

Society of Dance History Scholars

SDHS

Advancing the Field of Dance Studies



The Congress on
Research in Dance

Proceedings



Writing Dancing/Dancing Writing

Thirty-seventh Annual International Conference

The University of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

November 13–16, 2014

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Published by the Society of Dance History Scholars, 2014.

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Digital Choreographic Lineage: A Global Access and Preservation Framework

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Abstract:

Digital Choreographic Lineage (DCL), a collaboration between Melanie Aceto, Associate Professor of Dance and Dr. Bina Ramamurthy, Research Associate Professor, Computer Science and Engineering, is an interactive web-based resource that illustrates the network of connections between dance artists and provides access to their work. DCL details a dance artist's lineage (who an artist studied with, danced for, collaborated with and was influenced by) and reveals connections among all of her lineal artists in a single and interactive source. DCL not only includes information about dance artists, but the composers, designers, writers and artists with whom they have collaborated and therefore is intrinsically connected to contemporaneous movements in these other disciplines. The main goal is the establishment of a knowledge base documenting and preserving 20th and 21st century dance data that is searchable and mineable and that will continue to grow as new generations of artists are added. DCL is a research hub for scholars, educators, artists, students and dance audiences. Dance scholars can trace the migration of modern dance techniques; DCL illuminates shared influences. Dance students can see whom their favorite dancers studied with in order to seek out parallel training. DCL is a place where artists can contribute their history and have it be accessible to the world without waiting until they have a book written about them. DCL creatively leverages modern data analytics to simultaneously serve as an archive, a research tool and a teaching tool, presenting the history of dance.

Please visit www.choreographiclineage.buffalo.edu

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Nupe Women Dances of Bida: A Performance Analysis

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Abstract.

The Gbagurasa and Angale dances of Nupe women of Bida in Niger State, in the middle belt region of Nigeria are two dances that reflect the robust creative experiences of women in performance spaces in Nigeria's cultural landscape. Against what others have written about the Nigerian woman, concepts of womanhood with relation to creative freedom, integrity and self-representation have been projected in these two dances. Despite seemingly insurmountable odds and restrictions, Nupe women in these dances have conveyed their innovative and creative spirit. This research analyzes their distinctive character in modern dance practice in Nigeria.

Introduction

Despite their relative obscurity in Nigeria dance literature, the *gbagurasa* and *angale* dances are two very popular dances in Nupe land. The Nupe people are an agricultural and fishing people, located in low basin of river Niger in the middle belt region of Nigeria. They live in villages and towns of the Niger, with the largest of such colonies in Bida, core of ancient Nupe kingdom, whose present rulers still take the title 'Etsu Nupe'(King of Nupe).

Subjugated and brought under British rule in 1897, Bida is situated south of Minna, the capital of present Niger State, Nigeria. Some other Nupe towns ruled by independent kings called Emirs include Lafiagi, Pategi, Agai, Lapai, Shonga, Tshragi, Zungeru and Badeggi¹

There is a strong tradition of kingship in Nupe land, from the time of Tsoode, the mythical founder of the kingdom, whose military exploits are immortalized in Nupe traditions. Before the incursion of Arab culture in Nupe land, the Nupe community as other communities across Nigeria had prominent women-in-council officers of state who were actively involved in the social administration of Nupeland.

A prominent example of an important woman official in government in the 19th century, is Hajia Gogo, who rose to become, perhaps, the most remarkable and reputable female personality in Nupe land.² The Nupe people of Bida, as other Nupe communities, are great lovers of traditional arts and crafts. Nupe arts and crafts have attained not only national but international recognition.

For instance, renowned professional choreographer and performer, Late Hajia Fatima Lolo³ exhibited both on local and national platforms, the valid artistry and dynamism of her *gbagurasa* dance skills. In her performances, she projected an art style of enviable standard; which visual, choreographic designs and communicative forms reflected the African concepts of creativity, art and personality growth.⁴



Figure 1: Hajai Lolo and Gbagurasa Dancers from Bida

Women and the Nupe Dance culture

Nigeria is a country of remarkable diversity in dance forms with inclination towards ethnic borders. In Nupe communities, as in other parts of Nigeria, there are exclusive male and female dances. The male dances include the *Ndakogboya*, *Kpanganagi*, *Elo* and *Guguyagi* mask dances.

However, because their flexible range, participatory nature, artistic structures and adaptability, the much sought after *gbagurasa* and *angale* dances are performed by women and maidens, and form part of the total dance culture. Both dances are much in demand during social functions, because they are ‘open’, without ritual values.

Gbagurasa is believed to be the oldest of Nupe traditional dances.

According to tradition, the dance was initiated by a certain Nupe man in the early years of Nupe history by act ingenuity. He produced a drum by creating a hollow in a cylindrical wood, which he covered with an animal skin. When the drum was struck, it produced peculiar rhythmic sounds to which the community responded in various expressional movements. With the passage of time:

More drums were created and movement and gestures were structured and juxtaposed with music. Consequently, (*gbagurasa*) dance became a unit of joyous celebration for various occasions in the life of the Nupe people.⁵

In precolonial times, when, due to the communal structure of society, the pattern of dance practice was hinged on communal ownership, *gbagurasa* dance was organized by the community, but through the years, the dance has undergone major modifications in organization and performance. The present emergent form is a relative acceptable form by the audience, since the dance which is linked to extra musical dance events is evolving and continues to absorb positive influences and technology from its environments.

