosion, bomber planes, and houses destroyed during the Spanish civil war are blended into the film reflected on the mirror;[37] the prologue mentions the word "war" without any further information; siren- and explosion-like sounds contribute to

37 Mesa: Interview.

the soundtrack; Verlaine's poem, transformed into a WWII secret code, is woven into the textual and auditory fabric of the piece. None of these references, on their own, establish full focus on the topic of war – in some cases, taken individually, they are not even fully recognisable. But put together in a single universe – brought in relation through image, text, and sound – they lead the spectator to consider war. This consideration does not uniquely pertain to one – or any – of the particular war-related situations; it emerges between them as a non-specified war, onto which the spectator can project their own experiences and knowledge. Similarly, childhood is not directly referred to, but in the voices from *Uccellacci e uccellini* – of children and parents; in images from the choreographer's childhood (a cherry tree planted by her grandfather, edited to appear alongside a tree in Hiroshima);[38] in the reference to a "miniature" war in the prologue; and in the performer's rolling across the floor or abandoning herself as if to sleep – there is a hint towards childhood, which appears through the relations of these fragmentary elements without explicit articulation. The further relation between war and childhood – both ushering in the notion of loss – points to the work's focus on memory, on a rapport with what is not there. *Solo a ciegas* thus allows fragmentary information from disconnected sources to be put in relation and evoke the topics that influenced the piece. Mesa's choreography is a relational arrangement of heterogeneous media in addition to ideas, references, and information.

Solo a ciegas furthermore arranges relations between temporalities and spaces. The stage space is linked to the *hors-champ* of the screen, and to the mediated space of the projection on the mirror. But, at the same time, the piece circulates in geographical spaces beyond the theatre. Similarly, the real-time actions performed by the body on stage are linked to the off-time of pre-recorded material – in some cases repeating what is performed live, juxtaposing temporalities – and the rhythms of the film images; but, simultaneously, the piece navigates a wider chronological range. The *Solo*'s choreography arranges references to, and between, diverse locations and moments: 1940s France enters the stage through Verlaine's poem-turned-code; 1930s civil-war-ridden Spain and 1940s Hiroshima peek in through film images; 1960s Italy appears through Pasolini's film; early-20th-century South America emerges through excerpts of *La Comparsita* and tango steps (Argentina was already present through the reference/dedication of the piece to Mesa's grandfather, *El Argentino*); 1900s Japan, and 1900s European representations of it, are present through Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. Mesa says that in *Solo a ciegas,* the performer's body must be present in the physical space shared with the audience, but the body also

38 Ibid.

crosses different times and spaces[39] – theatrical, cinematographic, or sound spaces, in addition to times and spaces of memory. Like Pasolini's film that jumps between different time periods – in it, a present-day narrator recounts the story of two medieval Franciscan monks in a fantasy-ridden flashback – Mesa's piece navigates time and space, between specific locations and moments. Time-spaces multiply, fracturing each other's unity and continuity; but, rather than forming a new unity or continuity, they create a kaleidoscopic, multi-directional temporality and spatiality. The piece is neither set in, nor about, France in the 1940s or Spain in the 1930s; it is, rather, situated in the interval that relates the present with each and every referenced time-place, and in the interval that relates them to each other. It is, in Mesa's terms, in a '*temps suspendu* [suspended time]'.[40] Writing on the notion of the *hors-champ* – so crucial for the construction of the performance considered here – Deleuze has described a non-specificity of temporality and spatiality that also applies to *Solo a ciegas*:

> In one case, the out-of-field designates that which exists elsewhere, to one side or around; in the other case, the out-of-field testifies to a more disturbing presence, one which cannot even be said to exist, but rather to "insist" or "subsist", a more radical Elsewhere, outside homogeneous space and time.[41]

Similarly, while the *Solo* has a biographical basis, it does not simply link episodes, instances, and locations of a single person's life in a linear, coherent way. The work is not an autobiography of Mesa herself – even though elements from her childhood and family history are present – nor a biography of her grandfather – even though references to his life and context are also present. If a subject, a person, is portrayed here, it is a multiple and relational one. The sole figure on stage performs neither a single, unitary body nor a single, unitary subject: she becomes animal through squatted positions and a goat-mask, she becomes child by shouting or rolling across the floor, she proliferates by being reflected. This figure may be, at times, animal, child, adult woman – but she is neither animal *or* child *or* woman, nor animal *and* child *and* woman. She is an animal-child-woman emerging from the relations of all three. On the one hand, this multiplicity can be defined by the diverse experiences residing within this figure – even though they have not directly been lived by her – and by the relations between them. Talking of the multiplication of the body in Mesa's work, Julie Perrin indicates that this is not done in order to '*s'imposer ou envahir le plateau,*

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39 Ibid.

40 Anonymous: Lexique Incomplet, p. 23.

41 Deleuze, Gilles: *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1986 [1983, trans.Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam], p. 17.

mais plutôt de défaire l'unité du sujet pour en faire surgir davantage de subtilité, de strates [impose oneself or to invade the stage, but rather in order to undo the unity of the subject, so as to make more of its subtleties and its strata emerge]'.[42] On the other hand, the figure is multiple because the stage is populated by multiple beings, related to each other by the media construction of the piece. A child yelling '*Papa, corre!*', a woman reaching back to her childhood and her grandfather, a mother protecting her starving children, a Spanish citizen living in Argentina before the civil war,[43] a radio-operator during WWII, a young Japanese woman waiting for her husband all night while a melancholy tune invades the air – all are there, without fully being there. None of the characters are fully represented, even though they are fleetingly present in subtle ways. By associating the vestiges of absent presences, a multifaceted figure of loss, longing, nostalgia, and pain emerges. And the work, once again, is not constructed as a simple collection of these characters but builds its representation of a multiple subject through the relations between them. Mesa comments on the way in which her work brings disconnected subjects into relation:

> *Ici, le corps est hors du temps et hors de lui pour aller au contact d'une mémoire collective, voire universelle. Il s'identifie à des histoires qu'il traverse mais appartenant aussi aux autres, à tous* [here, the body is out of time and out of itself, in order to come into contact with a collective, universal even, memory. It identifies with the (hi)stories it goes through but also belonging to others, to everyone].[44]

In its publicity material, the piece is described as an '[*i*]*nventaire des espaces et des mémoires qui pourraient appartenir à d'autres corps: corps abandonnés, exilés, violés, disparus, imaginés* [inventory of the spaces and memories that could belong to other bodies: abandoned, exiled, violated, disappeared, imagined bodies]'.[45] Doubled by mirrors and disconnected from its voice, the body is fragmented; layering itself with other images, it is invaded; hidden by partial lighting, it is evoked. Correspondingly, the performance's subject does not reside in the physical body but in the relations between the identities, persons, stories, and media that collectively form the piece.

Finally, if *Solo a ciegas* contains arrangements of relations between information, identities, subjects, times, and spaces, it also emerges through the

42 Perrin, Julie: La Chorégraphe à la caméra, in: Ruiz de Infante: *Olga Mesa et la double vision*, p. 77.

43 Cf. Mesa & Lavigne: Interview.

44 Ibid.

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

association of these elements with, and by, the audience. Just like the media arrangement of the work includes the spectator – their position in the theatre, their gaze and its direction – the arrangement of archives, memories, and traces of war and loss also include the onlooker. All materials in the *Solo* – the images of war or childhood, the goat-mask, or the colour blue (present in the performer's attire/wig and in the lights) – do not represent or strictly symbolise, but, rather, are simply present and evoke associations that may vary from one audience member to the next. Thus, the presence of war, childhood, or loss relies on the spectator, (un)consciously contributing to the relational whole proposed by the choreographer. For instance, according to Mesa, the goat-mask scene was '*une image qui s'est imposée comme une vision, alors que je pensais à ce qu'il reste après la destruction d'une ville ou d'un paysage* [an image that imposed itself as a vision, while I was thinking of what remains after the destruction of a city or of a landscape]'.[46] Once it has become part of the piece, however, this association recedes, replaced by the associations audience members form with the material or deduce from its relations with other parts. If the piece deals with memory, it is not only because it presents vestiges of a now-absent past; it is also because it implicates the memories of those watching. Mesa does not *represent* memory; she arranges relations and gaps in the material to which the spectator can contribute associations, shift arrangements, and *perform* the multiple work of memory.

With a reflection on war and childhood, and a voyage between territories, temporalities, and subjects, Mesa's piece can be inscribed within a framework of contemporary European choreographic work interested in multiple subjectivities and corporealities (Vera Mantero's 1996 goat-feet in *one mysterious Thing, said e.e. cummings** speaks to Mesa's goat-head 12 years later), (auto)biography (e.g. the series including *Véronique Doisneau* (2004), *Lutz Förster* (2009), and *Cédric Andrieux* (2009) by Jérôme Bel and the aforementioned dancers; Eszter Salamon's *And Then* (2007) and Michikazu Matsune's *For Now* (2017)), and documentary and historical reference (e.g. Olga de Soto's explorations around Kurt Jooss' *The Green Table* in *Une introduction* (2010) or Salamon's 2014 *Monument 0 – Haunted by Wars (1913-2013)*, both focussing on the war history that interests Mesa). Against this background, *Solo a ciegas* performs a particular kind of body-subject, a particular kind of (auto)biography, a particular kind of documentary; like Salamon's *And Then* – in which multiple life stories are woven into an unstable narrative – it performs a life, story, and subject that are formed out of a web of sometimes-disparate relations. It is through this instability – in these network-like connections, in this multiplicity and dispersal of the subject – that the piece develops a choreographic politics of memory. This is a memory spilling out of a singular

46 Mesa & Lavigne: Interview.

body, breaking the linearity of a causal narrative, in favour of a mesh of non-centralised links – putting the seemingly unconnected into relation.

In addition to its media assemblage, *Solo a ciegas* also assembles relations between themes, subjects, times, and places. As prefigured by Laermans, this doubling posits a relational praxis of choreography as more than a subtype of intermedia (choreographic) practice. This forms the basis for Mesa's work's politics of memory and for expanded choreography's capacity to articulate the complexity of – identitary, emotional, political, cultural – contemporary realities. At the same time, such a doubling is historiographically important, since it implies that the choreographic can be found – beyond practices encompassing multiple media – in the arrangement of elements such as themes, concepts, characters, or references. Returning to Saint-Hubert, his text considered compositions of motions, costumes, actions, and equipment as much as arrangements of *entrées* and themes around the notion of the subject [Chapter 1]. From the perspective developed here, these latter arrangements are not just frameworks in which the choreographic work of dance-making enters, but are choreographically relevant in themselves.

In the between-ness

Recounting a period of Mesa's career when she worked with collage, her regular collaborator Francisco Ruiz de Infante notes that she collected the elements to be used in the collage but did not glue them into any fixed position.[47] *Solo a ciegas* is similarly fleeting – a fragile construction, that defies the expectation of dissolution by remaining present, not falling apart. The physicality of the body – its rawness – combined with other media, is made evident; at the same time, by emerging through the immaterial, and shifting relations between these elements, *Solo a ciegas* has a strikingly non-solid, evanescent quality. The arrangement of the work's relations – beyond an assemblage of physical elements, their effects, and the information they transmit – generates an ambience-like quality, an environment, a *milieu* in which they coevolve. In a comparable way, Laermans refers to the 'total performativity' of assemblage-based, multimedia choreographies as something 'that the spectator usually experiences and speaks of in atmospheric terms';[48] Jenn Joy similarly refers to 'the choreographic as *an atmospherics* of encounter'[49] – choreography as *ambience*.

47 Ruiz de Infante, Francisco : Ces collages pas collés… (première tentative), in : Ruiz de Infante: *Olga Mesa et la double vision*, p. 125.

48 Laermans: *Moving together*, p. 233.

49 Joy, Jenn: *The Choreographic*, Cambridge/London: MIT Press 2014, p. 7, emphasis added.

The ingredients from which the fragile but persistent atmosphere develops are on stage from the beginning of the *Solo*: the performer is there while the audience enters, as well as the technical equipment – light console, projector – and other objects the performer will (not) use; the prologue text prefigures many of the topics touched upon throughout the performance. No connection exists between them; only progressively will an ambience be created between seemingly-disparate elements. This piece both gives rise to this universe and exists through its emergence. Irène Filiberti perfectly grasps this passage from disparate presences to a combined, ambience-like entity in Mesa's work:

> *[D]ans cet espace ouvert, infiniment, les choses, les mots, les corps, le mouvement ne peuvent apparaître qu'à partir de leur état premier : une page blanche, un espace vide. Ici, même le sol est un gisement de possibilités, de virtualités. Et puis, sans qu'on y prenne garde, avec le temps, cela prend forme, momentanément. Un frémissement, une hésitation, une émergence, une matière, une image, une phrase. Soudain on est devant la chose. Là, précisément où elle advient, où elle est juste en train de se faire* [in this infinitely open space, things, words, bodies, movement, can only appear from their primary state: a blank page, an empty space. Here, even the floor is a deposit of possibilities, of virtualities. And then, without us noticing, through time, this takes form, momentarily. A simmer, a hesitation, an emergence, a matter, an image, a phrase. Suddenly, we are in front of the thing. There, exactly where it comes about, where it is just in the making].[50]

The piece is progressively developed out of fragmentary entities, that do not fully blend into each other; even when the different elements seem to entwine into a whole – accentuating each other's effects – the poles of their relations remain visible, thus barring the formation of a "total" combination. To take an example from what Mesa considers to be the climax of the work,[51] she is naked, wearing a goat-mask and high heels [Figure 21]. In front of the film projection mirror, both her physical body and its reflection are visible. Unclear sounds form a soft background. The film image, superposed on her body's reflection, changes from a blue, abstract, still image to figurative-but-unidentifiable shots. The woman-goat figure moves slightly, unhurriedly, and the humming chorus from *Madama Butterfly* begins.

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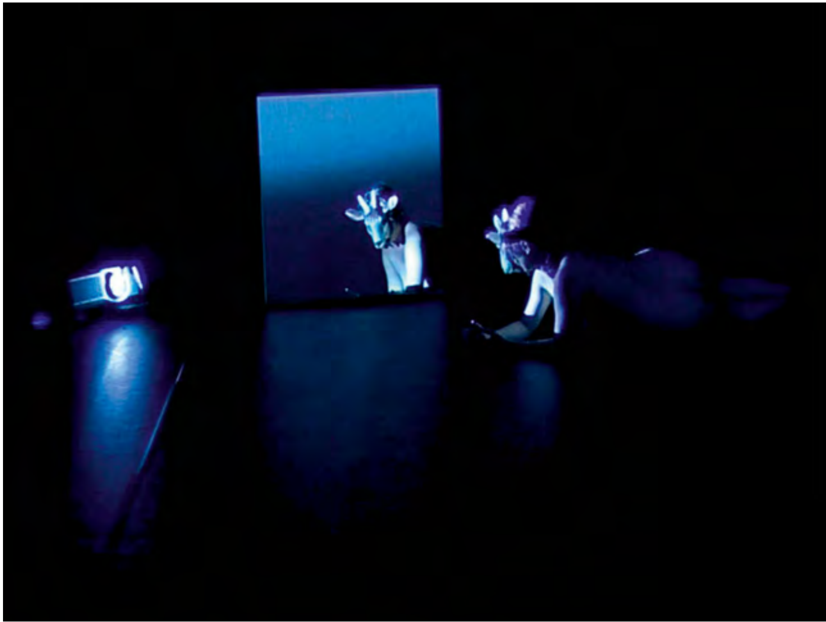
50 Filiberti, Irène: Le processus est poésie, in: Ruiz de Infante: *Olga Mesa et la double vision*, p. 11.

51 Mesa: Interview.

Figure 21: Film still from the video recording of Solo a ciegas (con lágrimas azules). *Source: Mesa, Olga:* Solo a ciegas (con lágrimas azules) *[DVD], Cie. Olga Mesa / Association Hors Champ – Fuera de Campo 2008, 41:19. No re-use without permission.*



The scene does not erase the distinct elements of which it is composed; body, movements, mask, sounds, film images, light, mirror, humming and blueness, goat-ness and human-ness, nakedness and heel-extensions, the theatrical present and 1904 Japan, the theatrical space and the film space – the spectator is aware of each and every one of them. At the same time, they are related, the perception of one associated with the perception of another; the nostalgic calmness and melancholy of the humming responds to the body's slight movements, the almost-abstract film images make space for the goat-head, the low background sounds underlie the scene's overall fragility.

Rather than attending to individual elements *or* the whole they compose, the spectator can focus on the interval of the relation, the space between different elements, a space which belongs to each and to all. In her text 'The Choreography of Singularity and Difference' – to which the present analysis is greatly indebted – on Salamon's *And Then,* Ana Vujanović similarly sees the work as consisting of human/dance actions and multiple media (including film), as well as existing *between them*. In a passage that could apply to the choreographed between-ness of *Solo a ciegas,* she writes that Salamon's choreography

> is also the speech as a soundtrack, the filmed interviews, the camera angles and movements, the lighting on stage, the *dispositif* of the screen-stage, the performing modes. However, choreography here relates to, but at the same time cannot be reduced to, the inscription of these various elements themselves. The choreography here is the inscription of differences, shifts, and the *movements* between them.[52]

Recounting evolutions in Mesa's choreographic career, Jaime Conde Salazar similarly notes that

> *l'écran avait commencé à reprendre du terrain à la scène de telle manière que celle-ci finit par devenir un espace étrange entre différents médias ; une sorte de seuil où l'action vivante n'était complète qu'en relation avec l'image projetée* [the screen had started to take over with respect to the stage in such a way that the stage ended up becoming a strange space between different media; a sort of limit where the live action was only complete in relation with the projected image].[53]

Solo a ciegas, like Salamon's *And Then*, does not only exist in the space between its media, but also in the suspended time between its temporalities, the immaterial space between its spatialities, the relations between the subjects it brings onto the stage. The *Solo* almost floats among the elements out of which it is constructed, instead of remaining solely attached to their individual being and presence – and instead of creating a concrete, new, accumulated unit.

Arguably, this between-ness is the source of the piece's atmospheric quality and its very basic ingredient. 'Relations are themselves experienced' writes Brian Massumi,[54] referring to William James' idea, illustrated by Chénin's videos [Chapter 4]; a relation is not a mere projected association between distinct elements, but it is, itself, existing and perceptible. Comparably, the in-between intervals that form *Solo a ciegas* can be perceived as such; the work's very being is found in the composing elements *and* the interstitial space between them. This relational space also has qualities including, but not limited to, those determined by the participating media. In the goat-mask scene, when Mesa positions herself in front of the projection mirror [Figure 21] and moves, the interval between her body and the mirror can be understood as a relation in space, of images, of (bodily, bodily-mediated, and filmed) actions, and is perceived in a correspondingly cross-modal way. Relations are sensed in a field

52 Vujanović, Ana: The Choreography of Singularity and Difference. *And Then* by Eszter Salamon, in: *Performance Research* 13/1 (2008), p. 129.

53 Salazar, Jaime Conde: Hors Champs, in: Ruiz de Infante: *Olga Mesa et la double vision*, p. 35, emphasis added.

54 Massumi, Brian: *Semblance and Event. Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*, Cambridge/London: MIT Press 2011, p. 34.

between vision, audition, and kinaesthesia for the moving image. These relations have a texture, influenced by the sleekness of the mirror images, the roughness of its content, the rawness of the performer's skin; they have an intensity, modulated by the luminosity of the film and lights, the volume of the sound, the speed of the body; they have a sharpness, modified by contrasts in the film, the hesitations of the performer, the distinctness of the sounds. Most of these qualities emerge from media participating in the relations – the brightness of the film, the volume of the sound – but several also depend on their content and information. In the scene considered here, the humming chorus, nakedness and exposure of the body, goat-face, and film shots give the intervening space a nostalgic, melancholic, solitary, loss-ridden, strange, and strangely-familiar dimension. This texture, intensity, sharpness, nostalgia, solitariness, and strange familiarity are only partial attributes of the scene's individual elements; more so, they characterise the interstitial spaces – the relation – between them. In other words, the relations composing the piece are not abstract patterns but concrete, specific, qualitatively-describable entities. Mesa's art making is, thus, a process of arranging relations between heterogeneous elements, as well as an act of arranging heterogeneous relations.

The idea that the piece exists in both the compositional elements and in the immaterial territory circulating between them can be connected to the notion of assemblage, already employed to describe Mesa's work. In Jane Bennett's words,

> no one materiality or type of material has sufficient competence to determine consistently the trajectory or impact of the group. The effects generated by an assemblage are, rather, *emergent properties*, emergent in that their ability to make something happen […] is distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone. Each member and proto-member of the assemblage has a certain vital force, but there is also an effectivity proper to the grouping as such: an agency of the assemblage.[55]

Mesa's work can also be seen as the emergent effect of its material performers' actions and relations. Towards the end of the piece, the performer goes to

55 Bennett, Jane: *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham: Duke University Press 2010, p. 24, emphasis added. Manuel DeLanda links emergence with the assemblage's characteristic of retaining the singularity of its members, an idea also discernible in Mesa's work: '[u]nlike wholes in which "being part of this whole" is a defining characteristic of the parts, that is, wholes in which the parts cannot subsist independently of the relations they have with each other (relations of interiority), we need to conceive of emergent wholes in which the parts retain their autonomy, so that they can be detached from one whole and plugged into another one, entering into new inter-actions.' DeLanda: *Assemblage Theory*, p. 10

the back of the stage and opens the black backdrop curtains to reveal the backstage area, where she performs a series of movements, including tango-based steps [Figure 22]. The physical space suddenly becomes bigger; an increase in the sound volume – tango music – contributes to this sense of opening, of escaping; some of the invisible equipment appears. For a moment, the universe on stage oscillates between evaporating – collapsing through the dissolution of its spatial boundaries – and expanding – to include the newly-visible elements. In this ambivalence, it becomes possible to realise that the piece has created a universe – an ambience-like existence – out of minimally-few disparate objects, words, actions, and images; by opening up to the "beyond" of the stage, and increasing the fragility of the relational arrangement that it has formed, the emergent relational entity is made manifest.

Figure 22: Film still from the video recording of Solo a ciegas (con lágrimas azules).[56]
Source: Mesa, Olga: Solo a ciegas (con lágrimas azules) *[DVD], Cie. Olga Mesa / Association Hors Champ – Fuera de Campo 2008, 41:19. No re-use without permission.*

56 The piece was conceived as having the spectators on the stage. In this way, when the curtain opened, it would reveal an *hors-champ* constituted by the empty auditorium. This was, however, realised very few times due to technical difficulties. Mesa : Interview.

As an immaterial emergence, the work *is* not but rather *happens*;[57] it comes about through the conjunctive actions of the assemblage's members. Indeed, even if the piece is mostly set and does not contain real-time improvisation, the constraints of the choreography are – in the expression of Mesa herself – 'alive'.[58] The relations between her body and other media are not just mechanically *performed* but *lived* in specific moments; for example, the sound technician can react to the performance by making sound respond to it.[59] A choreography of *doing* concerns what the choreographer does, as well as choreography itself as happening.

Thus the question of choreographic ontology is not simply replaced by a focus on relational praxis, but also by a focus on the results of this praxis in their emerging. Mesa's work therefore allows choreography's being and its characteristics to be envisaged without solely referring to physically-present entities and performed actions, but also to their relationality as happening. Once again, this relocation of choreographic ontology has historiographic importance; it seeks the choreographic beyond physical presences and practices, in the very unfolding of (com)position. In 1641, Saint-Hubert's list of necessary elements in a court ballet contained physically-present acts (dance, music) and material entities (costumes, machines), as well as dramaturgical aspects (subject, order) [Chapter 1].[60] These are *ingredients* of ballets, illustrating that in Saint-Hubert's context, ballet consisted of physically-instantiated acts and presences as much as the order of their composition; and that, as different as Saint-Hubert's focus on order may be from Mesa's evanescent emergence, they are both modes of unfolding relational choreography.

Conclusion

A word spoken, a fleeting image, a leg flying upward, a bright light turning blue, an object touched, a phrase written; Olga Mesa's *Solo a ciegas* allows a consideration of choreography that expands beyond the dancing/moving human body by re-aligning it with other media in a non-hierarchical relationship. Beyond a choreographic concern for the actions of the moving/dancing body and other media, however, the current analysis of Mesa's work identifies choreography as

57 On the active, dynamic nature of assemblages see DeLanda: *Assemblage Theory*, as well as Laermans, who identifies a 'here-and-now or event-quality' in them: Laermans: *Moving Together*, p. 12.

58 Mesa: Interview.

59 Ibid.

60 Saint-Hubert: *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, Genève: Minkoff 1993 [1641], p. 6.

a process of arranging relations between them. In this construal, choreography is characterised more by the act it operates – arranging, organising, ordering, relating – than by the types of objects – (non)corporeal, (non)physical, (non)kinetic – it applies to. Choreographic authorship is correspondingly modified and likened to other relational practices, placing it in an interdisciplinary position defined by common ways of *doing*.

A hungry kid, a woman-animal, a tango, a night of longing, a mission of resistance. In *Solo a ciegas*, the sounds, texts, film images, movements, and lights that are put in relation are intertwined with an arrangement of ideas, subjects, references, times, and places to form a portrait of war and childhood, loss and memory. The shift of choreography from material ontology to praxis of relational arrangement detaches it from a particular view of choreographic intermediality, and envisages it as a process of assembling narratives, subjects, and fleeting universes. As such, Mesa's choreography weaves a choreographic politics of memory, disruptive in its non-linearity, hybridised in its multiplicity, and critical in its open-endedness.

Intensity, texture, sharpness. Shifting choreographic attention to the creation of relations as potential objects of choreography, it is also possible to focus on how relations themselves are constituted beyond their poles as distinct entities or their additive effect. In this perspective, qualities that are attributes of the relations between the piece's materials are identifiable, beyond the qualities of those materials themselves. *Solo a ciegas* is composed of a body and sounds, of objects and texts, of film images and lights; it unfolds through an acting body, erupting sounds, changing lights, and moving images. But what it *is* can also be found in the interstitial, relational space, in the ambience-like, seemingly-fleeting-yet-persistent universe that develops in their between-ness. This development is an emergence, an event contingent upon the choreographic assemblage's distributed actions; it is an illustration of choreography's being beyond the materiality of its physically-present ingredients.

As a multimedia construction in which dance and the moving human body assume a non-hierarchical position – in horizontal coexistence with other media – Mesa's *Solo* reflects Saint-Hubert's non-solely-dance-centred vision of ballet [Chapter 1]. As a non-medium-specific assemblage resulting from a non-medium-specific relational praxis, the piece reflects *La Manière de composer*'s composite ballet spectacle and the interdisciplinary role of some of its practitioners. As a choreographic act of arrangement reaching beyond intermediality, Mesa's work reflects Saint-Hubert's ballet's dramaturgical links between non-linearly-related parts. As an event emerging from heterogeneous relations, *Solo a ciegas* reflects Saint-Hubert's focus on order and the subject as non-physical constituents of the ballet. Identifying these reflections may seem preposterous; viewing 17th-century ordered assemblages through a contemporary, Deleuzeian/

Guattarian choreographic-assemblages lens *is* preposterous. But, it is preposterous in Mieke Bal's sense of the term; [61] it is a historiographic act of purposefully putting "before" what came "after" to consider the relevance each may hold for the other. This relevance is the marker of common issues despite differential responses, thus pointing to the need for a macro-history of choreography that includes pre-modernist composite spectacle along with contemporary work that counters modernist influences. Contemporary Deleuzeian-Guattarian assemblages and 17th-century ordered assemblages are radically dissimilar – from Mesa's dispersed dramaturgy to Saint-Hubert's centralising subject; from Mesa's compositional open-ness to Saint-Hubert's compositional rules – but they are dissimilar *as choreographic assemblages*. It is in this framework – of a parallel choreographic history – that a comparison between them needs to be pursued.

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

Chapter 6: Being (in) a choreographic object: William Forsythe's artificial nature installation in Groningen[1]

In the late 1980s, the Dutch city of Groningen was preparing to celebrate its 950th anniversary. For this occasion, several figures of the city's public life – most notably a former businessman named Frank Mohr – initiated a large-scale urban art installation project that would "mark" the city's boundaries at the same time it marked the city's anniversary. The chosen artist – architect Daniel Libeskind – prepared a "masterplan" wherein nine additional architects, thinkers, and artists proposed installations – called "markers" or "tokens" – to be erected around the city. The project was generally met positively in Groningen – a medium-sized city of around 200,000 residents – although some viewed it as a public-relations, image-building enterprise.[2] Funds were secured via organisations, including the municipality and Rijswijk's Ministry of Public Health and Culture.[3] An advisory committee was established, composed of actors from museum-related and academic contexts. A parallel steering group was also formed, to technically support the development of the project; it included a member of Groningen's municipal town-planning department, as well as Mohr.[4]

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1 Parts of this chapter are based on 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.

2 Grassmuck, Volker: A Combinatorial Cosmology of the Contemporary City. The Books of Groningen: Marking the City, in: *Intercommunication* 2 (1992), http://waste.informatik.hu-berlin.de/~grassmuck/Texts/groningen.html (August 2020). The number of residents in the city may have varied since the 1990s.

3 Letter to Daniel Libeskind from the municipality of Groningen, 23 June 1989, Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – MAP 1, pp. 3–4; Hefting, Paul & Winkel, Camiel van (eds.): *Marking the City Boundaries: The Books of Groningen*, Groningen: City Planning Department 1990, unpaginated.

4 The advisory committee included W.H. Crouwel, director of the Boymans van Beuningen museum, Rotterdam; M.H. Cornips, conservator in the art department of Groninger

Libeskind's "masterplan" – or, as he called it, the 'critique' of a masterplan[5] – was titled *The Books of Groningen* and was organised around the city's name as it appears on the oldest-surviving handwritten document – CRUONINGA; each marker corresponds to one of its letters.[6] Libeskind also associated each city marker with a Greek muse, a colour, a time of the day, a place in the city (tavern, streets…), a material, and a (liberal) art, thus creating what Ruth Wallach termed an 'urban cosmology'[7]. The masterplan was embodied by a metallic book, each page corresponding to one marker. Based on this plan, and consistent with Libeskind's insistence on the interdisciplinary and international nature of the project,[8] a group of artists and theorists[9] were invited to propose designs for the markers. Each installation was placed at a route entering/exiting the city (one more, by philosopher Paul Virilio, is found in the town centre); they form a belt around present-day Groningen, spelling out its ancient name.

One of the artists invited to design a city marker was choreographer William Forsythe, who was director of Ballett Frankfurt at the time. His marker, completed in 1990, is what may be called an "artificial nature" installation in a field at the fringes of Groningen. It consists of a straight, approximately-400-meters-long canal excavated in the field, parallel to which willow trees were planted. Each willow's trunk is strapped to a concrete pillar in the canal via a metallic wire; the wire pulls the trunk towards the pillar, creating an arc-like form over time [Figure 23]. An S-shaped hedge made of hip-height bushes crosses the canal [Figure 24].

museum, Groningen; E. R. M. Taverne, Professor of History of Architecture at the State University of Groningen and P. H. Hefting, of the Dutch PTT. Cf. Hefting & Winkel: *The Books of Groningen*, unpaginated

5 Quoted in Grassmuck: A Combinatorial Cosmology of the Contemporary City.

6 Libeskind, Daniel: Presentation of the Masterplan (transcription), 1990, Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – MAP 1, p. 5.

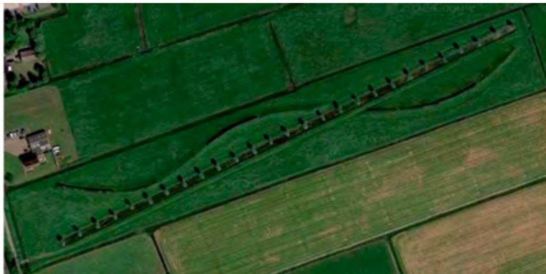
7 Wallach, Ruth: Marking the City: Place-Making and the Aesthetics of Urban Spaces, in: Klusáková, Lud'a & Teulières, Laure (eds.): *Frontiers and Identities: Cities in Regions and Nations*, Pisa: Plus-Pisa University Press 2008, p. 286.

8 Letter from Daniel Libeskind to the advisory committee, 5 November 1989, Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – MAP 1.

9 The group included, apart from Libeskind himself, Kurt W. Forster, Akira Asada, Thom Puckey, Gunnar Daan, Heiner Müller, John Hejduk, Leonhard Lapin, William Forsythe, and Paul Virilio.

Figure 23: Willows along the artificial canal are bent by being pulled by a metallic wire attached to a concrete pillar. The Books of Groningen. *Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe,* BOOK N(7): *Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato, William Forsythe. Photograph: Emma Villard. No re-use without permission.*

Figure 24: Aerial view of William Forsythe's marker showing the hedge crossing the canal. The Books of Groningen. *Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe,* BOOK N(7): *Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato, William Forsythe. Source: Google Maps, 2020, May 29.Ruischerbrug,Scale: 50m. Google Maps [online] (Retrieved 29.05.2020). No re-use without permission.*



Corresponding to CRUONINGA's second "N", the marker is associated – according to Libeskind's masterplan – with mechanics, dance, the red flame, 3pm, the streets, and Erato, the muse of lyric poetry. (Terpsichore, the muse of dance, corresponds to architect Gunnar Daan's installation, consisting of two large frames in the form of open book pages, filled with small aluminium plates that subtly "dance" in the wind.)[10] Forsythe himself simply names the work *The Books of Groningen* with the subtitle *Book N(7)* and characterises it – prefiguring his work on choreographic installations in the 2000s and 2010s – a "choreographic object" for which he shares authorship with Libeskind.[11]

Related in Libeskind's mystical system to dance but not to its muse, described as "choreographic" but also as an "object", the marker raises the question of what conception of choreography is active in this non-human, largely-non-moving work of land art. This chapter draws from three types of sources to explore this question: firstly, a personal visit to the marker (and other markers around Groningen); secondly, a series of discussions with Groningen municipality employees who worked on the installation, and with Forsythe's collaborators who have experience of his more recent choreographic objects; and finally, Groningen Municipality's archives on the project. Based on these, this chapter presents the installation as a contemporary choreographic expansion that counters the anthropocentrism and kinetic necessity of choreography – historical constructions that succeeded Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro's early-Italian Renaissance[12] [Chapter 3] but continue to colour present readings of them.

A choreography of nature

Everything in Forsythe's marker is human-made; the field in which the installation now stands was previously just a grass-filled space surrounded by other fields and roads, transformed with a canal dug from scratch and the planting of willows and a hedge.[13] The choreographer intervened in the natural growth process of the bushes and trees, exploiting the unusual suppleness of willow wood, as well as the presence and flow of water – ultimately creating

10 Quoted in Papadakis, Andreas C. (ed.): *Marking the City Boundaries*, London: Art and Design/Academy Editions 1992, p. 53.

11 Forsythe, William: The Books of Groningen, undated, http://www.williamforsythe.com/installations.html?&no_cache=1&detail=1&uid=36 (August 2020).

12 For an analysis of Libeskind's plan in relation to the Renaissance, see Stieber, Nancy: The Triumph of Play. Charts, Carts and Cards, in: Papadakis: *Marking the City Boundaries*, pp. 9–15.

13 Lourens, Diana, Pestoor, Jan & Tervoort, André: Interview with the author (August 2017).

a site of artificial nature. Over time, human intervention in the installation has continued; the Groningen city maintenance department trims and cuts the tree branches to visibly retain the arched shape.[14] The idea of human control over nature is prominent, both in Forsythe's marker's conception and in the discourse surrounding it. According to Dik Breunis – member of the *Books of Groningen* steering group who participated in the preparatory discussions about Forsythe's marker – the choreographer's conceptual focus was placed on two poles: firstly, the history of Groningen and, secondly, the interaction of humans with nature – and more specifically, human attempts to control and change nature to achieve their goals.[15] Bringing these two interests together, the installation's three components – willows, hedge, canal – all refer to how nature has been historically modified by Groningen inhabitants to facilitate their living and work conditions. The canal points to the multiple artificial canals present throughout the city; the bending of the trees reproduces a traditional, local technique used to obtain ship-making wood; the hedge can be seen as an artificial dike, an elevated ridge used in the Netherlands to protect from rising sea levels.[16] The discourse presenting the installation to visitors is also focussed on human control over nature; in the explanatory entrance sign the marker is said to 'represen[t] the way in which mankind has made changes to the natural world for centuries in order to survive'. A similar reception is found by theorists; for Wallach the willows form 'a forced canopy over the canal',[17] while for Nancy Stieber 'Forsythe's trees in bondage bow gracefully to human control, in elegant but tortured tension'.[18] People control nature, and choreographers define the movement of bodies – in an expansion of choreography, the choreographer controls nature and defines the forms that it will embody.

The Groningen project is not Forsythe's only choreography of nature. His 2013 work *Aviariation* also – and even-more visibly – choreographed trees in a square in central Basel, by fitting them with electronic devices that produced sound vibrations that moved their branches. There are further examples of

14 Ibid; email to the author.

15 Breunis, Dik: interview with the author (August 2017). This is consistent with Libeskind's plan, which aimed for 'a rethinking of the symbolic and imaginative role that the city plays in the lives of its inhabitants.' Libeskind, Daniel: Oral Explanation during Presentation "Masterplan" for the Advisory- and Steering Committee, 26 August 1989 (transcript), Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – RO/2126, p. 17.

16 William Forsythe's proposal also included using 'indigenous plants and vegetables, trees, bushes, etc, etc, grasses, flowers'. Note from Forsythe to Frank Mohr, 19 March 1990, Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – RO/2118. This reading was also given in Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

17 Wallach: Marking the City, p. 290.

18 Stieber: The Triumph of Play, p. 13.

Forsythe's work transposing choreographic movement prescription beyond the body. In the 2014 work *Black Flags*, for instance, it is the title's black flags that are put into motion, via robots given choreographic instructions. Expanding the types of objects to which choreography applies, Forsythe's work forms links with the visual arts.[19] It has also become part of a wider tendency – including Mette Ingvartsen's *Evaporated Landscapes* (2009) and *The Artificial Nature Project* (2012), or Jack Hauser/Lisa Hinterreithner's *The Call of Things* (2014) – of choreographically working with non-human elements and materials. This contemporary interest in the choreographic use of non-human materials cannot, however, be reduced to a simple exercise of choreographic control by humans on (natural) objects. Paralleling the development of philosophical perspectives that place increased value on things and materials,[20] such works stress the agency of their non-human performers.