While in traditional times, *gbagurasa* dance existed as a communal affair and was organized by the community, at present, the dance is not owned by the community, but by specific talented women who have set up and organized their own dance companies.

The dance companies entertain the Bida community and environs during social ceremonies, such as child naming, marriage, chieftaincy installation and religious festivals, like sallah celebrations.

The dance which also has featured in the state and national festivals of arts and culture cannot be performed during funeral ceremonies.

There exists a variety of *gbagurasa* dance companies in Bida today. The main attraction of *gbagurasa*, aside from its unique vocal style and dancing is its close affinity to women.

As wives and mothers, the roles and function of the female characters in the dance are individualistic and self-defined, within the creative essence, autonomy and personality of traditional African womanhood. The women artists endeavour to reflect the ideology of womanhood as one central to African philosophy and spirituality. In their dances, they project the consensus admiration and respect for the resilience and strength the woman body exhibits in accomplishing major gains, including the artistic, theatrical and performative, for both personal growth and community survival.

It is not clear how the *gbagurasa* dance emerged to be associated with women. This history is lost to the Nupe people of Bida. However, from cultural antecedents, it might be inferred that the level of interest and dedication of the women to this dance practice must have been significant. Every *gbagurasa* dance company across Nupe land has a founder and leader in the capacity of a modern theatre director, who controls the entire process of recruiting and training new members, rehearsals and dance productions.

Membership into a *gbagurasa* dance ensemble is open to any women, but is normally subject to the dance leader's (choreographer's) approval. She is unquestionably talented in the practice of the art form and is held in high esteem by members of the group and society at large. Under her, the group receives instructions in effective dance practice and how to organize themselves in various aspects of dance production.

Aside this, the women artists learn to comport themselves as community members and are committed to the Nupe values of creativity, aesthetics of performance and inclusive social relationship. Because of the dance's close affinity to women, men can enter the rehearsal or performance arena and partake in the dance, only at the invitation of the leader.

This reality demonstrates women's active control of this dance. It is not difficult to recognize the lead singer /dancer of a dance company that specialises in *gbagurasa*. Her manner of dressing, the ease and accuracy, dignity and competence with which she presents her songs and basic dance movement in performance reveal her as one in charge of the group.

It has been argued that works of art reveal the environments in which they exist. In dance, movement shapes and rhythms exhibit the personalities of the performers, but also the social and physical environment where the dance evolved. Fraleigh has noted that:

Because dance is in essence an embodied art, the body is the lived experiential the dance aesthetics. Both dancer and audience experience dance through lived attributes – its kinaesthetic and existential character. Dance is the art that intentionally isolates and reveals the aesthetic qualities of the human body- of- action and its visual life force.⁶

Thus, the mask dances of the Nupe are intensely energetic and acrobatic, with forceful, gusty whirling, leaping and kicking movements. *Gbagurasa* and *angale* dances on the other hand, are gentle graceful, and rounded, fluid, sensuous and soothing. Aside from depicting the inner strivings of the dancers, these contrasting rhythms and assorted themes incorporated in the dances can also be associated with the dancers' physical environment.

These gestures and acts are not merely qualities of emotions attributed to binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity-sometimes with relation to sex grading in African dancing. The contrasting qualities of movement also embody an ecological/environmental phenomenon; one which puts the people on guard for in eventualities.

The sustained gentle, vibratory, shimmying and swaying, in *gbagurasa* and *angale* dances can be likened to rippling, flowing waters and its life giving energies, while the whirling, disjointed acrobatic displays of the male dances, for instance the *ndakogboya* mask dance, connote tumultuous raging storms and floods, which occasionally threaten community existence.

Apart from this interpretation, dance practices and movement dialogues show evidence that the indigenous African organizational structure regarded "both men and women as the co- makers of the policies of the world."⁷ Beyond this, the role of women as preservers of nature life may be the image that is reflected in the soothing *gbagurasa* dance movements.

The gentle sustained movement patterns of the dance point at the angle of discipline and responsibility of the women, who usually are saddled with the onerous task of 'quelling the unsettling effects of raging storms' – in both private and public spheres.

Instrumental music and songs

The theatrical motivation for *gbagurasa* dance resides within its dramatic singing and movement gestures. In performance, the poetic/chants and singing mode, juxtaposed with unique melodic properties are easily identified. Prominently employed is the call and response form in inflectional patterns of the Nupe language. The poetic chants and songs which are coded in meaningful parables and proverbs are generally grounded in the moral values and traditions of historical importance to the community.

The musical instruments, mostly assorted drums, are beaten by men. They are employed as instrumental accompaniment to evoke a harmonious, inclusive traditional African ceremonial/ festivals scene. Sometimes, calabashes, (*mangara*) are introduced for symbolic reasons in *gbagurasa* performance. During marriage ceremonies, one of the calabashes is broken, to signify the breaking away of the bride from her family.

Gbagurasa music is accompanied by dramatic arm gestures and gentle, swaying movement concentrated on the pelvis and legs. The emphasized firm downward, rounded (circulatory) and vibratory thrusts of the stomach and waist, ostensibly draws attention to the fertility powers of the female body, its reproductive tasks and beyond this, its grounding and balance, through the hassles of daily life.

Costumes and Makeup

Costumes worn by the women dances differ from those worn by their male musicians, dancers or male dancers in the mask dances. In the mask dances, the body of the dancer (who puts on the mask) is submerged and concealed in a dynamic atmosphere of multi-coloured, textured costume, complimented with grotesque face masks.

These symbolic artistic paraphernalia as art historians and critics, Fagg, and Monti have noted, are representative of the intelligible aspects of African existence. The shrouded performers reflect the complexities of existence, particularly, issues bothering on the phenomenon of death and endless life in the African worldview. In the dance, these existential issues are grappled with, in the search for meaning and transformation.⁸

The women are expensively and tastefully costumed in their dances. Their Costume consists of several beautiful coloured wrappers tied over blouses sown in same manner as Yoruba women's blouses (buba). The buba is a sewn elaborate, cube shaped blouse, with flamboyant rectangular sleeves. Big sewn wrappers (edako), sometimes, hand woven from the loom, are tied around the breasts and allowed to dapple to the ankles.

Some yards of cloth are tied loosely around the heads in a turban fashion, and serve as headgears (lufuta). A lot of jewellerys are worn by the dancers. Coral beads of assorted kinds are worn as neck beads. The palm and feet of the dancers are coloured brilliant black, or a mixture of black and red, with native herb colouring (lali). By their dressing, the women performers' show of their wealthy estate as people held in high esteem by the community.

Movement patterns

In performance, *gbagurasa* dance has a stylized opening, middle and ending. This format is also followed in the *angale* dance. The *angale* is another indigenous dance performed by Nupe women of Bida. The dance is said to have been borrowed from Igbo land, in south eastern Nigeria. The Nupe people of Pateggi first learnt the dance and taught it to the Nupe of Bida.

Like *gbagurasa* dance, *angale* dance is quite popular and dynamic. Though there is no age limit for its performers, the dance is favoured by the younger girls or the maidens. Also, like *gbagurasa* dance, the *angale* dance in contemporary times is owned by individual women. In *angale*, young men can dance with the maidens at will, while only women can perform the *gbagurasa* dance.

In addition, *Angale* dance permits greater variety of intricate dancing/ movements than *gbagurasa* dance. The posture of the dancers in *angale* remains almost the same as in *gbagurasa*. The body is held upright in dignified, alluring posture. The arms of the dancers are extended gracefully as though beckoning, while the buttocks are subtly, but vigorously shaken as the dancers take short rhythmic and jerky steps, perhaps, pointing again to the physical endowment or environmental domains of the dance: Nupe communities are landlocked.

In *angale* dance, the movement of the feet is made with the heels rather than the toes. While the young girls who perform the dance tie wrappers around their hips to accentuate the movement of the buttocks, the older women in *gbagurasa* dance do not do this as they already have the (matron) figure.

Unlike *gbagurasa*, *angale* dance does not incorporate songs or vocal accompaniment, rather, the *kalangu* or cylindrical talking drum is employed. Aside this feature, is the use of the local *algaita* (double reed oboe), which has been recently added to the instrumental ensemble of the *angale*, to heighten the mood of the dance.

On the whole, a similar drum ensemble is used in both *gbagurasa* and *angale* dances. The manipulation of the tension thong (by tightening or loosening), produce the instrumental music for *gbagurasa* and *angale* dances. The drum ensemble includes the *kule* (metal gong), *eyetetenngi* (small skin drum), *Kwarayagi* (wooden drum that produces the background rhythm), *kalangu* (cylindrical talking drum), *enyanko* (hourglass drum which amplifies sound) and *angale* (a type of skin drum).

Floor pattern formations in *angale* dance remain the same as in *gbagurasa* dance. These include circular, semi-circular and linear patterns. The costumes by the women dancers also differ from those worn by the maidens. The young girls wear simple sown colourful blouses and wrappers and tie light brightly coloured scarfs on the heads. Their use of jewellery and make-up is minimal, accentuating their youthful elegance.

The aesthetic harmony that exists in both dances in the performance arena arises not only from the ensemble of dancing women, sometimes with their male counterpart, but also the subtle body contacts between the dancers and their instrumentalists. The performers endeavour to adhere strictly to specific instructions and code of conduct agreed upon by members of the group, at rehearsals and while performing the dances.

Any first time observer to the dance performances will notice elements of similarities between *angale* and *gbagurasa*, which is no surprise, since *angale* dance derives much of its inspiration from *gbagurasa* dance.

Conceptualizing the Dances

The aim of the theatre in its broad spectrum is to reflect reality and communicate authentic truths about human nature and conditions. As a profession and as an art, it possesses an identity within particular meanings and interactions. In a broad term, it is concerned with and expresses creativity through the medium of the arts- in dance, music, songs, poetry, drama, fabrics' and all manners of complex artistic endeavors.