Indeed, cracks appear in the discourse of control surrounding Forsythe's work; in an era of extreme human dominance and influence upon natural resources and phenomena, the Groningen installation has a nostalgic, almost "retro" aspect. Instead of high-tech equipment, it uses straightforward wires and pillars (the most technologically-complicated aspect of the installation – automatic LED lighting – was added by the municipality and was not part of Forsythe's artistic plan[21]); instead of complex control systems, it uses human surveillance and simple gardening; instead of up-to-date procedures and materials, it turns to traditional techniques. This low-tech, simple setup makes the installation's control over nature relative; keeping the vegetation well mowed and weeded, maintaining a completely-stable and precise form for the dike and tree arc, and keeping the canal completely clean and free of insects and plants would require an enormous amount of labour. If the installation stems from a human desire to control nature, it deliberately does not centralise the human within a clearly advantageous, fully-dominant position. The choreography in the installation is not completely human-controlled, and cannot be completely comprehended solely from an anthropocentric perspective.

One way the installation questions such a perspective is by disrupting the spatial scale habitually used by human observers. If the human subject – one partly inherited from the Enlightenment – experiences their being as a unit, the installation cannot be fully grasped at the mesoscopic scale of the plant-unit. The overall shape of the tree and dike change through cell growth (cells

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19 Cf. Leon: Between and within choreographies.

20 See, for instance: Bryant, Levi: R. *The Democracy of Objects*, Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press 2011; Bennett, Jane: *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham: Duke University Press 2010.

21 Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

increasing in size) and cell division (the multiplication of cells),[22] which are only understandable at the microscopic level. (When asked about Forsythe's idea for his marker, Mohr commented that it would be a dance in close-up[23] – like under a microscope.) The trees' embodiment of an arc and the dike's embodiment of a curve happen incrementally, through a cumulative effect of a million microscopic events and cells. From this perspective, plant growth is a matter of innumerable sub-units and not directly of the tree- or bush-unit; the choreography is not performed by a unified single plant entity, but by the plant as a plural constellation. But, for choreography to be seen as a multiplicity of cellular sub-units' action, choreography must open beyond the mesoscopic scale habitually adopted by human subjects. In order to grasp such a choreography, relating to a tree – binding a loop around it, pulling it into an arc – or a bush – planted in specific formations – does not suffice; instead, it requires acceptance of the presence and role of microscopic sub-units whose being – combined with human intervention – makes the choreography possible.

From the cells and particles composing the plant-unit – and their micro-actions that make the plant take form – the installation also branches out to the macro-scale, in which the plant participates. A plant's limits are not clear-cut: its roots extend into the soil and absorb elements of it, its pores are open to the air and humidity, its hormones constantly respond to its environment, its shoots seek sunlight, its branches and leaves host insects. In Forsythe's willows, these "grey" boundaries are expanded by the wires – extensions that connect them with the canal pillars, introducing them into a network that is not reducible to its constituent elements, including other parts of the installation. The wires, as extensions of the trees – in addition to the sun, soil nutrients, rainwater, wind, animals feeding from and into the ground – make changes in the environment that influence the plants; the plants act towards, and because of, elements beyond them. Expanding beyond the plants, the installation also includes the canal, the field in which it was erected, and the complex ecosystem that has developed, largely because of the installation. Plants grow un-planned in the canal and are annually weeded before growing again, the wind adds sound and intensity, small animals cross the field, wild grasses surround the dike, and new small trees appear around the willows, which are allowed to remain so long as they do not drastically interfere with the installation's design.[24] As with its components, the limits of the installation as a whole are not clear. Its borders are marked by two short fences at either end of the field and by a

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22 Lloyd, Clive: Plant Cell Biology, in: Plopper, George, Sharp, David & Sikorski, Eric (eds.): *Lewin's Cells* (3rd edition), Massachusetts: Jones & Bartlett 2015, pp. 947–950.

23 Breunis: Interview.

24 Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

difference in the height (and, at times, colour) of surrounding grass. But, the sounds and movements from nearby streets – cars passing, voices – blend into its environment, as do houses and (unbent) trees in the background. Similarly, while the project aimed to mark Groningen's *boundaries*, the contemporary city is difficult to contain; highways and train lines connect to suburbs and countryside, and the installation is on a boundary that is (possibly only) administratively defined. The municipality's letter to Libeskind regarding his contract suggested that '[t]he tokens are to be placed [...] in such a way that the in- and outgoing traffic (road, water, rail and air) will clearly notice that it is entering or leaving the city, as in former days the gates of the city of Groningen marked the entrance to and the exit out of the city'.[25] But, the city, like the plants and the installation itself, branches out beyond itself, in a macroscopic expansion beyond the scale and perspective of the individual human observer.

If the marker – microscopic or macroscopic constellation – questions the scale of a unitary, coherent human subject, it also casts doubt upon this subject's conception-of-being as autonomous. Indeed, in the macroscopic scale, Forsythe's choreography can be seen as an ecology, a complex macro-system made of heterogeneous, but interrelated, elements: trees, wires, water, soil, wind, insects, light... While Forsythe only partly made a site-specific work (the installation is conceptually associated with Groningen's history, but Forsythe did not choose the particular location[26]), he has, perhaps inadvertently, created an environment of which the installation is part – and which presumably exceeds the choreographer's design. The notion of ecology – introduced in scientific discourse as early as 1866[27] – is encountered in descriptions of contemporary choreography[28] and, particularly, in analyses of Forsythe's installations.[29] In Groningen, the choreographic ecology is, moreover, largely self-regulating: the installation has not suffered from pests, is only mowed at six-month intervals and trimmed once a year, while soil nutrients and abundant rain replace human-driven watering and fertilising. Maintenance largely focusses on damage due to human intervention and repairs of non-essential parts of the installation

25 Letter to Daniel Libeskind from the municipality of Groningen, p. 2.

26 Breunis: Interview.

27 Stalpaert, Christel & Byttebier, Karolien: Art and Ecology: Scenes from a Tumultuous Affair, in: Cools, Guy & Gielen, Pascal (eds.): *The Ethics of Art: Ecological Turns in the Performing Arts*, Amsterdam: Valiz 2014, p. 60.

28 See, for instance, Klien, Michael: *Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, PhD thesis, Edinburgh: Edinburgh College of Art 2008, p. 2.

29 See, for instance, Manning, Erin: Propositions for the Verge. William Forsythe's Choreographic Objects, in: *Inflexions* 2 (2009), http://www.inflexions.org/n2_manninghtml.html (August 2020).

– such as lighting and accompanying electricity circuits.[30] Therefore, it is not only human (choreographic) activity that makes the installation possible; it is also the ecology's capacity for self-regulation and maintenance.

Additionally, Forsythe's marker for Groningen affirms its own way of being against an anthropocentric perspective because of its inscription in time. The installation has a durational aspect that is intimately connected with the monumental, historically-rooted, and future-oriented nature of the municipality and Libeskind's "masterplan" project. In the architect's words, 'the overall Book of the City Marking Project is the letter which has been sent out through the present to those awaiting a reply of the future to what happened in the past'.[31] Libeskind wanted his project to be inscribed in the humanly-experienced time cycle of the 24-hour day, but also in the beyond-individual-lifetime timespan: 'millennial time, based on a 1000 year measure'.[32] The project's installations provide long-lasting traces that have become ingrained in the fabric of the city, as parts of its landscape.[33] (The municipality will maintain the installations for a minimum of fifty years, likely longer.[34]) Forsythe's installation fully enters this lengthened timescale. The work changes throughout the year, cyclically going through phases of bare winter branches and leafy green springs. Over a number of years, the size, form, and thickness of the plants also change; their being is thus introduced within the historical time-scale of the city, evolving with it. The contradictions of a purportedly-unchanging monument are thus avoided. In its extreme durational existence, the piece evolves in a high intensity of slowness, its actions imperceptible to human observers. Like changes to urban landscape that go unnoticed, "before" and "after" pictures are necessary to see change in the installation. The slowness of Forsythe's marker thus provides a response to an age of extreme speed, in the form of an aesthetics of patience. The choreographer was fully aware of the durational aspect of his proposition; according to Breunis, Forsythe was the only artist to really engage with the long-term existence and evolution of his installation – he gave instructions about the need for the wires to follow the trees' growth, changing the strap position to maintain the wire's resistance, and trimming branches to avoid the

30 Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

31 Libeskind: Presentation of the Masterplan, p. 5.

32 Libeskind: Oral Explanation, p. 15.

33 Engaging with the longevity of the project, a school group buried small boxes with drawings and stories about the future next to certain markers – Forsythe's included – to be opened by the students still present several decades later. Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview. Cf. also Grassmuck: A Combinatorial Cosmology of the Contemporary City.

34 Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

trees growing vertically upward.[35] Nevertheless, contrary to other contributions – whose existence or decay depend on municipality intervention – Forsythe's marker can, presumably, continue its existence indefinitely. By the same token, when its vegetation is destroyed, replacement needs to respect the plants' temporality, by waiting for the new plants to grow to the desired size and shape. The timescale of the installation cannot be determined by the human figure, who must adapt to the plants' timescale.

Despite the intentions and discourse that make *Book N(7)* a project of artificial-nature creation, the installation develops beyond human projections because of design choices made by the choreographer and because of its components' plural and durational kind of being – plant but also multiplicity of cells and member of an ecology – affirmed in their growth process. Furthermore, a non-anthropocentric reading of the piece can also muddle possible dichotomies between the human and the non-human. Indeed microscopic, macroscopic, and durational choreography can also apply to the human body. Deborah Hay's conception of the body as a collection of 53 trillion cells[36] is an example of how human bodies can also be seen as agglomerations of microscopic units. From conceptions of humans as ecologies encompassing media-extensions to Forsythe's own transposition of the dancer's centre outside of the body,[37] the macroscopic scale can also be used to understand the actions of humans. In works like Eszter Salamon's *nvsbl* (2006) and Ivana Müller's *Playing Ensemble Again and Again* (2008), dancers evolve in states of intense slowness, at times increasing the duration of action to the point that movements become undetectable. In other words, if Forsythe's marker is a non-anthropocentric choreography, it also acts as a reminder that anthropocentrism may be linked to a specific – autonomous, unitary, mesoscopic – conception of *anthropos*, and

35 Breunis: Interview.

36 Hay, Deborah: *My Body, the Buddhist*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2000, p. 1.

37 Theories of distributed cognition or "active externalism" consider that the environment surrounding a person, as well as the media they use, hold an active role in cognitive processes. Since cognition can be distributed to agents outside the person; the mind itself becomes extended and distributed. Cognition does not happen *in* the person but in the *ecology* of the person. Malafouris, Lambros: *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement*, Cambridge/London: MIT Press 2013; Clark, Andy & Chalmers, David: The Extended Mind, in: *Analysis* 58/1 (1998), pp. 7–19. Bojana Cvejić notes: 'Forsythe […] multiplied the centres within the body, but also transposed them into the space surrounding the body, using not only points but also lines or entire planes on or in which to issue or lodge movement'. Cvejić, Bojana: *Choreographing Problems: Expressive Concepts in European Contemporary Dance and Performance*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2015, p. 138.

that the human being may be seen as a constellation branching out beyond its boundaries as well.

In addition to other figures of choreographic history who operated before the ideological shifts of the Enlightenment, Domenico and Guglielmo [Chapter 3] worked before this anthropocentric, autonomous conception of *anthropos* became entrenched and dominant. If Forsythe's choreographic object in Groningen decentralises such a view of the human and counters its dominance, this allows one to recognise the non-anthropocentric aspects of Domenico and Guglielmo's choreography as well – itself developing parallels between human practitioners and their surrounding world, inscribing dance into a realm not-fully designed by them, and calling into question the very dichotomy between human and non-human.

A choreography of non-moving movement

Forsythe's marker was completed in 1990, one year after Peter Sloterdijk published *Eurotaoismus* and its critique of modernity as a project of ever-increasing, self-perpetuating hyper-mobility. The philosopher – in an argument that highly influenced Dance Studies through André Lepecki's reference to it in his book *Exhausting Dance*[38] – describes the constant striving towards movement as a staple of Western modernity:

> *Fortschritt ist Bewegung zur Bewegung, Bewegung zur Mehrbewegung, Bewegung zur gesteigerten Bewegungsfähigkeit […] Die Modernität ist ontologisch reines Sein-zur-Bewegung* [Progress is movement towards movement, movement towards more movement, movement towards heightened aptitude to move […] ontologically, modernity is a pure being-towards movement].[39]

In the decades that followed – while Forsythe was elaborating his work on choreographic objects – movement increasingly came into the theoretical foreground, as illustrated by the social sciences' "turn" towards the notion of mobility.[40] Choreography has accompanied – or, at least, paralleled – this movement-focus, by expanding its application to multiple, non-dance- and non-art-related movement phenomena – from gendered gesture to the circulation of trolleys

38 Lepecki, André: *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2006, pp. 12–13.

39 Sloterdijk, Peter: *Eurotaoismus: Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1989, pp. 36–37.

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

in supermarkets. If movement is everywhere, choreography gains relevance as a movement-related discipline that can expand beyond dance.

The work that Forsythe proposed for Libeskind's masterplan stands in an ambivalent relationship with this kinetic and choreographic omnipresence. On the one hand, the installation partially corresponds to the idea that Forsythe's choreographic objects are proposals for bodily, kinetic participation. In multiple examples, visitors must engage with Forsythe's installations through movement to achieve a task and to realise the work's *raison d'être*: they enter and move within the inflatable *White Bouncy Castle* (1997, with Dana Caspersen and Joel Ryan), they navigate among oscillating pendulums through *Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time* (2005-), they cross from one hanging gymnastic ring to the next without touching the floor in *The Fact of Matter* (2009).[41] Similarly, since the Groningen marker is in a 400-metre-long field, and since there is no high vantage point from which the installation's three components – canal, trees, dike – can be appreciated, the best way for the visitors to experience the work is to enter the field and walk within it; the installation provokes movement as a response to its design and placement in space. On the other hand, the marker itself performs no evident movement; apart from an occasional wind in the trees and the slight motion of the dike, viewers see a largely-immobile landscape of artificial nature. (According to Breunis, when he and Mohr asked Forsythe whether – as a choreographer – he wanted his installation to move, the answer was no.[42]) In this sense, the Groningen marker is comparable to choreographic objects – such as *A Volume within which it is not Possible for Certain Classes of Action to Arise* (2015), an empty cube whose small dimensions impose limits on users' movements – which allow an exploration of motion while remaining still.

If, however, one adopts a non-anthropocentric perspective on the work, *Book N(7)* cannot be solely grasped as an object whose immobility invites motion by the user. Drawing the focus away from the mesoscopic scale adopted by the average human visitor, the movement in the Groningen marker also happens at micro- and macro-levels which may not include the human observer/user; it

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41 In a 2012 interview, Forsythe explicitly associated the pendulum installation with scores. Forsythe, William, van Imschoot, Myriam & Engels, Tom: Interview, 2012, http://olga0.oralsite.be/oralsite/pages/William_Forsythe_on_Scores/index.html (August 2020). In this interview, Forsythe used the term "choreographic object" to refer to means of communicating information about the body or other choreographic structures – something that is close to the function of his *Synchronous Objects*, discussed earlier. The usage of the term has since shifted to also refer to installations as well; see for example Gaensheimer, Susanne & Kramer, Mario: Foreword, in: Gaensheimer, Susanne & Kramer, Mario (eds.): *William Forsythe: The Fact of Matter*, Bielefeld: Kerber 2016, p. 6.

42 Breunis: Interview.

is detectible in cellular activity[43] that gradually gives form to the choreography, or in members of its moving ecology – the trees pulled towards the pillars, the branches reaching towards the sun, the animals moving among the bushes, the hydrophilic plants growing in the canal. The marker's apparent immobility is due to its motion being too small, too big, or too slow to be perceived by the human observer; but, within this immobility, a different conception of movement, and choreography, may be found as well. This is particularly illustrated by the willows – the installation's sub-part that has received the most attention and is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

In their microscopic and macroscopic scales, the trees respond to a choreographic intervention in the form of wires that influence their growth patterns. As the discourse of control surrounding the installation argues, this intervention is a constraint for the trees. But the wires, beyond imposing a specific form to be embodied, may also be an opportunity; by inviting the trees into an ecology that includes wires and pillars, they allow the willows to embody a curve that is not attainable by their non-choreographed counterparts. Just as a tool allows actions that are impossible for human corporeality without this body extension, choreographic objects render different types of movements possible through the relation of their physical form and the – in this case, leafy and wooden – bodies of their users. The willows are thus invited to explore growth options that they would otherwise not have; what if one grew in arched form?[44]

Even if the choreographic intervention was the same for all of the willows, they have not uniformly responded to that question. Some willows are less curved than others [Figure 25] – in some cases, a second wire has been added to confront the tree's perceived resistance [Figure 26]. Other trees have fully curved towards the wires, but have shifted this curve sideways [Figure 27], introducing an unexpected direction to the work. Such discrepancies counter the discourse of control surrounding the installation; moreover, they highlight that choreographic objects do not fully determine the resulting motions, but open a range of options for users actively engaging with them.

43 This "micro-movement" can only be construed collectively, as individual plant cells display very small changes of position. Lloyd: Plant Cell Biology, p. 947.

44 This analysis is also inspired by Forsythe's rhetorical universe – see Spier, Steven: Dancing and Drawing, Choreography and Architecture, in: *The Journal of Architecture* 10/4 (2005), p. 354.

Figure 25: Trees with different curves. Compare the first willow's closed angle with the second willow's open one, as well as the first willow's strong curve with the fourth willow's much lighter bend. The Books of Groningen. *Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe,* BOOK N(7): *Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato, William Forsythe. Photograph: Emma Villard. No re-use without permission.*

Figure 26: Tree pulled by a double wire. The Books of Groningen. *Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe,* BOOK N(7)*: Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato, William Forsythe. Photograph: Emma Villard. No re-use without permission.*

Figure 27: Tree curving sideways. The Books of Groningen. *Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe,* BOOK N(7)*: Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato, William Forsythe. Photograph: Emma Villard. No re-use without permission.*

According to Christopher Roman[45] – who collaborated with Forsythe as a dancer for multiple years and has experience of his installations – at times the choreographer refers to the objects as "propositions" towards participants, to be responded to in multiple ways. Thus, the object is not a physical translation of a prescriptive choreographic idea, but a framework for investigation. Steven Spier describes *White Bouncy Castle* in a similar way: '[a]t the time of the piece Forsythe was particularly interested in processes that would produce movement that was in accordance with the principles of a work, but not determined by him in detail'.[46] Forsythe has noted that in choreographic objects 'physical engagement is the means to understanding *the class of actions* to which each choreographic

45 Roman, Christopher: Interview with the author (September 2017).

46 Spier, Steven: Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies, in: Spier, Steven (ed.): *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography: It Starts from any Point,* Oxon/New York: Routledge 2011, p. 142.

system refers'[47] – the object may therefore be a territory in which its user can choose from the kinetic potentials offered by the environment.

Forsythe's choreographic action is, then, less a definition of movement than the creation of an environment in which different movements can arise; it is the generation of movement potentials. But this does not mean that all potentials afforded by the wires *will* be explored; certain tree forms and actions will never become visible, just like users of other choreographic objects may not actually perform all possible actions. Nevertheless, the objects still include the potential for unrealised actions; the potential movements a choreographic object affords – even if no one has performed them – and all the potential states and forms of the object itself – even if it has not exemplified, or will not exemplify, them – are parts of the object. Forsythe's choreography may therefore be more fully understood if not reduced to a dichotomy of movement realised or not realised. It is not limited to the selection of one option from among a number of defined possibilities – in this case, that the tree performs this specific curve instead of any other potential movement – thus favouring actually performed movements over non-realised ones; rather, it includes multiple, potential, virtual options. The choreography is not composed of the exclusion of unrealised forms, but of the co-presence of virtual forms alongside its actual one;[48] its apparent lack of activity coexists with the potential motion contained within the installation.

Thus, the tree ecologies – their form, flexibility, spatial disposition – are a choreography in a state of immobility too. Similarly, when asked about the choreographic interest that Forsythe's installations may display in their "inactive", immobile state, Roman responded that several choreographic traits can be identified even when they are not used; for him, the height of each ring in *The Fact of Matter*, the distances between them, and the size of the room in which they are found are all visible aspects of choreographic design.[49] Caspersen, another of Forsythe's long-time collaborators, concurs:

> These are situations where, unlike in traditional performance, the choreographic principles are visible and persist over time. The public enters into the choreo-

47 Quoted in Millqvist, Elisabeth: Sculpturemotion, 2017, http://www.wanaskonst.se/en-us/Art/Art-2017/SculptureMotion/SculptureMotion (August 2020), emphasis added.

48 This draws from Gilles Deleuze's treatment of virtuality, developed in his work on Henri Bergson: '[f]rom a certain point of view, in fact, the possible is the opposite of the real, it is opposed to the real; but, in quite a different opposition, the virtual is opposed to the actual […] The possible has no reality (although it may have an actuality); conversely, the virtual is not actual but *as such possesses a reality.* […] the possible is that which is "realised" (or is not realised) […] The virtual, on the other hand, does not have to be realised, but rather actualised […]'. Deleuze, Gilles: *Bergsonism*, New York: Zone Books 1991 [1966, trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam], pp. 96–97.

49 Roman: Interview.

> graphic environment, and their bodies, trained or untrained, and the decisions that each person makes, become a perfect expression of the environment. However, the choreographic principles exist and are visible independent of those bodies and decisions.[50]

In Groningen, the willows display, in their apparent immobility, choreographic properties – a play of force and resistance, gravity and flexibility, curving and asymmetry – that may never be used in performance, but which still illustrate choreographic decisions and options. *Book N(7)* is choreographic because it sets its users in motion and because it itself moves, micro- and macroscopically; but, it is also choreographic in its very immobility – like a fantasmatic interval [see Chapter 3 on *fantasmata*] – not *despite*, but precisely *in*, its lack of displacement.

If Forsythe's *Book* expands choreography, then, this may not be simply because it transposes a conception of choreography associated with movement in spacetime to the micro- or macroscopic level. It is also because it marks a shift in choreography's very relationship with movement; the marker's immobility, its lack of displacement, is more than an illusion due to the human observer's incapacity to see that it "really" is in motion. Rather, a different kind of choreographic motion emerges – one which is not performed, not actual, but nonetheless present. In a context of omnipresent motion, such a view of choreography does not avoid or exclude movement; it is neither passive immobility nor a refusal of movement, but a reconsideration of movement – and choreography's relationship with it.

While this view of choreography is developed on the apparent immobility of non-human entities – trees – it can apply to the human (dancer) as well. For example, in improvisational strategies investigating not the movement that *will* happen but the explosion of possibilities that *could* happen, potential, non-realised movement can also exist in, and be experienced by, human subjects.[51] Indeed, Forsythe's work in Groningen is part of a wider framework in which choreographic theory displays an interest in "non-moving" movement that is also applicable to human bodies. For instance, theorist Petra Sabisch has argued for a choreography that does not exclude movement, but that 'refutes a representational image of movement, according to which only the physical display of locomotion and displacement and the application of a dance code is validated as danced or choreographed movement'.[52] Rudi Laermans introduces the notion of non-movement – of virtual, but not actually performed, movement – in his very definition of dance's medium, when he notes that it

50 Quoted in Spier: Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies, p.140.

51 Cf. Erin Manning on "preacceleration", in Manning: Propositions for the Verge.

52 Sabisch, Petra: *Choreographing Relations: Practical Philosophy and Contemporary Choreography*, Munich: epodium 2011, p. 92.

'*is a merely virtual potential consisting of all possible movements and non-movements*'.[53] This shift in contemporary choreographic mentality is concurrent with multiple experiences of "non-moving movement" – contemporary subjects are exposed to immaterial digital transactions and exchanges within seconds without any actual displacement, to information "circulating" online, to motion felt through virtual reality equipment.[54]

A dichotomy between movement and stillness and between the human and the non-human reinforce each other all too often. In contrast, Groningen's willows enter – and thus widen – the class of performers situated on the "movement" side of the movement/stillness dichotomy. But more than that, what these non-human performers contribute to choreography is their capacity to expand it from an art prescribing (non-)human performers' displacement to an art occupied with an expanded conception of movement, actual or not. In this way, they make visible the shortcomings of a movement/stillness dichotomy – one that, as Lepecki and Sloterdijk, quoted above, remind us, is a result of the process of modernity. To refuse such a dichotomy's relevance is to recognise historical practices' – like that of Domenico [Chapter 3] – own fantasmatic imbrications of motion and stillness as non-oppositional aspects of choreography.

To look at a tree happening

By augmenting trees' motion potential and – purposefully or not – inviting them to provide diverse answers to a choreographic problem, Forsythe's Groningen marker fosters their active participation in the choreographic process. This active participation reflects plants' general mode of function, which is much less passive than conventionally thought:

> The intentionality of the plant is not unidirectional, given that the roots, too, seek nutrients, navigating a veritable environmental maze, sensing humidity

53 Laermans, Rudi: *Moving Together: Making and Theorizing Contemporary* Dance, Amsterdam: Valiz 2015, p. 53 (italics in original).

54 In a comparable string of reasoning, Maaike Bleeker introduces Gilles Deleuze's reflection on cinema and the moving image in her analysis of – intensely slow, or, at times, completely immobile – works by Ivana Müller, arguing that if film does not only represent movement happening in front of the camera but also uses movement as a way of showing its objects – the camera moves, perspectives shift and are multiplied, editing adds a layer of motion – this kinetic medium has so deeply ingrained its movement-thinking in contemporary audiences that it has become possible for them to also perceive non-cinematographic objects in this way. Bleeker, Maaike: Media Dramaturgies of the Mind: Ivana Müller's Cinematic Choreographies, in: *Performance Research* 17/5 (2012), p. 69.

> gradients of the soil, and avoiding movement in the direction of other nearby roots. A combination of passive growth and what appears to be an active "foraging" for resources positions this intentionality on the hither side of the distinction between passivity and activity.[55]

How to cross a room full of rings? How to avoid the pendulums? How to arch your trunk? The answers to these choreographic "questions" are not infinite; they are limited by the object's form and, therefore, the choreographer's choices – but they are more than a mere collection of possibilities pre-defined by the choreographer, as some of these emerge through the trees'/users' engagement. In other words, a choreographic intervention that creates a set of potentials a tree can explore does not necessarily mean that the choreographer can grasp the whole range of resulting movements; it is in the willow-users' active exploration that the potentials appear.

But the trees are not only active because the installation invites them to explore generative motion potentials; they are not *rendered* active by the installation. The choreographic act augments *and* taps into the trees' already-existing capacity to be active; the installation is possible *because* the willows can embody diverse forms, *because* they are dynamic, malleable beings. In other words, although the wires guide the willow trunks to curve, the wires would not have an effect without the trunks' pre-existing flexibility and mobility. The marker choreographically embodies a specific form (an arc), potential for variation of this form (the sideways- and differently-curved bends resulting from Forsythe's intervention), and the trees' unrealised potentials for further form shifts – the willows could, with adequate support, perform a large number of movements, in different directions, bending to the left or right, forward or back. Looking at the willows, then, what one sees is not just the simple addition of all potential movements performed and not performed, but also the very capacity of the object to generate new forms.[56] From this perspective, a tree is active not only in its diverse choices of arching, but also in its state of being.

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55 Marder, Michael: What is Plant-Thinking?, in: *Klesis – Revue philosophique* 25 (2013), p. 129.

56 It is useful to refer to the way in which Deleuze explains his vision of virtuality: 'for the real is supposed to be in the image of the possible that it realizes. […] The virtual, on the other hand, does not have to be realised, but rather actualised; and *the rules of actualisation are not those of resemblance and limitation, but those of difference or divergence and of creation*. […] For, in order to be actualised, the virtual cannot proceed by elimination or limitation, but must *create* its own lines of actualisation in positive acts. […] *It is difference that is primary in the process of actualisation* […]'. Deleuze: *Bergsonism*, p. 97, emphases added.

In this respect, Erin Manning introduces a useful theoretical tool by referring to the notion of objectile to analyse Forsythe's choreographic installations.[57] In his reference to this notion in *The Fold,* Gilles Deleuze writes:

> *L'objet ne se définit plus par une forme essentielle, mais atteint à une fonctionnalité pure* [...] *Le nouveau statut de l'objet* ne rapporte plus celui-ci à un moule spatial, c'est-à-dire à un rapport forme-matière, mais à une modulation temporelle qui implique une mise en variation continue de la matière autant qu'un développement continu de la forme. [...] *C'est un objet maniériste, et non plus essentialiste: il devient événement* [the object is not defined by an essential form anymore, but achieves a pure functionality [...] The new status of the object *does not anymore link it to a spatial mould, that is to a relationship between form and matter, but to a temporal modulation which implies a continuous variation of matter as much as a continuous development of form* [...] It is a mannerist, and not an essentialist object: it becomes event].[58]

This suggests that the object is not matter with unvarying form; in its inactivated state, a choreographic object is not a sculpture. Rather, the object is dynamic; it is defined by what it can do, how it can unfold, how its form happens.[59] In this perspective, beyond providing movement potentials for its users, a choreographic object is dynamic because it contains margins of variation. In the case of Groningen, it is possible to see the trees as natural objectiles, with the capacity to re-arrange themselves. Thus, looking at choreography here means not looking at/for displacement, but at/for the dynamic capacity for change, rearrangement, and unexpected unfoldings.[60]

Therefore, Forsythe's choreography in Groningen is possible through the combination of choreographic intervention and the trees' own, active being.

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57 Manning: Propositions for the Verge. Manning introduces the notion of the objectile while describing choreographic objects as dynamic entities that invite participation within their 'relational environment'.

58 Deleuze, Gilles: *Le Pli. Leibniz et le baroque,* Paris: Les Editions de Minuit 1988, pp. 26–27, emphasis added.

59 For a consideration of 'any object as an unfolding event' see also Lepecki, André: thing:dance:daring:(proximal aesthetics), in: Copeland, Mathieu (ed.): *Chorégraphier l'exposition,* Dijon: Les Presses du réel 2013, p. 97.

60 In a similar vein, dance theorist Bojana Cvejić considers movement as qualitative change over time, rather than relative repositioning or displacement: 'a movement which cannot be seen from the empirical point of view of extension (shape, size, trajectory) – as the displacement of a mobile – but can only be sensed as a transformation of the body in time, as change in duration. [...] To move is not to go through a trajectory which can be decomposed and reconstructed in quantitative terms; to move is to undergo the transformation of the body in the Bergsonian sense that makes movement a qualitative change'. Cvejić: *Choreographing Problems,* pp. 38, 86.

This reading implicates identifying choreographically-relevant action in both the artist's choices, and in the trees themselves. In this way, the installation expands choreographic authorship from a singular human creator towards a non-anthropocentric collection of agencies that, combined, give rise to the work's form. This form is not the stable result of a centralised choreographic prescription, but the constantly- and perpetually-reinstated result of its performers' dynamic existence.

To practice choreography is therefore not-fully coextensive with a productive-creative act; it includes identifying choreographic potential in an expanded realm of non-human, possibly non-intentional agents' being. If Mathilde Chénin's works envisage a multiplication of choreographic ontology [Chapter 4] and Olga Mesa's *Solo* proposed a passage from ontology to praxis [Chapter 5], Forsythe's installation in Groningen invites a passage from choreography-as-praxis to choreography-as-a-tool for identifying, understanding, and relating with material ontology as an active, unfolding process. Indeed, Forsythe's work has the striking ability to make one think of *any* tree, *any* organism, in their stillness, through – and as – choreography. A view of (expanded) choreography as a tool for the perception and conception of one's surroundings is encountered in the words of various choreographic artists. As an echo of Renaissance's cosmic dance of the heavenly spheres, Michael Klien, Steve Valk, and Jeffrey Gormly argue that '[c]horeography is everywhere, always, in everything. I no longer see in pictures. I see movement and interrelation, exchange and communication between bodies and ideas'; choreography is 'a way of seeing the world'.[61] For Chase Granoff, choreography almost becomes an ideology; '[i]t is a weird thing, choreography. I can start to view everything from that perspective [...] What if choreography was a political party or a religion?'[62] For Mårten Spångberg, choreography is 'a complex means of approaching the world. No, the universe'.[63] Choreography is argued to be a mental act, an intellectual activity; skills associated with choreography are likened to a tool both of action and of thought.

The idea of an expanded choreography as a perspective or mode-of-thought is, once again, not only applicable to the apparent stillness of non-human agents, such as a series of willow trees. The very choice of plant life within *Book*

61 Klien, Michael, Valk, Steve & Gormly, Jeffrey: *Book of Recommendations: Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, Limerick: Daghdha Dance Company 2008, p. 24 and unpaginated introduction.

62 Granoff, Chase & Joy, Jenn: Transparency and Process: A Conversation with Chase Granoff and Jenn Joy, in: Granoff, Chase & Joy, Jenn (eds.): *The Art of Making Dances* [No edition information] 2011, pp. 22–23.

63 Spångberg, Mårten: Seventeen Points for The Future of Dance, 2012, https://spangbergianism.wordpress.com/tag/choreography/ (August 2020).

N(7) situates it in a particular, liminal position that undoes the illusory clarity of dichotomies. Plants are not human and share fewer sentient characteristics with humans than animals; at the same time, they are living, organic creatures. From this boundary-occupying position, choreography shifts towards becoming a thinking tool and mode-of-relation with a world envisaged as process. On the one hand, this view of choreography can be applied to multiple inorganic objects and materials; a bowl of liquid, a pile of sand, an elastic band, a piece of metal, a sheet of paper, a drop of paint can all be seen as dynamic choreographic entities that incorporate potential movement and change. On the other hand, it can also be applied to human subjects and how their (potential) movement can be grasped. For example, the expanded choreography of urbanism – the directives and opportunities proposed by street crossings, stairs, obstacles, traffic lights – involves dynamic situations, with unpredictable options bubbling under the surface of actual performance.

In a world where everything and everyone seems to be in motion, ethical and political questions – Who moves? Who decides who moves? What physical, financial, psychological expense is required for motional capacity?[64] – can be translated in choreographic terms. A critical engagement through, and with, movement is indeed present in writings related to (expanded) choreography. For Kai van Eikels, '[c]horeography as a craft of organising dance will […] be an *application* […] of the *choreographic*, which is an intelligence that enables you to redirect the cultural, social, political, economic, psychological, pedagogical, etc. forces of existing patterns and habits of moving';[65] choreography is said to be 'gaining momentum on a political level as it is placed in the middle of a society to a large degree organized around movement, subjectivity and immaterial exchange'.[66] But, if the omnipresence of motion is due to both actual, incessant displacement and the existence of potential movement, its ethics and politics need to also expand towards a non-moving, virtual, still choreography. Shifting choreography from the act of arranging (non-)motions to a tool for understanding staticity in terms of motion, stability in terms of potential, being in terms of becoming, and form in terms of aptitude to change, a choreographic ethics appears that concerns what movement potentials are available, to whom, why, and how. To practice expanded choreography by

64 Cf. Allsopp, Ric & Lepecki, André: Editorial. On Choreography, in: *Performance Research* 13/1 (2008), p. 1.

65 Eikels, Kai van: An Institution Is only as Good as the People who Work there Can be. No?, in: Brandstetter, Gabriele & Klein, Gabriele (eds.): *Dance [and] Theory*, Bielefeld: transcript 2013, p. 306.

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

looking at both mobile and immobile phenomena – and understanding them in terms of active potential – may untangle the ethics and politics – power distributions and spaces of liberty – hidden within a moving stillness: to look for a tree's freedom to become, to explore posture potentials, to tend towards non-movements.

Deleuze writes: 'I have, it's true, spent a lot of time writing about this notion of event: you see, I don't believe in things'.[67] Drawing from Erin Manning and Deleuze, the current reading of *Book N(7)* similarly acknowledges its tree-components' being as happening. This acknowledgement implicates a distributed choreographic agency, beyond the conscious and/or intentional acts of a human author, that inscribes these acts in a world that is always, and already, (choreographically) active. In this perspective, choreography is not a creative intervention in the world – a *poiesis* – but a tool for recognising the world as being (in) a constant, generative process. While this view of choreography is anchored in a contemporary sensitivity, it recognises *as choreographic* historical practices – like those of Domenico and Guglielmo [Chapter 3] – that similarly did not create choreography autonomously, but entered frameworks defined by the non-human – be it nature, music, or a cosmic harmony – and attributed political and ethical importance to them.

Conclusion

In William Forsythe's installation for *The Books of Groningen*, choreography expands by widening its possible objects; instead of human dancing bodies, the work choreographs a water canal and a collection of plants. However, the marker is not the result of fully-human choreographic planning of an artificial nature; its constituents' input is equally crucial. Operating at the microscopic level – the cell or particle – and at the macroscopic level – the complex ecology, with heterogeneous elements – the work leads to a non-anthropocentric choreographic logic. By doing so, Forsythe's artificial nature and its expansion to a non-anthropocentric choreography question assumptions about the human, the human scale, and their autonomy.

Forsythe's early choreographic object in Groningen does not merely change choreography's objects but also its conception of, and relationship with, movement. From a practice arranging how human bodies move across time and space, choreography becomes more than a practice arranging non-human movements (possibly at different scales). It also becomes a field where movement is present

67 Massumi, Brian: *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*, Cambridge/London: MIT Press 2011, p. 6.

despite a lack of actual displacement, turning *potential* movement into valid choreographic material. This view of choreography is neither dichotomously juxtaposed, nor secondary, to an arrangement of perceptible motion in space; by casting doubt on the dichotomy between movement and stillness, it provides an alternative to how choreography can be conceived and practiced.

The willows in Groningen perform a non-anthropocentric choreography of microscopic, macroscopic, and intensely-slow motion; they perform, in their apparent stillness, a virtual choreography of potential motion. But, they can also be seen as active, choreographically-relevant, dynamic entities, before being rendered as such by the choreographer; the installation invites us to see the trees as choreographic agents. From the autonomous act of a human creator, authoring choreography thus becomes the collective outcome of multiple entities' being; from human poietic intervention, choreography itself becomes a tool for observing and recognising the world as always, and already, active. The aesthetics, ethics, and politics of this expanded choreography lie in identifying action potentials *inherent* in the world, rather than the putting-into-motion of this world.

Guglielmo's vision of the person – a microcosmos reflecting the macrocosmos – is mirrored in the Groningen installation's plant performers, non-dichotomously opposed to human ones, yet transforming how the latter are construed; Domenico's stillness-including, fantasmatic dance is mirrored in Forsythe's willows' non-moving choreographic relevance [Chapter 3]. The Renaissance masters' understanding of a choreography exceeding the individual human creator is mirrored in the Groningen trees' active participation in their choreography. Once again, these reflections are not deterministically causal or direct relations, but juxtapositions. As such, what they make manifest is not a transhistorical similarity; Domenico and Guglielmo's harmonious "natural" dance ideologically differs from Forsythe's allowance of unorderly and unpredictable performance. What these examples do make manifest, in their differential singularities and macro-historical links, is the dynamic through which current expansions – that distance themselves from the anthropocentric and the kinetic – widen the contemporary gaze on historical practices that developed outside of the full grasp of anthropocentrism or the kinetic.