This explains why, for instance, in the African Igbo and Yoruba experience, the term for the performing arts, including dance, is *egwu* or *ere* respectively, both, which are literally translated as play. Therefore, for the Igbo in particular, *igba egwu*, which refers to the act of dancing, does not merely mean to "throw the legs", neither does it imply incorporating play elements as part of its activity.

Rather *egwu* or dance is considered as the highest embodiment of play in its broadest characteristics. To partake in any dance experience as a performer or creative artist, is for the Nigerian male or female, a highly creative and educative experience, which goal and functionality invariably helps in actualizing meanings in everyday life.

In this viewpoint, art education as an aspect of theatre practice and studies remains a viable means by which cultural experiences derived meanings which could serve to develop perceptions: for instance, perception of the process of dance creativity, which includes skills, techniques, personality and attitude to work.

The creative forces which inhabit and motivate individuals concerned in the process of art making, provide opportunities to learn about them in their interaction with their art medium as well as their social and psychological environments. This creative process of interaction between individuals, the dance medium and Nigeria communities, have been keen subjects in Nigerian dance literature.

For example, Gladys Akunna acknowledged that, “(Nigerian) traditional theatre... (Include) dances (which) incorporate well established master pieces of high cultural art bordering on the artistic, cultural and social consciousness of the people.”⁹

Fundamentally too, this theatre’s artistic productions carry a stamp of its time and the artists who produced it, particularly the leader of the theatre company. The production and performance of *gbagurasa* and *angale* dances described above showcase the component features of creativity adopted in imaginative, originally woven bodily and cultural indigenous movement expressions.

Though the forms, techniques and themes of the dances have continually evolved by communal and individual practices, these features have been transformed through generations of women artists who operate within a framework of conscious artistic creativity. More than four decades ago, Sarah Bowers had noted the lack of literary interest in the Nupe women singers, whose creativity she noted as fascinating and unique:

Among the professional singers of Bida, there is a particular group of female singers. Each singer has gained her professional status because of ability and desire, not by family tradition or birth right. They come from various compounds and quarters to form a professional ensemble.¹⁰

The development of artistic ability and imagination, have been identified as basic to artistic creation. Thus, western psychologists are in sync with a major African Philosophy – the belief that all human beings possesses some measure of creative ability, with creative geniuses possessing a greater degree of ability traits.¹¹ Thus, in cultural spheres, arts production, distribution and appreciation are crucial to communal wellbeing.

This explains why in African philosophy, it is a common belief that human beings, whether as man or woman, are creative beings capable of creative expressions and individuation. Composed in their psychic make-up in the unique characteristics of Jung’s derived *anima* and *animus* essences¹², they possess the liberty of creative expressions, which may be effectively projected in meaningful systems of artistic expressions.

A major reason for this development is the factor of the personality soul and a concrete destiny which exist in traditional African thought. In this belief system a women’s position of relevance as well as a man’s are viewed as products of behavioral processes grounded in concepts of social relations. Within this social structure, the woman, in particular, appear not to be influenced by dysfunctional generalized assumptions or cultural situations.

These thoughts and belief patterns, perhaps, explain the reason why at the birth of a child in African societies joyful sentiments are elicited, embodying creative endeavours and expectations for the child as male or female. Again, as an example, in the African Igbo society of Eastern Nigeria, it is common to ask of the mother of the child what she begot.

The answer usually is *nwanyi*, which is translated in Igbo language as the ‘resilient child’ or a ‘child of impossibility’, or *nwaoke*, also translated as “prominent child” if the

child is a boy. These terms by semantic connotations, refer to socio-psychological experiences of being a resilient child or being a prominent or purposeful child; in which case, the gender identity and gender roles of the child incorporates an ambiguous fluidity.

For in this cultural context, it appears that the emphasis of the child is not on being a female sex or male sex, which implies the biological differentiation or distinction and characteristic by genital. Even if this interpretative process in dealing with the gender phenomenon may not be that pronounced in other Nigerian cultures- by the way, the Yoruba Culture defines the gender concept in a similar way as the Igbo, a similar interaction can be preconceived.

As other forms of internalized language and art symbols, these complex knowledge structures entail a lifelong process of learning as Meki Nzewi has stressed. In his opinion, the African indigenous knowledge system (IKS) is designed, as a fluid transaction of informal education into public and private living, in a manner that obviates stress and instils pleasure in learning.¹³

On musical learning, he acknowledged that musical arts' learning in indigenous Africa communities has a subtle feature of formality. We hasten to add that same is the case with learning the dance art, for instance, the production and the dance performances of Nigeria women, including learning to perform the *angale* and *gbagurasa* dances.

The women artists to whom the dances are attributed participate jointly in an atmosphere of sustained harmony to organize and synthesize their dance materials. They incorporate dance and movement skills, intricate steps and postures, gestures, movement patterns and dynamics.

Also organized, are the musical sounds and properties, (both melodic and rhythmic), costumes, make up and props, participation formats and presentational methods of the dances. In public displays of the musical dances, the women's complex creative personalities and learning exposure are embodied in the entertaining, beautifully sculptured movement expressions, which communicate intense beauty and forms of cultural values.

Indeed in Africa societies, the dance art encapsulates the female body, her 'earth', provides her with grounding and lets her be who she truly is. It emphasizes both impression and appreciation of the whole object of African womanhood as synonymous with the cultural space of performance, where women in line with their personal realities showcase defined roles in diverse domains of artistic creativity.

Unlike the confusing and disappointing accounts of women in most post-colonial Nigerian literary theatre and dramatic literature with shallow treatment of personal histories of women and poor handling of their bodily experiences, the dance narratives are based on substantiated realities, conceived with consistent motivational characteristics of Nigeria women vide their experiential 'body' theatre- the dance.

These remarkable features 'distil' the arduous process of creativity. Their final products of the women performers' creativity, their *gbagurasa* and *angale* dances in organization, compositional and presentational contents, become as Marcia Siegel had intimated:

... A new playing out of the (creative) process ... edited. The (erstwhile) exploration ...and spontaneous interchange (improvisations) giving way to learned (formality)... and set of practiced responses ... the open ended quest ... (becoming)... a structure.¹⁴

Conclusion

In African societies, we talk or think of dance strictly as that cultural aspect of the African life, which is purely African, without a tinge of copying or adulteration. As that embodied activity and cultural object which pervades the African life from the cradle to the grave, it provides as Dyke and Achetti noted, a unique platform for “recognition and discourse of national ... gender and personal identities” in its incredible, yet remarkable diversity and kind.”¹⁵ Remarkably, as they emphasized:

... Dance sparks widespread participation, critical appreciation and endless interpretations... The embodied practices of dancers ... afford not mainly pleasure and entertainment, but powerful means for celebrating existing social arrangements and cultural ideals or for imaging and advocating new ones.¹⁶

By its physical and mental regimes as a unique medium of social interaction, dance has embodied Nigerian women’s thought and activities as well as their creativity and socialization processes; depicting their attitudes and responses to society’s basic organizations and structures, cultural values and evolving behavioural patterns and art models, some which have projected negative and suppressed images of womanhood in profusion .¹⁷



Figure 2: The suppressed image



Figure 3: The “beast of burden” image

Against this background, and despite the negative influences in the culture of post-colonial Africa, the female body, by virtue of entering the performance space and time relationships, does not enter or function as what Diamond referred to as “a representation or a sign in system governed by a particular apparatus, owned and operated by men”¹⁸ Neither does the female body act as men’s opposite or worse still, their appendage.¹⁹

Usually, in in most cases in the African Nigerian context, the dance is performed with a collaborative posture, in which individual participants, in groups and affiliations creatively organize their thoughts or beliefs about what constitutes meaningful theatrical dance experiences.

Speculations about environmental moods, symbols and images that inform communal meanings and values are given to theatre and dance events from which new social and ideological constructs are derived – in a bid to find solutions and gain control of social inventions emanating from social interactions and interactive processes, whether aural, visual, nonverbal, psychological, socio-cultural and political.

Although it is a fact that the gbagurasa dance was created by a man and that men are usually the drummers or instrumentalists and in interaction with the women choreographers and dancers, the dance belongs exclusively to the women, and depending on certain apparatuses , they choose who they want to feature in the dance productions.

These embodied performances as enactment of memory, history and culture, reveal the “organisation of indigenous society- a model of structure, an organizational structure that could be useful to the world... that is reasonable in the modern time, and which thrived on the true ideals of feminism, and can be borrowed or adapted in both contemporary local and international contexts.”²⁰

In this structure, the Nigerian female artist is an individual, self – defined, creatively distinct, effective and autonomous in her creative activities. Problem is, this identity is hardly the focus of Nigerian Literature which seems to revel in damaging representations of women and negative evaluation of women roles in the performance space.

This disregard for women's artistic endeavours and the general misleading conceptions about women creativity in the literature obscure women dances. However, the role of authentic Nigerian literature in fashioning a democratic space and reinvention of female identity and by extension guaranteeing the Nation's development can never be over emphasized.

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Notes

1. nadel, a black byzantium, 1942. Also, see obayemi, "the evolution", pp s24-37.
2. saidu, ibrahim, the nupe and their neighbours, 1982. Also see Halima, mohammed, "women in nigeria history, pp.45-47.
3. gladys , akunna, pp.72-76
4. please, see figure one
5. chike, enyeazu, the mechanics, p, 7.
6. susan, fraleigh, dance and the lived body, p.xiii
7. ade, dasylva, dapo adelugba on theatre practice in nigeria, p.233.
8. w. fagg, nigerian images, 1970
9. gladys akunna,, "traditional nigerian dance forms and womanhood: some authentic expressions", pp.92-109.
10. sarah, bowers, "nupe singers", pp-54-56
11. guilford , "creativity, " pp.444-454.
12. easter, harding, the way of all women, 1970
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Performing/writing heterotopia: dislocated places and fragmented temporality

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Abstract

Contemporary Bharatanatyam practitioners in Britain are often seen to bring together disparate city places/objects either physically or through digital technology to create a new performative identity. The relationships among these heterogeneous places in such dances fit much more closely with Michel Foucault's 'heterotopia'. To demonstrate this, I analyse two choreographies: "NowHere" (2011) by Divya Kasturi and "Song of the City" (2011) by Ash Mukherjee. Drawing on the dances, personal observations and interviews, I argue that these contemporary choreographers are appropriating heterotopia as an aesthetic device to portray kaleidoscopic patterns of cultural, historical, geographical and psychological climates of urban cities.