Conclusion to Part 2

Just a link, a click, and a small-sized window; red, black, and yellow lines appear and disappear, form and split planes, cross each other, zoom in and out. To get the lines moving, an algorithm has been at work, patiently processing and translating positional data into visual forms – a series of programming instructions give rise to a graphic dance. The lines, planes, and underlying code are performing expanded choreography. A woman is naked; she wears a mask and high heels; she cries and rolls; she tangos and speaks. A screen shows blurry images; a blue light invades the space; reflections multiply both images and space; sounds circulate, words are repeated, music booms and murmurs. The woman, mask, heels, steps, images, screen, light, sounds, words, and music are, together, performing expanded choreography. A group of willows are planted in a field in a small Dutch city. Pulled by wires, the willows bend and bow to the water; they form an arc, a natural half-tunnel, part of an artificially-constructed but not-entirely-human-dependent landscape. This group of trees, in their slow growth and progressive movement towards an arched shape – along with the wires and everything that surrounds them – are performing expanded choreography.

Arguably, Mathilde Chénin's lines are performing expanded choreography because they are remediations of actual, embodied motions, images of a dance that took place [Chapter 4]. Arguably, Olga Mesa's *Solo* is an expanded multimedia choreographic piece, where an embodied practice of dance is complemented by a wide array of other media [Chapter 5]. Arguably, William Forsythe's Dutch willows are an expanded choreography because they are gracefully – or painfully – *dancing*: their leaves dance in the wind, their bodies incorporate choreographic form; their being-plants rendering their dance an expanded choreography [Chapter 6]. These are all justifiable claims. But, a multiple choreographic history points to expansions of choreography that are not only widenings, but also shifts and changes in what choreography is and how it is conceived. From such a perspective, Chénin's lines and planes are not only choreographic because they are rooted in bodily motions; they are also choreographic because they propose a multiple choreographic ontology based on choreography's in-

formational content, adapting to and transformed by different media. From such a perspective, Mesa's *Solo* is not only choreographic because it includes a moving and dancing human body, accompanied by sound, light, text, and other physical presences; it is also choreographic because it is an assemblage of relations, unfolding in the dynamic – albeit immaterial – space between its components; it is fruit of a praxis, rather than type of product. From such a perspective, Forsythe's Dutch willows are not only choreographic because they are micro- or macroscopically moving-dancing; they are also choreographic in their stillness, in the virtuality of their non-movements, and their capacity to turn choreography into a tool for understanding their being. In other words, these works are expanded choreographies because they contain notions of what *else* (expanded) choreography may be.

These three manifestations of choreographic expansion are not an exhaustive overview of the contemporary choreographic field's experimentations, nor do they point towards a unified, singular, essential quality that characterises the expanded choreographic field as a whole. Rather, they portray expanded choreography as a collection of different ways of envisaging choreographic "elseness"; they are parts of a multiple choreographic history because they, too, contribute to its multiplication, its non-linearity, its diversity. They also contribute to this history because – in their sporadic intersections, scattered convergences and agreements – they contrast a hybrid, alternative paradigm to entrenched conceptions of choreography.

This plural paradigm refuses set notions of the human body, motion, and dance. In contrast to corporeally-essentialist choreographic approaches, it does not treat corporeality as fixed, but, rather, posits it as complex and multiple. And in contrast to a refusal of the body, it spills beyond the human by finding commonalities with other species and develops relations of mutual influence by entering non-anthropocentric wholes. Similarly, rather than engaging with stillness as a negation of motion, it questions the equivalence of motion with displacement and explores novel conceptualisations of the kinetic – as change, dynamic existence, virtual potential. Rather than excluding dance, it engages with it in transformational ways, as material to be dephysicalised, a source of information, a member of a composite assemblage. In other words, it proposes a less-essentialised view of what body, motion, and dance can be. Relatedly, this differentiated, expanded-choreographic paradigm refuses a stable choreographic ontology. Treating non-human materialities as choreographic agents, it dissolves hierarchies that bind the choreographic to a specific *type of thing* – the privileged medium of human corporeality. Pointing to the relational between-space or informational content as choreographic, it posits that choreography can be immaterial, intangible, invisible. Shifting focus from its produced "objects" towards praxis-of-creation or even a quasi-ideological tool, it dislodges chore-

ography from the (im)materials it is made of and that it makes. This variable paradigm also plays a role in expanding choreographic authorship – ranging from interdisciplinary creative teams (e.g. in Mesa's work) or interdisciplinary aspects in a single artist's practice that multiply their skills and methodologies (e.g. Mesa and Chénin) to a decentralisation of the human creator when non-human agency contributes to the emergence of choreography.

The plural, expanded-choreographic paradigm finally posits a choreographic politics that both reflects and feeds into the condition of the early-21st century. Against a background of ecological crisis, it proposes a choreography that allows non-anthropocentric communities of beings to enter into horizontal relations and participate in the emergence of often-unforeseeable results. Through the notion of relation as an existing entity – as it appears in Chénin and Mesa's works *via* Massumi [Chapters 4 and 5] – it posits relationality as a constitutive aspect of being, pointing to the limitations of (human) subjects conceived as autonomous. Based on a focus on virtual potential for motion and action – as it appears in Forsythe's work *via* Erin Manning and Gilles Deleuze [Chapter 6] – it concentrates on potential worlds already inherent in daily experience, rather than possible worlds that are detached from a reality perceived as inescapable. The expansion of choreography is concurrent with major ideological shifts towards a view of the world as a complex, interconnected entity that unfolds unpredictably; it is this world that it reflects and it is to this world that it contributes, through its own reconfigurations.

This inscription of expanded choreography in the present does not, however, presuppose its isolation *within* contemporaneity. Expanded choreography's links with choreographic history are multiple and bidirectional; adopting an expanded-choreographic perspective towards the past, in a parallactic[1] movement, allows this past to feed into visions of an expanded present. From a methodological and historiographic standpoint, choreographic history is active in these analyses of present expandedness by hypothesising a multiplicity of choreographic shifts, rather than a widening and linear directionality. But, choreographic history is also active in the echoes between Saint-Hubert's non-medium-specific dramaturgical order [Chapter 1] and Mesa's multimedia practice of arrangement [Chapter 5]; between Raoul Auger Feuillet's corporeal, graphic, and sign-based choreography [Chapter 2] and Chénin's tripartite kinect works [Chapter 4]; between Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro's choreography following natural principles [Chapter 3] and Forsythe co-choreographing his installation with a group of trees [Chapter 6]. These echoes

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

are not markers of resemblance – a court ballet was a radically different spectacle than Mesa's low key, ethereal *Solo*. Nor are they revivals – Chénin's approach is precisely *not* an attempt to recreate a notational practice. Nor are they pointers of linear continuity – there is no causal relation between Domenico's *balli* and curved trees in a Dutch field. Rather, bouncing in the juxtapositional space between past and present, they are indicators of mutual relevance that manifests common problematics despite diverse responses: diverse ways in which choreography has been non-anthropocentric; diverse ways in which it has detached itself from the necessity of displacement; diverse ways in which its ontology has been conceived, from multiple materiality to immateriality; diverse ways in which its authorship is practiced; diverse ways in which it has been inscribed in political and ethical contexts that go beyond human corporeality. There is neither smooth continuity nor rupture between contemporary expanded choreography and choreographic history. There is, however, a necessity to place both in common, macro-historical frames of reference – and thus to envisage histories of expanded choreography.

Part 3: Expanded modernities

Introduction to Part 3

Twentieth-century dance history manifests a fundamental diversity in dance culture. The European territory between the two World Wars, for instance, displays an almost-kaleidoscopic variety. Classical ballet productions at highly-regarded and institutionally-established theatres were produced alongside more daring, experimental, modern ballet productions by companies such as the Ballets Russes and the Ballets Suédois [Chapter 7]. Next to diverse ballets, modern dance and associated practices also manifested themselves in variable forms. Isadora-Duncan-inspired schools pursued quests of free dance and Jaques-Dalcroze-inspired schools tuned moving bodies into rhythm; while Mary Wigman exemplified an expressive but stark style of *Ausdruckstanz*, Kurt Jooss and Valeska Gert developed their own strands of dance theatre. In parallel, "girl" troupes performed in cabarets; Rudolf Laban guided non-professionals dancing in movement choirs; dancers from, or alluding to, Africa and Asia populated European stages and confronted audiences with their exoticising projections; Oskar Schlemmer echoed objectlike baroque costumes; and Fernand Léger made a film called a ballet. This striking diversity is not exclusive to the midwar years in Europe. A similar variety appears in, for example, the 1960s in the United States. This decade of "post-modern" dance saw the creation of Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* (1960), Hanya Holms' excursions towards musical theatre with *Camelot* (1960), Martha Graham's *Phaedra* (1962), Katherine Dunham's *Bamboche* (1962), José Limon's *A Choreographic Offering* (1964), George Balanchine's *Jewels* (1967), Alwin Nikolais' *Tent* (1968), and Jerome Robbins' *Dances at a Gathering* (1969) in parallel with Robert Dunn's John Cage-inspired composition workshops, and the first Judson Dance Theater concerts. Such concurrent diversity is becoming more and more visible in dance historical research, even though the dominance of certain dance styles still skews portraits of the 20th century. Part 3 examines the extent to which such diversity also exists in the *choreographic* history of the period.

In the 20th century, choreography's association with the function of dance-making and the medium of moving corporealities became entrenched and even essentialised. "Choreography" had been used to refer to dance-making since

the 19th century; in 1828, Carlo Blasis used it to describe artistic work on the dance-step content – and not the notation or plot – of a ballet;[1] in 1860, while acknowledging the sense of notation, August Bournonville wrote:

> The term *choreography* has in a peculiar way changed meaning since Noverres's times; today it is used equally with regard to composition and to performance, and the appellation of choreographer is lightly given to the least supernumerary, who transmits what he has seen either his chief or the youngest dancers doing, and for the most part in a rather imperfect form […] Let us begin by dealing with choreography in the literal sense of this word and afterwards with what is now conventionally called choreography, that is the composition of ballets and dances.[2]

It was, however, in the 20th century that the amalgamation of choreography with dance-making was most forceful in Europe and the United States. Wigman, for example, linked dance and choreography: 'We need [counting] especially in our choreographic work, during the process of creation and the rehearsing of group works in the modern dance or ballet'.[3] Graham too spoke of choreography as equivalent to dance-making: 'I choregraphed for myself. I never choreographed what I could not do […] When I stopped dancing, but kept making dances, it was very difficult at first to create not on my own body'.[4] Graham further underlined the connection by commenting that "choreography" can be absorbed by "dance-making":

> [Anthony Tudor] was what was known as a choreographer. Such an impressive word. I had never heard the word "choreographer" used to describe a maker of dances until I left Denishawn. There you didn't choreograph, you made up dances. Today I never say, "I'm choreographing". I simply say, "I am working". I never cared much for choreographing. It is a wonderfully big word and can cover up a lot of things. I think I really only started to choreograph so that I could have something to show off in. It came as a great shock to me when I stopped dancing that I was honored for my choreography as well.[5]

1 Blasis, Carlo: *The Code of Terpsichore*, Hampshire: Dance Books 2008 [1828, trans. R. Barton], p. 95. Cf. Foster, Susan Leigh: *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2011, p. 40.

2 Bournonville, August: *Letters on Dance and Choreography*, London: Dance Books 1999 [1860, trans. Knud Arne Jürgensen], pp. 49–50.

3 Wigman, Mary: *The Language of Dance*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 1966 [1963, trans. Walter Sorell], p. 10.

4 Graham, Martha: *Blood Memory: An Autobiography*, New York: Doubleday 1991, p. 238.

5 Ibid., p. 236.

Beyond modern dance, this view of choreography was present in modern ballet – Susan Foster reports that it was in this framework that "choreography" was first used in this sense[6] – as well as post-modern dance – as Dunn's essay 'Evaluating Choreography'[7] illustrates.

The 20th century paralleled the association between dance-making and choreography with an increased focus on the body and movement as essential elements of dance. From the idea of dance as an autonomous – "absolute" (Wigman) – art that casts aside musical or textual support in favour of self-sufficient expression through corporeal motion, to an organic engagement with corporeality for technique development, and subjective expression through motion that finds a source in the body, the 20th century points to an entanglement of movement, body, and dance. In the words of leading modern dance critic John Martin, dance's very 'material is the whole human body, tangible and real, in movement'.[8] While the above views are mostly associated with modern dance artists, 20th-century ballet also had a central focus on motion and body. For example, critic and ballet proponent André Levinson defined dance as

> *le mouvement continu d'un corps se déplaçant selon un rythme précis et une mécanique consciente dans un espace calculé d'avance. Du fait de situer un corps dans un espace, la danse apparaît comme un art plastique. Du fait d'imprimer à ce corps un mouvement réparti dans le temps, la danse se manifeste comme un art cinématique. […] Une troisième donnée la différencie pourtant de tous les arts plastiques. C'est sa matière: le corps humain* [the continuous movement of a body displacing itself according to a precise rhythm and a conscious mechanics in a pre-calculated space. Because it situates a body in space, dance appears as a plastic art. Because it inscribes into this body a movement distributed over time, dance manifests itself as a cinematic art. […] A third element differentiates it, however, from all plastic arts. It is its matter: the human body].[9]

Against this background, choreography was associated with the specificity of human corporeality and the necessity of motion; Foster sees 20th-century choreography as heading towards the 'process of individual expression through movement'.[10] To take a specific example, Doris Humphrey explicitly linked choreography to corporeality:

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6 Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 43.

7 Dunn, Robert Ellis: Robert Ellis Dunn Remembered. Four Pieces by the Artist/Teacher, in: *Performing Arts Journal* 19/3 (1997), pp. 14–16.

8 Martin, John: *America Dancing*, New York: Dodge 1936, p. 89.

9 Levinson, André: *La Danse d'aujourd'hui*, Paris: Duchartre et Van Buggenhoudt 1929, pp. 172–173.

10 Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 16.

> [T]he first mark of the potential choreographer is a knowledge of, or at least a great curiosity about, the body – not just his own, but the heterogeneous mixture of bodies which people his environment […] I have never heard of a choreographer who achieved even moderate success, who did not have a physical skill in moving bodies, and who was without an over-all theatrical sense of shape.[11]

Mid-20th century, Nikolais qualified motional aspects of his multimedia practice as choreographic: 'I cannot be content as only a choreographer. As such, my dominant concern should be motion; yet I cannot forego my attraction to the shapes and forms of things'.[12] Humphrey-student Limon intersected choreography, body, and movement by talking about how one 'puts together the movements of his body to create the concatenation called choreography'.[13] Once again – and despite the persistence of narrative-oriented choreographic models in classical dance [Chapter 7] – these tendencies are also found in modern ballet; for example, Bronislava Nijinska writes that '[m]ovement is the principal element in dance, its plot. A modern school of choreography must introduce movement into dance technique, it must provide a basis for the theory and the mechanics of dance'.[14] In a framework closer to post-modern dance, Don McDonagh's *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* (1970) illustrates choreographic entanglement with a moving corporeality:

> If dance could do without music and technique, could it also do without rehearsal? If it could do without elaborate lighting designs, could it do without visible light of any kind? If it could do without decor, could it do without costume? If it could do without any of these, could it do without dancers? The answer to the latter was the only "No!" Some attempts were made to create dances verbally or by printed suggestions so that audiences would conjure up their own movement sequences. But although these "concept" choreographies were interesting, they were exceedingly frail in the physical world of dance.[15]

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11 Humphrey, Doris: *The Art of Making Dances*, London: Dance Books 1997 [1959], pp. 20, 25.

12 Nikolais, Alwin: No Man from Mars, in: Cohen, Selma Jeanne (ed.): *The Modern Dance: Seven Statements of Belief*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 1965, p. 63.

13 Limon, José: *An Unfinished Memoir*, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England 1999, p. 75

14 Nijinska, Bronislava: On Movement and the School of Movement, in: Preston-Dunlop, Valerie & Lahusen, Susanne (eds.): *Schrifttanz: A View of German Dance in the Weimar Republic*, London: Dance Books 1990 [1930], p. 55.

15 McDonagh, Don: *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance*, London: Dance Books 1990 [1970], p. 209.

An associated conception of choreography posits it as an arrangement of moving bodies in time and space.[16] As the above quotations illustrate, choreography as an arrangement of moving bodies in time and space at times overlaps with the notion of dance-making, which is itself conceived of *as* an arrangement of moving corporealities.

Within the 20th-century field – in which choreography was most forcefully entangled with dance-making and human corporeality – there are, nevertheless, important variations of choreographic history. Frictions between dance and choreography appeared in the words of practitioners who associated choreography with parts of dance-making with which they did not agree. For example, for Paul Taylor this was the limitation of dancers' individual presence: '[s]ome dances look like "choreography" because the dancers are not allowed to become their most interesting stage selves [...] Up with dancers; down with choreography.'[17] Frictions also appeared through references to dance-making not termed "choreography". In the 1960s, Serge Lifar suggested replacing the term "choreographer" by "*choréauteur*" [chore-author] when referring to a dance-maker.[18] Both modern dance (Humphrey, Louis Horst, Wigman) and post-modern dance (the seminal 1960s workshops held by Dunn that contributed to the appearance of the Judson Dance Theatre) employed the term "composition" to refer to aspects of dance-making. Finally, frictions appeared in practices challenging the insistence of a necessarily-physicalised choreography – from futurist dance to Nikolais' multimedia spectacles, and from Loïe Fuller to Merce Cunningham's work with LifeForms.

Therefore, the 20th century both performed and questioned choreography's association with dance and/or the moving human body – an association so strong it feeds into current understandings of choreography. Against this background, Part 3 introduces an expanded choreographic perspective to the analysis of works from different moments of early- and mid-20th-century dance history; this perspective points to an undeniable diversity that challenges the idea of choreography being solely based on dance, the human body, and/or motion. This diversity also has implications for how historiography portrays 20th-century choreographic culture(s) – their complex relations with motion and corporeality, as well as their negotiations between different construals of these concepts; their concurrent embrace of choreographic medium specificity

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16 For example, Gabriele Klein theorises 20th-century choreography as relating to the topographic ordering of bodies in time and space. Klein, Gabriele: Essay, in: Klein, Gabriele (ed.) *Choreografischer Baukasten. Das Buch*, Bielefeld: transcript 2015, p. 19.

17 Taylor, Paul: Down with Choreography, in: Cohen: *The Modern Dance*, p. 97.

18 Lifar, Serge: *La Danse: La Danse académique et l'Art chorégraphique*, Paris: Gonthier 1965, p. 16.

and artistic interdisciplinarity; their interrogation of the notion of choreographic authorship.

Chapter 7 looks at *Relâche* – a modern ballet conceived in 1924 by painter Francis Picabia for the Ballets Suédois. Identifying it as a nexus of multiple choreographic models,[19] it shows that while Picabia's dada ballet was preoccupied with choreographic modernity's attachment to embodied motion, it also decentralised corporeal dance performance in a composite spectacle – thus sketching out yet another type of intermedia choreographic assemblage that can dialogue both with Saint-Hubert's 17th-century ballet [Chapter 1] and Olga Mesa's contemporary *Solo* [Chapter 5]. Chapter 8 investigates the work of modern dance's central figure, Laban, in industry during and after WWII. Amid Laban's attachment to the centrality of the human body and the necessity of motion, it identifies his view of supra-individual choreographies that emerge from the actions of both human and non-human agents – thus de-anthropocentrising choreography – and his belief in the presence of movement in apparent stillness – branching out to William Forsythe's present-day willows [Chapter 6] and Domenico da Piacenza's fantasmatic pauses [Chapter 3]. Finally, Chapter 9 analyses the choreographic productions of lettrism, a post-WWII artistic movement with roots in poetry, whose eclectic works are comparable to post-modern dance. Placing lettrism among dominant dance discourses of the 20th century – based on its confirmation of the link between dance and choreography – it posits lettrism as (also) a field in which choreography expanded to a range of materials and media, as well as immateriality, echoing Mathilde Chénin's informational-algorithmic [Chapter 4] and Raoul Auger Feuillet's abstract-graphic [Chapter 2] transfers. Identifying an ambivalence in relation to a dominant choreographic model at several points of the 20th century – both in historiographically-marginalised (lettrism) and -over-represented (Laban) examples – Part 3 presents figures of choreographic multiplicity, rather than a series of counter-examples that challenge a canon with an alternative, but singular, view.

Part 1 analysed written documents not only as discursive sources *about* embodied acts but also as objects displaying their own conceptions of choreography. Consistent with this methodological idea, Part 3 considers that choreographic practices – be they "condensed" in a single work (e.g. *Relâche*), spread out in a continuous process of work without a single designated product (e.g. Laban), or distributed over multiple works (e.g. lettrist choreography) – do not only consist of performative and/or embodied, but also visual, textual, auditory, and other manifestations. Correspondingly, to contribute diverse understandings of these

19 Cf. Leon, Anna: Vielfältige Konzepte des Choreografischen in Tanz und Film. Die Ballets Suédois und ihr Stück Relâche, in: *Montage AV* 24/2 (2015), p. 32.

practices, the following draws from multiple types of sources – from contemporary reconstructions to scripts, from scores to notations, from photographs to film, from written reports and notes to music.

While they are dispersed over several decades, Part 3's chapters relate to what may be referred to as the 20th century's "dance modernity". *Relâche* dates from the interwar context where several figures, notions, and practices associated with a heterogeneous 20th-century dance modernity – including modern dance – were active [Chapter 7]. Laban's projects in industry concern the activity of an artist central to modern dance history [Chapter 8]. Lettrism, while appearing slightly later, refers and responds to the pre-war historical avant-gardes as well as modern ballet and modern dance; it is included as an example of how arguments about choreography can be transferred from pre- to post-war modernity and exemplifies the former's possible influence upon the latter [Chapter 9]. Finally, as parts of, or references to, 20th-century dance modernity, these examples relate to a network of associated notions: the modernity of the avant-gardes (*Relâche*, lettrism), modernism (*Relâche*, Laban, lettrism), modern dance (Laban, lettrism), modern ballet (*Relâche*, lettrism), and the experience of body, life, and society as "modern" (*Relâche*, Laban). But, as Stefan Hulfeld illuminatingly reminds, "modernity" and the "modern" is neither fixed nor limited to the 20th-century timespan and position; despite modernist historiography's insistence on presenting modernity as a series of chapters – subsequent innovation annulling previous ones – modernity is a notion that calls for a macro-historical approach that acknowledges linkages, rather than affirming ruptures.[20] The following chapters tend towards this approach, looking into how 20th-century choreography branches out both to an expanded, pre-choreographic past, and an expanded present.

20 Hulfeld, Stefan: Modernist Theatre, in: Wiles, David & Dymkowski, Christine (eds.): *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2013, esp. p. 15f

Chapter 7: The multiple choreographies of the Ballets Suédois' *Relâche*[1]

In 1920, Rolf de Maré, a well-off arts patron from Sweden, founded a dance troupe. Like Sergei Diaghilev before him, he named the troupe after his national origins – the "Ballets Suédois", or "Swedish Ballets" – but selected Paris as its home base. In the next few years, the troupe produced and performed more than 20 works in Paris and abroad, implicating an international selection of artists. Choreography was the domain of Jean Börlin, also lead dancer of the Ballets Suédois; de Maré's librettists included Paul Claudel, Luigi Pirandello, Blaise Cendrars, and Jean Cocteau; his ballets' sets were signed by, among others, Fernand Léger and Giorgio de Chirico; music was composed by artists including Darius Milhaud, Georges Auric, and Cole Porter. In 1925, the Ballets Suédois were dissolved – although de Maré's dance activities did not cease, as indicated by his foundation of the *Archives Internationales de la Danse* [International Archives of Dance]. A few months before its dissolution, the company performed its last choreographic production: *Relâche.*

Like other Ballets Suédois works, *Relâche* had enviable credits: Börlin choreographed, Erik Satie composed its music, and René Clair directed a film – *Entr'acte* – that became part of the ballet's performance. This collaboration was meant to be based on a libretto by Cendrars; however, the project was transferred to ex-Dada artist Francis Picabia,[2] who wrote both the ballet's script – possibly in reference to Marcel Duchamp's *Le Grand verre* (1915-1923)[3] – and

1 This chapter is an elaboration of Leon, Anna: Vielfältige Konzepte des Choreografischen in Tanz und Film. Die Ballets Suédois und ihr Stück Relâche, in: *Montage AV* 24/2 (2015), pp. 17–35; see also 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 Boulbès, Carole : *Relâche. Dernier coup d'éclat des Ballets Suédois*, Dijon : Les Presses du réel 2017, p. 91.

3 Baker, George: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris*, Cambridge: MIT Press 2007, p. 302.

a loose scenario for the film. Picabia's ballet benefited from a wide publicity campaign; the piece, though, was performed merely thirteen times, the last of which was followed by a further short stage work by Picabia, *Cinésketch*.[4] In the approximately 40-minute-long work, the Parisian audiences of *Relâche* were treated to an introduction and intermission filled by Clair's film, on-stage action that ranged from a firefighter pouring water into buckets to a partial striptease, and Picabia and Satie in a Citroën car in the finale.

Relâche is part of the historical cannon of early-20th-century dance modernity and representative of multiple tendencies of the period. It exemplifies the innovations and experimentations of modern ballet – including incorporating non-classical technique, interdisciplinarity, and scenographic elements that accentuated the plastic/visual dimensions of the stage. It displays early-20th-century choreography's challenges towards institutionalised dance practices; its inclusions of, and penetrations by, mass media and popular culture; and its relations with the historical avant-gardes in the visual arts – branching out, beyond dance history, to performance art. In parallel, the piece deepens and heightens several of the period's tendencies; for example, a dephysicalisation of the body is found in several works of the time, and in Picabia's ballet the body is confronted with its quasi-replacement by the inorganic medium of film. Here, the performative implication of scenography takes centre stage and, at times, undermines the presentation of dance. In these ways, *Relâche* – just like other radically-experimental modern ballet works, such as the Ballets Russes' *Feu d'artifice* (1917) – both exemplifies and intensifies aspects of early-20th-century dance modernity relevant to expanded choreography.

Although no original film recording of the ballet exists, available primary sources on the Ballets Suédois' last ballet include: photographs of the stage and the performers (however, these were not shot during the performances and do not certainly represent "final" versions of material);[5] notes and correspondence between de Maré, Picabia, Satie, Clair, and other collaborators, available at the archives of the Stockholm *Dansmuseet*; the entirety of Clair's scenario and film,[6] Satie's music, and Picabia's basic scripts for *Entr'acte* and for the ballet as a whole. An invaluable secondary source is art historian Carole Boulbès' book-length study, based on her research as a contributor to the ballet's reconstruction by the Ballet de Lorraine (2014). The reconstruction itself is a further valuable source, even though it includes (founded, but creative) conjectures by choreographers

4 Boulbès: *Relâche*, pp. 12, 126.

5 Ibid., p. 115.

6 For a version of the film in circulation today, see: Clair, René: *Entr'acte*, in: Clair, René: *A nous la liberté* [DVD], The Criterion Collection 2002 [1924], 20:17.

Petter Jacobsson and Thomas Caley.[7] *Relâche* is mentioned in several dance-history studies of the early-20th century, and is analysed from the perspective of art, film, and performance history.[8] Here, the Ballets Suédois' last ballet is explored from the perspective of expanded choreography.

From such a perspective, *Relâche* responds to multiple conceptions of choreography at once – some associated with dance-making and embodied motion, and others expandeding beyond them. Adopting an "expanded" viewpoint allows *Relâche* to exemplify early-20th-century dance modernity's questionings and multiplications of its own choreographic models. At the same time, *Relâche* feeds back into reflections about the historical inscription of expanded choreography itself. Thus, ideas around the proximity of dramaturgy and choreography, or the development of intermedia choreographic assemblages – as seen in Olga Mesa [Chapter 5] and Saint-Hubert's [Chapter 1] works – crop up again, in different configurations, as fragments of an expanded choreographic history.

Of dancing in a ballet

Its unconventionality notwithstanding, *Relâche* was presented as a ballet, produced by a ballet company, and danced by classically-trained dancers of the Ballets Suédois. An initial conception of choreography is indeed found in Picabia's piece's relationship with the world of ballet – particularly in Paris, where de Maré's company was based. In the French capital, ballet was primarily construed as a dramatic genre – as the danced representation of a (more-or-less elaborated) narrative. In the words of Hélène Laplace-Claverie, who has thoroughly studied the history of French ballet libretto:

> *[o]n admet sans trop de peine aujourd'hui qu'une oeuvre chorégraphieque est une création hybride, située au confluent de plusieurs disciplines artistiques. Mais à l'époque, les*

7 Jacobsson, Petter & Caley, Thomas : *Relâche.* Ballet instantanéiste en deux actes, un Entr'acte cinématographique et *la Queue du chien* (Reenactment of the 1924 ballet by Francis Picabia), Nancy : Ballet de Lorraine 2014, 32:35, https ://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNmxvRt4Rg8 (October 2018).

8 For example, see Brandstetter, Gabriele: *Poetics of Dance : Body, Image and Space in the Historical Avant-Gardes*, New York: Oxford University Press 2015 [1995, trans. Elena Polzer & Mark Franko], pp. 375–384 ; Suquet, Annie : *L'Eveil des modernités : Une histoire culturelle de la danse (1870-1945)*, Pantin : Centre national de la danse 2012, pp. 120–124; Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, chapter 5; Bouchard, Karine: *Les Relations entre la scène et le cinéma dans le spectacle d'avant-garde: Une étude intermédiale et* in situ *de* Relâche *de Picabia, Satie et Clair*, MA thesis, Montreal: Université de Montréal, 2009 ; Goldberg, RoseLee : *Performance : Live Art 1909 to the Present*, New York : Harry N. Abrams 1979, pp. 59–62.

> *conceptions sont plus rigides et pour la plupart des spectateurs, un ballet doit se contenter d'être une pièce de théâtre dansée. Les goûts et les attentes en la matière évoluent lentement. La scène chorégraphique française reste tributaire de la tradition noverriene du "ballet d'action"* [we admit without issue today that a choreographic work is a hybrid creation, situated at the intersection of multiple artistic disciplines. But at the time, conceptions were more rigid and for most spectators, a ballet must settle for being a danced theatrical piece. Tastes and expectations on this matter evolved slowly. The French choreographic scene remains tributary of the noverrian tradition of the "ballet d'action"].[9]

Choreography, therefore, was associated with dance-making, and it bore traces of a narrative/dramatic focus – although it was not strictly equated with narrative, unlike Edward Nye's reading[10] of the *ballet d'action*. In this framework, choreographers in ballet companies often based their dance-making on the work of a librettist. But, the early-20th century was a transitory period. The ballet world included highly-institutionalised performance venues – such as the central(ising) Paris Opera – and practitioners who adhered to a movement aesthetics of virtuosity and grace, using a highly-codified and relatively-stable vocabulary; but it also coexisted with a diversity of alternative dance models – some emerging within the ballet realm itself – and popular dance forms. Similarly, the libretto and its narrativity gradually fell out of use, largely through the work of companies such as the Ballets Russes and the Ballets Suédois.

Against this transitory background, when Picabia was asked to direct a ballet for de Maré's company, he initially expressed hesitation:

> *J'avais pris la résolution de ne jamais faire de ballets mais la collaboration de Satie dont j'admire le talent et auquel je porte beaucoup d'amitié m'a fait revenir sur cette décision et j'ai accepté avec grand plaisir* [I had made the resolution to never make ballets, but the collaboration with Satie, whose talent I admire and for whom I feel strong friendship, made me change my mind and I have accepted with great pleasure].[11]

Reflecting this hesitation, *Relâche* undermined the codes and contexts of classical dance – although it was presented as a ballet. It attacked established ballet institutions and subversively targeted a ballet-habituated audience. For example,

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9 Laplace-Claverie, Hélène: Les Ballets Suédois sont-ils des ballets? Petit dictionnaire des idées reçues en matière d'art chorégraphique, in: Mas, Josiane (ed.): *Arts en mouvement: Les Ballets Suédois de Rolf de Maré. Paris 1920-1925*, Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée 2008, p. 21.

10 Cf. Nye, Edward: 'Choreography' is Narrative: The Programmes of the Eighteenth-Century *Ballet d'Action*, in: *Dance Research* 26/1 (2008).

11 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 85.

the second act was danced before a backdrop painted with the names of its creators alongside phrases such as '*Aimez-vous mieux les ballets de l'Opéra? Pauvres malheureux* [Do you prefer the ballets of the Opera? You poor wretches]'.[12] De Maré sold whistles and encouraged noise, shifting reception attitudes away from ballet-theatre codes.[13] This attack of ballet institutions was exacerbated by *Relâche*'s insistence upon bridging the gap between ballet and popular dance forms, such as the music hall. Its title expressed, according to Picabia, '*une trêve à toutes les absurdités prétentieuses du théâtre actuel, je ne parle pas du music-hall qui seul a gardé un côté vivant* [a truce with all the pretentious absurdities of contemporary theatre, I am not referring to the music hall, which is the only one to have kept a lively aspect]'.[14] In his composition for the ballet, Satie – who had worked as an orchestra conductor in a cabaret – made use of popular themes and, even, army songs; according to a reviewer of the time, this risked disrupting the performance by provoking sing-along-moments by the audience.[15] Finally, although danced by professionally-trained classical dancers, *Relâche* defied classical dance aesthetics and technique. The ballet included acrobatic movements, refused *pointe* work, and the lead female dancer appeared in high-heeled shoes. The Ballets Suédois' previous choreographies had also experimented with the non-virtuosic, the non-technically spectacular, the folk influence – so much so that certain critics were persuaded the company lacked skill.[16]

Relâche, then, was presented by its creators as a ballet; nevertheless, it attacked the ballet genre in various ways. A similar ambivalence is identifiable in its treatment of a libretto-based choreographic model of dance-making. On the one hand, *Relâche* reflected – reproduced, even – this model. For example, Picabia drafted a scenario for *Relâche* in which he roughly described its action sequences and indicated the points where dances were to be composed by Börlin;[17] the ballet's actions can be understood as flirtations between a woman

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12 Ibid., p. 345.

13 Ibid., p. 351.

14 Picabia, Francis: Interview by Rolf de Maré, undated, Archives of Les Ballets Suédois, Dansmuseet, Stockholm, Sweden: Relâche/Ballet librettos and descriptions.

15 Boulbès: *Relâche*, pp. 197, 224; Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, p. 298. While de Maré's troupe's audience remained largely limited to the Parisian bourgeoisie, its insistence upon popular culture did not go unrecognised; critic Emile Vuillermoz has written about the Ballets Suédois' "Bolshevik" programme while other writers – less reticent to respect the music hall than one may imagine – recognised the Ballets Suédois' possible contributions to the genre through *Relâche*. Boulbès: *Relâche*, pp. 316, 180, 558.

16 Laplace-Claverie: Les Ballets Suédois sont-ils des ballets?, p. 23; Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 63; Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, p. 298.

17 Libretto reproduced in Boulbès: *Relâche*, pp. 112–113 and Bouchard: *Les Relations entre la scène et le cinéma dans le spectacle d'avant-garde*, pp. 131–132. See also Boulbès: *Relâche*, pp.

and a group of men, in a (possible) wink to love stories often encountered in ballet libretti. Mirroring the importance of certain librettists of the time, Picabia is recognised as the main author of the project; de Maré referred to his last dance production as '*un ballet de Francis Picabia* [a ballet by Francis Picabia]'.[18] On the other hand, Picabia's scenario has no coherent narrative or plot development beyond a series of actions, no named characters, and no apparent desire to make sense. Börlin noted that the ballet he produced dances for had '*pas de sujet: le scénario tient dans cette feuille* [no subject: the scenario fits in this sheet]'.[19] Thus, the scenario troubles a libretto-based choreographic model by shifting towards non-narrative (or even a-narrative) dance-making; it does not tell a story to be staged in dance, but provides the basis for a staging without story – and thus illustrates the format's non-narrative turn at a time when it was still in use, but also rapidly overcome. In effect, Picabia's script was not given to the public as a support for understanding – it was not a textual aid for making sense of the ballet – but, rather, was a tool in the production process.

Through Clair's contribution, the intersection between ballet and film was centrally important to subverting a ballet-based and dramatic/narrative-oriented choreographic model. To an extent, this concerns film's contribution to the ballet's turn towards popular art forms; Picabia held that

> *[l]e Cinéma est devenu le théâtre essentiel de la vie moderne, et cela parce qu'il s'adapte aux individus de toutes les classes de la société et aux caractères les plus divers* [Cinema has become the essential theatre of modern life, and that is because it adapts itself to individuals of all classes of society and to the most diverse of characters].[20]

But most importantly, *Entr'acte* accentuates the work's attack upon coherent plot development and narrativity – and therefore the choreographic model associated with them. Indeed, while the film contains some light narrative aspects – notably in its second part, which includes Börlin's character's funeral procession – it is not based on a coherent plot and its cinematography is not organised around dramatic development; both Picabia and Clair have referred

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118–119 for a fuller description of the ballet's action sequence, from which the following draws.

18 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 128.

19 Ibid., p. 132.

20 Quoted in Bouchard: *Les Relations entre la scène et le cinéma dans le spectacle d'avant-garde*, p. 94. Moreover, instead of elevating film to the artistic status of ballet, Picabia looked back to a "proletarian" era of cinema; the inclusion of Clair's film was an explicit reference to the earlier 20th-century *café-concert* custom of film interludes between acts, while parts of *Entr'acte* have been read as references to early cinema's comical gags. Cf. Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, p. 306; Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 426.

to it as pertaining to the realm of dreams.[21] Moreover, Clair ignored Picabia's recommendation to include written projections between scenes,[22] preferring unexplained and uncommented action flow. Fernand Léger's laudatory review of *Relâche* notes that:

> *Le cinema va naître [...] du ralenti au rapide, du gros plan à l'infini petit, toute la fantaisie humaine bridée dans les livres et le théâtre va se déchaîner – le scénario s'envole loin et inutile* [cinema will be born [...] from slow motion to fast, from the close-up to the infinitely small, the whole of human fantasy restrained in books and theatre will unleash itself – the script flies away, useless][23]

– just like the libretto. In this way, Clair's work contributed to the marginalisation of narrative as an organisational principle – underlining Picabia's treatment of the libretto model – and thus linked choreography-related considerations with developments in other arts.

Relâche subverted the choreographic model of a libretto-based dance-making process even beyond questioning its potential narrativity; in a choreographic expansion, it questioned the primacy of dance-making itself as a goal. Apart from staging non-classical dance within a ballet – thus challenging the limits of the ballet genre – the work also moved towards choreographed versions of everyday actions. For example, the female protagonist gathered up discarded clothing after a collective partial striptease in the 'Dance of the wheelbarrow'; there were also actions such as smoking a cigarette, lying on a stretcher, or pouring water in a bucket. And, despite its inclusion of several dances, *Relâche* also included moments of immobility, explicitly differentiated from dance in the script. Reflecting the ballet's flirtation with the limits of dance, de Maré recounted that '*les danseurs se voyaient, dans ce ballet, réduits au rôle de figurants, ils ne pouvaient comprendre ce que l'on attendait d'eux* [dancers in this ballet saw themselves being reduced to the role of extras, they could not understand what was expected of them]'.[24] In these ways, *Relâche* embodies a conflict with dance while becoming relevant to a contemporaneity stretching its limits; it embodies expanded choreography's widenings of, *and* distances from, dance-making.

Certain "danced portions" of the ballet – to refer back to Marina Nordera's expression [Chapter 1] – had attention drawn to them by being presented with-

21 Picabia, Francis: Untitled, in: *La Danse* (November-December 1924), unpaginated; Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 395.

22 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 391.

23 Léger, Fernand: Review of *Relâche*, in: Damase, Jacques (ed.): *Ballets Suédois*, Paris: Jacques Damase/Denoël 1989 [1924], p. 253.

24 Quoted in Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 521. Although unsigned, the text this quotation is drawn from is attributed to Rolf de Maré.

out music; but, while this underlines a possible choreographic and dancerly autonomy, it was counterbalanced by an equal musical autonomy, in sections where music played without dance. And, in effect, *Relâche* displayed a Saint-Hubesque treatment of ballet, in which different art forms were equally valourisable. In this framework, different media could disrupt the ballet's stage actions – both dancing and actions that challenged the centrality of dance. The background scenography consisted of a multitude of reflectors that resembled automobile headlights and lit up intermittently, thus blinding the audience and fragmenting their visual experience of dance.[25] Similarly, Clair's *Entr'acte* interrupted the stage action – notably, presenting content that contained ironic gestures towards dancing. Ornella Volta reads Börlin's character's death in Clair's film as a symbolic death of dance in the company's works; Boulbès reads *Entr'acte*'s famous scene featuring a bearded ballerina – danced by an actual Ballets Suédois ballerina with a fake beard – as an ironic cinematographic gesture towards the realm of dance.[26] In *Relâche*, therefore, Börlin's dance coexisted with Satie's music, Clair's film, and a complex lighting and scenographic design. These media affirmed their own presence, instead of framing dance as a primary element – often to the detriment of offering the audience a smooth dance experience. The Ballets Suédois' last work thus expands ballet towards a spectacular framework not solely focussed on presenting dance.

This decentralisation of dance in the ballet was partly determined by the very element meant to ground dance-making in a libretto-based choreographic model: the scenario. Not a mere basis for dance invention, Picabia's scenario provides information about other media activities. For example, it indicates the duration of musical and cinematographic passages and gives descriptions of certain costumes; it prescribes how to stage the lighting and suggests elements of scenography – thus placing its treatment of dance on par with that of other media. In this way, *Relâche* retains a scenario written by a "librettist", but expands this script's function beyond the specific teleology of (non-)narrative dance-making. If Picabia's scenario betrays the libretto's role as a basis for dance-making, then, this is because it leads to a multimedia (expanded) choreography instead of the sole choreography of dance. Inversely, if the ballet's choreographic model can be disengaged from the primordial imperative of (non-)narrative/dramatically-inclined dance-making, *Relâche* is an example of the libretto's expansion, rather than its failure or betrayal. This use of the libretto –

25 Ibid., p. 301. For journalists' accounts of this "blinding" by the lights, see pp. 300, 307, 620.

26 Volta, Ornella : La Dernière séance des Ballets Suédois, in : Mas : *Arts en mouvement*, p. 191 ; Boulbès : *Relâche*, p. 402.

shifting away from its textually-based dramaturgical role – prefigures contemporary approximations of choreography as an expanded, multimedia practice and dramaturgy as a non-essentially-textual one.

Through institutional, dramaturgical, intermedia, technical, and stylistic shifts, the Ballets Suédois' last work attacked ballet codes while remaining a ballet – indeed one of its publicity slogans invited spectators to a '*Ballet, qui n'est pas un ballet, ni un anti-ballet* [ballet that is neither a ballet, nor an anti-ballet]'.[27] In the same way, *Relâche* also performed a choreographic model inherited from ballet while simultaneously subverting it; if its choreography is related to a libretto-based process of dance-making, the work troubles narrativity, betrays classical dance, challenges an even-wider conception of dance, casts doubt on dance as the privileged ingredient of ballet, and shifts the role of the libretto as the foundation of dance-making. In other words, *Relâche* was both a script-based ballet and a non-narrative work which expanded beyond dance in a multimedia framework. In this way, it indicates the ways early-20th-century dance modernity may have critiqued its own choreographic models – and reminds that historiographic tools are needed to acknowledge the period's expansions of choreographic practices. These expansions, manifested through decentralising dance in intermedia spectacle – a tendency that was also, albeit differently, pursued by court ballet [Chapter 1] and contemporary expanded choreography [Chapter 5] – place Picabia's work and the avant-garde world of modern ballet-making in transhistorical choreographic relationships that are not founded upon their being-ballet or even being-dance.

Of motion in the body

While *Relâche* was defined as a ballet and responded to a choreographic model inherited from ballet history, it also responded to modern, 20th-century appreciations of dance and choreography attached to the centrality of motion. Such appreciations reflected the notion of perpetual movement as a central, and sometimes idealised, characteristic of early-20th-century society.[28] This is easily identifiable within modern dance, which was associated with continuous flow of movement, as opposed to the codified unit of the ballet step; movement for movement's sake, replacing the illustrative role of dance; and a body presented as liberated from classical discipline, to be unleashed in a flux of motion. But it was also, as *Relâche* exemplifies, identifiable in modern ballet. In parallel, choreographic motion was physicalised, "corporealised"; nine years

27 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 153.

28 On the status of dance within this era of motion, see Brandstetter: *Poetics of Dance*, p. 21.

after *Relâche*, John Martin wrote of modern dance choreographers' 'discovery of the actual substance of the dance' – movement – which he presented as 'the most elementary *physical* experience of human life'.[29] In a context closer to *Relâche*, French writer Jacques Rivière responded to the Ballets Russes' *Sacre du printemps* (1913) by opposing motion as a 'sauce' in which the dancer's body is lost; in the *Sacre*, inversely, movement is '*sans cesse ramené au corps, rattaché à lui* [continuously brought back to the body, attached to it]':[30] movement was incorporated. *Relâche*, then, appeared at a time when motion was not only centralised and essentialised, but also anchored in the dancer's moving body – thus underlining dance's specificity through its attachment to human corporeality.

Relâche fully responded to the 20th-century (dance) modernity's preoccupation with motion. Picabia presented his work as an "*instantanéiste* [instantaneist]" ballet; instantaneism '*ne croit qu'au movement perpétuel* [believes only in perpetual movement]'.[31] He also wrote of the ballet as '*le mouvement sans but, ni en avant ni en arrière, ni à gauche ni à droite* [movement without a goal, neither forward nor back, neither left nor right]'.[32] Through such expressions, the piece expands choreography from the delimited domain of artistic dance to a wider world of movement. For Cécile Schenck, its choreography is found

> *dans l'impression d'un "mouvement perpétuel", sans finalité autre que celle d'exalter la vie dans ce qu'elle a et de chaotique et de spontané. […] La danse n'est dès lors plus sur scène mais dans la salle, sur l'écran, dans la rue, les gestes du travail et le roulement infini des machines: désormais "tout est danse"* [in the impression of a "perpetual movement", without other end than to exalt life in its chaotic and spontaneous aspects […] Dance is, from that point, not on the stage anymore but in the performance space, on the screen, in the street, the gestures of work and the infinite rolling of machines: from now on, "everything is dance"].[33]

In other words, everything is movement and movement becomes essentialised as the choreographic medium, in a process literally staged by *Relâche*.

Consistent with a choreographic model of human bodies in motion, a great deal of movement in *Relâche* was embodied by the Ballets Suédois' dancers, with Börlin creating gymnastic, acrobatic steps that filled the stage with activity. A

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29 Martin, John: *The Modern Dance*, Princeton: Dance Horizons 1989 [1933], pp. 6–8, emphasis added. (This text was published in 1933 but was actually written for a series of lectures in 1931-1932 – therefore it emerged seven years after *Relâche*.)

30 Rivière, Jacques : Le Sacre du Printemps, 1913, http ://sarma.be/docs/621 (August 2020).

31 Boulbès : *Relâche*, p. 443.

32 Picabia, Francis: Relâche, in: *La Danse* (November-December 1924), unpaginated.

33 Schenck, Cécile : La Danse inhumaine, fonctions de la chorégraphie dans l'oeuvre d'art totale des Ballets Suédois, in : Mas : *Arts en mouvement*, p. 61.

striking performance of embodied movement – fully responding to the incessant motion of urbanised, speedy 20th-century modernity – is found in a short dance choreographed for the female lead dancer (Edith de Bondsdorff) and one of the leading male characters (Börlin), titled 'Dance of the revolving door'. According to contemporary historians' reconstructions of the ballet, this was a waltz-inspired choreography in which the two dancers circled through a revolving door.[34] In the context of increasingly-mobilised modes of life, including experiences of automated motion in *auto*mobiles, the 'Dance of the revolving door' literally staged the kinetic experiences reflected in choreography's preoccupation with the motion of bodies. Crucially – although it is not certain whether this was planned – the revolving door itself was not present on stage as a scenographic element,[35] and was therefore referred to through the dancers' motions – the kinetic experience of early-20th-century European modernity was literally absorbed into the body.

While *Relâche* reflected a choreographic model of embodied motion, the emerging notion of a movement-based choreography is also extremely pronounced in Clair's *Entr'acte* – the very element that disrupted a dance- and body-based choreographic format. The approximately-20-minute film includes some dance movement – for example, there is a beautiful scene of a dancer jumping, filmed from below, through a glass floor. Overall, however, *Entr'acte* is not a film representing dancing bodies so much as a celebration of motion in diverse manifestations; the camera follows everyday "choreographed" scenes such as car traffic in an urban environment, and in Börlin's character's funeral procession there is a finely-choreographed kinetic sequence including a frenetic roller-coaster ride.

Beyond its representation of motion, *Entr'acte* is an internally-choreographed piece itself – movement effects, such as slow motion and fast-forwarding, are extensively used; the camera's own being-in-motion is made apparent; images are inverted and superposed, multiplying viewpoints and spatial relations; the film's editing makes rhythm one of its main organising principles as it moves through images. George Baker identifies in the film

> an endless motivating of the arbitrariness of the montage between images through the shared revelation of cinematic motion, the gift that film imparts to all things. Objects are connected in *Entr'acte* because they are "like" one another, in motion, or in speed, or in direction; the film also utilises motion to align the disparateness of shape and texture.[36]

34 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 118; Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, p. 299.

35 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 289.

36 Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, p. 319.

In his annotated script, Clair indicated the motional effects – slow motion, increased speed – he introduced,[37] while his more-theoretically-construed vision of cinema also reflected his kinetic focus:

> *S'il est une esthétique du cinéma […] Elle se résume en un mot: "mouvement". Mouvement extérieur des objets perçus par l'oeil, auquel nous ajouterons aujourd'hui le mouvement intérieur de l'action. De l'union de ces deux mouvements peut naître ce dont on parle tant et ce que l'on perçoit si peu souvent: le rythme* [If there is an aesthetics of cinema […] it is summed up in one word: "movement". External movement of objects that the eye perceives, to which we will add, today, the internal movement of action. From the union of these two movements can be born that which we talk so much about and that which we perceive so rarely: rhythm].[38]

If choreography is about motion, *Entr'acte* is not only part of a choreographic work, but an (expanded) choreographic work in itself; motion expands beyond the human body and towards other c/kinematic media.

Through a common logic of movement, the ballet's choreographed film forms a basis for understanding the porosity between choreography/dance and film. Clair – who had experienced earlier dance-film experiments by acting in Loïe Fuller's *Le Lys de la vie* (1921, with Garbielle Sorère) – illustrated a motion-based understanding of choreography by incorporating and exemplifying movement as a cinematographic mode of thinking. Movement on stage and on screen, in bodies and in film: *Relâche* creates a kinetic parallel between different media. Underlining their continuities, at the end of *Entr'acte*, Börlin's character breaks through a – filmed – curtain, as if jumping out of the film screen, only to be actually found on stage in the ballet's second act.

The choreographic expansion performed by *Entr'acte* can, however, also be read as an antagonism between media that embodied 20th-century modernity's kinetic focus. Indeed, the choreographic aspects of *Entr'acte* can also be read as staging the *replacement* of embodied motion by cinema's mediating technology; critic Paul Dambly wrote that *Relâche* was '*avant tout le triomphe du cinéma, dont la pantomime, médiocrement chorégraphique n'a d'autre but que d'encadrer les films* [above everything else the triumph of cinema, [its] poorly choreographic pantomime has no other goal than to frame the films]'.[39] Reflecting a possible antagonism with an organic/corporeal view of dance, the de-physicalisation of the body on the film screen was paralleled by Picabia's research on the mechanisation of the body. This is coherent with his portraits of *Relâche*-related actors Clair and de

37 Boulbès: *Relâche*, pp. 416–417.

38 Quoted in ibid., pp. 429–430.

39 Quoted in ibid, pp. 574.

Maré – depicted as machines made up of curly wires – and Börlin – as an amalgam of lines and circles.[40]

Picabia's project, then, included aspects of a nascent antagonism *and* continuity between different media responding to the kinetic focus of the time. Indeed – and as the aforementioned motional activity illustrates – Picabia did not fully efface physicality in favour of cinema. In his own words, '*il est certain que le cinéma [...] ne pourra jamais avoir les possibilités tactiles d'un ballet* [it is certain that cinema [...] will never be able to have the tactile possibilities of a ballet]';[41] his animated stage was not completely replaced by a mediated version of dancing bodies. Neither fully "organic" – including cinematically-mediated and -performed motion – nor fully technologised – insisting upon the liveness of tangible dancers moving in front of an equally-tangible audience – *Relâche* performs neither a modernist autonomisation of choreographic movement through its corporeality, nor the complete effacement or replacement of human physicality through the embodiment of motion by non-corporeal, technological media. Just as it responded to a choreographic model of dramatic/narrative dance-making while also upsetting it, *Relâche* performs a choreographic model of embodied motion while also expanding beyond it. In this way, it makes visible 20th-century modernity's conflicts about the place of the body in a choreographic format centred on motion, along with its expansions beyond such conflicts. Once again, it becomes an invitation to historiographically acknowledge practices performing *and* troubling modernism's tendencies. In doing so, it relativises choreographic modernism's grip upon the very period that saw its emergence – and calls for a more-plural understanding of the choreographic history inherited from the historical avant gardes, framing it as a period relatable to both anterior and posterior quests to dephysicalise motion and establish parallels between different media on stage.

Arranging (expanded) choreography

Picabia's ballet cannot be reduced to any single medium; in Baker's expression, it expressed an 'utter [...] rejection of the modernist imperative of medium specificity'.[42] In the piece, different artistic media collaborate with, support, and penetrate each other – a point most prominently illustrated by the association of music and film. Satie wrote the music for *Entr'acte* after the film and its

40 Reproduced in ibid., pp. 136, 141, 144.

41 Picabia: Interview, Archives of Les Ballets Suédois, Dansmuseet, Stockholm, Sweden: Relâche/Ballet librettos and descriptions

42 Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, p. 330.

editing had been completed, basing his composition on a meticulous, shot-by-shot timing of the film images.[43] The result was what Baker reads as a musical "revelation" of cinematographic editing, where the music points to the effects of the *montage* cut:

> Satie's music often cadences and thus underlines the cuts and montage in Picabia and Clair's film, bringing things to a rhythmic stop when the film images seem rather to push connectedness between scenes [...] If montage is the invisible force within cinema that creates a film's rhythm – one of the qualities that the temporal art of film could conceivably "share" with music – then it is precisely the invisible "rhythm" of montage and cutting to which the music is attracted, and that it must reveal.[44]

Given that *Entr'acte* was presented with live accompaniment by an orchestra, this relation between film and music was literally performed in the *Théâtre des Champs Elysées*, with conductor Roger Desormière adjusting segments of Satie's music – including elements of repetition that were included for this very reason – in order to synchronise it with the film.[45] A further relation of mutual support – of blending, even – is identifiable between the set and certain costumes of the ballet; according to Boulbès, the brightness of the background flashing lights was meant to merge with the sparkling dress of the female protagonist.[46] The continuity between film and stage action through Börlin's screen-tearing cinematic jumps, described above, also adds to this construction.

While avoiding modernist medium specificity, *Relâche* cannot be fully characterised by the additive accumulation, or fusion, of different media in a *Gesamtkunstwerk*-manner. In effect, as much as diverse media in the ballet related through mutual support, blending, or continuity to one another, they were equally interrelated by carefully-orchestrated disruption and opposition. This is the case between dance and music which, at times, alternated; in particular, in a beginning passage of the ballet, music played but the lead dancer remained still, smoking a cigarette, only to start dancing when the music stopped. Dance and music thus avoided and gave space to each other. (The dissociation of dance and music had been a long-time interest of Satie.[47]) Comparable oppositions also emerged between dance and scenography, as the background lights interrupted dance's kinetic action; according to Baker, the lights were correlated

43 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 411.

44 Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, pp. 325–326.

45 Ibid., p. 325.

46 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 322.

47 Ibid., p. 214.

with the music,[48] and this was where the set-dance clash originated. Rather than a unified, autonomous piece, *Entr'acte* similarly both interrupted the ballet – by being inserted mid-way through – and was itself interrupted – by the stage action, between the prologue and the rest of the film. Through this series of disruptions, *Relâche* points to an aesthetic of abruptness, or even aggression.

Support, revelation, blending, continuity, interruption, disruption: *Relâche* makes different media meet, interact, and, at times, conflict with each other. Neither modernist nor *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Picabia's ballet was an intricate construction that relied as much on its multimediality as on the specific ways in which its different media crossed one other. This reading of *Relâche* is associated with practices that are highly relevant to Dada art, such as collage, montage, and assemblage. Such practices are, like *Relâche* – and like Mesa [Chapter 5] and Saint-Hubert's [Chapter 1] work – not necessarily medium-specific; Georges Didi-Huberman explicitly notes how montage in the 1920s was a notion '*transversale à tous les arts de la représentation* [transversal to all arts of representation]'.[49] Such practices are also – like *Relâche* and *Solo a ciegas* – primarily focussed on juxtaposing elements and developing (oppositional or continuous) relations between them; they do not focus on singularised contents, but on the effect of their co-appearance. *Relâche*'s film, music, set, and dances acquire their full significance *in* their interaction. If the ballet is seen as an expanded choreography, then, this is because – beyond just questioning the place of dance and the fundamental physicality of motion – it is the result of assemblage-like media associations that include the dancing/moving body. In this way, *Relâche* relates to other assemblage-based choreographic endeavours – be they later, like Mesa's, or earlier, like Saint-Hubert's – while contributing a Dadaist variation to the diversity of historically-distinct *types* of choreographic assemblages.

In addition to juxtaposing the ballet's media, an assemblage-like approach operated within the ballet's contents; while the actions *Relâche* presented may have seemed absurd, in many ways they constituted responses to, or reflections of, other actions. This relationality of content primarily took the form of symmetry between the ballet's two acts.[50] Thus, in the first act Börlin – lead male dancer – enters the stage in a wheelchair, in the second, de Bondsdorff – lead female dancer – enters on a stretcher. In the first act, de Bondsdorff strips off her dress, in the second it is a group of male dancers who take off their

48 Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, pp. 295, 305.

49 Didi-Huberman, Georges: *Quand les images prennent position: L'Oeil de l'histoire, 1*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit 2009, p. 85. Here, Didi-Huberman is referring to the practice of montage in Russia and Germany, but allows this point to be expanded to Dada in general (cf. p. 124).

50 Cf. Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, pp. 299–300.

evening clothes to reveal tight-fitting unitards. While the first act starts with a solo part for the woman before she is joined by a group of men, the second act starts with a male group that is joined by a woman, who, by the end, will be left alone – thus coming full circle. Picabia's script demands that the female character is pulled off of the stage through a fly system [*cintres*] at the end of the first act, only to be lowered to the stage through the same system in the second. This was accompanied by a 'mirror composition' ('*composition en mirroir*') of the music,[51] as well as a site-specific title for the cinematographic part of the ballet;[52] *Entr'acte* means "intermission" in French, relating the film's title to its dramaturgical position within the ballet. Just as Mesa created, beyond media associations, relations between ideas, times, spaces, and characters [Chapter 5] – and like Saint-Hubert's notion of the subject that concerned not only media of representation, but also themes and narrative lines [Chapter 1] – the contents of Picabia's ballet can be understood relationally, supplanting the narrativity of the libretto by an assemblage-based dramaturgy.

Relâche's spectators were exposed to these disruptions and fusions, these symmetries and interruptions, between media and contents of Picabia's construction. But, the role of the audience in the *Théâtre des Champs Elysées* was not confined to the external observation of actions on stage. Instead of treating them as mere observers, *Relâche* literally reached out to its spectators by directly addressing itself to them and, at times, even attacking them – in truly Dada-style: in the beginning of *Entr'acte*, a canon fires towards the camera (and, thus, the audience); the film's script prescribes that a spectator be staged to intervene in the film's action;[53] in the beginning of the piece, the Ballets Suédois dancers sat among the spectators and, towards the end, they distributed props to an audience member, before (in a further symmetry) returning to their seats; the light reflectors on the stage blinded and lit up the audience,[54] reminding spectators of their own presence in the theatre. Picabia and his colleagues also connected the theatre space with the work that was performed in it: certain scenes of *Entr'acte* were shot on location at the theatre building; the complex electric installation required for the light-reflecting scenography rendered the piece difficult to export for touring, thus keeping it grounded within its initial spatial context; the scenography of the second act – including anti-Opéra slogans and the names of the ballet's creators – functioned as publicity for the work it would frame.[55] Just as *Solo a ciegas* was constructed from media,

51 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 219. (Boulbès is here referring to an argument by Robert Orledge.)

52 Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, p. 290.

53 In Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 417.

54 Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, p. 295.

55 Boulbès: *Relâche*, pp. 298, 343.

content relations, and an assemblage that incorporated the position and gaze of its spectators [Chapter 5], *Relâche* also established site-specific relations between the work itself, the specific space in which it was presented, and the audience there to watch it. In this way, *Relâche* was a performance inscribed in the specific moment and space of co-presence with its audience, developing an event-like quality – characteristic of many avant-garde works of its time – while also (preposterously[56]) appearing as a relational, expanded choreography that orchestrates links with its audience.

Thus, as an avant-garde ballet – and as an expanded choreography – *Relâche* displayed an assemblage-like intermediality, dramaturgy, and relation with its audience. Picabia was the author of this complex construction. But, despite being an author-figure, it is possible he did not physically create anything for the ballet; for example, he did not even participate in the construction of the second act's set, delegating it to a professional painter-decorator from the Parisian suburbs.[57] The praxis of Picabia can therefore not be seen as the *poiesis* of an object, but, rather, as an orchestration of different media, persons, and content elements. Such a process seems to have been recognised by spectators; Léger wrote:

> *[T]out est réglé, voulu: minuterie du geste, du mouvement, des projecteurs. Plusieurs mois, Picabia a réglé les temps, les demi-temps, les dixièmes de temps – un monde entier en petit où tout fonctionne avec discipline, exactitude, raideur, mécaniquement – et toujours ça n'en a pas l'air...* [Everything is regulated, deliberate: timing of gesture, of movement, of the projectors. During many months, Picabia regulated the times, the half-times, the tenths of time – a whole world in small size in which everything functions with discipline, exactitude, rigidity, mechanically – and always does not seem to do so...][58]

Indeed, while Börlin was the choreographer of the ballet's dances, and Clair can be considered choreographer of its film, Picabia was the choreographer of a relational work; authorship being associable with the choreography of dance (or film) as well as the expanded choreography of a complex entity. In this way, Picabia's role joins Saint-Hubert's master of order [Chapter 1] and Mesa's *praxis* [Chapter 5] by acknowledging choreographic creation that is not-necessarily attached to a specific, tangible product, but that focusses on intermedia arrangements.

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

57 Boulbès: *Relâche*, p. 353.

58 Quoted in ibid., p. 594.

Relâche displays, apart from the libretto-based or movement-focussed choreographic models of its time, an early-20th-century response to these very models. It does this by being a non-medium-specific, assemblage-based work in which the juxtaposition of media – including the (non-)dancing and (non-)moving body – acquires equal, if not more, importance than their actions; by developing a dramaturgy based on relations between actions and actors, rather than narrative; by inscribing the performance in the event of its co-presence with an audience; by having a creator who was more attached to a minutely-timed orchestration of different elements than to grounding dance-making. The links between Picabia's ballet with contemporary expanded choreography (in general) and Mesa's [Chapter 5] work (in particular) show that early-21st-century, non-medium-specific, relational choreographic strategies do not constitute a rupture with the choreographic past, but a contemporary reconfiguration of elements inherent in that past. The links with an expanded view of Saint-Hubert's ballet [Chapter 1] further show that if contemporaneity can engage in undoing dancerly essentialisms in order to re-read the "pre-choreographic" past, this undoing is an operation whose tools are contained within choreographic history itself.

Conclusion

With its classically-trained dancers and its anti-dramatic development, *Relâche* responds to a libretto-based, ballet-sourced choreographic model while also subverting its narrativity and focus on dance. With its on-stage action that transfers the motion of modern lifestyles into the dancing body, its kinetically-constructed cinematographic prologue and interlude, and its discursive insistence upon movement, *Relâche* reflects choreography's passage towards an era of motion – and the conflicts arising in this passage; it thus acts as an incubator of modernist dissociations between a body-centred dance and other movement-mediating art forms. With its continuities and juxtapositions, fusions and oppositions between dancing bodies, music, scenography, costumes, lights, film, and its constant links between the work and its audience, *Relâche* is an assemblage-like, non-medium-specific expanded choreographic entity that unfolded as an event. *Relâche* thus forms a *nexus*[59] – a territory of multiple, coexisting understandings of choreography between narrative, motion, and expandedness.

By remaining in such an interstitial choreographic territory, the piece reflects early-20th-century (dance) modernity's oscillations: oscillations between narrative and motion as a creative model in film or choreography; oscillations between classical and modern ballet/dance; oscillations between how motion is

59 Cf. Leon: Vielfältige Konzepte des Choreografischen in Tanz und Film, p. 32.

incorporated by dancers while overflowing into other arts (e.g. film) and the urbanised experience of early-20th-century life; oscillations between medium specificity and interdisciplinary collaborations. These oscillations are partly mediated by shifts and frictions between, and expansions of, diverse choreographic models – of danced narrative, of body, of motion – thus making choreography a realm in which the period's ambivalences are translated. In this way, the choreographic multiplicity of the Ballets Suédois' last ballet suggests that historiography should focus on the complexity of simultaneous choreographic models, but also on these models as agents in a process of negotiation between different dance genres, different arts, and their porosities.

Apart from the horizontal axis of simultaneity, this reading of *Relâche* also proposes that historiography consider the vertical axis of transhistoricity.[60] Along this axis, Francis Picabia's ballet – a multimedia assemblage developed through the work of a creator approximating choreographic authorship and a non-linear dramaturgy – relates both to Mesa's *Solo* [Chapter 5] and Saint-Hubert's *La Manière de composer* [Chapter 1] and thus points to the necessity of interrogating potential links between choreographic models of the baroque, historical avant-garde, and contemporary periods. In its performance of an assemblage-like choreography, *Relâche* displays aesthetic, stylistic, institutional, and artistic features that are not assimilable to the 17th century's 'disposition of things put in their place'[61] nor to early-21st-century Deleuzeian-Guattarian views. In other words, if the vertical axis of transhistoricity demands that a history of choreography-as-assemblage be told, it also points to the variety of choreographic models contained within this history. In this sense, an expanded choreographic perspective of early-20th-century modern ballet allows for more plurality in a historical specimen, and at the same time it refines expanded choreography's own historical inscription.

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60 A methodological discussion of these axes' interaction is to be found in Foster, Hal: *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press 1996, p. xii.

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

Chapter 8: Looking at a world in movement: Rudolf Laban's work in industry[1]

Rudolf Laban's attachment to dance was primordial. At the same time, his dance practice overflowed into the non-performative domain – most notably in the form of amateur movement choirs that were not always staged – and was associated with non-dance fields.[2] Among these, Laban considered labour motions to be particularly relevant to the dance-maker: 'all through history movement on the stage drew its inspiration from the occupational motions of the now most numerous part of the population, the workers'.[3] The most notable example of a connection between dance and work in Laban's early career was his orchestration of Vienna's 1929 *Festzug des Handwerkes und der Gewerbe* [Pageant of the Crafts and Trades], a large-scale event in which professional dancers and workers from different guilds performed dances and choreographically-arranged work movements on mobile platforms along the streets of the Austrian capital.[4] Roughly a decade later, in 1938, Laban left Germany for the United Kingdom, where he remained until the end of his life; there, he reduced his dance-making activity[5] and worked in the field of industry, primarily collaborating with consultant Frederick Lawrence.

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1 Parts of this chapter are based on Leon, Anna : Object, Material and Machine in Rudolf Laban's Industrial Dance : Undoing Dichotomies in European Dance Modernity, in : Birringer, Johannes & Fenger, Josephine (eds.) : *Tanz der Dinge/Things that Dance*, Bielefeld : transcript 2019, pp. 89-96.

2 E.g. Laban, Rudolf: *Choreographie: Erstes Heft*, Jena: E. Diederichs 1926, p. 24. See also Maletic, Vera: *Body – Space – Expression: The Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement and Dance Concepts*, Berlin/New York/Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter 1987, p. 4.

3 Laban, Rudolf: *The Mastery of Movement* (4th edition), Alton: Dance Books 2011 [1950], p. 93.

4 Cf. Laban, Rudolf: *A Life for Dance: Reminiscences*, London: McDonald and Evans 1975 [1935, trans. Lisa Ullmann], pp. 141–149. See also McCaw, Dick (ed.): *The Laban Sourcebook*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2011, pp. 139–144.

5 Isabelle Launay situates his last important spectacle in 1936; see Launay, Isabelle: *A la recherche d'une danse moderne: Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman*, PhD thesis, Saint-Denis: Université Paris 8 1997, p. 10.

While inextricably bound to the socio-political circumstances of their beginnings – during and after WWII, when women were trained in manual factory jobs previously held by men[6] – Laban's activities in industry are also part of the wider framework of 20th-century dance modernity's interest in labour, be it in Western Europe (François Malkovsky), Russia (Ippolit Sokolov), or the United States (Ted Shawn, the New Dance Group).[7] Laban's work is also situated within factory management discourse about how to increase the efficiency of human movement – ranging from Frederick Taylor's "scientific" management[8] to Fordist control of labourers' actions – and the management of non-manual labour, to which Laban also contributed. Laban's work in industry can also be inscribed within a framework of increasing labour mechanisation, compartmentalisation of tasks in assembly lines, and a high concentration of labourers in factory environments. Despite these contextual inscriptions, however, Laban's work in industry – and its effectiveness – is less studied than his other activities.[9]

One of the reasons for this may be that – apart from theoretical works such as *Effort*[10] – the vast majority of relevant materials are found in unpublished notes, letters, reports, notations, etc. that are uniquely available in archives. This chapter draws from Laban's published books; texts from Laban and collaborators, found in Laban Art of Movement Guild journals; as well as unpublished material in the Rudolf Laban collections (Special Collections, Leeds University Library), the Laban Archive (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance), and the Rudolf Laban Archive (University of Surrey). The latter sources – often informal documents pertaining to everyday planning and operation of industrial activities – are written by Laban, Lawrence, and/or their collaborators, and they form a collective authorial figure around Laban's person and ideas. As authorship is sometimes uncertain, this chapter's footnotes indicate how likely it was that

6 Cf. McCaw: *The Laban Sourcebook*, p. 8.

7 On Malkovsky see Bodak, Suzanne: *Philosophie du geste. La Danse libre de François Malkovsky*, France (no city indicated): Ressouvenances 2007, pp. 32, 40; on Sokolov see Bowlt, John E.: Ippolit Sokolov and the Gymnastics of Labor, in: *Experiment* 2 (1996), pp. 411–421 and Suquet, Annie: *L'Eveil des modernités : Une histoire culturelle de la danse (1870-1945)* , Pantin : Centre national de la danse 2012, pp. 624–627.

8 Laban writes that Taylor 'was one of the first people who tried to penetrate the riddle of human movement from an entirely new point of view'. Laban, Rudolf: *Modern Educational Dance*, Plymouth: McDonald and Evans 1975 [1948], pp. 4–5.

9 An important book-length work on this topic is Davies, Eden: *Beyond Dance: Laban's Legacy of Movement Analysis*, New York/Oxon: Routledge 2001.

10 Laban, Rudolf & Lawrence, Frederick Charles: *Effort : Economy of Human Movement* (2nd edition), Plymouth: McDonald and Evans 1979 [1947].

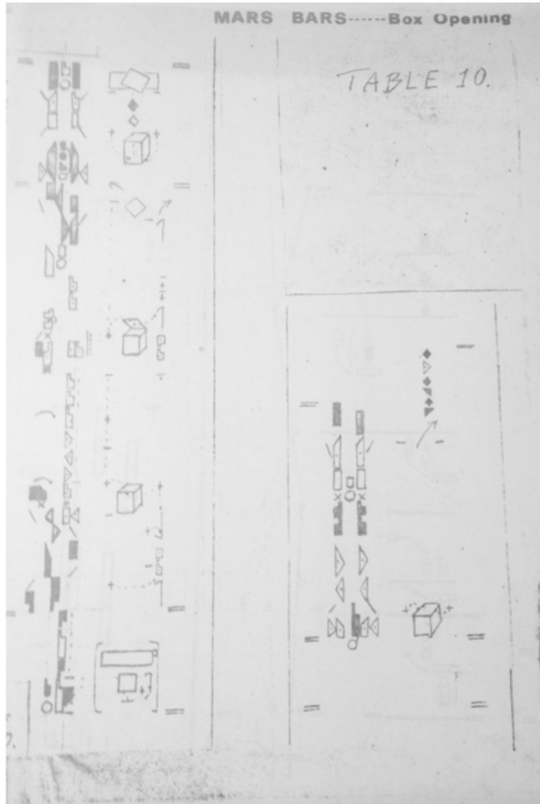
sources were written by Laban himself;[11] nevertheless, documents not (definitely) written by him are still part of his discursive and conceptual universe.

Laban is a canonical figure of German and, more widely, European modern dance; more than exemplifying modernity's choreographic traits, he is, arguably, a historiographically-central figure who played an almost-disproportionate role in determining those very traits. However, Laban's work in industry displays a paradoxical complexity that both confirms and subverts choreographic tendencies of modernity, revealing its potential expandedness. His work is also relevant to a historical perspective on expanded choreography because of its inscription beyond theatrical dance and its role in the history of choreography – both in a revived interest in choreography as notation, and in adapting that interest to 20th-century needs and practices.

Laban and Lawrence's work applied Laban's dance-based knowledge, concepts, and notation system to factory work [Figure 28] and developed kinetic ideas related to industrial activities. This was implemented in consulting projects for food and drink manufacturing (Mars Bars Ltd., J. Lyons & Co.), transport logistics (Manchester Ship Canal Co. Ltd.), equipment production (Tyresoles Ltd.), and farming (Dartington Hall Ltd.). For these and other clients, Laban, Lawrence, and their associates provided training to employees in their job movements, selection advice for recruitment, and proposals for the re-arrangement of work, including performance-based payment schemes. Thus, Laban's work with Lawrence marked a shift from the appropriation and re-contextualisation of labour movement in dance (as had happened in Vienna in 1929) towards an application of dance-derived concepts to labour, without any performative end beyond the accomplishment of the work itself.

11 The first time a source is referenced and if authorship is uncertain.

Figure 28: Detail of Labanotation of the action of opening a box, for Mars Bars. Anonymous, MARS BARS – Box opening, 1942. Image source: Special Collections, Leeds University Library, BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/151. https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419984. Reproduced with the permission © Laban Estate. No re-use without permission.



Laban's work in the industrial field – and, to a certain extent, his work in general – implies a broad conception of what choreography is, in which multiple definitions of choreography coexist. The first is literally and historically inscribed, referring to Raoul Auger Feuillet and choreography as notation [Chapter 2]. Indeed, Kinetography (Labanotation) was adapted to the needs of industrial analysis, and factory work used, and may have contributed towards, the development of a supplementary notation system based on effort. A second conception of choreography active in Laban's mentality is the 20th-century understanding of both dance and choreography as bound to corporeality, as the bodily expression

of an interior psychological state – doubled by an attachment to movement; Laban spoke of dance as 'a total immersion in the *flow* of movement'[12]. This became a cornerstone of the Labanian approach to employee selection, which matched workers to jobs specifically adapted to their movement patterns. A third conception of choreography should also be considered, which places Laban's industrial work in an expanded choreography framework. In this context, Laban questions his own anthropocentrism and attachment to motion, pointing to the early-20th-century's ambivalences around its choreographic models – just as *Relâche* did [Chapter 7]. In doing so, Laban's work on work links with other beyond-human and beyond-motional choreographic approaches, responding to interrogations raised by Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro's treatises [Chapter 3] as well as William Forsythe's contemporary installations [Chapter 6]. Thus, Laban manifests 20th-century modernity's reconfigurations of problematics also present in early modernity and the present.