Keywords: heterotopia, 'other spaces', Michel Foucault, heterochrony, South Asian dance in Britain, Bharatanatyam, choreography, spatio-temporal aesthetics

Introduction, context and rationale

Contemporary Bharatanatyam practitioners in Britain often bring together disparate city places or various objects either physically or through digital technology on stage to create a new performative identity. According to philosopher Michel Foucault, the theatre itself acts as a heterotopia due to its ability to juxtapose several sites that are incompatible with each other. The purpose of this paper is thus to examine how contemporary choreographers are appropriating Foucault's conceptualisations of heterotopia, may be unwittingly, as an aesthetic device to portray cultural, historical, geographical and psychological climates of urban cities. To examine this, I engage with the following research questions: how do the counter-arrangements of places shape identities or artistic subjectivities? How does heterotopia as a choreographic tool contribute in the aesthetics of contemporary performance? To address these queries, I particularly select the following dances: *NowHere* (2011) by Divya Kasturi and *Song of the City* (2011) by Ash Mukherjee. Broadly, I intend to investigate how these dances fit within the theoretical regime of heterotopia. Besides, I am interested to find out how contemporary practitioners justify their actions of bringing in different places on stage.

Scholars have argued that post-modernity is heterotopic in nature because it brings contrasting elements together (Relph, 1991: 98), and therefore they often utilise Foucauldian conceptualisations of heterotopia to study post-modern cities.¹ Returning to Bharatanatyam contemporary practice in Britain, feminist scholar Valerie A. Briginshaw (2001) reads choreographer Shobana Jeyasingh's *Duets with Automobiles* (1991) as a multi-layered text of a post-modern city. Dance scholar Avanthi Meduri (2011) explores

the re-configuration of the hybrid and complex identities of British Asians through urban street in Jeyasingh's choreography *Faultline* (2007). In her recent book, another dance academic Stacey Prickett (2013) examines the politics of 'place' in South Asian outdoor performances in Britain. Drawing on sociologist Jonathan Raban's conceptualisations (1974), I have demonstrated that there is an encounter between the material 'hard city' places and imagined 'soft city' in contemporary choreographies (e.g., *Quick!*) (Banerjee, 2012). All these suffice that there is a rising interest amongst scholars to situate Bharatanatyam dance not only as an urban practice but also to lay importance on the element of 'place'².

My intention for this study had originated from my fieldwork conducted in various performance venues in Britain (2010-2014). For instance, I observed how multiple public places unfolded a practice of mobile spaces and portrayed 'slices' of time in choreographer-dancer Nina Rajarani's *Quick!* (2006). Interestingly, there runs a parallel between the idioms of football and Bharatanatyam dance, challenging and alternating order of two distinct practices in Rajarani's *Bend it...* (2007). Such experimentations have provoked me to ask: how does theatre represent 'other spaces' and how are these spaces 'different' than previous ones? On another occasion, I noted that in *NowHere* (2011) dancer-choreographer Divya Kasturi exhibited 'a continuous temporal rupture' through props and the digital arts (Reflective Journal, February 11, 2012). What emerges is particularly important for the analysis of a theatre space in the same way as Foucault has described 'heterochrony' that is 'linked to slices in time' (1986 [1967]: 26). At this point, I want to inform that heterotopia is not directly alluded by the choreographers, rather, I am associating their methods and work with heterotopia and while doing so, I am presenting heterotopia both as a theoretical/choreographic tool to analyse dances.

In the remainder of this paper, I explore heterotopia as a theoretical framework that assists in developing arguments, especially, how Foucault's various principles of heterotopias provide new understandings of performative space in contemporary practice. Following that, I briefly discuss the dances and explain how these two performance spaces are unique in terms of their material and conceptual properties. I argue that the encounter of places characterise a new order in addition to mediations between here and there and between the past and the present that are articulated through histories, routes and temporalities.

Unpacking heterotopia

Etymologically, 'heterotopia' is derived from the Greek *heteros* which means 'another' and *topos* that means 'place'. Foucault introduced and appropriated this term from medical science (Sohn, 2008) to conduct spatial studies in the 1960s. Unlike utopia, heterotopias are places 'in which all the real arrangements, that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged and overturned [...]' (Foucault, 1986 [1967]: 24). He further argued that: 'The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible [...]' (1986 [1967]: 25).

To elaborate on this concept of heterotopias, Foucault (1986 [1967]) enumerated six principles of heterotopology, and meticulously pointed out their nature and diverse functions. The first principle is ‘heterotopia of crisis’ in which ‘there are privileged, or sacred, or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis’ (Foucault, 1986 [1967]: 18). In his second principle, Foucault showed the example of privileged middle-class boys being sent ‘elsewhere’ such as boarding school to become virtuous individuals. Foucault cited prisons and psychiatric hospitals to be ‘heterotopias of deviation’ where people are displaced due to their abnormal behaviour. The third principle centres on the partition of one space into several conflicting spaces or emplacements, producing incompatible juxtapositions, such as a theatre or a cinema. Such depiction is more pertinent here as I demonstrate later how various contested places are exhibited with artistic subjectivities.