Anthropocentrism in question

Laban's activity – in industry and beyond – reflected the 20th century's choreographic focus on a moving corporeality in multiple ways. Even when his work related more to the term's etymology –the literal writing of motion through notation and the inscription of motion in space – than its significance in Laban's modern context, it remained anchored in the body. Laban's notational system – his main tool of observing, analysing, and graphically-encoding movement – grounds its principles of function and its conception of space upon the dancer's corporeality and embodied experience;[13] while the notation allows for subdivisions of the body, its representation of the body as a whole is a shift away from its Feuilletian inspiration. This whole-body representation in the notation was reflected in Laban's factory work; for example, Eden Davies reports that for Mars Bars Ltd. Laban 'devised a system of compensatory exercises and improved the actual wrapping action so that it merged into a whole body movement'.[14] Laban insisted on the specificity of the human body when he suggested his notational

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12 Laban: *Modern Educational Dance*, p. 97, emphasis added. In *Choreutics*, Laban writes that '[t]he lasting, uninterrupted flow of organised movement phrases is true dance': Laban, Rudolf: *Choreutics*, London: MacDonald and Evans 1966, p. 93.

13 For example, paths in space are drawn from the embodied perspective of the dancer; the size of steps is judged with a performer's "natural" stride as a reference point. Hutchinson-Guest, Ann: *Choreo-Graphics: A Comparison of Dance Notation Systems from the Fifteenth Century to the Present*, New York: Gordon and Breach 1989, pp. 370, 139.

14 Davies: *Beyond Dance*, p. 27.

work 'could be used only to describe and analyse human movement'.[15] Similarly, the kinesphere – one of the main constructs developed by Laban in order to conceptualise and visualise the inscription of motion in space – is also defined on the basis of the human body – specifically, the spherical space that one can reach with extended limbs.[16]

Laban's practice also aligned itself with 20th-century views of choreography pertaining to human bodies in motion. Alluding to a Delsartean mind-body link, Laban theorised that the moving body was a *locus* of expression of the subject: 'bodily movements consist of elements which create actions reflecting the particular qualities of the inner effort from which they spring'.[17] This relationship also functions inversely: Laban stressed 'the important effect action has on the mental state of the mover'.[18] His notion of effort, to a great extent elaborated in the field of industry – the most important publication on the topic was co-written with Lawrence – contributes to these ideas. Part of Labanian movement analysis, effort theory is less interested in the spatial form of motion than its qualities and dynamics (mostly associated with Eukinetics, analysed through the figure of the dynamosphere).[19] It analyses movement in terms of Space, Time, Weight, and Flow;[20] this is not simply the movement's

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15 Laban, Rudolf: *Principles of Dance and Movement Notation*, New York: Dance Horizons 1973 [1956], p. 20. However, in an evolution presumably not planned by Laban and prefiguring the arguments in this chapter, his notation may today be applied to the movement of non-human organisms (notably mammals and birds). Hutchinson-Guest, Ann: *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement*, New York: Routlege 2005, p. 5.

16 In *Choreutics*, Laban writes: '[i]nnumerable directions radiate from the centre of our body and its kinesphere into infinite space': Laban: *Choreutics*, p. 17.

17 Laban: *Modern Educational Dance*, pp. 25–26. On the associations and parallels between Laban and Delsarte see Maletic: *Body – Space – Expression*, pp. 5, 73, 154.

18 Laban: *Modern Educational Dance*, p. 102.

19 Laban's early definition of eukinetics presents it as a sub-field of choreutics associated with dynamics: '[i]n that part of the study of choreutics which we call eukinetics the dynamic structure of these movements can be exactly determined. The result is a scheme which is comparable to that of orientation in space. The space in which our dynamic actions take place may be called the "dynamosphere"'. Laban: *Choreutics*, p. 30. On the nuances between Effort and Eukinetics, Maletic explains: '[w]hile eukinetics focussed on the expressive qualities in dance […] Effort is concerned with all human movement and its term indicates that unlike energy which exists in all nature in many different forms, Effort can only be found in living organisms and is clearly linked with motivation/intentionality.' Maletic: *Body – Space – Expression*, p. 178.

20 Laban lists eight basic combinations of effort parameters which correspond to basic actions: wringing, pressing, gliding, floating, slashing, flicking, punching, and dabbing. To take two examples, pressing is firm in relation to weight, direct in relation to space, and sustained in relation to time, while flicking is light in relation to weight, flexible in relation to space, and sudden in relation to time. Laban: *Modern Educational Dance*, p. 35.

path, speed, etc., but the "how" of the movement understood in terms of these factors. This analysis assumes that effort is the expression, in movement, of an inner impulse for action, in a sense combining (un)conscious motivation and engaged energy in order to realise an action.[21] As such, effort manifests internal aspects of the person through their corporeal movement; 'pressing, thrusting, wringing, slashing, gliding, dabbing, flicking and floating [actions recurring in Laban's analysis of effort ...] are the basic actions of a working person, and, at the same time, the fundamental movements of emotional and mental expression.'[22] In their chapter 'Psychological aspects of effort control', Laban and Lawrence further analysed personality in terms of indulging or resisting the four effort factors: '[n]othing can be expressed in psychological terms until the attitude towards the motion factors Weight, Space, Time and Flow has been determined'.[23]

Despite his association with human-body-centred and human-subject-oriented understandings of choreo(-)graphy, however, Laban also conceived of a non-human choreography; this was strikingly present in his industrial work. This is initially indicated by how the industrial Laban treated the body itself as an object. He was interested in the body as a physiological and mechanical device, comparable to the machines that were also working in factories; '[e]ssentially, the movements of the robot and of man are the same [...] There is no bodily action which is not essentially mechanical and even the reactions of the senses are built up on the same principles as cameras, gramophones radio apparatus, and such like'.[24] Laban further considered the body – or specific parts of it – as tools; '[t]he hand is a universal tool. Its movement are [sic] the movement of a pair of pincers, of a shovel, a fork, a hammer, a batter, etc.'[25] Equating the body to the machine has pragmatic

21 Cf. Laban: *The Mastery of Movement*, pp. 9, 21, 169.

22 Laban, Rudolf: *The Mastery of Movement on the Stage*, London: MacDonald and Evans 1950, p. 105.

23 Laban & Lawrence: *Effort*, p. 72, see also p. 67. In *Choreutics*, Laban proposed that 'the inner meaning of movement can perhaps be described by special dynamospheric symbols still more explicitly than by spatial ones': Laban, *Choreutics*, p. 35.

24 Laban Rudolf: Laban Lecture 1962 (Paper II), in: *The Laban Art of Movement Guild Magazine* 29 (1962), p. 16. On the chemical aspect of the body, Laban writes: '[t]he human body is a very complicated mechanic-chemical device [...] I can use my fist as a hammer, an action which sets a greater part of the mechanico-chemical device "man" in action'. Laban, Rudolf: The Difference between a Machine and a Human Body, 1942, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/71/11, pp 1b–2 [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue]

25 Laban, Rudolf: Movements Involved in Industrial Operations, 1942, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/75/16, p. 3 [attributed to Laban by the archive catalogue through an attached handwritten manuscript]. Laban also writes: '[t]he working person

implications; Laban warned that 'the value of a labouring man decreases more rapidly through neglect in maintenance as [sic] a machine',[26] thus highlighting that corporeal training of workers was considered upkeep of their corporeal device – or of them as corporeal devices, too.

Laban also stressed the extent to which this human-body-as-device made constant use of objects – from simple tools to complex machinery – while working. An interest in the objects' physical make-up resulted in suggestions for their re-design, in order to make the interaction between workers and equipment easier. To optimally adapt the machine or tool to the human, Laban and his colleagues proposed ways of perfecting the worker's affordances provided by the equipment; these included everything from adding bars to trolleys for better grip to correcting the structure of tables.[27] He also proposed that machines should

> give the operator the most suitable series of stresses and relaxations and of all the other contrasts of effort elements. It is evident that the designer should know enough about effort study and the function of the human body engine, both with regard to structure and effort capacities, so that the controls of his machines are constructed in the most suitable way for easy and rhythmical operation.[28]

But objects are not just peripheral accessories that facilitate working movement by being adapted to human functioning; they also have an active role in influencing the very movements in which they are used. Thus, bidirectionally, 'the

might use his bare hands, or a set of tools. Hands are in fact nothing but tools attached to our bodies as living implements'. Laban: *The Mastery of Movement*, p. 88.

26 Laban, Rudolf: Untitled notes, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/64/70, p. 8 [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

27 Laban-Lawrence Industrial Rhythm: Notes on the Tools and Equipment Designed for Use in the Tea Factory, 1944, Special Collections, Leeds University Library, BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/146. https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419979, p. 1; Laban-Lawrence Industrial Rhythm: Rhythm of J Lyons & Company, Greenford, Tea Factory, 1944, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/72/5, p. 6. Cf. also Paton Lawrence & Company: Movement and Effort Observations, 1948, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/74/2.

28 Laban, Rudolf [& Lawrence, Frederick Charles?]: The Effort Situation of our Age, undated (Part of typescript report entitled 'Synopsis of a lecture by Rudolf Laban and F.C. Lawrence, at the Manchester Association of Engineers': 'Motion and Movement in Modern Engineering Practice', 3 June 1946), Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Faculty of Dance, Laban Archive, LC/B/16/320.58, p. 10 [document not signed but attached to a 1946 lecture by Laban and Lawrence; handwriting comparison of corrections to the typed text also support that Laban is its author. Page numbers are not regular].

efficient machine which can be easily operated is driven and assisted by men who should be taught to use their own bodily power in the right way'.[29] Despite the credo that 'machines should be adapted to the men and not the men to the machines'[30] or that machines 'are accidental accessories only, destined to facilitate the function of the real instrumental body which is the cooperating staff consisting of individual workmen',[31] Laban and his colleagues proposed exercises that habituated workers to the objects and machines they operated. These included, for example, suggestions for the efficient use of pedals and levers, and the use of token tools for training with objects.[32] Notwithstanding Laban's discursively-advocated anthropocentrism, the individual *anthropos* had to conform to mechanical rhythm; '[m]ind and body', wrote Laban and Lawrence, 'must sometimes be trained to match the machines as their structure and rhythm become more and more exacting'.[33]

Non-human entities, such as tools and machines, also played a central part in the choreography of work – so much so that Laban suggested that '[i]n the case of highly mechanised processes the importance of body movement fades away almost entirely. It is then the movement of the object, effected by machinery, which must be assessed'.[34] Materials and machines were choreographically analysed through the "dance into industry" metaphor:

> This dance of material is unique to modern industry. Metal melts and flows into moulds, bars or pipes bend, fall to pieces, hover in the air, get into exact positions, branch out or are assembled together through the impact of machines almost *without human interference* […] Logs dance and balance together supported by cranes, turn to the right or the left, stand on their ends and glide down slopes.[35]

A manager or consultant had to understand the choreographic aspects of the non-human since '[h]elplessness towards the rhythm of material is a cause of

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29 Laban & Lawrence: *Effort*, p. 8.

30 Paton Lawrence & Company: Movement and Effort Observations, 1948, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/74/2, p. 8.

31 Laban, Rudolf: The Industrial Concert, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/77/44, p. 1b [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

32 Rink, Gerda: Hoover – Motion Economy and Industrial Rhythm, 1943, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/66/17, p. 7.

33 Laban & Lawrence: *Effort*, p. 82.

34 Laban, Rudolf: The Laban Lawrence Method of Effort Assessment, Selection and Effort Training, 1946, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/33/49, p. 4.

35 Laban, Rudolf: The Revival of Rhythm, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/57/4, pp. 38–39, emphasis added [attributed to Laban by the archive catalogue].

worries and difficulties very comparable with the helplessness of the operator who does not become aware and is not able to master his own bodily and mental rhythm'.[36]

Against this background that recognises the presence and role of the non-human in industrial activity, Laban's view of choreography – as notation and movement-writing – expanded beyond its human-corporeal forms. The importance of tools and machines in the choreography of work was reflected in "Industrial Kinetography". This adaptation of Laban's notation system to industry was presented as a consequence of the common use of objects by dancers (stage props) and workers (tools).[37] The modified notation covers the movement of both human workers and 'materials, parts, tools and implements which are set in motion or on which work is done';[38] specific symbols for tools and machine parts allowed objects to de-centralise Kinetography – and choreo(-)graphy – away from the human body.

Similarly, a choreography of expressing human interiority through movement also expanded to non-human factory workers. Indeed, the most striking way Laban acknowledges the non-human in his choreography of work is through the attribution of effort to machines. Some of Laban's writings deny this possibility, marginalising the inorganic:

> No matter whether the exertion appears to be more bodily or mental, there is always at its origin a process which can be compared to the switching on of an electric current. This primary function is the exclusive privilege of living beings. No inanimate object can make an effort.[39]

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36 Laban, Rudolf: Untitled notes, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/77/34, pp. b2–c [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

37 'The special application which movement notation has found in industry has developed from the fact that dancers frequently handle objects and tools, i.e. stage properties, when on the stage. The close connection between the movements made when handling stage properties and those used in industrial operations is obvious'. Laban: *Principles of Dance and Movement Notation*, p. 19.

38 Laban, Rudolf: Laban Lawrence Industrial Notation, 1943, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/22/3, pp. 3 and 4 for a mention of specific tools. [attributed to Laban by the archive catalogue]. See also Laban, Rudolf: Industrial Kinetography (Laban), undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/66/2 [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

39 Laban: *The Mastery of Movement*, p. 169. This quotation focusses on the "inorganic", implying that organic non-human beings could display effort patterns. This is, in effect, the case; however, human actors are still considered superior in their relevance to effort analysis: 'the effort-characteristics of men are much more varied and variable than those of animals'. Laban: *The Mastery of Movement on the Stage*, p. 11, see also p. 13. *Effort* expresses a similar idea: '[i]t is true that the tremendous motion which is shown in the

However, in the practice of industrial consulting, machine and human movement were analysed in the same terms of effort: '[m]achinery and implements, which can be considered as an extension of human body powers, can be assessed in their effects in W[eight] S[space] T[ime] and F[low] in a similar way as the movement functions of the body itself'.[40] Laban also considered using effort graphs – which display effort qualities through a combination of strokes – to represent mechanical movements.[41] Therefore, machines may not have initiated effort-laden movements or possess human-like inner impulses, but they can embody and manifest effort. They perform a specific kind of effort, in which the dynamic qualities of movement are found, even if these movements are not associated with the machine's inner state.

Thus, in his choreography of work, the differences between the human and the non-human body – in terms of physical make-up and movement qualities – were more vague than Laban himself suggested. The embodied subject was also seen as a device-like, mechanically-functioning, working body, while Laban's conception of the machine was, in Isabelle Launay's words, '*un modèle non mécanique de la machine* [a non-mechanical model of the machine]'[42] – one that can *embody* intentional states even if it cannot *generate* them. Despite the human being considered superior to the machine, Laban's work indicates that the machine has more agency than may be immediately apparent, reconfiguring the hierarchy of work towards a more horizontal, non-anthropocentric organisation. Laban's thinking and practice thus displayed a fundamental interest in the centrality of the human body while simultaneously challenging this centrality, recognising the role of inorganic materiality. In this framework, conceptions of choreography-as-writing were re-activated and linked with human corporeality, but could also be adapted to the non-human. Modern conceptions of choreography associated with the moving-body were reflected through a focus

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flow of material in modern industry is a part of this investigation, but its main value lies in the recognition that behind this terrific flow there is always the bodily-mental effort of an individual. No mechanisation can eliminate human effort; the handling of the powers of nature must be done by humans'. Laban & Lawrence: *Effort*, p. 73.

40 Laban, Rudolf [& Lawrence, Frederick Charles?]: New Efforts Appearing in Massagglomerations, undated (Part of typescript report entitled 'Synopsis of a lecture by Rudolf Laban and F.C. Lawrence, at the Manchester Association of Engineers': 'Motion and Movement in Modern Engineering Practice', 3 June 1946), Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Faculty of Dance, Laban Archive, LC/B/16/320.58, p. 31 [document not signed but attached to a 1946 lecture by Laban and Lawrence. Overlaps with handwritten notes by Laban, suggesting he is its author. Page numbers are not regular].

41 Laban or a Laban-based analyst writes of '[t]he employment of effort graphs for the assessment of machine functions and the use of machines in industry'. Anonymous: The Flow of Material, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/75/11, p. 1.

42 Launay: *A la recherche d'une danse moderne*, p. 95.

on the human body's kinetic expression, but could also expand towards movement qualities discerned in the actions of things. In this way, Laban's factories displayed both a human-centred choreography and a hybrid, expanded, non-anthropocentric one, stressing the need to historiographically acknowledge the – perhaps contradictory – plural nature of Laban's choreographic views. His focus on human corporeality thus anchors him in the physicalised 20th-century choreographic landscape, but it does not preclude him from relating to earlier – like Guglielmo's non-anthropocentric views [Chapter 3] – or later – like Forsythe's dancing trees [Chapter 6] – choreographic embracings of the non-human.

Expanded movement

Laban's view of choreography was not only anchored in human corporeality. As suggested by the motional analysis of effort, it was also founded upon this corporeality's being-in-motion. This kinetic attachment – be it in factories or beyond – was, in turn, implicated in the relations – and dichotomies – he envisaged between human and non-human entities. Echoing Forsythe [Chapter 6] and later theorisations of affordance, Laban espoused that objects, products, and equipment may invite, or generate, motion. He tried to understand the movement qualities necessary for operating new products and machinery – the movements they required their users to perform (one of the devices Laban considered capable of producing qualitatively new movement experiences was the war-related mechanism of the parachute[43]). But some of his observations led to a pessimistic conclusion; he noted that new products and pieces of equipment could generate nothing more than jerks, micro-movements, or even immobility in their users. Identifying a possible elimination of (loco)motion though mechanisation, Laban writes: '[w]e live in a time of racing machines, destined to take soon the last vestige of motion out of us'.[44] Furthermore, Laban theorised that modern lifestyles would concentrate "mental mobility" – the new way to display human mobile skills.[45] An antagonism thus appears in a humanity confined to corporeal motionlessness, partly because of mechanical and other equipment. But just like the unclear limits between the human and

43 Laban & Lawrence: *Effort*, p. 83.

44 Laban, Rudolf: The Renaissance of the Art of Movement, undated [1946?], Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/74/1, p. 3 [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison].

45 Laban, Rudolf: The Renaissance of the Art of Movement, undated [1946?], Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/74/1, pp. 3b–4a.

the non-human, the limits between movement and non-movement are not clear-cut. Undoing this double dichotomy points to a further expansion of Laban's choreography, diverging from its association with a kinetic human body.

Laban's analysis of micro-movement – possibly relating to the exhaustion of 'the last vestige of motion out of us' (quoted above) – starts with a focus on human subjects. In the field of work, he was interested in analysing and assessing not only manual labour motions but also "minimal" movements in white-collar, office jobs. The liminal status of office work, in which 'visible rhythm of movement seems to disappear entirely', was interesting because it still consumed 'rhythmical energy'.[46] This imperceptible movement is related to the Labanian notion of "shadow moves" – slight, often unconscious micro-movements which accompany larger movements or (apparent) immobility (e.g. sitting). The analysis of shadow movements complemented and nuanced a worker's effort graph, expanded motional assessment to managerial positions, and played a role in the evaluation of the working person.[47] Moreover, Laban's writings imply that in shadow movement the rhythms and effort patterns that a person has been habituated, or forced, to absorb are made visible; '[w]atching workmen departing in the late afternoon from factories, one can recognise the rhythms which they have exercised during the day in the flow of their tired or excited shadow moves'.[48] In other words, shadow moves reflect traces of previous movement that have shaped a person's body.

But, this vision of movement was not restricted to human subjects; just as shadow movements indicate movement-traces in the person, Laban saw, in objects, traces of the movements that created them. The movements executed in creating something are perceivable in the resulting form; '[w]hen the dancer looks at an object – be it an instrument, a container or a roof – then the image of movements and thoughts, even the feelings of the people who created the article, becomes immediately alive'.[49] In this perspective, an object contains traces of movement, even in its immobile state; it manifests the movement process that resulted in it. In this way, the relevance of movement in immobile, non-motorised objects is identified, focussing not on *their movement* but on them *in terms of movement*. The movements of production in the field of

46 Anonymous: The Rhythm of the Office Worker III, 1943, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/66/13, p. 1.

47 Warren Lamb points at the – unfalsifiable – reliance that Laban exhibited in favour of shadow movement analysis: 'Laban made much use of the shadow movement category to substantiate his conclusion about a person. "You can see from her shadow movements" he would say "that she is disequilibrated"'. Lamb, Warren: The Development of Action Profiling (Part 1), in: *Action News* 1978, unpaginated.

48 Laban: *The Mastery of Movement*, p. 124.

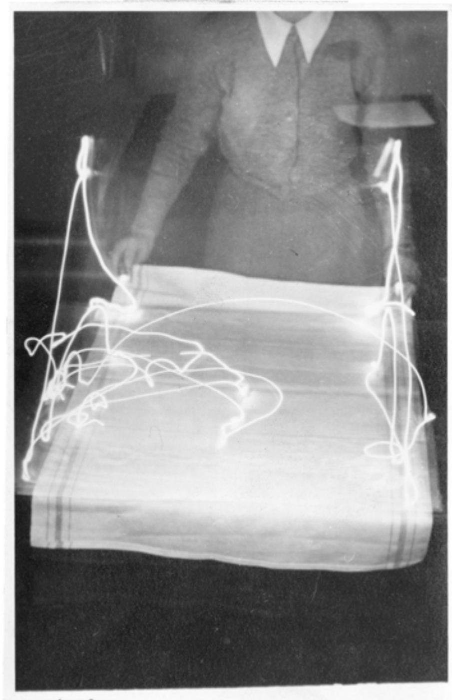
49 Quoted in McCaw: *The Laban Sourcebook*, p. 64.

work provided Laban the opportunity to observe the relationship between the actions performed by workers and the result of their labour. He saw an interaction, and a connection, between product and producer: '[i]n work, a physical-spiritual-mental exchange of forces must take place between the creator and his creation'.[50] Consequently, he considered that the product of work depends on, and embodies, the work processes and intentions that created it: '[w]ell conceived and applied, rhythm of operational performance is the congenial link between the idea of the planning designer and the perfect fulfilment of his intentions *in* the product by the manual worker'.[51] In a fascinating series of photographs in the Rudolf Laban Archive of the University of Surrey [one is reproduced in Figure 29], workers' movements are captured by "lightlines" – bright lines tracing their trajectories, allowing a timelapse to be condensed into one image – thus manifesting the outcome of their work (a folded tea towel, a set of medicine vials packed in cartons) in terms of their movements.

50 Quoted in ibid., p. 64.

51 Laban, Rudolf: The Rhythm of the Operator II, 1943, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/65/42, p. 16, emphasis added [attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

Figure 29: A photograph showing the lightlines from folding a tea towel, 1952 (L/F/3/19). From the Rudolf Laban Archive, University of Surrey, © University of Surrey. No re-use without permission.



Laban Lawrence Industrial Rhythm
Lightline : Folding a tea towel by
one method – 1952.

The relevance of movement to immobile objects is not limited to what their human creators may have done, but also concerns inorganic objects themselves, to which Laban extended the organic notion of growth: 'the manufacture of an

object is a process almost comparable to the growth of a living organism'.[52] Growth can be modified and directed by external sources but is an inherent tendency of the organism; similarly, Laban's use of the concept highlights that while human action can influence manufactured products' form, materials contribute to, and interact with, these actions. Beyond identifying the external movements that created an object in its form, Laban identified internal movement proclivities in materials:

> Movement is indicated in the shapes of all things. Not only that movement is indicated to which an object or a life form owes its final shape, such as the movement of development and growth. There is also that movement which seeks to break out of the shape, the gravity and weight of a large rock indicate the enormous force with which it could fall into the valley as part of an avalanche. The grace of a plant indicates the movements by means of which it is ready to push out a blossom from its stem, the blossom from which later sprouts fruit and new seed.[53]

Laban's vision – of micro-movement, movement-traces, and movement-proclivities present in immobility – are part of a wider motion-bound conception of the world surrounding him; he applied this conception to human and non-human, animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic, locomotor and immobile entities – comparable to a choreographic perspective on willow trees [Chapter 6]. Indeed, if movement is relevant when displacement is minimal, this is because Laban, (as well as some of his contemporary and Renaissance colleagues [Chapter 3]) saw the entire universe as being in motion, despite apparent stillness. Warren Lamb, one of his long-time collaborators, recounts that 'Laban was so absorbed by movement. The world consisted in movement. Stillness for him was something that he abhorred. He would often refer to everything as being in a state of flux'.[54] For Laban, thinking itself was performed through motion: '[o]ne's thoughts move in and through one's mind and so do one's feel-

52 Laban, Rudolf [& Lawrence, Frederick Charles?]: New Efforts Appearing in Massagglomerations, undated (Part of typescript report entitled 'Synopsis of a lecture by Rudolf Laban and F.C. Lawrence, at the Manchester Association of Engineers': 'Motion and Movement in Modern Engineering Practice' 3 June 1946). Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Faculty of Dance, Laban Archive, LC/B/16/320.58, p. 36.

53 Laban, Rudolf: *Gymnastics and Dancing* (typescript of translation commissioned by Gordon Curl), 1926, Special Collections, Leeds University Library, BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/65. https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419899, Part 2, p. 9.

54 Quoted in McCaw, Dick: *An Eye for Movement: Warren Lamb's Career in Movement Analysis*, London: Brechin Books 2006, p. 115.

ings, which are therefore called emotions […] or results of moving'.[55] Some of Laban's more-pragmatic industry collaborators may have considered such beliefs more akin to mysticism than useful choreographic thinking.[56] Nevertheless, his universal vision of movement might have been – more than just one of the widely-applicable dance metaphors present since the early-20th century[57] – related to the very model through which he conceived of industry. Beyond the motions performed within it, the factory can be understood through Laban's vision of a world in rhythmical movement.

Initially, this factory choreography concerns human teamwork. Possibly following the movement-choir-related idea of collective rhythm, a vision of the factory as an orchestra – a large-scale rhythmic entity that needs to work harmoniously – was developed. Workers in different levels of production and management can thus

> be compared with musicians who play a special instrument in a great symphony […] As soon as they understand the common purpose and their personal role within it, they will fit into the rhythm of the whole without any outside driving, because of their enjoyment in the resulting harmony.[58]

Parallel notations juxtaposed each worker's rhythm to that of others, 'like the various voices of music in a score'.[59] The consultant's role was to understand

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55 Laban, Rudolf: Laban Lecture 1957, in: *The Laban Art of Movement Guild Magazine* 18 (1957), p.11.

56 Lamb remembers: '[a] word he used a lot was Cosmos. He would talk with me quite a lot about his Space Harmony research, and he really believed that he was touching on something that was of immense, epoch-making significance and that nobody else would have much of a glimmer of what he was talking about. […] I got the impression of a man who explored and rambled in a way about all sorts of things, many of which were mystical'. Quoted in McCaw: *An Eye for Movement*, p. 29.

57 On this topic see Köhler, Kristina: Dance as Metaphor – Metaphor as Dance: Transfigurations of Dance in Culture and Aesthetics around 1900, in: Grabes, Herbert (ed.): *Metaphors Shaping Culture and Theory*, Tübingen: Narr 2009, pp. 163–178.

58 Laban, Rudolf [& Lawrence, Frederick Charles?]: New Efforts Appearing in Massagglomerations, undated (Part of typescript report entitled 'Synopsis of a lecture by Rudolf Laban and F.C. Lawrence, at the Manchester Association of Engineers': 'Motion and Movement in Modern Engineering Practice', 3 June 1946); Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Faculty of Dance, Laban Archive, LC/B/16/320.58, p. 36.

59 Laban, Rudolf [& Lawrence, Frederick Charles?]: New Efforts Appearing in Massagglomerations, undated (Part of typescript report entitled 'Synopsis of a lecture by Rudolf Laban and F.C. Lawrence, at the Manchester Association of Engineers': 'Motion and Movement in Modern Engineering Practice', 3 June 1946), Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Faculty of Dance, Laban Archive, LC/B/16/320.58, p. 30. See also Laban & Lawrence: *Effort*, pp. 86–87.

and possibly orchestrate this rhythm, working beyond the scale of the person on the supra-subjective level of collective movement.

Expanding the focus to the parallel actions of people and objects, Laban, Lawrence, and their colleagues developed consulting propositions that concerned the management of factories as a whole. By focussing on the flow of material through production lines, they could identify mistimings between these flows and workers' individual paces; by considering flow in the transfer of goods, they could re-orchestrate the coordination between human teams, crane drivers, transport machines, and goods to optimise dock works.[60] In order to make such analyses, Laban-Lawrence industrial movement notation included, beyond the movements of people and objects, 'the transport and flow of material through different departments of a production unit and [the] graphic representation of the rhythm of the manifold activities within a factory'.[61] Even though Laban did not attempt a single effort graph of an entire unit/factory in the consulted archival material, his writings imply that effort notions could apply to humans, objects, and 'the whole flow of material in production';[62] the qualitative dynamics of movement therefore also concerned the collective scale of the assembly line or factory.

While workers, materials, and machinery did *move* within industrial processes, the choreographic relevance of the factory went beyond the actual performance of motion, to stillness as an aspect of mobility, rather than its Other. Laban writes:

> The personification of objects, and the belief that inorganic nature lives, have their source in the intuitive awareness of the universal and absolute presence of movement. This primitive view is an intuitive confirmation of the scientifically proved truth that what we call equilibrium is never complete stability or a standstill, but the result of two contrasting qualities of mobility.[63]

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60 For example: Paton Lawrence & Company: Economy of Effort, 1943, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/74/5, p. 2; Paton Lawrence & Company: First Investigation into the Flow of Dock Work, 1946, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/73/14, p. ii.

61 Laban, Rudolf: Laban Lawrence Industrial Notation, 1943, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/22/3, p. 5.

62 Laban, Rudolf [& Lawrence, Frederick Charles?]: New Efforts Appearing in Massagglomerations, undated (Part of typescript report entitled 'Synopsis of a lecture by Rudolf Laban and F.C. Lawrence, at the Manchester Association of Engineers': 'Motion and Movement in Modern Engineering Practice', 3 June 1946), Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Faculty of Dance, Laban Archive, LC/B/16/320.58, p. 31.

63 Laban: *Choreutics*, p. 6.

Correspondingly, industrial choreography expanded from its performance by (non-)human bodies towards a generalised vision of a labouring world in motion. In this framework, rhythmic-kinetic aspects were identified in acts not involving visible motion – be they administrative tasks, or wider industrial and commercial (trans)actions. For example, Laban argued that with his notation 'it is possible to demonstrate and eventually to regulate not only the rhythm of personal performances but also that of the flow of material and even of administrative concern'.[64] He noted that 'man is embarking now into a venture which seems to surpass any human capacity. It is [in] this [sic] the regulation or better rhythmisation of international trade and economics', that one could identify 'the still more complex rhythms of trade and economics in their regional, national and finally international relationships'.[65] Similar to how individual (non-)human units of a factory must be considered part of the interconnected choreography to which they collectively contribute, multiple factories, enterprises, and productive activities may be considered actants of a global expanded choreography – as phenomena to be understood choreographically, as parts of a world in flux.

If choreography is attached to bodies in (loco)motion, Laban's reflections on industrial equipment and products trouble this conception by minimising movement imposed on human bodies. But, while Laban described a dichotomy of a moving human corporeality trapped into motionlessness by inorganic products, his work also recognised motions and non-motions shared by both. By identifying the kinetic relevance of seemingly-still human beings – through the notion of shadow movements – as well as the objects, materials, factories, and the wider agglomerations they belong to, Laban posited both a choreography of moving human bodies and an expanded choreography envisioning the (still) world in kinetic flow. In this way, he disengaged choreography from the human mover (challenging the 20th century's "bind" of motion to corporeality[66]), undid a clear dichotomy between motion and motionlessness (detaching his practice from a conception of choreography predicated on motion as opposed to immobility), and complexified the ways 20th century's attachment to motion can be understood. In doing so, the industrial Laban participates in a historical range of choreographic practices – pre- and post-20th century – that upset

64 Laban, Rudolf: The Revival of Rhythm, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/57/4, p. 41.

65 Laban, Rudolf: Rhythm in International Trade and Economics, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/77/33, unpaginated [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

66 On the notion of "bind" see Cvejić, Bojana: *Choreographing Problems: Expressive Concepts in European Contemporary Dance and Performance*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2015.

the motion/stillness dichotomy. In Laban's case, this upsetting did not operate through containment (like Domenico's *fantasmata* [Chapter 3]) or virtual potential (like Forsythe's willows [Chapter 6]), positing human motion as a reflection of cosmic harmonies, or developing unpredictable ecologies. Instead, it was the determinism of trace, the teleology of proclivity, and a universalism of motion that reconfigured a wider problematic for early-20th-century modernity.

Managing movement

Several ideas present in the industrial Laban sources indicate a deontological, non-exploitative approach in his management of work. The regulation of industrial processes was portrayed as beneficial to the human community:

> To become aware of the dance of material is also to become more clearly aware of the dance of man in his work and his whole life, and the speeding up and regulation of production should achieve the adaptation of the dance of material to the dance of life – benefitting [sic] the worker as well as the consumer and avoiding many of the disturbances of an industrial civilization.[67]

Moreover, Laban and Lawrence were critical of the profit-seeking labour management of the Fordist tradition;[68] they were opposed to the injunction to work at the highest speed possible. For example, they diagnosed Mars Bars as 'suffer[ing] from an over-estimation of time-efficiency and an under-estimation of effort-efficiency'.[69] The multi-faceted conception of work effort implies that different types of jobs require different approaches to, and combinations of, Weight, Space, Time, and Flow. This analysis of effort allowed Laban and Lawrence to remain within the Taylorist logic of efficiency and productivity –

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67 Laban, Rudolf: The Revival of Rhythm, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/57/4, p. 40.

68 For example, Laban writes: 'all the other factors of usefulness, profit, expansion etc are subordinated to the best form of rhythmical functioning'. Laban, Rudolf: Introduction, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/77/4, unpaginated [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

69 Anonymous: Concerns our Offer to Mars-Bar Limited, 1942, Special Collections, Leeds University Library, BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/151, https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419984, p. 1. Laban also writes: '[t]he perfect performance, and therefore the quality and quantity of output, does not depend on mechanical speed only, but rather on the rhythm in which effort and relaxation as well as speed and thoroughness are compounded': Laban, Rudolf: Report on the Introduction of Laban Lawrence Industrial Rhythm to Dartington Hall Trustees, Dartington Hall Ltd., Totnes South Devon [extract], undated, Special Collections, Leeds University Library BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/132, https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419965, p. 12.

wherein inappropriate effort was considered wasteful, and skill was considered "economical" effort[70] – while simultaneously rebutting speed-based industrial motion management as simplistic. Based on effort theory's highly-subjective, qualitative approach to movement as an indicator of the person's profile and skills, Laban and Lawrence also assumed an individualised approach in selection and training. Job effort graphs were matched with workers' effort graphs, including "mental" effort graphs that depicted psychological aptitudes; training was used to augment latent but necessary capacities.[71] If movement qualities are related to inner impulses, then being the right person – or being trained to express one's potential – in the right job is the only way to do the job well. The correspondence between personality traits and movement qualities guaranteed job enjoyment; for Laban and Lawrence, 'keep[ing] the inapt person on the wrong job is less an educative measure than the expression of ignorance and sometimes perhaps of sadism'.[72] As Romana Schmalisch, a contemporary artist who has conducted artistic research on the industrial Laban, succinctly puts it: '[t]hrough efficient and collective efforts, labour for Laban assumes an aesthetic value, bringing pleasure to the workers'.[73] A hint of Taylor's equating of prosperity with optimal efficiency is discernible in Laban and Lawrence's approach to labour: 'REMEMBER – the particular aim of the Laban-Lawrence Training is to make efficiency a pleasure'.[74]

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70 Laban & Lawrence: *Effort*, pp. 8, 14.

71 Laban, Rudolf?: The Job Effort Graph and its Application, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/62/27 [Laban's name is written in pencil on the first page of the typescript]. The essential veracity of movement analysis was argued to be a way of confronting selector bias in recruitment. For instance, Laban-Lawrence "control sheets" were given to training supervisors in order to 'arrive at conclusions without the danger of psycho-moralistic of other prejudices'. Laban Lawrence Industrial Rhythm: Laban Lawrence Effort-Value Control Sheets, 1942, Special Collections, Leeds University Library, BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/132, https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419965, p. 2.

72 Laban Lawrence Industrial Rhythm: Laban Lawrence Effort-Value Control Sheets, 1942, Special Collections, Leeds University Library, BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/132, https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419965, p. 2.

73 Schmalisch, Romana: The Choreography of Labour, in: *Notes sur les mouvements* 1, Aubervilliers: Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers 2013, p. 4.

74 Taylor, Frederick Winslow: *The Principles of Scientific Management*, New York/London: Harper & Brothers 1919, p. 11; Laban-Lawrence Industrial Rhythm: Laban Lawrence Training Manual, undated, Special Collections, Leeds University Library, BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/132, https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419965, p. 5. Certain workers were reported to have expressed their own interest in training: Laban Lawrence Industrial Rhythm: Laban-Lawrence Observations and Training, 1942, Special Collections, Leeds University Library, BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/132, https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419965, p. 4.

But, important ethical questions emerge in Laban and Lawrence's approach to industrial choreography, most notably concerning the need to train workers in order to achieve efficiency and pleasure. This is echoed in both Laban's earlier activities – which aimed to 'enlighten the guilds, from the masters down to the apprentices about their own traditions [...] to awaken in working people a feeling for their work rhythm'[75] – and in Taylor's belief that the "scientific manager" knows how to do a task better than the worker performing it.[76] While Laban and Lawrence urged trainers to adopt the working person's viewpoint of tasks,[77] the very concept of training meant that workers had to *learn* how to optimally perform movements, balance effort factors, and avoid spending energy purposelessly so they could enjoy their work. Laban and Lawrence admitted there was some individual trial-and-error learning, but they argued these natural capacities should be combined with guidance by an observer-trainer.[78] Similarly – while it was assumed that workers could understand effort notions by an 'awakening of the understanding'[79] – the movement analysis terms were defined by the consulting team, and the exercises integrated pre-defined knowledge, not open movement possibilities. The Laban-Lawrence training method did transfer responsibility to trainers, after a consultation period; again, however, these trainers were given detailed instructions to perform their role in a way that was scripted by the consulting team.[80] The partial removal of the worker's agency within the work ethic of pleasure may not have been Laban's intention; but, his ideal of an optimal, enjoyable mode of labour was shadowed by an external observer who imposed their vision of the enjoyable and the efficient – potentially dispossessing the worker of a personal grasp of their labour.

The worker, between guided and pleasurable motions, tunes into more than just the job's optimal effort arrangement. While the individual worker was an important part of expanded industrial choreographies, their personal action options were limited to those that did not interfere with overall functioning of a supra-individual choreography: '[d]eviations of single persons from the flow

75 Laban: *A Life for Dance*, p. 143.

76 Taylor writes: 'in almost all of the mechanic arts the science which underlies each workman's act is so great and amounts to so much that the workman who is best suited actually to do the work is incapable (either through lack of education or through insufficient mental capacity) of understanding this science'. Taylor: *The Principles of Scientific Management*, p. 41.