The fourth principle pivots on how heterotopias are temporally linked as in ‘heterochronies’ (e.g. in a museum). Foucault posited that heterotopias are inaccessible as public spaces in his fifth principle, but in such case ‘the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications’ (Foucault, 1986 [1967]: 27). I discuss later how this fifth principle can be applied to the image of a temple in Kasturi’s *NowHere*. Foucault’s sixth principle is based around illusion or illusory space, such as gardens, cinemas, fairs, casinos and museums, where space and time could be converged at discretion and codes of behaviour undergo mutation very rapidly.

Because of its slippery associations, various scholars have criticised the model as problematic and incomplete.³ Foucault himself thought that heterotopias are ‘disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, ... make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance’ (Foucault, 1970 [1966]: xvii-xviii), yet this model has gained currency across various disciplines to explore the hybrid and complex transformation of places in urban cities.⁴ Architecture scholar Michiel Dehaene and art historian Lieven De Cauter re-visit Foucauldian notion of heterotopia as an urban concept in their edited book *Heterotopia and the city: public places in a postcivil society* (2008). A few theorists have also appropriated heterotopia to read arts and performances.⁵

Borrowing largely from Foucault’s assumptions, the danceworks and interview narratives, I have used heterotopia both as a methodology for writing and a model to bridge praxis and theory. I favour the use of this concept because such interrogation shows us how urban practice can be read ‘as texts and contexts, how to see other spaces hidden in the more obvious and diverting multiplicity of real world sights and situations’ (Soja, 1996:162).

The choreographies

NowHere (2010)

Choreographed by Divya Kasturi, *NowHere* was performed by Kasturi herself and another female dancer-choreographer, Urja Thakore. In this piece, Kasturi experimented with three forms, namely Bharatanatyam, Kathak and release technique to explicate her

in-betweenness and post-modern subjectivity. The music composition was by John Marc-Gowens and its light and set were designed by Anthony Hateley and Helen Murphy respectively.

This piece opens up with Kasturi narrating her travel story: her urban presence in London is constantly alternated with the city of her origin, Chennai, India. Within its narrative structure, three syntaxes, such as Sanskrit, Tamil and English languages collide to expand the boundaries of nations and create a cross-cultural linguistic identity. The set divides the stage space horizontally from the downstage right to left (Figure 1) and Kasturi's debut Bharatanatyam and Kathak costumes hang longitudinally on both the sides representing her past and 'home'. She tells the audience stories, including her childhood dance class, travels and debut performances. All these accumulated temporalities provoke, from the audience's perspective, fragmentation from the present time, since the performance itself operates within a temporal framework.



Figure 1: Costumes as heterochronies in *NowHere* (2011) by Divya Kasturi. Photo: Simon Richardson.

The second part opens with a digital projection of Parthasarathy temple from Chennai, whilst Kasturi's foot work is heard from dark. The cityscape of London (red double-decker bus and buildings) is supplanted by Kasturi's native city, appearing with its busy street (having auto rickshaws, shops, parked cars and motorcycles). So, it is the perfect example of what Foucault described as heterotopia, where the audience observes the simultaneity of temporality and spatiality that defines social relationships of Kasturi between now (in London) and then (in Chennai). Reviewer Michael Seaver (2012) stated: 'Playing on the word "nowhere" as "now here", she asks how our roots create our identity, and how much the past can really define the present'. The virtual city street fades away and is replaced by a projected image of Kasturi appearing in a black dress. This piece culminates with the virtual image of the temple, creating illusion for the audience. Kasturi's recorded voice chanting Sanskrit verses gradually diminishes; the blue light fades away slowly, to perfect extinction.

Video clipping: *NowHere*

Song of the City (2011)

Ash Mukherjee choreographed *Song of the City*⁶ as a commissioned work for Akademi⁷ to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of poet Rabindranath Tagore in the Vault at Southwark Playhouse in London. The performers were Kim Amundsen, Kamala Devam and Gian Luca Loddò, and its music was arranged by Arun Ghosh. Inspired by the songs and poems from Tagore's anthology in Bengali language and a poem that is translated from Bengali into English by William Radice,⁸ *Song* explores the fluid borders among artist, man and the city.

Prior to its movement analysis, I discuss briefly how various heterotopic elements are utilised in its promotional video⁹ and photographs. The visible images of heterotopia in its video include city skyscrapers, household, factories, riverside, government office and public buildings. An urban environment that is in a state of flux is represented by virtual moving cranes. Also, these 'incompatible' places are juxtaposed for depicting a fragmentation of spatial reality and a pluralist architectural and urban identity. Mukherjee in an interview told me: 'For instance, look at London city right now - a very vintage or classical architecture is there and modern architecture stands there side-by-side. I wanted to bring all these in this piece' (personal interview, February 28, 2013). I read the following promotional photograph (Figure 2) as an instance of 'hetero-architecture'¹⁰ where the old architecture of Tower Bridge is placed against a new building, demonstrating a gap between architectural languages. It is this juxtaposition that qualifies (London city) as a heterotopia. Moreover, the selection of attire and gesture ('*suchi*' hand gesture indicating '*ekabrahman*' philosophy) from Bharatanatyam tradition bring to surface the metamorphic life of its citizens who aspire to become enlightened, elite and modern, yet cannot resist the lure of return to the glory of this ancient philosophy. The two distinct worlds, the modern London and the ancient religious belief co-exist; the borders between them are porous and they deconstruct an order by imposing a new order.