77 Laban & Lawrence: *Effort*, p. 53.

78 Ibid., pp. 14, 25.

79 Ibid., p. 14.

80 See, for example, Laban-Lawrence Industrial Rhythm: Laban Lawrence Training Manual, undated, Special Collections, Leeds University Library, BC MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/132, https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/419965.

of work cause disturbances in the flow of material. […] individual movements may develop freely within certain well definable margins'.[81] The factory is thus presented as an organism in which individual actants should function in a cell-like contribution to the whole:

> To make all the individual cells of an industrial organism aware of the way which leads from the single intention to the precision of the whole. To convey to everybody working within an industrial organism the experience of wellbeing which accompanies personal and common rhythmical function.[82]

This tuning-in concerns collectives of human workers, and requires that each worker combine their movement to the hybrid, collective, expanded choreography of the entire factory; worker movements are interrelated with those of machines and tools.

Rhythm is one of the ways to achieve this synergy; rhythmic sense is relevant 'far beyond the assessment of the operation of a single workman to the flow of work within a whole department or factory or chain of factories'.[83] Laban argued that '[a]s any production consists of a chain or series of individual actions, the greater rhythm within a department or even a whole factory can be assessed', both as the sum of individual acts and 'as the rhythm of the material flow of a product or of other details of the work'.[84] Correspondingly, 'an entirely new rhythm appears, which demands new efforts and a more complex planning. The various gang rhythms must be co-ordinated together with that of the machines between them'.[85]

Rhythm – as a means of ordering the expanded choreography of the factory – is accompanied by the notion of harmony, often also mentioned in Laban's

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81 Paton Lawrence & Company: First Investigation into the Flow of Dock Work, 1946, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/73/14, p. i.

82 Laban, Rudolf: The Idea of Industrial Rhythm, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/77/5, unpaginated [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

83 Laban, Rudolf: The Revival of Rhythm, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/57/4, pp. 41–42.

84 Laban, Rudolf: The Observation of Rhythm in Work, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/40/21, p. 12 [attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

85 Laban, Rudolf [& Lawrence, Frederick Charles?]: The Planning of Collective Effort, undated (part of typescript report entitled 'Synopsis of a lecture by Rudolf Laban and F.C. Lawrence, at the Manchester Association of Engineers': 'Motion and Movement in Modern Engineering Practice', 3 June 1946), Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Faculty of Dance, Laban Archive, LC/B/16/320.58, p. 17 [document not signed but attached to a 1946 lecture by Laban and Lawrence. Page numbers are not regular].

dance-related writings. The efforts, rhythms, and movements of humans, machines, and administration must be regulated by harmonious relationships; this was once again Laban's pre-requisite for optimal, productive, and enjoyable work:

> [T]o be satisfying and to give satisfaction, every movement, whether of people, machinery or moving objects must be rhythmical [...] in relation to preceding and succeeding movements and when other people, machinery or objects are involved, in relation to their movements. Everything must be so timed, spaced and emphasised as to create one harmonious whole.[86]

An ideal Labanian factory did not allow a disorderly, disorganised choreography; it was based on a harmonious one. Moreover, despite the fact that individual actants were attributed agency and initiative, it was a tightly-controlled harmony that emerged from their actions. A common rhythm was to be set by a decision-maker other than the working agents – indeed, the notion of harmony implies the existence of an observer and an external gaze, whose position allows perception and projection of harmony. Laban maintained that individual human beings were capable of awareness of, and agency within, their working group:

> The cells of the body of a murderer will remain unconscious of the crimes of their master. And I do not think that the cells of a holy man are all aware of the enhanced moral tendencies of the individual of whom they are parts [...] But human individuals have, as we hope [...] more responsibility towards the behaviour of the collective organism to which they belong.[87]

But, he also stressed a hierarchical figure's role in facilitating such awareness: '[t]he leaders of collective organisms are bound to train individuals for communal purposes. The individual has the tendency to revolt against such training if he does not understand or appreciate the collective purpose'.[88]As important as individual efforts and rhythms may be, the factory's expanded choreography also included figures of choreographic industrial authority. In most cases, these figures were the founders/owners, managers, and other executives of industrial plants, portrayed as the sources of the factory's choreography: '[t]he mental rhythms and efforts displayed by [the executive] are the *initiators* of the flow of

86 Anonymous: Excerpts from the Report of a Meeting between Mr. Laban and the Heads of a Large Company, in: *The Laban Art of Movement Guild News Sheet* 1 (1948), p. 12.

87 Laban, Rudolf: The Industrial Organism, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/65/14, pp. 5, 7 [attributed to Laban by the archive catalogue; the document is a typescript followed by handwritten pages; handwriting comparison also points to Laban as its author].

88 Laban, Rudolf: The Industrial Organism, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/65/14, p. 4.

material'.[89] The manager had to 'listen and to respond actively to the language of evolution and growth manifesting itself in the tender buds of his plant and serve it cunningly rather than using brutal and mechanical will power'.[90] At the same time, the manager regulated and controlled other workers' work; being 'aware of the rhythm and acquiring the faculty to observe, to *regulate* it with increasing efficiency is [many managers'] main task'.[91] Laban noted that 'any labour management is in itself a rhythmical organisation of the manifold working processes'.[92] In other words, the manager had to be benevolent – indeed, the orchestral understanding of collective rhythm suggests that Laban and Lawrence did not propose a complete, disciplinary homogenisation of individual rhythms – but their position also centralised the industrial regulation, rendering the factory a supra-subjective entity. The hierarchy of this "regulatory" process is visualised in a graph for tea manufacturers J. Lyons & Company Ltd. [Figure 30]; the administration was on top and in charge of planning and selection, while the workers received foremen and trainers' input.

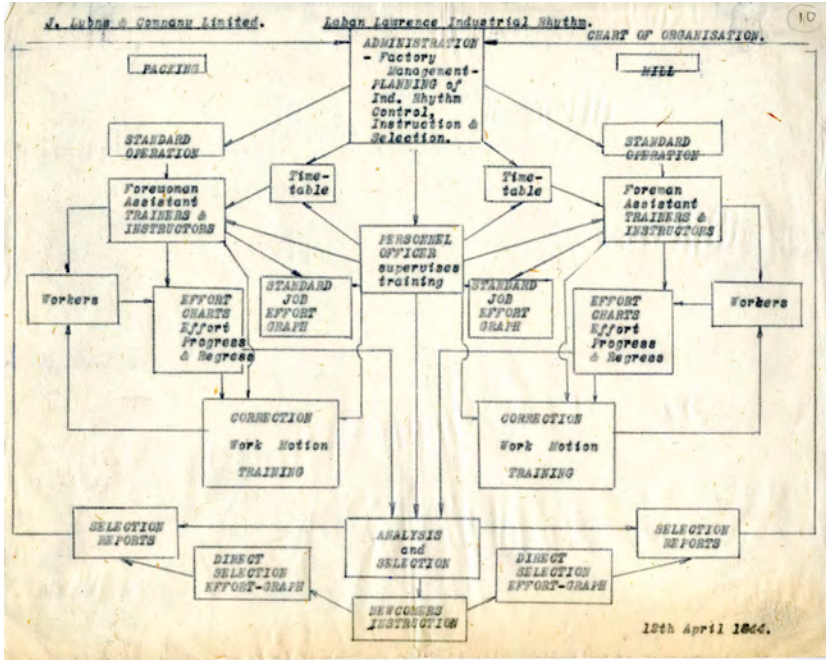
89 Laban, Rudolf: Untitled notes, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/73/12, p. 1, emphasis added [handwritten notes, attributed to Laban by handwriting comparison and the archive catalogue].

90 Laban, Rudolf: The Industrial Organism, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/65/14, p. 2.

91 Laban, Rudolf: Untitled notes, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/77/34, p b2, emphasis added.

92 Laban, Rudolf: Introduction, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/77/4, unpaginated.

Figure 30: Industrial Rhythm chart by Rudolf Laban, 1944 (L/E/72/6). From the Rudolf Laban Archive, University of Surrey, © University of Surrey. No re-use without permission.



The expanded choreography of the factory was therefore based on a hierarchy in which the manager-choreographer was not an instigator of purposefully-unknown potential, but, rather, a director of action. Nevertheless, cracks appear in this choreographic ideology. For Laban, 'the main preoccupation of many managers is to deal with [materials' and fabrications'] rhythm, *even if they do not recognise it always as the fundamental factor of production*. [...] to regulate [the rhythm] with increasing efficiency is their main task'.[93] This quotation confirms the manager's hierarchical superiority in the industrial choreography, while also expressing their limited knowledge about their task. Indeed, the external observer/consultant/choreographer could direct the manager, by identifying and/or projecting a harmonious, optimal choreographic functioning. The founder/manager was presented as the 'germ-cell' of the industrial organism,

93 Laban, Rudolf: Untitled notes, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/77/34, p. b2, emphasis added.

a 'storehouse of possibilities' – but not its 'creator'.[94] In effect, the germ-cell manager was also part of the industrial organism, subject to an (external) gaze; thus, the dispossession of one's work inherent in consulting concerned more than just the manual workers. Laban and Lawrence identified managers in need of guidance themselves, who were otherwise hindering the industrial organisms for which they were responsible. For instance, in *Effort*, the authors recount a case of a problematic working atmosphere in which '[t]he only obstacle to a complete cure was the manager, who was himself [...] not able to think in terms of effort and was strongly opposed to a systematic effort training. His conversion would have required the training of himself.'[95] Perhaps unwittingly, Laban and Lawrence's approach meant human hierarchical superiors were also subjected to choreographic order.

This choreographic order may even exceed the grasp of the consulting choreographer:

> Like any other growth which we encounter on our earth [industrial organisms] should be looked upon as the inescapable result of the evolution of material energies and not as wanton creations of individuals or even of communities. There is no mind or consciousness that could plan or invent those intricate patterns of thousands and thousands of co-ordinated factors and facts which constitute the life stream of industrial organisation. The amount of the hitherto hardly recognised and therefore unexpected complications which arise day by day in any industrial organism and in the co-operation of the total sum of them surpasses any human phantasy.[96]

In other words, the expansion of choreography beyond individual human bodies and towards the supra-individual scale of the factory introduced a margin in which choreographic control was lost, wherein the performers of the expanded industrial choreography acquired a (de-individuated) agency. Laban alluded to this possibility when he wrote that the resulting "growth" of industrial organisms would be different from the pre-conceived vision of them;[97] the organically-construed choreography of the factory could have escaped the manager or even the consultant.

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94 Laban, Rudolf: The Industrial Organism, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/65/14, p. 2.

95 Laban & Lawrence: *Effort*, p. 85.

96 Laban, Rudolf: The Industrial Organism, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/65/14, p. 1.

97 Laban, Rudolf: The Industrial Organism, undated, Rudolf Laban Archive, © University of Surrey, L/E/65/14, p. 1.

In Laban's expanded industrial choreography, the dancing labourer – or labouring dancer – is meant to achieve motional harmony, economy, and pleasure. And since this choreography also includes dancing tools and machines – or mechanical and inorganic dancers – they, too, are part of the motional harmony and rhythm; they are meant to perform a well-oiled, smooth choreography along with their human counterparts. To achieve this harmonious, pleasurable performance of work, the labourers' individual agency is active; but, their dispersed choreographic initiatives are counterbalanced through top-down – albeit benevolent – guidance and direction from a manager or consultant. The ethics and politics of Laban's industrial choreographies cannot be summarised as a threat of mechanisation upon humanity, or motionlessness upon a fundamental tendency towards (loco)motion. Instead, they concern how hybrid, rhythmically moving-and-pausing entities function between individual initiative and centralised management. Just as Laban's industrial work both underscores and subverts dichotomies between the human and the non-human, the ethics of his expanded choreography, partly dispossessing individual workers of their work in favour of a harmonious choreographic totality, is itself partially subverted by the ghost of a swarming industrial organism, whose cells cannot be fully controlled.

The industrial Laban saw – like Guglielmo and his Renaissance colleagues [Chapter 3] – human (labour) motion as belonging to a wide-reaching realm. He envisioned – like Forsythe's ecology in Groningen [Chapter 6] – the factory as a supra-individual, more-than-human choreography. But contrary to Domenico and Guglielmo's integration of the concept of nature and Forsythe's distributed collection of (non-)human agents, the source, author, and control of Laban's expanded choreography is a centralised – albeit fallible and potentially failing – hierarchical (hu)man figure. In this sense, Laban's expanded choreography of the factory completes the Renaissance's oscillation towards a human choreographic author(ity) while manifesting modernity's failure to fully attach itself to that model, losing ground to unpredictable systemic potentials that contemporaneity has accepted and, at times, celebrated.

Conclusion

An expanded choreographic perspective on the industrial Laban focusses on the motional activity and possible agency of non-human entities, while also concentrating on the human mover, their intentions, interiority, and expression. By deviating from the human focus of his notation with signs for tools and equipment, viewing effort as relevant to analysis of machine motions, and observing the interactions between human and non-human labourers in order

to adapt them to one another, Rudolf Laban appears less dichotomous than some of his own writings suggest. This expanded choreographic perspective may move focus away from human specificity, but it does not efface the centrality that the human body had for Laban. Similarly, the expansion of his choreography (and choreo-graphy) to the non-human coexists with a choreography of human subjects.

An expanded choreographic perspective on the industrial Laban also identifies – in the midst of the 20th-century's entanglement of choreography, subject, body, and movement – motions that were not limited to the displacement of human bodies in space and time. Industrial choreographies collectively encompassed (non-)human agents implicated in rhythmical production processes, micro-motions of body parts, traces of motional patterns in exhausted workers, vestiges of movements implicated in production, and material proclivities in objects. Once again, this expanded perspective does not negate Laban's interest in human (loco)motion, but allows it to co-develop with a kinetic perspective on entities such as factories and products. Correspondingly, the expansion of choreography beyond human (loco)motion and towards a choreographic vision of a world in flux complements and juxtaposes itself with a choreography of moving (human) bodies.

As Laban's industrial choreographies were both human-centred *and* not human-centred, their ethics concerned both human labourers and the tools, machines, and other equipment that assisted and permitted their work. And, as Laban's industrial choreographies were both locomotion-oriented *and* not locomotion-oriented, their ethics were found in the effective motions of their performers and in the management of their collective, at times pausing, rhythms. Regulated by harmonious relationships, this choreography of work suggests that expanded choreographies implicate relations of power, authority, hierarchies, and negotiations about agency and individual freedoms, just like dance-based ones. In the case of Laban's factories, these negotiations may have favoured a harmonious whole and a knowledgeable external guide or leader, but also introduced cracks through which collective, supra-individual choreographies escaped full external control. If expanded choreography acts as a reminder of the multiplicity of Laban's industrial choreographies, it also acts as a reminder that an ethical assessment of his choreography of work at the scale of the moving human person is incomplete; there are ethical issues that can only be addressed if the ethics of an expanded choreography are recognised.

Like *Relâche* [Chapter 7], Laban's work in industry paints a portrait of modernity that oscillates away from its own choreographic models. Thus, it affirms the centrality of humanity and motion while undoing their dichotomous conception against the non-human and the still; practices a politics of control enmeshed with an aesthetics of harmony, while recognising the limits of control; cen-

tralises choreographic authorship to a human agent, while postulating that this agent may be surpassed by large-scale, agglomerate structures. An expanded choreographic perspective considers Laban's industrial work in its very contradictions and diverse directions, pointing to the need for historiography to accept deviations, paradoxes, differences. In the horizontal axis of synchronicity,[98] this reading of the industrial Laban requires acknowledging choreographic diversity, while the vertical axis of transhistoricity demands taking into account his relevance both for an expanded choreography of contemporaneity and for those pre-20th-century pasts to which this contemporaneity branches out. Laban's particular – harmonious, teleological, universalist, hierarchical – performance of choreographic expansion may distance him from Guglielmo and Domenico's Renaissance [Chapter 3] or Forsythe's present [Chapter 6]. But, it is also a sign of the diverse configurations in which early modernity, 20th-century (hyper-)modernity, and contemporaneity each probed the limits of a choreographic attachment to a motion-driven human subject; and allowed – as animist figures, in Elizabeth Povinelli's sense of the term[99] – choreography to spill out of that subject and into the posited aliveness of a more-than-human world.

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

99 Povinelli, Elizabeth A.: *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*, Durham & London: Duke University Press 2016, p. 17f.

Chapter 9: Creation, imagination, paradise: lettrism's excursions into choreography

August 1945. Jean-Isidore Goldstein, young and resourceful, leaves his native Romania and arrives in post-war Paris under the name Isidore Isou. Goldstein/Isou enters into contact with Jean Cocteau, Tristan Tzara, André Breton, and Gaston Gallimard (of the publishing house) – among others – and prepares to trouble the Parisian art scene. He starts attracting other young artists, and together they form a movement that came to be called *lettrisme*. Lettrism marked its presence with scandal-provoking actions – such as interrupting a theatrical piece by Tzara and publishing texts that bore the assertive mark of the manifesto – starting with a journal aptly-titled *La Dictature lettriste* [The lettrist dictatorship].[1] Isou's movement was inscribed in the context of the aesthetic, civil, and cultural transformations of post-war Europe; it reflected the deadlocks of a binary abstract-figurative paradigm in the visual arts,[2] the social pressures that progressively took form in the May 1968 protests, and the media consciousness that surrounded the beginnings of computing and the virtual. Notably, lettrism reflected such tendencies through an association with *pre-war* European modernity. Isou considered lettrism to be a – or, rather, the last – movement of the avant-garde; contemporary historians agree, by considering the movement a post-war avant-garde.[3]

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1 For a brief overview of these beginnings, see Girard, Bernard: *Lettrisme: L'Ultime avant-garde*, Dijon: Les Presses du réel 2010, pp. 7–20.

2 Cf. Fabrice Flahutez's argument is quoted in the conclusion of this chapter.

3 Flahutez, Fabrice: *Le Lettrisme historique était une avant-garde*, Dijon: Les Presses du réel 2011, pp. 47–48; Simone, Cristina De: Le Lettrisme dans l'après-guerre: Oralité poétique et soulèvement de la jeunesse, in: Collective: *Fragments pour Isidore Isou*, *Perspectives inactuelles* 2, Paris: Art Book Magazine/ENSA Limoges 2017, p. 24; Blanchon, Philippe: Apprendre d'Isidore Isou, seul, à travers l'hypergraphie, in: Collective: *Fragments pour Isidore Isou*, pp. 43, 56. Fabrice Flahutez titles his book on the movement *Le Lettrisme historique était une avant-garde* [Historical lettrism was an avant-garde], while Bernard Girard titles his above-quoted study *Lettrisme – L'ultime avant-garde* [Lettrism – The last avant-garde].

Lettrism primarily started its course in poetry; proclaiming the destruction of the word, Isou suggested that poetry was based on the letter, a unit which the lettrists used both phonetically, in letter-based poems to be recited – their sounds included, but were not limited to, existing phonemes – and later, visually – in images containing letter-signs. Therefore, while it does not fully overlap with any of these practices, lettrism is associated with concrete poetry, visual poetry, and Dada typographic works. Lettr ism also invented concepts that went beyond the primacy of the letter, and soon widened its scope to encompass multiple art forms – including, but not limited to, painting, music, film, architecture, theatre, and choreography. It continued to develop as a diverse movement, whose members did not always agree. Thus, the movement should not be confused with the position of its founder – even if the unavoidable figure, discourse, and concepts of Isou cast a shadow over the writings of most lettrists.

Isou did not always hold dance in great esteem – he wrote of it as a "derisory" art.[4] Nonetheless, he dedicated considerable attention to it, by writing about it and making (and sometimes performing in) his own dance works. His productions, and those created by other lettrist artists, were performed both in theatrical spaces and galleries.[5] Lettrist choreography included absurd actions, provocation, audience participation, increased floor contact, reciting text, prolonged immobility, and absence of performers from the stage. Through several of these traits, lettrist dance can be associated with certain manifestations of post-modern dance – forming a figure of a European post-modern dance – and is strikingly relevant to contemporary dance practices in Europe and elsewhere. Nevertheless, its work remains largely unknown in Dance Studies[6] and, consequently, is not seen as an important part of European contemporary dance's genealogy.

Lettrist choreographic creations were accompanied by notions theoretically and historically framing dance, elaborated by the lettrists themselves. Lettrism constructed its own theory about the historical evolution of the arts – including dance – by envisioning consecutive art phases that encompassed or even led to

4 Isou, Isidore: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, in: Lemaître, Maurice: *La Danse et le mime ciselants, lettristes et hypergraphiques*, Paris: Grassin 1960, p. 39.

5 Isou, Isidore: *Ballets Ciselants, Polythanasiques, Hypergraphiques et Infinitesimaux*, Paris: Roberto Altmann 1965, unpaginated introduction.

6 An exception to this in contemporary dance studies is Frédéric Pouillaude's essay that presents lettrist dance in relation to French contemporary dance, as background to the analysis of Olivia Grandville's 2011 work that restaged certain lettrist dance pieces, *Le Cabaret discrépant*. Pouillaude, Frédéric: To the Letter: Lettrism, Dance, Reenactment, in: Franko, Mark (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, New York: Oxford University Press 2017, pp. 165–176.

lettrist work. Indeed, the movement was carefully defined through abundant, (ir)regular internal publications, in which members *of* the group took the role of historians and theorists writing *about* the group; in this way, lettrism acquired a past and a present, a goal and function, a heritage to the future and a nomenclature. (Isou – a pseudonym – was, to a great extent, a staged figure; Goldstein not only wrote *as* Isou, but also *referred to* Isou within Isou's texts in the third person singular.[7]) This writing of lettrist history has been read as one of the lettrists' artistic endeavours;[8] like Isou's created personage, the movement's historical definition of itself may be seen as an artistic project. In lettrism, theory and history do not just explain, analyse, interpret, contextualise, or critically assess artworks – artworks are also the *result* of theory and a theoretically-construed history.[9] Understanding lettrist dance, then, relies on understanding lettrist choreographic works as well as lettrist dance theory and history; this chapter therefore focusses on several works and texts as a *system*. The primary sources available on lettrist dance and choreography – those drawn on here – include scores, images, and descriptions of works, as well as dance history/theory texts in books, journals, and informal publications written by lettrists. In these sources, lettrist choreography refers to both ballet history and dance modernity – modern ballet and modern dance artists of the pre-war period.

Lettrist dance, history, and theory reveal a complexity in the movement's view of choreography; diverse conceptions of choreography emerge in the lettrists' texts about dance and in their stage works. Isou and his colleagues adopted the 20th-century association between dance and choreography by insisting on making dances, despite their works being unconventional. They also exemplified the 20th century's association of choreography with a moving human corporeality, proclaiming dance to be '*l'art des mouvements purs ou géometriques du corps* [the art of pure or geometrical movements of the body]'.[10] But, lettrism challenged its own views by proposing works in which the body, movement, or both were absent; therefore, lettrist dance also contains an expanded concep-

7 According to the editors of the 1953 *Revue musicale* issue to which Isou contributed an article, Goldstein-Isou wrote in the first person when making personal and subjective, non-absolute claims. Isou, Isidore: Manifeste de la danse Isouienne: La Danse ciselante, in: *La Revue musicale, Numéro special "La musique et le ballet"* (1953), p. 111.

8 Flahutez: *Le Lettrisme historique était une avant-garde*, p. 15.

9 Roland Sabatier notes that artworks must be understood in relation to the theories of the framework in which they were conceived. Sabatier, Roland & Blanchon, Philippe: Quelle exposition pour le lettrisme?, in: Collective: *Lettrisme: Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis*, La Seyne-sur-Mer: Villa Tamaris Centre d'Art/La Nerthe 2010, p. 32.

10 Isou: *Ballets Ciselants, Polythanasiques, Hypergraphiques et Infinitesimaux*, p. 7.

tion of choreography, by widening dance and marginalising the moving human body.

This chapter explores the dance-historical and -theoretical framework proposed by lettrism and the works that emerged from it – mainly focussing on pieces from the 1950s-60s – to argue that the different conceptions of choreography active within lettrism are a crucial part of the movement's historical inscription. Their multiplicity allows lettrism to position itself among its dance-historical "concurrents". At the same time, this variable synchronous inscription crosses a transhistorical one, in which lettrist choreographic expansions respond to earlier – like Raoul Auger Feuillet's early-17th century [Chapter 2] – and later – like Mathilde Chénin's early-21st century [Chapter 4] – choreographic histories that differentially multiply choreography's (im)material substrates. Thus, lettrist dance – and lettrist history of dance – appear as territories of at times contradictory conceptions of choreography, contributing to lettrism's positioning within dance history – and thereby commenting upon how that history is told.

Neither Diaghilev nor Graham, but Isou

Lettrism associates dance and choreography with the corporeality of the dancing medium – the human body. For Isou, the '[*l*]*'art chorégraphique ne peut pas se déprendre, comme les domaines abstraits, spirituels, de la matière unique dont il se forge* [choreographic art cannot, like abstract, spiritual domains, separate itself from the unique material out of which it is made up]'.[11] Based on this interest in the body, lettrist dance countered choreography's exclusion of certain body parts in favour of others (e.g. the legs) and of general movement.[12] Isou argued against neglecting the neck, torso, and head – and their subparts: forehead, mouth, eyebrows[13] – and suggested a dance of turning thumbs, smiling, spitting, and body-fragments.[14]

> *Je veux retrouver un sourire sans aucun sens au delà du plissement des lèvres. [...] Je veux que la danse redécouvre en deçà de ses grossièretés actuelles des nuances et des riens* [I want to find again a smile without any meaning beyond the folding of the lips [...] I want dance to rediscover, short of its present coarseness, nuances and nothings][15]

11 Isou, Isidore: *Fondements pour la transformation intégrale du théâtre*, Vol. II, Paris: Centre international de création kladologique 1970, p. 218.

12 Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, pp. 29–32.

13 Ibid., p. 30.

14 Isou: Manifeste de la danse Isouienne, p. 113.

15 Ibid., p. 115.

he wrote, suggesting that his goal was to strip choreography down to a non-instrumental interest in the human body itself. Isou's work *14 petits ballets ou Somme chorégraphique, ciselante, destructive, hypergraphique et infinitesimale* (1960) illustrates how these interests were translated into practice. His ballet included a score – prescribing performer actions – and a script – recited alongside the live action. The corporeal score included movements of body parts that Isou felt were neglected in conventional choreographic practice: opening the mouth, dilating the lips, smiling, chattering one's teeth, winking, flapping an eyelid, lifting a pinkie finger… Isou's text draws attention to these actions and their significance, in order to critique choreography's habitual use of the body in motion:

> *Regardez mes lèvres tandis qu'elles vous invitent à une nouvelle danse. Indifférents au reste du corps, soyez attentifs aux nuances gesticulaires produites par cette parcelle unique du danseur […] cette bouche, pour la première fois inscrite comme figure essentielle dans la danse, jusqu'ici réduite aux positions grossières des jambes et des bras, cette bouche nous découvre qu'elle est riche en éléments utilisables, comme les deux lèvres, la langue et les dents, et que les combinaisons purement esthétiques, non-significatives, pures, de ses éléments sont aussi infinies que les positions des jambes […] Il y a tant de virtualités inexplorées dans chaque main que je m'étonne de la rapidité grossière avec laquelle les chorégraphes jusqu'à présent ont sauté directement à l'ensemble du corps et ont négligé l'essentiel* [Look at my lips while they invite you to a new dance. Indifferent to the rest of the body, be attentive to the gesticular nuances produced by this unique fragment of the dancer […] this mouth, for the first time inscribed as an essential figure in dance, until now reduced to crude/vulgar positions of the legs and arms, this mouth reveals to us that it is rich in usable elements, such as the two lips, the tongue and the teeth, and that the purely aesthetic, non-meaningful, pure combinations of its elements are as infinite as the positions of the legs […] There are so many unexplored virtualities in each hand that I am surprised by the crude/vulgar rapidity with which choreographers have until now jumped directly to the totality of the body and neglected what is essential].[16]

This turn towards the body-medium was accompanied by an organisation of choreographic practice and knowledge through a system of body analysis and research into the '*particule anatomique de base* [basic anatomical particle]'.[17] This

16 Isou: *Ballets Ciselants, Polythanasiques, Hypergraphiques et Infinitesimaux*, pp. 13–16.

17 Lemaître, Maurice: *La Danse, le mime et l'art corporel d'avant-garde*, Paris: Centre de créativité 1982, p. 15. It is also in this systematic analysis of the body that the lettrist dance joins the movement's interest in the letter: '[*o*]*n ne peut pas dire que la danse possède des phonèmes ou des vocables purs* […] *Il faut donc se débarasser des* phrases *afin d'atteindre les termes* élémentaires; *plus loin, il faut saisir les* phonèmes, *les particules les plus minimes de l'art corporel* [we cannot say that dance possesses pure phonemes or terms […] We must then get rid of *phrases* in

system was meant to allow an understanding of all, and any, existing, or yet-to-be-discovered, choreographies, regardless of historical context;[18] it went beyond the specificities of Western dance history to embrace '*les enseignements des écoles du monde entier* [the teachings of schools of the whole world]'.[19] To do so, lettrism divided the body into non-pliable or "inert" sections (such as the heel or toe) and pliable or "motor" sections (such as muscles or genitalia)[20] – a process that, Frédéric Pouillaude suggests, paralleled Rudolf Laban's movement analysis.[21] In this way, corporeal mobility became a criterion for the organisation of choreographic practice.

While some of their dance works focussed on the movement of "marginal" body parts, the lettrists were also interested in internal – and therefore invisible – corporeal motions, in a radical turn of choreography towards the body medium; for Isou, the organs, mucous, and liquid body parts could dance.[22] Correspondingly, Maurice Lemaître's series of *Chorées surprenantes* (published 1965) included a ballet in which muscles were tensed, as if to perform visible motion but never actually doing so; a ballet where an apparently-immobile dancer was juxtaposed with a film showing their wrinkles' micro-motions; and a third ballet in which staged spectators touched an immobile dancer to verify their internal dance.[23] In his *Le Ballet du cerveau* (1968), an immobile dancer was accompanied on stage by a film that purportedly showed the images and sounds crossing their mind, and by a second performer who explained the internal movements of their "dancing brain":

> *Comment pourrait-on en effet résister à l'appel des névroglies, ces mystérieuses et enchanteresses névroglies, dont la croissance et la multiplication mêmes sont des gestes purs, dont le rythme et l'anti-rythme, le saut et l'anti-saut, la vitesse et l'immobilité progressive, poussée jusqu'à la mort et le retour au minéral, graveront à jamais dans vos propres névroglies le souvenir inoubliable de ce spectacle rare* [How could we,

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order to attain the *elementary* terms; further than that, we must grasp the *phonemes*, the most minimal particles of corporeal art]'. Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, p. 35.

18 Cf. Lemaître : *La Danse, le mime et l'art corporel d'avant-garde*, p. 15.

19 Isou, Isidore & Lemaître, Maurice: Danse: Le Ballet ciselant, in: *Front de la jeunesse* 11 (1956), unpaginated. This text was presumably co-written with Robert Estivals, Gabriel Pommerand, Vasco Noverraz, and Roland Vogel, as their names are crossed out in the consulted copy at the Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Paris.

20 Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, p. 36.

21 Pouillaude : To the Letter, p. 168.

22 Isou: Manifeste de la danse Isouienne, p. 118 ; Isou, Isidore : *Œuvres de spectacle*, Paris : Gallimard 1964 [1961], p. 192.

23 Lemaître, Maurice : Chorées surprenantes, in : *Lettrisme* 4 (1965), pp. 10, 15, 18.

> indeed, resist the call of the neuroglias, these mysterious and charming neuroglias, whose growth and multiplication are themselves pure gestures, whose rhythm and anti-rhythm, jump and anti-jump, speed and progressive immobility, pushed to death and the return to the mineral, will inscribe forever in your own neuroglias the unforgettable memory of this rare spectacle].[24]

This focus on the body in dance and choreography is consistent with the lettrist perspective on art history, wherein each art goes through phases termed *amplique* and *ciselant* ["amplic" and "chiseling", respectively].[25] The former, considered the starting-point phase of each art form, entailed works and creative approaches that referred to elements "extrinsic" to the art itself – such as textual narration or figurative depiction, or the use of the body's motions and gestures to tell stories. The *amplique* phase was, in time, replaced by the *ciselant,* in which the lettrists saw arts turn inwards, working on their "own" forms and elements – in the case of dance, the body itself. The use of the body as a medium to be explored "in itself" also distinguished dance from other artistic bodily practices. For example, Isou believed mime and dance were initially bound together, but dance differentiated itself in his eyes because it uses corporeal gesture without meaning.[26] Dance thus became the art of '*les expressions corporelles pures* [pure corporeal expressions]'.[27] This insistence on "purity" is paralleled by Isou's negative evaluations of previous dance paradigms that were defined through a specific context; for instance, he criticised ballet's positions as merely pointing to their social origins – such as the reverential bow or the posture of combat.[28] In these ways, an insistence on the body's non-instrumentalised importance in choreographic practice contributed to dance's medium specificity and potential "purity". These points are further related to Isou's compartmentalised, modernist[29] view of the arts leading to a strict division between artistic practices

24 Lemaître, Maurice : Le Ballet du cerveau : Ballet infinitésimal, in : *Lettrisme* 2 (1972), unpaginated.

25 Cf. Lemaître, Maurice : *Qu'est-ce que le lettrisme?*, Paris : Fischbacher 1954, pp. 151–152; Pouillaude : To the Letter, pp. 167– 68.

26 Cf. Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, p. 10.

27 Sabatier, Roland: La Danse, undated, https://www.lelettrisme.org/danse--pantomime.html (August 2020).

28 Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, p. 29.

29 Lettrist art history particularly expresses a conception of art associated with modernism, as presented by Clement Greenberg when he writes that 'the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the specific effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thereby each art would be rendered "pure," and in its "purity" find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence.' Greenberg, Clement:

and their media. This was made manifest in his separation of theatre into textual, corporeal, and material/scenic branches; and his concept of "discrepance" which – in a Cunningham-Cage-like way – suggested the causal dissociation, juxtaposition – and, therefore, autonomisation – of different media within a single work.[30]

This theory was transferred to the lettrists' dance-historical narrative in particular, and diverse, ways. The first of these concerns ballet, with which the lettrists had strong links. For example, members of the movement often used the term "ballet" to describe their works. Certain lettrist dance pieces directly referred to material from the ballet tradition; Isou's history of dance was punctuated by references to widely-known figures of European ballet – including Marie Sallé, Marie-Anne Camargo, Jean-Georges Noverre, and Marius Petipa – as well as modern ballet figures – such as Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes or Maurice Béjart. Based on this affinity, Isou recognised ballet's contributions to dance as an art form. For the lead lettrist, "pure" choreography began in Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchésographie* and Pierre Beauchamp's five ballet positions; similarly, the 1581 court ballet by Balthasar de Beaujoyeulx *Le Ballet comique de la Reine* acquired a privileged place in lettrist dance history because it displayed abstract combinations and a 'purificatory analysis'.[31] Thus, in certain respects, the lettrists were aligned with ballet-proponents André Levinson and Lincoln Kirstein, who associated medium specificity and anti-representationality with the genre of ballet. In some ways echoing Isou, Levinson complained that

> *[p]ersonne [...] ne se préoccupa des caractères propres de la danse, ni ne tenta d'élucider les règles spécifiques de cet art considéré non plus à travers les autres genres, mais dans sa réalité intrinsèque* [nobody [...] was concerned with the traits that are proper to dance, nor attempted to elucidate the specific rules of this art, considered not through other genres anymore but in its intrinsic reality];[32]

while Kirstein argued that it was not until Vaslav Nijinsky's ballet innovations that movement was conceived 'simply as movement [...] used for the sake of

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Modernist Painting, in: Frascina, Francis, Harrison, Charles & Paul, Deidre: *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, New York: Harper and Row/Westview Press 1987 [1960], pp. 5–6. Following this association, here the terms "modernism" and "modernist" are used to reflect this association with "purity", a focus on an art's "specific" medium, and aesthetic autonomy. For a wider definition of "modernism" in the theatrical arts see Hulfeld, Stefan: Modernist Theatre, in: Wiles, David & Dymkowski, Christine (eds.): *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2013.

30 A typical example of discrepance is Isou's film *Traité de bave et d'éternité*, presented at the 1951 Cannes film festival, in which sound and image are made distinct.

31 Isou: *Fondements pour la transformation intégrale du théâtre*, Vol. II, pp. 216–217.

32 Levinson, André: *La Danse d'aujourd'hui*, Paris: Duchartre et Van Buggenhoudt 1929, p. 180.

its own interest alone'.[33] On the other hand, the lettrists also diagnosed ballet's failure to accomplish the precepts of the *chorégraphie ciselante*. The lettrist critique of ballet (and other dance forms) is partially based on it having submitted '*à des idées ou à des anecdotes extérieures à l'art des gestes* [to ideas or anecdotes external to the art of gestures]'.[34] In other words, in Isou's eyes, while certain ballet works contributed to a conception of choreography based on "purity", ballet history countered this by embracing a choreography associated with narrative and non-analytical uses of the body. These features of ballet place it in the *phase amplique* of dance, the timespan marked at one end by Beauchamp and, on the other, the neoclassical ballet figure of Serge Lifar – Isou's contemporary in the Parisian scene. Indeed, Isou's treatment of modern ballet artists – notably those associated with the Ballets Russes – suggests he was doubtful about their capacity to make dance enter the *phase ciselante;* he argued their contributions to dance (history) were limited to stage design and music.[35]

Isou's critique of ballet aligns with modern dancers' and modern dance writers' critique of classical dance; but lettrist views are also mirrored in modern dance discourse. Reflecting the lettrists' willingness to liberate dance from the potential-storytelling aspects of the *amplique,* Mary Wigman insisted that '[t]he absolute dance is independent of any literary-interpretative content; it does not represent, it is'.[36] Reflecting the lettrists' focus on the body and their universalist tendencies, Martha Graham wrote: '[i]n its essentials, dance is the same over the entire world. These essentials are its function, which is communication; its instrument, which is the body; and its medium, which is movement'.[37] Reflecting the attraction towards an ideal of "purity" that lettrist dance-related discourse exemplified, Roger Copeland considered modern dancers, like Graham, to be 'reject[ing] modernity', as it was Merce Cunningham (and bal-

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33 Kirstein, Lincoln: *Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing*, New York: Dance Horizons 1977 [1935], p. 284.

34 Isou : *Ballets Ciselants, Polythanasiques, Hypergraphiques et Infinitesimaux*, p. 10.

35 Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, pp. 16–17. The lettrist critique of ballet and its conventions was, at times, translated into works literally staging an attack on classical dance and including, in certain cases, the performance of aggression. For instance, in Isou's *Essai d'anti-ballet*, classical dancers were teased, blocked from acting, or even had aggression thrust upon them. Isou : *Ballets Ciselants, Polythanasiques, Hypergraphiques et Infinitesimaux*, pp. 37–39.

36 Wigman, Mary: *The Mary Wigman Book*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 1984 [1973, trans. Walter Sorell], p. 108.

37 Graham, Martha: A Modern Dancer's Primer for Action, in: Cohen, Selma Jeanne (ed.): *Dance as a Theatre Art: Source Readings in Dance History from 1581 to the Present,* Princeton: Dance Horizons 1992 [1941], p. 137. (However, Isou would consider the function of communication as incompatible with the *ciselant*.)

let choreographer George Balanchine) that 'exemplified Greenbergian purism'.[38] Crucially, however, Isou did not consider artists associated with modern dance as having achieved the *ciselant* either. His overview of dance history mentions that Isadora Duncan attempted to liberate dance from academic constraints and had a revolutionary dimension, although it evaluates that she did not manage to go beyond dilettantism and a negatively-construed simplicity; similarly, Isou refers to certain modern dancers from Europe (e.g. Kurt Jooss) and across the Atlantic (e.g. Graham), but considers them followers, in their expressionism, of romanticism's tendency towards anecdote.[39]

Susan Manning has pointed out similar concerns, regarding the realm of, and discourse about, post-modern dance[40] – especially the Judson Dance Theater, which was chronologically and, in certain cases, stylistically closer to lettrism. Isou's focus on the corporeal medium and his avoidance of anecdote thus mirrors the words of Sally Banes, when she wrote that it was

> in the arena of post-modern dance that issues of modernism in the other arts have arisen: the acknowledgment of the medium's materials, the revealing of dance's essential qualities as an art form, the separation of formal elements, the abstraction of forms, and the elimination of external references as subjects.[41]

Once again, however, post-modern dance is not used as a reference point for developing the *ciselant* in lettrists' dance historical narrative – perhaps out of lack of familiarity with their work.

The lettrists' body-focussed, modernist view of choreography can therefore be put in relation – in some cases, by the lettrists themselves – with (modern) ballet, modern dance, and post-modern dance, revealing commonalities – all, in certain manifestations, respond to a Greenbergian/modernist ideal – that proponents of these genres may not admit. In this way, lettrism replaces a genre-specific view of choreographic modernism with a more-complex one that has overlapping layers. At the same time, lettrism's lack of acknowledgment of its commonality with these genres – themselves synchronously coexisting

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38 Copeland, Roger: *Merce Cunningham: The Modernizing of Modern Dance*, New York: Routledge 2004, pp. 102, 105.

39 Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, p. 16; Isou: *Ballets Ciselants, Polythanasiques, Hypergraphiques et Infinitesimaux*, p. 9. Here, Isou mistakes Jooss' name for "Karl Joss".

40 Manning, Susan: Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric. A Response to Sally Banes' *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, in: *TDR – The Drama Review* 32/4 (1988), pp. 32–39; see also Burt, Ramsay: Undoing Postmodern Dance History 2004, http://sarma.be/docs/767 (August 2020).

41 Banes, Sally: *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-modern Dance*, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press 1987 [1977], p. xv.

but also institutionally and aesthetically competing – situated the movement in an external position. Indeed, while Isou admitted that a non-lettrist artist, Maurice Béjart, displayed aspects of the *ciselant,* he also claimed that Béjart only falsely achieved it and drew from lettrist ideas.[42] Isou thus formed an alternative to dance history's conventional "chapters", replacing their dialectic with a third option: lettrism. Counter to what some modern dancers/dance writers claim, ballet for him was not just succeeded by (post-)modern dance; rather the *amplique* – encompassing ballet history, modern ballet, *and* modern dance – was succeeded by the (lettrist) *ciselant.* The lettrists' discursive and practical performance of chiseling choreography exemplified and perpetuated modernist aspects common with these genres, while simultaneously embodying their succession.[43]

Although the lettrists appeared as purveyors of a modernist body-focussed choreography, they also staged multiple excursions beyond these choreographic principles. While the lettrist *ciselant* classified the body into mobile and inert sections, this organisation was counterbalanced by disorganised dance.[44] The *ciselant* troubled dance, exploding its perceived fixations: the lettrists elaborated various ways of upsetting previous dance paradigms – for example, by valourising the a-rhythmical or focussing on crawling (instead of elevation and jumps).[45] Similarly, while discrepance contributed to an autonomisation of different arts, it also disorganised resulting works, whose elements were out of synch. By the same token – despite their focus on corporeality – the lettrists produced choreographic works which questioned the treatment of the moving body as dance's primary medium. In doing so, they challenged their positionality as both successors and continuators of a heterogeneously-construed 20th-century dance modernism – and foregrounded their relations with former, and later, expanded choreographic paradigms.

Expanded choreographic excursion one: media crossings

Lettrist choreography's display of expanded aspects is exemplified, in the first place, by the movement's distinction between what they termed aesthetics – the

42 Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, p. 25.

43 Susan Manning, to whose writings this chapter owes a lot, developed a comparable argument when she described the similarities between modern and post-modern modernist dance writing. Manning: Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric.

44 Cf. for instance Isou: *Fondements pour la transformation intégrale du théâtre*, Vol. II, p. 243.

45 Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, p. 18.

"forms" (e.g. painting, poetry, novel) and styles (e.g. classical, romantic, symbolist) of art – and mechanics – the type of medium or material (e.g. paper, film, people, objects, paint) used in art-making.[46] Creativity in the field of mechanics took the form of *méca-esthétique* [mecha-aesthetics] – where artistic focus was on the choice and/or use of the medium/material – and *anti-méca-esthétique* [anti-mecha-aesthetics] – in which the medium/material was purposefully subverted and altered.[47] This framework allowed artists to widen the mechanics of their practice:

> *L'artiste peut utiliser l'intégralité des ressources existantes ou à inventer, dans le cadre de la "méca-esthétique intégrale". Ainsi, un réalisateur de films peut concevoir une oeuvre dont le support serait le cosmos, un végétal singulier, une fourmi ou une comète* [the artist can use the entirety of existing or to-be-invented resources in the framework of "integral mecha-aesthetics". Thus a film director can conceive of a work whose medium would be the cosmos, a unique plant, an ant or a comet][48]

– like how an expanded choreographer can conceive of a choreographic work whose medium is a book, video, code, or installation. In effect, the choreographic activity of the lettrists – like that of Chénin [Chapter 4] and to a certain extent Feuillet [Chapter 2] – is associated with an expansion that distinguishes between choreographic practice and the bodily-kinetic medium.

The first way in which this distinction operated was by considering the body as simply one-among-many possible media and materials of the mecha-aesthetic framework.[49] This explains how the body may be used both as the habitual mechanics of dance and as subverted, unexpected mechanics of other types of artistic expressions. Indeed, the body was extensively present in lettrist art in general – from the very moment when poetry became an art of the letter. For lettrists, a letter-based poem was not to be individually read, but recited and listened to, as part of a corporeal act shared with the spectator. The poem became a score for live performance and the body became an instrument of sound; the voice was opposed, in Isou's early writings, to the '*inhumanité mécanique* [inhuman mechanics]' of musical instruments.[50] In further

46 Cf. Isou, Isidore : *Introduction à l'esthétique imaginaire et autres écrits*, Paris : Cahiers de l'externité 1999, p. 48 ; Devaux, Frédérique : Untitled, in : Satié, Alain (ed.) : *La Méca-esthétique lettriste*, Paris : Salons art, vidéo, cinéma et écritures 1996, p. 7.

47 Sabatier, Roland : Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis, in : Collective : *Lettrisme. Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis*, p. 18.

48 Devaux : Untitled, p. 8.

49 Cf. Isou, Isidore : L'Art corporel lettriste, hypegraphique & esthapeiriste, in : Collective : *Lettrisme. Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis*, p. 190.

50 Isou, Isidore : *Introduction à une nouvelle poésie et à une nouvelle musique*, Paris : Gallimard 1947, p. 229. Isou was also doubtful about mechanical means of recording the live

experimentations, the lettrists produced "a-phonic" poems, in which the body silently and entirely replaced the text.[51] This corporeal tendency of lettrist poetry was elaborated in a field Isou termed '*art corporel* [corporeal art]', in which the lettrists created installations that contained living creatures, orchestrated strip-teases, offered their body as a public canvas, and offered medication to their audience.[52] Thus, it shared several points with body art, performance, and happenings.

Additionally, the lettrists used the body medium in non-dance practices *within* the choreographic field. The music in Roland Sabatier's 1965 dancework *Omega 3* was partly performed by a soloist improvising step arrangements; the weight, speed, and texture of their steps contributed to the work's soundtrack.[53] Interestingly, choreographic works themselves contained the body as a subverted mechanics, bringing choreography close to the letter. The body was envisaged as a canvas, and lettrist works were painted on dancers' costumes or directly projected onto their bodies.[54] Without the intermediary of the costume, the dancer folded their body or manipulated props to form letters and signs [e.g. Figure 31, in the work of Sabatier], their motions mediating particles of text.[55] Lemaître gave another example of this in his description of one of his *Chorées*, where the body's actions were to spell out the phrase '*qui veut danser doit penser* [one who wants to dance must think]' [Figure 32]; the body represented letters and words visually – e.g. standing erect to form an "i" – and phonetically – the word "*doit* [must]" was represented by raising a finger ["*doigt*", phonetically identical with "*doit*"].[56] Here, the audience was invited to read corporeal motions and positions as text, processing them at different linguistic levels (sound, letter, word). The 1965 work's title, *Prose hypergraphique gesticulaire* [Hypergraphic gesticular prose], explicitly pointed to a choreographed version of a literary form. In this way, lettrist dance was associated with hypergraphics – a field

voice/performance; see Girard: *Lettrisme*, p. 92. Cf. also Flahutez: *Le Lettrisme historique était une avant-garde*, p. 105.

51 Isou, Isidore: *L'Art corporel lettriste hypergraphique et esthapéïriste*, Paris: Psi 1977, p. 8.

52 Ibid., pp. 20, 24. For Lemaître's stripteases see Lemaître, Maurice: *L'Anti-sexe: Spectacle de strip-teases ciselants (1967)*, in: *Lettrisme* 10 (1972).

53 Sabatier, Roland: *Omega 3*, Paris: Editions Lettrisme et hypergraphie 1966, unpaginated, BnF. In other cases, the body as mechanics was used to create works referring to the universe of painting; Jean-Paul Curtay proposed representing Mondrian's canvases in the form of *tableaux vivants* – horizontal lines embodied by women, vertical ones by men. Isou: *L'Art corporel lettriste hypergraphique et esthapéïriste*, unpaginated.

54 Lemaître: Chorées surprenantes, p. 7.

55 Sabatier: *Omega 3*, unpaginated; for a related *chorée*-mime see Lemaître: Chorées surprenantes, p. 21.

56 Lemaître: Chorées surprenantes, p. 22.

in which multiple media become carriers of the letter, and the moving body becomes material for a universal practice of lettrist scripture.

Figure 31: Detail from Sabatier's Omega 3. *Source: Sabatier, Roland:* Omega 3, *Paris: Editions Lettrisme et hypergraphie 1966, unpaginated. No re-use without permission.*

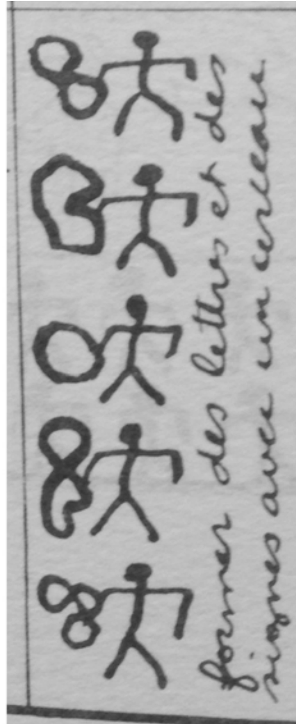
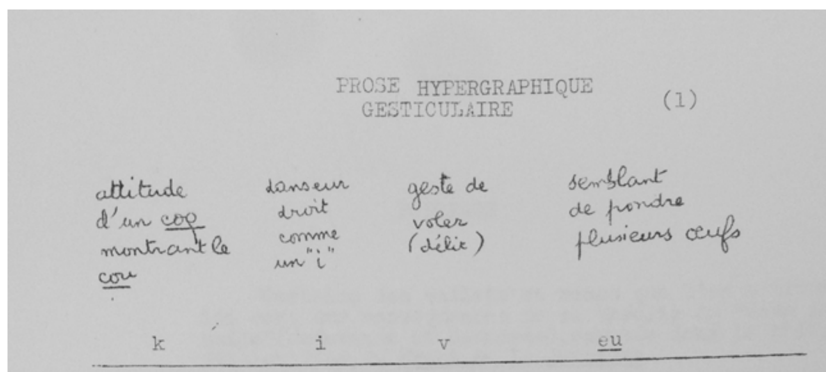


Figure 32: Detail from Lemaître's Prose hypergraphique gesticulaire. *Source: Lemaître, Maurice: Chorées surprenantes, in: Lettrisme 4 (1965), p. 22, Courtesy of the Bismuth Lemaître Endowment Fund. No re-use without permission.*



Beyond depicting letters or signs on/through the body's motions, the lettrists also organised choreography through principles of literature and text. In Lemaître's works *Fugue mimique no. 1* (1959) and *Sonnet gesticulaire* (1959), the body performed movements that were organised based on poetic principles of versification or 'physical rhyme'.[57] Lemaître clarifies how this was realised in his construction of a choreography in the form of a sonnet:

> *14 vers, divisés en deux strophes de quatre vers sur deux rimes, et une de six vers sur trois rimes. Mes "vers" chorégraphiques se composaient de "syllabes" constituées par une attitude (danse) ou un geste significatif (mime), les rimes étant naturellement le retour d'une même attitude ou d'un même geste.* [14 verses, divided into two stanzas of four verses with two rhymes and one of six verses with three rhymes. My choreographic "verses" were composed of "syllables" constituted by a posture (dance) or a meaningful gesture (mime), the rhymes being naturally the return of one and the same attitude or gesture].[58]

The piece was performed by three interpreters; the corporeal gestures and motions of each corresponded to the syllables of a choreographic poem, and, combined, they formed a composition of three sonnets. Here, while the choreography used the body in motion, its construction was literary and the audience was invited to approach it as a poem. Indeed, although presented as a "ballet",

57 Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, p. 22; Lemaître: *La Danse et le mime ciselants, lettristes et hypergraphiques*, p. 60.

58 Lemaître: *La Danse et le mime ciselants, lettristes et hypergraphiques*, p. 60.

its title refers to it as a sonnet. Like Chénin's works that illustrated a choreography adaptive to multiple media and penetrated by their different logics [Chapter 4], lettrist expansions introduced the moving body into choreographies that were conceived in literary and textual ways.

These hypergraphic/expanded choreographies undo the non-instrumental, "pure", non-representational corporeal movement that the *ciselant* implicated; against the idea that dance's corporeal medium should refrain from external reference, the moving body is used to transmit a message or follow a textual form. Indeed, Isou refers to '*un nouvel amplique, l'hypergraphie, grâce à laquelle chaque particule corporelle représente un signe et dont le ballet devient un* message en lettres [a new *amplique*, hypergraphics, thanks to which each corporeal particle represents a sign and whose ballet becomes a *message in letters*]'.[59] Therefore, despite lettrism's serial, sequential view of dance history between the *amplique* and the *ciselant*, this linearity is troubled by loops where previous phases re-appear in new form; the lettrist history of art includes a post-*ciselant amplique* phase, in which hypergraphics were referential. This loop, by admitting commonalities with the past, casts doubt upon genres – (modern) ballet and modern dance – as consecutive "chapters" in an ever-progressing history. It also complexifies lettrism's own position as a *ciselant* "successor".

The use of the body as a form of mechanics to produce hypergraphic-like artworks was paralleled by the lettrists' integration of the non-human in choreographic work; "corporeal art", in this sense, was not restricted to "human corporeal art". The movement introduced animals and non-organic elements to the choreographic stage. For example, in Sabatier's *Omega 3*, movements of (human) dancers' fists, thumbs, tongues, eyes, cheeks, and eyelids were accompanied by a turkey circulating in the performance space, a fish in an aquarium, an electric fan, trickling water, and a choreography of cigarette smoke.[60] These works were concurrent with a progressive acceptance of non-human and even non-organic sounds – such as sirens – in live lettrist poetry performance.[61]

Such an interest in non-human elements on stage introduced a second way in which the division between the mechanics and aesthetics of dance helped develop a lettrist expanded choreography – in which the moving body was not the privileged, or sole, mechanics. This is discernible in Sabatier's score for *Omega 3*, where bodily-performed gestures are both described and illustrated; as the score progresses, illustrations dissociate from textual explanation, and the action or movement is communicated by the image-sign. Through such

59 Isou: La Danse et la pantomime de l'antiquité aux lettristes, p. 18.

60 Sabatier: *Omega* 3, unpaginated.

61 Flahutez: *Le Lettrisme historique était une avant-garde*, p. 208 note 4.

replacements, and by writing that *performs* on paper what it is meant to convey – for instance, squiggly writing for the word "trembling" [Figure 33] – Sabatier's score appears as a means to provoke corporeal action in performance *and* an image-based performance of his work – a kinaesthetic document. Lemaître also manifests the possible forms of expanded choreographic works in non-corporeal media – or, to use lettrist vocabulary, mechanics:

> *Je veux qu'on représente désormais les mimes et les ballets par des peintures, que ces peintures, ces romans, ces poèmes ou ces oeuvres dans tous les éléments de toutes les mécaniques possibles (sauf le geste du corps humain) soient considérés eux-mêmes comme des morceaux gestuels. On filmera ensuite ces oeuvres [...] et ces combinaisons nouvelles de leur reproduction seront des ballets ou des mimes inédits. Que les balletomanes ou les fanatiques du mime se réunissent pour offrir des textes joyciens qui seront autant de pantomimes ou danses originales. Des sculpteurs installeront des blocs de granit taillés qui seront applaudis comme des danses inconnues* [I want that from now on we represent mimes and ballets by paintings, that these paintings, these novels, these poems or these works in all elements of all possible mechanics (apart from the gesture of the human body) be considered themselves as gestural pieces. We will then film these works [...] and these new combinations of their reproduction will be original ballets or mimes. May ballet and mime fanatics unite to offer Joycian texts which will be original pantomimes or dances. Sculptors will install carved granite blocks which will be applauded as unknown dances].[62]

This programmatic wish is followed by Lemaître's three *Chorées* from 1963, taking graphic forms: one is composed of four lines of non-meaningful words; another is a small drawing that includes non-letter signs; the third includes a meaningful phrase, non-meaningful text material, and drawings [Figure 34]. Following the preceding argument, these letters, signs, and drawings are not a score leading to corporeal action. Here, the moving body's performance of a textually- or poetically-construed choreography is paralleled by works whose choreography resided in non-corporeal media (be they granite blocks, film, or text) – as also illustrated by Chénin's tripartite works [Chapter 4].

62 Lemaître : Chorées surprenantes, p. 4.

Figure 33: Detail from Sabatier's Omega 3. *Source: Sabatier, Roland:* Omega 3, *Paris: Editions Lettrisme et hypergraphie 1966, unpaginated. No re-use without permission.*

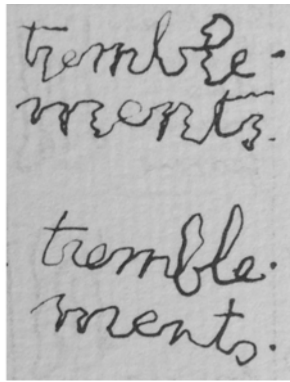
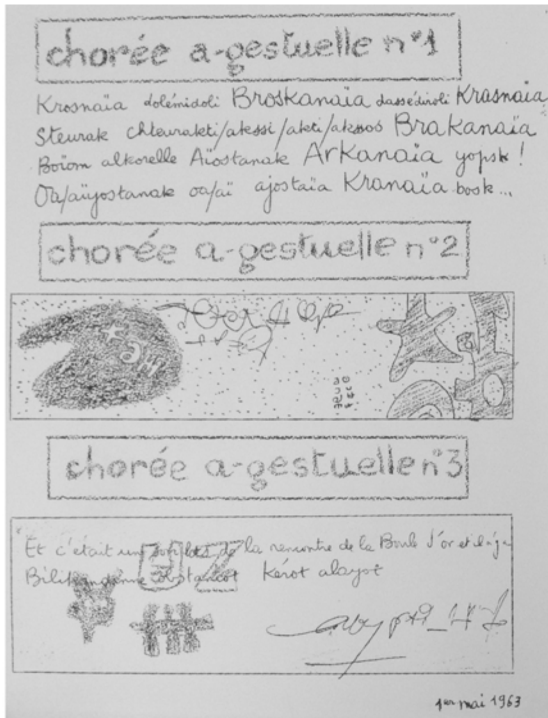


Figure 34: Detail from Maurice Lemaître's Chorées surprenantes. *Source: Lemaître, Maurice: Chorées surprenantes, in: Lettrisme 4 (1965), p. 5, Courtesy of the Bismuth Lemaître Endowment Fund. No re-use without permission.*



This expansion away from the corporeal-kinetic medium counters lettrism's focus on the body's "pure movements" as a guarantor of choreographic specificity – and therefore casts doubt upon that purity as the artistic aim that defined the dance field's "progress". Indeed, while medium "purity" is, for the reader of lettrist writings, associated with progress, the ultimate end – in the teleological sense of the word – of art is an altogether-different notion for lettrists: creation. Isou was unequivocal on creation – construed as innovation, invention, and discovery[63] – writing that it is '*le seul droit à l'existence qu'un art possède* [the only right to existence that an art possesses]'.[64] According to contemporary lettrism theorists and historical members of the group itself, creation characterises lettrism more than a sole focus on letters and signs.[65] Isou relatedly notes that (artistic) systems are not necessarily destroyed by subsequent ones; rather, all systems may find their own death by exhausting themselves[66] – in other words, if they are no longer capable of producing creation. He writes that

> *[l]'applatissement (couché par terre) et l'exécution des mouvements dans cette position remet sur un plan différent toute l'histoire des figures de la danse. Les envols, les pirouettes, les arabesques, les entrechats, acquièrent un milieu différent et une dimension inusitée* [flattening out (lying on the floor) and the execution of movements in this position puts the whole history of dance figures on a different plane. The jumps, the pirouettes, the arabesques, the entrechats, acquire a different milieu and an uncommon dimension].[67]

Thus, crawling and contact with the floor are expressions of a system that – rather than annulling and replacing the classical dance of elevation – provides dance vocabulary with new margins of creation. Similarly, replacing the moving body with other media widens the kinds of materials and forms with which choreography may work, thus broadening its creative potential. If the hypergraphic "new *amplique*" introduces loops into an only-apparently-linear dance history, the notion of creation replaces the singularity and unidirectionality of (modernist) progress with the possibility of multiple, creative endeavours functioning together – indeed the lettrists simultaneously produced chiseling, hypergraphic, and other types of dance works.

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63 Cf. Girard: *Lettrisme*, pp. 55–56, 59; Sabatier: Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis, p. 11.

64 Isou: *Introduction à une nouvelle poésie et à une nouvelle musique*, p. 232.

65 Sabatier: Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis, p. 11; Girard: *Lettrisme*, p. 78.

66 Cf. Isou, Isidore: *Fondements pour la transformation intégrale du théâtre*, Vol. I, Paris: Bordas 1953, p. 214.

67 Isou: Manifeste de la danse Isouienne, p. 117.

Through works using the body as a mechanics for non-dance-related expressions – be it images or texts – the lettrists allowed their choreographic art to turn its gaze away from its medium and become, once again, expressive. In this way, the expansion of lettrist choreography allowed lettrism to counter a linear history which – crucially – it had partially adopted. Through choreographic works using media other than the body – image, text, or anything else – the lettrists dissociated themselves from an essentialisation of the moving body as the primary choreographic material. In this way, lettrism performed an elegant twist, replacing the corporeal medium specificity of dance – on whose purity lettrism insisted – with a focus on the ever-widening scope of creation.

These expansions of choreography, which complexify lettrism's own choreographic position, also influence its positionality in the dance historical landscape. Such expanded lettrist choreographic practices parallel works created by other artists within the lettrists' historical context. For example, Lemaître's organisation of choreographic pieces based on poetic structures recalls Robert Dunn's experiments with future-Judson choreographers, in which the structure of Erik Satie's musical compositions became the basis for composing dances.[68] These parallels are a useful reminder of the development of this type of experimentation outside of the New-York scene, and suggests lettrism be considered European post-modern dance. But, the lettrists employed their own terms (*ciselant-hypergraphique*) rather than the modern/post-modern dialectic; similarly, their dance history's loops and non-linearity subvert the successive replacement inherent in the notion of "post". Through expanded hypergraphic choreography and choreographic works in non-corporeal media, the lettrists upset the linearity and forward-directionality of a (modernist) history that they also partly adhered to – potentially casting doubt on (modernist) historiography itself.[69]

Along with their association with post-modern dance, these expansions turn lettrism into a field that exemplifies and solidifies the 1950s and 1960s (European) dance field's interdisciplinary links with performance art. But, beyond allowing for intra- and inter-disciplinary connections, these expansions present lettrism as being comparable with other historical practices that doubt the exclusivity of the relationship between corporeality and choreography. The lettrists' transformations of choreographic mechanics performed a media and ontological pluralisation of choreography, which is also discernible in Feuillet's late baroque period [Chapter 2] and Chénin's contemporaneity [Chapter 4]. These transformations are not akin to Feuillet's system of translatability between body,

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68 McDonagh, Don: *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance*, London: Dance Books 1990 [1970], p. 50.

69 For different visions of modernist historiography see Manning: Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric (in dance); Hulfeld, Stefan: Modernist Theatre, p. 16 (in theatre).

writing, and sign, or Chénin's extraction and transfer of choreographic information; rather, they can be read as a 20th-century reconfiguration of choreographic multiplication manifesting modernity's quest for limitless creation.

Expanded choreographic excursion two: imagining choreography

Some of the aforementioned works in this chapter replaced the moving body with other choreographic media. The lettrists also produced pieces in which this body disappeared and was replaced by nothing at all. The progressive elimination of corporeal movement from the lettrist dance stage developed in works where actions were deliberately made unavailable to the audience; movements were invisible due to the darkness of the stage, and steps were only (at times) heard.[70] The removal of bodily action was further elaborated in pieces of complete immobility, where the apparent lack of movement was not an indicator of an internal dance, but, rather, embraced dance's absence. Thus, Lemaître's *Chorées* included a ballet of total stillness – a naked solo performer, standing in a neutral position and trying to avoid all movement, even controlling their breath – titled *La Mort du ballet* [The Death of Ballet] (1964).[71] In other works, the body was not present at all; for example, Isou's *14 petits ballets* included a section where the ballet was reduced to a text read from backstage: '[*a*]*u fond, vous avez entendu un grand discours et vous avez vu très peu de danse* [in the end, you have heard a grand discourse and you have seen very little dance]'.[72]

Exchanging the body for nothingness, choreographic expansions did not only take the form of an absence; choreographic mechanics also included non-physically-existing media. In other words, the moving body was not, strictly speaking, replaced with nothing, but with something that was not or could not be there.

> *[M]ême si un artiste ne peut pas immédiatement accomplir une oeuvre sur un astre ou sur une pensée; de même qu'il ne lui est pas aisé de trouver comme support un tigre ou un crocodile, une fleur rare d'Océanie, une flotille de Spitfire; j'ai dû envisager ces éléments de l'outillage* [even if an artist cannot immediately accomplish a work on a star or on a thought; just like he cannot easily find, as a medium/support,

70 Lemaître: Chorées surprenantes, p. 17.

71 Ibid., p. 11.

72 Isou : *Ballets Ciselants, Polythanasiques, Hypergraphiques et Infinitesimaux*, p. 22.

> a tiger or a crocodile, a rare flower from Oceania, a flotilla of Spitfires; I had to consider these elements of equipment][73]

writes Isou, noting that any such medium – even if not readily available – can be a valid mechanics. If, however, an artist's envisaged medium does not exist, it is part of the realm of the imaginary, and resulting works are also part of the imaginary.[74] While this quotation does not refer to dance in particular, imaginary or inconceivable artworks – termed "*infinitesimal*" by the lettrists, as a new "chapter" of their artistic history – were represented in lettrist (expanded) choreography.

"Infinitesimal" art – dance, but also music, poetry, theatre – existed only in the domain of the imaginary or the virtual, according to lettrist nomenclature. Like how Chénin's videos [Chapter 4] adapt to materially-existing media – a camera filming to produce a video on a screen – and the virtuality of code, lettrist choreography also expands to the immateriality of the imagination. A 1967 *Ballet de poche* by F. Poyet illustrates this: a performer, having announced that the work is taking place in their pocket, turned the pocket out and made the inside of the pocket visible. They thus transformed a "hermetic" ballet – one in which actions are merely concealed from the audience – into an infinitesimal one;[75] the visible lack of action pointed to a virtual ballet. Isou and other lettrists theorised that in infinitesimal dance anything actually presented should make the viewer think of other, imaginary – even nonexistent or inconceivable – choreographic elements. Certain infinitesimal choreographic works presented no physical input at all; Isou explains in his introduction to his *Recherches pour un ballet infinitesimal* (1965) that

> *[l]a chorégraphie est ici proposée par des éléments étrangers à la chorégraphie habituelle, basée couramment sur les mouvements du corps, car mon oeuvre est formée de paroles qui composent la dimension transcendentale de l'art gesticulaire* [the choreography is proposed here through elements foreign to habitual choreography, commonly based on the movements of the body, because my work is formed out of words that compose the transcendental dimension of gesticular art].[76]

His ballet then unfolded through a scenario about the unlikely adventures – involving a mutilated corpse – of a character named Pierre de Montfargue, whose actions were narrated by a person on stage or, in the complete absence of a body, through a loudspeaker. Like the "*nouvel amplique*", this infinitesimal

73 Isou, Isidore: *Pour une connaissance plus précise de la méca-esthétique et de l'esthapéirisme*, Paris: Psi 1976 [1972], unpaginated.

74 Ibid., unpaginated.

75 Poyet, F.: Œuvres, in: *Lettrisme* 28-30 (1974), p. 12.

76 Isou: *Ballets Ciselants, Polythanasiques, Hypergraphiques et Infinitesimaux*, p. 51.

choreographic expansion points back to codes of narrative dance-making – again forming loops in lettrist choreographic history.

Such disappearances of physically-instantiated dance were related, in Isou's view, with the notion of purity. In his *Somme chorégraphique*, for instance, while a dancer stood immobile on stage, a spoken text expressed that

> [s]'*il est vrai que la danse obéit à une certaine intention ou à un certain idéal, il est naturel que l'idéal finisse par* détruire le corps et la danse pour s'exprimer dans toute sa pureté [if it is true that dance obeys a certain intention or a certain ideal, it is natural that the ideal will end up *destroying the body and dance in order to express itself in all its purity*].[77]

After this text was recited, the dancer disappeared completely, leaving the stage empty. Just as lettrism pursued modernist tendencies that aimed to purify the choreographic medium, it also introduced the possibility of fully "purifying" choreography by removing its physicality altogether. But once again, lettrism's tendencies towards purity and abstraction are complicated by lettrism itself. Infinitesimal art could indeed be anchored in the real and have effects within it, despite its ideality.

If infinitesimal works activated the imagination as a realm in which art – in this case, dance – could be produced and/or perceived, then they constituted a space in which choreography could expand by adapting to the largely-solipsistic – but potentially-linguistically-shareable – and ephemeral medium of imagination. In this construal, the physical inexistence of infinitesimal works – or the indifference for their physically-present "springboards" towards the virtual – does not necessarily imply an escape from mediality, but a further expansion of choreographic media to include the non-physical. Sabatier implies that issues of infinitesimal art mediality were of interest to the lettrists; he notes that this new aesthetic paradigm led to questions about the perceptibility and sensibility required to experience infinitesimal art.[78] While, then, infinitesimal art does not need the justification of concrete reality in order to acquire meaning or purpose,[79] this does not suggest it does not mediate real experiences. Mirella Bandini agrees with this reading:

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77 Ibid., p. 22, emphasis added. Roland Sabatier also associates infitesimality with a '*beauté à l'état pur* [beauty in a pure state]'. Sabatier: Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis, p. 19.

78 He specifically considers *télésthésie* – or sensation at a distance – as a candidate for sensory access to immaterial, imaginary media. Sabatier: Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis, p. 19.

79 Isou: *Introduction à l'esthétique imaginaire et autres écrits*, p. 12.

> *Dans le cadre de l'exploration immatérielle de l'art, les lettristes sortent de la dimension du tableau et du livre pour s'approprier une nouvelle réalité comprenant l'existant, l'imaginaire et l'idéal, sous forme de retour à l'immédiatété, aux perceptions physiques, sensorielles et esthétiques inscrites dans l'indicible, l'inconcevable et l'impossible* [In the framework of the immaterial exploration of art, the lettrists leave the dimension of the painting and the book, in order to appropriate a new reality containing the existing, the imaginary and the ideal, under the form of a return to immediacy, to physical, sensorial and aesthetic perceptions inscribed within the unsayable, the inconceivable and the impossible].[80]

Ballets that took place on no stage, as mental acts of their spectators, had their own reality. Infinitesimal art also had an effect on the real. For example, Sabatier writes of the

> *glissement du signifié habituel vers un signifié complétement idéal, iréel, in-existant et inimaginable. En cette occurrence, elle [la beauté transcendée de l'art infinitésimal] s'affirme comme la forme la plus perverse et la plus discrépante du réel. On met un nom là où il n'y en a pas, là où aucune réalité n'existe et sur laquelle nous ne pouvons pas mettre de nom* [shift of the usual signified towards a completely ideal, unreal, nonexistent and unimaginable signified. In this case, it [the transcendental beauty of infinitesimal art] affirms itself as the most perverse and most discrepant form of the real. We put a name where there is none, where no reality exists and on which we cannot put a name].[81]

This suggests that infinitesimal works do not describe or refer to an existing part of reality, but name the nonexistent as an act of intervention *in* the real. Indeed, infinitesimal works were acts and products of creation; this holds for the lettrists' privileged field of letters and signs – the movement considered "potential" letters; Isou theorised about lettric infinity, widening the creatability of letters to an endless virtual field[82] – as well as their imaginary works in other domains. Infinitesimal works, then, may display an ideality that, in its turn, is associated with purity; but they complexify this ideality by being parts of a non-physical yet very-much-experienced reality, and by generating effects in the real.

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80 Bandini, Mirella : *Pour une histoire du lettrisme*, Paris : Jean-Paul Rocher 2003, p. 32.

81 Sabatier : Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis, p. 20, emphasis added.

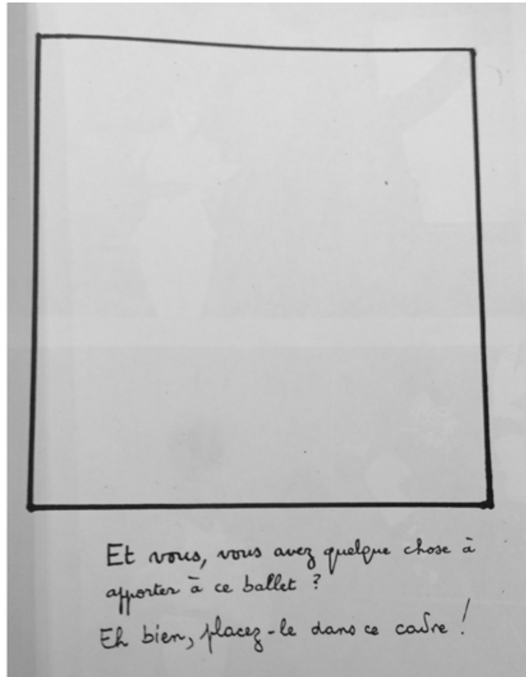
82 Isou : *Introduction à l'esthétique imaginaire et autres écrits*, p. 11 ; Sjöberg, Sami: *The Vanguard Messiah : Lettrism between Jewish Mysticism and the Avant-Garde*, Berlin/Boston : De Gruyter Oldenbourg 2015, p. 41. On the relationship between imaginary aesthetics and creation see Theodoropoulou, Vanessa: Isidore Isou, entre nominalisme, réalisme et conceptualisme, in: Collective: *Fragments pour Isidore Isou*, p. 103.

The capacity of infinitesimal art to enter reality further depended on its spectators, whose imaginations became artistic territory as they participated in infinitesimal creation. Infinitesimality has indeed been associated with the lettrist field of the "supertemporal"[83], which implicates – often long-lasting – artworks, open to successive appropriations and interventions by viewers [Figure 35]. The lettrists combined audience participation with the imaginary realm, resulting in works that audiences contributed to, but that never actually existed. For example, in *Manifeste de la danse aoptique ou de la danse-débat* (1961) Isou proposed that a discussion about nonexistent dance would replace physically-instantiated performance, calling for dance lovers to '*se réunissent et réfléchissent ensemble dans un silence profond sur les conditions d'un chef-d'oeuvre inexistant et invisible* [unite and think together in deep silence on the conditions for a nonexistent and invisible masterpiece]';[84] he called on them to contribute to creation even though they were not creating something material – and, thus, implicated them in a non-technologically-mediated virtual reality. By proposing such works, the lettrists point to potential shifts in choreographic authorship through its collectivisation with spectators and by refusing the necessity of producing a tangible, visible, uniformly-perceptible result.

83 Melin, Corinne : Esthétique imaginaire et tendances conceptuelles, in : Collective : *Fragments pour Isidore Isou*, p. 82, Sabatier : Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis, p. 20.

84 Isou : *Ballets Ciselants, Polythanasiques, Hypergraphiques et Infinitesimaux*, p. 48. Maurice Lemaître's 1982 '*ballet romantique supertemporel*' *Et la Sylphide?* proposed – as a framework for audience activity and as a physical presence leading to mental associations – a photograph projected on a screen and a dancer in a tutu and *pointe* shoes, inviting the spectators to reflect on Marie Taglioni and her genre. Lemaître : *La Danse, le mime et l'art corporel d'avant-garde*, unpaginated.

Figure 35: Ballet to be completed by viewers, by Maurice Lemaître. The text reads: 'And you, do you have something to bring to this ballet? Well then, put it in this frame!'. Source: Lemaître, Maurice: La Danse, le mime et l'art corporel d'avant-garde, *Paris: Centre de créativité 1982, p. 91, Courtesy of the Bismuth Lemaître Endowment Fund. No re-use without permission.*



Implicating audiences is associated with the lettrists' desire to bring about change in the world around them – despite Isou's refusal to equate art with everyday life.[85] Indeed, social change was a general principle of the movement's artistic practice, with the ultimate goal of creating a '*univers paradisiaque* [a heavenly universe]'.[86] In this idyllic world, the act of creation was generalised to a community of creators:

85 Isou: *Fondements pour la transformation intégrale du théâtre*, Vol. I, p. 32.

86 Sabatier: Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis, p. 11. Isou's willingness to form a utopian society based on creation may be the result of his Jewish origins and cultural background. For such a reading see Coadou, François: Lettrisme, mystique juive et messianisme chez Isidore Isou, in: Collective: *Fragments pour Isidore Isou*, pp. 113–132.

> *La Créatique ou la Novatique révèle la méthode par laquelle les individus peuvent se transformer en explorateurs de l'inconnu, de l'inédit, afin d'atteindre un niveau plus élevé de savoir et pouvoir, en devenant des génies cohérents et profonds, destinés à remplacer les dirigeants actuels, réactionnaires et abrutis, productifs, justement afin de transformer leur monde et même leur galaxie en un Paradis de Joie infime [La Créatique ou la Novatique* [these terms refer to notions developed by Isou in a book of the same title] reveals the method through which individuals can transform themselves into explorers of the unknown, of the original, in order to attain a more elevated level of knowledge and power, by becoming coherent and deep geniuses destined to replace the present leaders, reactionary and idiotic, productive, precisely in order to transform their world and even their galaxy into a Paradise of minute Joy].[87]

In this perspective, lettrism was a movement of the avant-garde because of its historical affiliations – dadaism and surrealism were recurring (criticised) reference points – and because of its insistence on bringing about social change through artistic acts. Through its necessary implication of the spectator, imaginary expanded choreography allowed lettrism to approach the historical avant-gardes' willingness to inscribe art in the social fabric, disrupting the potential purity of an ideal artwork detached from physical reality.

Through infinitesimal, physically-nonexistent, expanded choreographic works, then, the lettrists flirted with an abstraction from reality but ultimately resisted it in favour of the realness of imaginary acts and the possibility of audience participation within them. They approached a "purifying" detachment from physical creation, but deviated from it by insisting on the creative act and its teleological function of rendering the world better. By expanding their choreography to the imaginary, the lettrists reflected purity-seeking tendencies – associated with their modernism – while also resisting the ideal of an art autonomous in its medium and social (non-)inscription – thus aligning themselves with the historical avant-gardes. By doing so, they function as a reminder that a purity- and medium-specificity-seeking modernism was not opposed to the engaged practice of the avant-garde; the two can coexist within the work and worldview of a single artist or movement.[88]

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87 Isou, Isidore : Explication sur la créatique ou la novatique, in : Collective : *Lettrisme : Vue d'ensemble sur quelques dépassements précis*, p. 108.

88 Susan Manning developed a similar idea while analysing German *Ausdruckstanz*, a more mainstream dance form than lettrism: '*Ausdruckstanz* blurs the distinction between modernism and the historical avant-garde posisted by Peter Bürger. [...] For Wigman, Laban and their many followers endeavored to conceptualise dance as an autonomous language *and* to reintegrate the dancer's experience of movement into everyday life. Although Wigman was more commonly associated with the modernist project of conceptualising dance

Once more, the infinitesimal and supertemporal expanded choreography that relates lettrism to the historical avant-gardes is paralleled with works by artists active in U.S.-based post-modern dance. Gus Solomons Jr.'s *Two Reeler* (1968) – in which two tape recorders replaced the live presence of a performer – or artists interested in the public's participation – like Anna Halprin – are just two examples. Again, however, the lettrists' relationship with *post*-modern practitioners is counterbalanced by their relationship to the historical avant-gardes, casting doubt upon the successivity of the "post-". In this way, the lettrist history of dance places the movement as a continuation of the historical avant-gardes' work, while the history of lettrist dance links the avant-gardes of the early-20th century and post-modern dance of the 1960s.[89]

Beyond its multiple inscription in its contemporaneous and/or historically-proximate context, the expansion of lettrist choreography to the imaginary necessitates a wider historical perspective on work questioning choreography's materialisation. The lettrist infinitesimal joins Feuillet's *figure* – an ideated representation postulated by the page, embodied by dancers, but reducible to neither – and his system of choreo-graphic signs – graphic designs, but also means for thinking of an only-potentially incarnated dance – [Chapter 2]; it joins Chénin's algorithmic choreography – an inaccessible code whose actions define the potentiality of what can be seen – and focus on choreographic informational content – intangible, invisible *data* that constitute choreographic material [Chapter 4]. Whether in the late baroque's taxonomic, the 20th century's universalist and revolutionary, or the early-21st century's digitised way, an investment in the invisible, intangible, and immaterial can be acknowledged and analysed in its contextually-diverse manifestations *as* choreography – and thus counter the suggestion that the deincarnation of choreography is merely a matter of (bodily) absence.

Conclusion

Lettrist choreography had multiple facets. In some cases, it insisted upon corporeality as the foundation of dance and dance-making; in others, it was closer to expanded visions of choreography that upset the previous one. By expanding

as an autonomous language (absolute dance) and Laban with the avant-gardist or populist project of reintegrating dance into everyday life, I argue that both worked along a continuum between the two projects and that this continuum defined *Ausdruckstanz*'. Manning, Susan A.: *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press 1993, p. 7.

89 On this topic see also Burt, Ramsay : *Judson Dance Theater : Performative Traces*, Oxon : Routledge 2006.

choreography and adapting it to literary principles – turning the body into a carrier of letter and text, regaining its capacity to refer to elements beyond itself – lettrism undid its own insistence that moving corporeality marks choreography's purity, autonomy, and medium-specificity. By producing imaginary or inconceivable choreographic works, lettrism flirted with an ideality on the verge of absolute "purity"; however, this expansion undid its own tendencies by inscribing itself in the real and the quest for social change. The introduction of expandedness into lettrist choreography turns the movement's choreographic work into a hybrid that is both progress-based and not, both "pure" and not, both corporeal and not; both affirmative in its creation and distributive in its approach to choreographic authorship; both modernist and with an avant-garde sensibility, complexifying its way of being "modern"; both affirming its autonomy and adopting an interdisciplinary stance, creating links with performance and visual art.

Fabrice Flahutez has argued that lettrist painting is distanced from both figurative – in Isidore Isou's context, associated with the Eastern bloc's realist tendencies – and abstract – the Western bloc's dominant forms – visual art, fitting in neither pole of the dichotomy characterising its era.[90] Indeed, lettrism's distance from the *amplique* and its representative functions allowed it to differentiate itself from figurative art; its transgression of the *ciselant* and its self-reflexive functions allowed it to *also* mark its difference from abstraction. Whether or not lettrism's position as an outsider of 20th-century European art history was due to an insistence on embodying a third alternative, this interstitial position was characteristic of the movement. A similar claim can be made for dance history as well. Lettrism's corporeal/chiseling vision of choreography has commonalities with other dance practices, including ballet and modern dance. But, lettrism refutes the capacity of these practices to fully achieve *ciselant* idea(l)s, and thus appears as a third figure distanced from both. Additionally, through its "expanded" choreographies, lettrism circumvents the very goals it claims ballet and modern dance failed to achieve while – purposefully or not – leaving out accounts of post-modern works comparable to those of the lettrists. Thus, the multiplicity and contradictions of lettrist choreographies – more apparent through an expanded perspective – negotiate lettrism's position among already-competing genres in the complex post-war dance landscape; in both performing and expanding beyond the choreographic *ciselant*, lettrism sculpts a place for its own practice. In this perspective, the movement's relative historical unclassifiability is a constructive way of upsetting the categories lettrism flirts with and simultaneously – sometimes partly, sometimes wholly – rejects.

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90 Flahutez: *Le Lettrisme historique était une avant-garde*, pp. 28–29.

In this process, lettrism carves itself a position in (canonical dance) history, both embodying its accomplishment and exceeding its posited limits. But, lettrism's links with Feuillet's late baroque context [Chapter 2] and Chénin's contemporaneity [Chapter 4] – be it through their media transformations of choreography or their reconfigurations of its immateriality – highlight that Isou's movement is multiply relatable to (an expanded choreographic) history, rather than merely exceeding or subverting its historical precedents. The omnivorous and radical nature of lettrist choreography is therefore a context-specific manifestation of issues inherent, albeit to a great extent unacknowledged, in choreographic history. In this perspective, lettrism – much like contemporary expanded choreography – is not just an exceptional response to a dominant historical narrative, but part of extra-canonical, expanded choreographic histories.

Conclusion to Part 3

An ex-dadaist painter, a "*Les Six*"-related composer, a ballet-trained dancer-choreographer, a young but promising filmmaker, and a daring impresario collaboratively create a ballet in which a partial striptease coexists with a non-narrative film, lights blind an audience from which performers emerge, and a dancer stops moving when music plays, to enjoy the sound while smoking. The result of their work is choreographic because it relates to – while also subverting – a ballet-based association of choreography with narrative dance-making; it is choreographic because it exemplifies the internal conflicts of a choreography based on the human body in motion; it is choreographic because its orchestrations of dance, film, light, sound, costume, theatre, and audience are relational, expanded choreographic arrangements. A renowned dance practitioner leaves Germany just before the outbreak of WWII and installs himself in England, where he finds an unexpected partner in industrial management consulting. Together, they transfer dance experience and knowledge to factories, train labourers' movements, read motional patterns as indications of job adaptation, and theorise about the overall function of factories as large, rhythmic wholes of people, materials, and equipment. Their work is choreographic because it is associated with notions and practices of a choreography based on the human body in motion; but, it is also choreographic when it accepts a choreography of the non-human – of tools, machines, and materials; when it explores choreography beyond (loco)motion, in materials giving rise to new forms, in aggregates of (non-)human industrial systems; when it looks at the factory in choreographic terms of motion and rhythm. A Romanian-born poet and his fellows turn their attention to dance; the results include choreographies of apparent immobility, choreographies on paper and in words, choreographies existing solely in the imagination. The poet and his fellows practice choreography when they focus on human corporeality, through which dance gains a desired autonomy; but, they also practice choreography when they subvert this focus by admitting unexpected (non-)materials, allowing choreography to be penetrated by text, poetic structures, and immaterial thoughts. Despite being linked to choreographic models of dance, body, and/or motion, then, Part 3's

three examples are relevant to expanded choreography. Moreover, they do not form an exclusive dialectic between these two poles; along with moving bodies and expanded excursions, their associations with, for instance, choreography as narrative (*Relâche*) or writing/notation (Rudolf Laban) indicate a wide diversity of choreographic models, rather than a bi-polar antagonism.

The multiple choreographies of *Relâche*, the industrial Laban, and lettrism crucially underline that their reversals of dancing, body-in-motion-based choreographic models do not negate the role of dance, motion, or the human body. Dance is present in *Relâche,* in the non-cinematographic pockets of what remains a ballet; it is present in Laban's thinking, in his dancerly metaphors about industry; it is present in lettrist ballets, even if imaginary. The human body is present in *Relâche,* strutting in glittering costumes and flirting with nudity; it is present in Laban's factories and workers' bodies – which wrap, cut, and feed machines, and walk home at the end of the day, traces of their work lingering in shadow moves; it is present in lettrism, affirmed as the very basis of choreographic art, exposed in its internal dance. Movement is present in *Relâche,* on its stage and in its film; it is present in labourers, tools, machines, and materials' industrial activity; it is present in lettrist choreographies' rhymed phrases and internal dances of moving organs and cells. In other words, the expandedness of these works and artists complements – without effacing – a choreography of dance, body, motion, and/or their connection. Moreover, these analyses point to the heterogeneity of dances (subversive ballet dances, dances of materials, imaginary dances), bodies (physical, cinematographically-mediated, mechanical), and movements (cinematographic, imaginary, supra-individual) entailed by this complimentarity. In this way, an expanded choreographic reading of these works points to the multiplicity of an inclusive choreographic – but also dance, kinetic, bodily – history.

Such an expanded historiographic perspective invites reconsideration of binary oppositions, acceptance of coexisting but contrasting facets, and identification of the productivity of contradictions; it draws attention to works' responses to their own ambivalences (*Relâche*), articulates a second facet of their at times contradictory nature (Laban), and contributes to an understanding of their complex positionality within their historical context (lettrism). By illustrating the diversity of choreographic models active within a single work, artist's or group's *œuvre,* this reading of *Relâche,* the industrial Laban, and lettrist choreography also points to – without exhaustively portraying – the multiplicity of choreographic models present within early- and mid-20th-century dance history; in other words, it demonstrates that the plurality of 20th-century dance modernity is also identified in its choreographic histories. Against the dominance of a choreography bound to dance and/or entangled with human corporeality in motion, such a reading allows choreographic history to include, in Christina

Thurner's words, 'partiality over totality, plurality and diversity over homogeneity'.[1] Against a historical narrative where a single criterion – such as the "purity" of movement or the "authenticity" of corporeal expression – could define a singular "progression", it allows 'contingency over teleological necessity, as well as discontinuities over linear progressions'[2] to appear. This plurality concerns various aspects of early- and mid-20th-century choreographic history; it concerns different chronological moments and genres, and historiographically-relevant notions, such as dance modernity.

This multiple history of the early- and mid-20th century requires recognising its interdisciplinarity, taking form through collaboration and transversal experimentation both within (*Relâche*, lettrism) and beyond (Laban) the arts; its intermedia understanding of the body (*Relâche*), motion (Laban), and performance (*Relâche*, lettrism); its complexification of choreographic authorship, detaching it from the sole creation of corporeal or kinetic products, and reminding us that collapsing the figures of "choreographer" and creator of embodied motion excludes crucial parts of artistic labour (*Relâche*, lettrism); and its expanded politics, exploring the subversive potential of immaterial choreographies, or encompassing human bodies in supra-individual, hierarchical agglomerations along with non-human agents.

As these considerations prefigure, the horizontal-synchronous choreographic multiplicity of the 20th century is doubled by a vertical-transhistorical dimension that manifests its relevance to expanded choreography – be this in contemporaneity or in the (expanded) past. Again, this relevance does not suggest causal and linear relationality or similarity; but it does suggest there is a need for a diverse, macro-historical view of choreographic expandedness, to which 20th-century modernity contributes. By enriching choreographic assemblage practice with an aesthetics of abruptness, distinct from the centralising *sujet* (of its baroque manifestations) and emergent fleetingness (of its contemporary ones); by proposing rhythm and harmony as factors that organise supra-individual, more-than-human choreographies, thus reconfiguring a preoccupation with proportion (in the early-modern period) and the unpredictability of distributed agency (in contemporaneity); by fostering a subversively-participative, immaterial choreography, thus refusing the late baroque's systematicity and the inaccessible abstraction of the contemporary digital realm, *Relâche*, the industrial Laban, and lettrist choreography become members of a heterogeneous but densely-populated expanded choreographic history.

1 Thurner, Christina: Time Layers, Time Leaps, Time Loss: Methodologies of Dance Historiography, in: Franko: *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, p. 527.
2 Ibid., p. 527.

Conclusion

> *Imagine you would be sick of choreography, know all too well what it is, incarnate it, become choreography – and go totally nuts. […] Imagine choreography is both your guardian spirit and your worst nightmare.*[1]

Stories depend on those who tell them; and histories are, partially, symptoms of the situation in, and from, which they are told. The (hi)stories told here are written from the perspective(s) of expanded choreography: a 17th-century ballet-*poietics* not centred on dance [Chapter 1]; a 1700 choreo(-)graphy residing in signs and on paper [Chapter 2]; a 15th-century dance practice expanding beyond the human, with movements based on non-kinetic principles [Chapter 3]; a 1920s ballet emerging through the relations of body, music, lights, and film [Chapter 7]; a choreographer managing factories and their dances of labourers, tools, machines, and materials in the 1940s and 1950s [Chapter 8]; and post-war choreographies circulating from bodies to letters and then into the realm of imagination [Chapter 9]. The situated, expanded-choreographic perspective from which these stories are told is not a warning to the limited "truth" of the historical narratives, but is a condition for their very existence; recognising the situatedness of these "expanded choreographic" histories does not reduce their validity.[2]

From this expanded-choreographic perspective, pre-18th-century European choreographic sources question the centrality of dance, the essential place of the human/physical body, and the necessity of (loco)motion that characterised

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

2 On the 'constructive character of historiography' and its relation to a notion of truth see also 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, p. 526.

later conceptions of choreography. Therefore, if "choreography" – referring to practices and sources from these periods – is defined by dance-making and/or a moving corporeality, this requires awareness of its partiality and bias against certain aspects of the practices and sources in question. Similarly, early- and mid-20th-century dance history may display a choreographic model strongly attached to dance or organic corporeality and its motion, but cannot be reduced to that. Rather, this history reflects the period's diversity through varied, coexisting, sometimes-contradictory choreographic models. Attaching "choreography" to dance-making and/or the moving body should therefore be employed less as a necessary, all-encompassing notion – a canon betrayed by certain works – than as an important aspect of a nevertheless-complex reality.

Looking at choreographic history through the perspective of expanded choreography, however, does more than decentralise dance and/or moving bodies; it also recognises "expanded" aspects in historical practices. Contemporary expanded choreography widens what choreography is and can be; from customers moving in a shopping mall to birds migrating for the winter, and from the structure of a building to the spatial distribution of sounds, the notion of choreography stretches to encompass a wide range of phenomena and actions. In this spread, it also encompasses historical practices and notions – court etiquette and the dance of the planets, the motions of factory workers and a loudspeaker replacing a dance performance – *as* choreography. To put it differently, if Olga Mesa's in-between, floating arrangement is choreography [Chapter 5], the work of a *maître d'ordre* can be choreography too [Chapter 1]; if an installation of trees is choreography [Chapter 6], a factory can be choreographed as well [Chapter 8]. This does not mean that the term "choreography" should be anachronistically projected onto historical practices, but it does mean acknowledging that in the *present* conception of (expanded) choreography, such practices cannot be excluded from choreographic history. An expanded perspective of choreographic history, then, pluralises this history by drawing attention to its multiple facets, and pluralising the very category of "choreography".

The contemporary situation from which these histories have been told is far from an all-encompassing view based on a generic notion of contemporaneity. While writing this book, many – most – of the choreographic works in (both mainstream and not) European venues staged human bodies moving, dancing, jumping, sweating, swirling; human bodies of technical skill and performative brilliance; human bodies expressing, emoting, experiencing. In other words, a large part of choreographic contemporaneity was not "expanded". At the same time, resistance to choreographic expandedness was dwindling. Even within this short timeframe, discussions with students, other professionals in the dance field – dancers, choreographers, theorists, researchers, curators –, and non-specialised audiences indicated that staging the non-human and non-kinetic,

and choreographing non-human and non-moving media, were increasingly accommodated. The present of expanded choreography was, then, simultaneously becoming more-steadily anchored, *and* counter-balanced by alternative choreographic practices. Just as the abstract choreo-graphies possible in the Feuillet system coexisted with a technical discipline of the body by dance masters [Chapter 2], and like expressionist dance coexisted with *Relâche*'s explorations of non-physical motion [Chapter 7], the historical present of expanded choreography coexists with other paradigms, resisting marginalisation without becoming dominant. It is not a failure that expanded choreography remains "a" paradigm, but, rather, a welcome limitation against a colonisation of the present. The fact that expanded choreography does not fully encompass the present is coupled by this book's non-exhaustive treatment of expandedness itself; these are (hi)stories waiting to be complemented and complexified by other manifestations, notably by non-European and non-Western perspectives of choreographic expansion.

As a fragment of a particular historical present, expanded choreography tells equally-particular choreographic histories, which are to be neither marginalised nor generalised. In this sense, the historical readings in this text are not claims against the utility and relative validity of other (corporeal-kinetic) readings of history – but, they are claims that both the latter and an expanded choreographic perspective are equally symptomatic of their visions of choreography. It may be preposterous[3] to consider Domenico da Piacenza [Chapter 3] or even Rudolf Laban [Chapter 8] under the notion of an expanded choreography; however, considering *any* notion of choreography as neutrally applicable in a transhistorical way – rather than insisting on the multiplicity that characterises choreographic history – is preposterous.

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If the stories we tell of the past are symptoms of our present situation, the stories we tell of our present are also, as the notion of the parallax[4] implies, the results of our views of the past. The three histories of the present explored in Part 2 – of choreographed/ic algorithms and videos [Chapter 4], choreographed/ic relations [Chapter 5], and choreographed/ic trees [Chapter 6] – are therefore told from the perspective of a multiple choreographic history. This is a history in which choreography can be diverse and contain paper choreographies, intermedia dramaturgies, and kinetic containments.

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

4 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 multiplicity and diversity of choreographic history influences this text's reading of contemporary expanded choreography, by indicating that it does not follow a singular evolution – rather, it transforms itself – and that its different beings exist in multiple, overlapping ways. Consequently, this book's contemporary analyses identify expanded choreography's shifts and changes from – and not simple widenings of – pre-existing choreographic models, while discerning *several* different shifts and changes. A multiple choreographic history gives rise to a multiple present; thus, expanded choreography is a plural response to a non-linear history – a multiplicity that cannot be construed as a uni-directional phenomenon.

A choreographic-historical perspective reframes readings of the present by identifying the relevance of the past within the expanded present. As the case studies in this book have shown, it is not only aspects of contemporaneity that can be reflected in historical practices. A court ballet's decentralisation and de-hierarchisation of dance [Chapter 1], a *bassadanza*'s non-moving movement [Chapter 3], a choreo-graphy's conception of choreography in written signs [Chapter 2], Francis Picabia's a-narrative dramaturgy and his collage-like stage constructions [Chapter 7], Laban's vision of a world in flux [Chapter 8], and the lettrists' explorations of a graphic or imaginary choreography [Chapter 9] form echoes or reflections in Mathilde Chénin, Mesa, or William Forsythe's works [Part 2] – and in expanded choreography in general. These links are not markers of proximity or resemblance, but of a possibly-unexpected relevance, appearing in the juxtapositional space between different historical moments. If no direct causal relations exist between the majority of the case studies analysed here, a multiple choreographic history sediments a conceptual and practical diversity within the notion of choreography that becomes manifest in their nevertheless existing relations. This leads to a view of expanded choreography that is neither a deterministic result of the past – uniformly continuous with history, moving in a smooth linear progression – nor can it be construed as a break, or a rupture, from the past. Choreographic/dance history is not effaced – victimised by new "nows" – or something that expanded choreography must liberate itself from; it is wholly relevant to the contemporary context.

Expanded choreography is a particular – rather than an all-encompassing – present, which shapes its historical perspective. Similarly, the choreographic history discussed here is a multiple *and* specific narrative – one that coexists with histories of body and kinaesthesia, movement and gesture, dance steps and phrases – which does not exclude other instances of expandedness, in other works, other artists, other periods not explored here. Consequently, the view of the present that this history informs is an equally-particular one, and it coexists with other contemporary dance histories. Indeed, while the specific historical narrative adopted in this text is largely focussed on decentralising

dance and moving bodies in choreographic conceptions, it does not aim to marginalise them. This decentralisation is an invitation to better understand a dancerly, kinetic, bodily choreographic model as well; to understand the discursive, artistic, intermedia, institutional, socio-political ways in which such a paradigm became dominant; to examine this dominance's effectiveness within its context(s); to nuance how motion, dance, and body are construed and relate to one another in this choreographic model; to understand the entanglements between the notion(s) of modernity and its choreographic model(s). In this way, a partial historical narrative may insist upon its own specificity, but not on its exclusions.

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These chapters do not only highlight (expanded) choreography's departures from – and critical relations and frictions with – dance and moving bodies; they also point to the potential of choreography being something *else*. Correspondingly, this book has considered how (expanded) choreography may itself become more plural, rather than focussing on what a dance-based, kinetic/physical choreography can do when journeying to other fields. This plurality implies that choreography cannot be understood in an "essential", all-encompassing way. Rather, different conceptions of choreography penetrate each other and overlap; these penetrations and overlaps are markers of diverse conceptions of choreography that form a network, rather than pointing to a global commonality. A multiple and capable-of-becoming-other choreography thus appears. This multiplicity and diversity underlines that while expanded choreography may initially seem to imply that choreography can be universally applied to almost anything, it is choreography's capacity to pluralise in nevertheless always-particular ways that is at stake, not choreography's universality as a neutral or stable practice. A plural, non-essentialist view of expanded choreography does not suggest everything could be choreography, in a generic and undifferentiated way – rather, choreography can be ever-more multiple, but always specific. In this pluralist construal, the label "expanded" has a functional role – referring to specific kinds of choreographic practices – but it does not qualitatively distinguish "expanded choreography" from "choreography". If choreography is multiple, expandedness is part of choreography, without being differentiated from it.

Circulating within this network in the present and past, this book has moved along horizontal planes of synchronicity – to reveal the choreographic diversity within a given timeframe – and vertical planes of transhistoricity – to juxtapose chronologically-disconnected choreographic instances and develop (particular) expanded choreographic histories. For example, Saint-Hubert's *La Manière de composer* [Chapter 1], Picabia's *Relâche* [Chapter 7], and Mesa's *Solo*

[Chapter 5] all point to a conception of choreography as assemblage. Their assemblages differ distinctly – from Saint-Hubert's order-based arrangement to Picabia's Dadaist collage-aesthetic and Mesa's emergent, fleeting effect. But, in their distinctive difference, they bear witness to the fact that the contemporary focus on choreographic assemblages needs to be framed by an understanding of historical variations. In other words, rather than the early-21st century ushering in a choreographic aesthetics and praxis of the assemblage, what appears in this context is *a specific kind* of choreographic assemblage. Similarly, Feuillet's choreo-graphy [Chapter 2], Isidore Isou's choreography [Chapter 9], and Chénin's choreographic works [Chapter 4] all illustrate choreography's multiple existence in different (im)material states. The conception of this existence and the choice of materials is different for each – from Feuillet's papers and signs, to Isou's empty stages, and Chénin's videos and algorithms – but their difference implies that choreography's ontological diversity is a chronologically wide-ranging phenomenon. Once again, the early-21st century shifts this multiplication of choreographic media towards data and information, rather than initiating the ontological multiplication itself. Finally, Domenico and Guglielmo [Chapter 3], Laban [Chapter 8], and Forsythe's [Chapter 6] choreographies are inscribed in non-anthropocentric frameworks that render the binarity of (im)mobility obsolete. Their transgression of anthropocentrism and this binary is, once more, variable – from Renaissance's containment to 20th-century modernity's universalist motion, and contemporaneity's virtual potential. But, this variability demands acknowledgement of its transhistoricity, again pointing to the present as a reconfiguration – rather than an initiation – of choreography's questioning of anthropocentrism and the imperative to move. More of these histories can be developed; for example, contemporary expanded choreography's focus on motion in urban space, or the choreography imposed by devices upon bodies, can also shift from the horizontal to the vertical – looking not for their ancestors, but their historical interlocutors.

In the contemporary works explored here – and in contemporary expanded choreography in general – choreography disengages itself from the teleological function of producing a specific kind of object or working with a specific kind of material. Chénin's works posit that choreography can have multiple ontologies, and can exist through different (in)tangible, (in)visible, (im)material substrates [Chapter 4]; Mesa's work proposes that, beyond this plurality of produced forms, choreography can also be associated with an act – be it the creative praxis of the choreographer or the choreography's own emergent happening – that occurs between, rather than within, choreographic media [Chapter 5] ; Forsythe's installation allows consideration of choreography as thought, perspective, and understanding, rather than as (non)physical "stuff" or as an act [Chapter 6]. Contemporary expansions thus demand radical recon-

sideration of ontological expectations about choreography – expectations about what choreography *is*. But, because these expansions happen on transhistorical planes, they also demand recognition that choreographic history counters such expectations, requiring an equal reconsideration of the entities that are historiographically validated as choreography.

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A plural view of choreography shows that (expanded) choreographies are also articulated in complex relationships with notions they at times (appear to) refuse. Choreographic expansions multiply corporeality to non-human, dephysicalised, depersonalised, microscopically-fragmentable or macroscopically-systemic bodies; they multiply motion to virtual, contained, possible, tendential, trace; they multiply dance formats, media, and performance. Past and present (expanded) choreography heterogeneously relates to a multidimensionality of dances, bodies, motions, and their interlinkages. In their very instability, these diverse relations point to the need to historicise and complexify ideas of dance, body, and motion, in order to add to the intersecting, shifting relationships they form with (expanded) choreography.

The non-essentialist diversity of choreography is also important to choreography's political being. From disciplining embodied subjects to structuring movement, from imposing repeatable – and therefore predictable – patterns of motion to inscribing postures and gestures, choreography takes up ethical and political dimensions, which are also prominent in discourse about expanded choreography.[5] However, because choreography is not essentially defined through a singular trait, this implies that its politics are not *a priori*, and do not transcend the multiplicity and diversity of its manifestations; rather, they are found in the specific configurations of different choreographic models. The blending of power with virtue in Domenico and Guglielmo's dances [Chapter 3]; the notion of order in court ballet and its potential association with the socio-political status of its practitioners [Chapter 1]; the ambivalent relationship of Beauchamp-Feuillet notations with monarchic, disciplinary, and nation-bound goals [Chapter 2]; the open-ness of a relational-algorithmic score [Chapter 4]; the fleetingness of an account of war told through fragments imbricating themselves in audience members' lived memory [Chapter 5]; the resistance and initiatives of a group of trees in response to a choreographic proposition [Chapter 6]; the subversion of institutionalised and class-related dance formats in a

5 Cf. for example, Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects…, Conference presentation, MACBA 2012, http://www.macba.cat/en/expanded-choreography-situations (August 2020).

1920s ballet [Chapter 7]; the rhythmical, harmonious, centralised management of (non-)human labour forces [Chapter 8]; a social project mediated through choreographic creation [Chapter 9] – these are all instances of choreographic politics that are not uniform, instances of choreography's diverse relations with diverse politics, instances forming a heterogeneous choreographic politics that can only be explored as a function of choreographic multiplicity.

A similar claim can be made about choreographic authorship. To be sure, questions such as who authored a work and what authorship itself implies depend on the institutional, economic, discursive, social, and other factors that structure the choreographic field at any given time. But, in order to consider a figure a choreographic author, compare their work and status to other understandings of the term, and have that figure participate in a heterogeneous history of choreographic authorship, a conception of choreography is needed that is not limited to the makers of bodily motions. This book provides several examples of figures whose choreographic authorship needs to be, at the very least, (re)assessed – not against a homogeneous diachronic standard but as an opportunity to diversify understandings of choreographic authorship. This includes interdisciplinary authors and projects, like Saint-Hubert's *maîtres d'ordre* [Chapter 1], Picabia's work for *Relâche* [Chapter 7], Isou's transfers between choreography and poetry [Chapter 9], Chénin writing motion with her body before coding it [Chapter 4]; multiple authors, as in the doubling of choreographer by a choreo-grapher [Chapter 2], or creating a choreographic task to be completed by trees [Chapter 6]; authors with (in)tangible creative products, from 17th-century *maîtres d'ordre* to Picabia, and from Picabia to Mesa [Chapter 5]; authors sharing their work with non-human models or agents, like Domenico and Guglielmo following the aesthetic precepts of nature [Chapter 3], or Laban observing the dance of materials [Chapter 8]; and authorship distributed across multiple beings, from the communities of spectators of lettrist imaginary dance to the wires, trunks, and branches of Forsythe's installation in Groningen.

The multiple expansions of choreography further underline the need for an interdisciplinary understanding of the term and the practices to which it applies. This means recognising artistic-discipline-boundary-crossing choreographic practices – as illustrated by Saint-Hubert [Chapter 1], *Relâche* [Chapter 7], lettrist choreography [Chapter 9], and Mesa's [Chapter 5] work – or the crossing of the boundaries of art as a posited "discipline" – as illustrated by Laban [Chapter 8] and Chénin [Chapter 4]. It also means posing this recognition as a stepping stone for the development of cross-discipline histories: of the concurrent anti-narrative turn of cinema and dance/choreography; of the con-

current dramaturgical turn of choreography and post-dramatic turn of theatre;[6] of the concurrent development of expanded choreography and notions such as "the architectural", applicable beyond the design of buildings;[7] of the concurrent disciplinary institutionalisation of dance, music, and the visual arts in late-17th-century France, reflected in the form of Feuillet notations [Chapter 2]. It can mean, too, radically questioning medium specificity as a lens that inadvertently colours the reading of choreography, instead focusing on the skills, practices, methods, and reception processes implicated in intermedia choreographic work.

A further implication of this multifaceted view of choreography concerns how Western definitions of choreography project onto, and conceptually colonise, both non-dominant, local Western practices and non-Western ones. Postulating a plural view of choreography open to transformations allows a "provincialisation"[8] of any single choreographic model and its possibly-disproportionate influence. A non-essentialist consideration of choreography may thus help reduce the dominance of a European/Western viewpoint in characterisations of choreography; if choreography in Europe is not singular, it may equally be more attentive to its non-European counterparts.

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By providing a series of case studies, this book develops a progressive argument – not in the sense of a linear succession in which each step builds on the previous one, but in the sense of multiple layers within an argument, where multiple blocks support an idea. What has been developed, here, is a series of particular histor*ies*; and it is in the juxtapositional space between them that their relevance to one another emerges – a space waiting for more such histories that may never complete it, but that may populate and diversify it, until a complexity is formed that might come close to describing reality.

The ideas and analyses developed here have resulted in the writing of a linear text, with a beginning, middle, and end. Connections exist between its parts; terms recur; ideas re-appear, sometimes under different names; similarities arise between the elements; juxtaposition is at work between the different

6 Cf. Lehmann, Hans-Thies: *Postdramatic Theatre*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2006 [1999, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby].

7 Martin, Reinhold: 'Architectural Infrastructures and Cultural Techniques' seminar syllabus, Columbia University, 2014, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/arch/courses/syllabi/20141/A8906_2014_1_Martin.pdf (August 2020). This text benefited from Giulia Bini's mention of the notion of the architectural, cf. Bini, Giulia: *ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medien - HfG Hochschule für Gestaltung. Media Space Display*, PhD thesis, Venice: IUAV 2017.

8 Cf. Chakrabarty, Dipesh: *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 2000.

chapters. These ideas and analyses could, perhaps more adequately, be drawn out in a mind map, bundles and articulations colour-coded and made visible; or they could – reflecting Christina Thurner's suggestion on a *networked* historiography[9] – be entered into a database, where hyperlinks can form complex connections between different elements. In such a networked view, (expanded) choreography (and all its variants), dance (and its different manifestations), body (and its different beings), motion and immobility (and their diverse conceptions) would be mapped out alongside autonomy, medium specificity, intermediality, virtuality, arrangement, space and time, humanity and the non-human, thing and material, page and subject, immateriality and act, assemblage and narrative, dramaturgy and ecology. If the linearity of a text points to the non-linear articulations of its contents, this text insists upon a historiographic complexity that may indicate the text's own limits.

A networked historiography is a historiography of folds. It looks for multidirectional links and refracted connections in which disparate and different expansions cross one other. Georges Didi-Huberman noted that '[o]ne must not say that there are historical objects belonging to such or such a time: it must be understood that *in each historical object all ages meet*, collide, melt into each other in their forms, branch out, or overlap one another'.[10] A networked historiography folds time, again and again, so that historical objects touch each other's surface without being removed from their woven textile. Finding the fold that makes a link manifest is the preposterous beauty of juxtaposition.

The plurality of choreographic notions that this networked view illustrates, and the historical and contemporary narratives developed in this text, are examples of the very specificity that upsets homogeneous narratives. In this way, choreographic history – as much as the choreographic present – appears in figures of heterogeneity, diversity, and, at times, dissensus: Feuillet *partly* integrated the body in his system [Chapter 2], *Relâche* responded to *diverse* choreographic models simultaneously [Chapter 7], Forsythe engaged with motion in Groningen while not producing much of it [Chapter 6]; expanded choreography is plural. Michel de Certeau notes:

> If, for some time, [historians] hoped for a "totalization" and believed that they could reconcile diverse systems of interpretation in a fashion accounting for all of their information, by priority historians are now concerned with the complex manifestations of […] differences. In this way the area in which they are settling

9 Thurner: Time Layers, Time Leaps, Time Loss, pp. 529–530.

10 Quoted in Lista, Marcella: *Play Dead*: Dance, Museums, and the 'Time-Based Arts', in: *Dance Research Journal* 46/3 (2014), p. 9.

> can still, by analogy, bear the venerable name of the "fact": the fact, such is the difference.[11]

In the approach to historiography – both of the present and past – adopted here, accepting diversity, heterogeneity, and dissensus is not a refusal to take a position, but is the very basis for taking one. In his seminal text *The Landscape of History*, John Lewis Gaddis writes:

> [W]ith the passage of time, our representations *become* reality in the sense that they compete with, insinuate themselves into, and eventually replace altogether the firsthand memories people have of the events through which they've lived. Historical knowledge submerges participants' knowledge of what took place: historians impose themselves upon the past just as effectively – but also as suffocatingly – as states do upon the territories they seek to control. We make the past legible, but in doing so we lock it up in a prison from which there's neither escape nor ransom nor appeal [...] To reconstruct the real past is to construct an accessible but deformed past: it is to oppress the past, to constrain its spontaneity, to deny its liberty.[12]

The writing of history as a fixation, stabilisation, and oppression of the past may be – if histories are symptoms of their contexts – a symptom of a fixed, stable, potentially-oppressive present. Telling multiple histories is a way of refraining from this stately control upon the past; accepting a multiplicity within historical "truth" avoids an imposition on the past *and* the colonisation of the present and its potentialities. Telling these expanded choreographic histories has not been an attempt to stabilise the past, but an attempt to make it move along with a shifting, multiple present.

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11 Certeau, Michel de: *The Writing of History*, New York: Columbia University Press 1988 [1975, trans. Tom Conley], p. 81.

12 Gaddis, John Lewis: *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*, New York: Oxford University Press 2002, pp. 136, 138.

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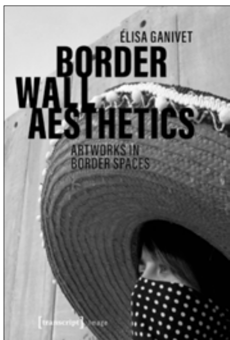

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