The set consists of the tunnel space that is divided into city streets having walls and narrow lanes on both the sides. Two male dancers are seen in white shirts, long black cloaks and black trousers whereas the female dancer wears a deep neck cut, figure hugging black top that has a black straight skirt above the knee with a long cut in its front. *Song* adopts the techniques of Bharatanatyam and from various western dance repertoires. Mukherjee weaves multiple emotional stages of urban living, especially through the last three songs: *je torey pagol boley tarey bolish ne kichu* ('If they ascribe you lunatic, revert not to them') and *jodi tor dak shune keu na ashey tobe ekla cholo re* ('If thy call remains unanswered, move on all alone'), he suggests solutions about how to deal with the dark spaces of city life. The culminating song *baje karuno surey, haay durey* ('It plays tune on pathos, alas far away!') is filled with desolation, melancholy and nostalgia. His (like any city dweller's) life struggles tend to generate a cocoon-like existence - an isolated state of being cushioned in a dream-world. Whilst mediating between the post-modern present and nostalgia of the romantic past, *Song* is a collision of a real and an imagined place that becomes the heterotopia of temporality and of life itself.

Video clipping: *Song of the City*



Figure 2: Tower Bridge of London. *Song of the City* (2011) by Ash Mukherjee. Dancers: Kim Amundsen, Kamala Devam and Gian Luca Loddo. Photo: Peter Schiazza.

Staging heterotopias

In order to understand how these two dances are in their essence heterotopic, I focus on Foucault's claim that heterotopias represent, contest and reverse the cultural order to which they are linked. Researcher Katja Vaghi in a review commented that *NowHere* 'brilliantly re-explores the topos' (2012: 14). For instance, Kasturi brings a divide of east and west through the screen - with east being in her past 'home' and traditional dance and west in her present immigrated home as recognised through the mix of western music and performance sensibility. In Figure 3 the living room of Kasturi's *guru* created through the artificial line of separation is an instance of heterotopia that is standing 'outside'. Kasturi mused on how a sofa was brought on stage:

Yes, in Chennai a very few teachers would have studio and dance is still an integral part of our culture. And most interestingly, I converted my living room here [in the UK] into a dance class and started teaching dance, although this was not intentional. [...] (Skype interview, April 7, 2014).

In the above narrative, she upholds the cultural value of the role of a living room in dance training back 'home' and why she replicated this aspect in her 'new home' in the UK.



Figure 3: A migrating living room. *NowHere* (2011) by Divya Kasturi. Photo: Simon Richardson.

In an interview, Kasturi informed me how her costumes were displayed like a museum art object: ‘These costumes had a museum-like effect with the plastic sheets in front of them and the costumes were encased behind them. They suggest a sense of ‘past’ lurking in the background [...]’ (email communication, April 7, 2014). Foucault (1986 [1967]) acknowledged museum as an instance of heterotopia as it brings together disparate objects from different times in a single space and attempts to enclose the totality of time. This leads the audience towards the spatio-temporal aesthetics.

The digital temple is an appealing example of Foucault’s fifth principle as it disintegrates sacred from urban space to perform rituals (Owens, 2002). It establishes a clear distinction between inside and outside spaces and to enter into the place one needs some special items to carry with, such as flowers, fruits and incense sticks to pay tribute. Kasturi in an interview said: ‘We are Vaishnavite ¹¹ [...] and this temple is linked to the identity of my family and ancestors’ (email communication, April 7, 2014). I contend that this temple image is an instance of alternate ordering as it is juxtaposed with theatre, which not only unsettles the geographical border but also blurs the boundary between secular and religious spaces.

In contrast to the specificities of London streets projected in *NowHere*, the performance venue of *Song* gives its audience a sense that they are outside of city space. An underground place, which was perhaps a protection place for soldiers during the war, can expose oneself to unhidden histories. Prior to its performance, the audience was forewarned of the damp and cold environment of the theatre in the advertising flyer. Devam, who was a cast member, informed me that the site in *Song* has remained to be an ‘uncomfortable place for rehearsals’ (Skype interview, March 3, 2013). Considering them together, these aesthetics comply with Foucault’s fifth principle that heterotopias discourage easy admission. Foucault insisted that ‘the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place’ (1986 [1967]: 10). Privy to these codes of exclusion, the tunnel helped the audience to create a fictive atmosphere in their minds along with the sense of the thrill that the thought of a tunnel conjectures.

One of the prominent features of *Song* is the tension that exists between two worlds - one is materialistic and the other is imaginative. Mukherjee stated that this duality is reinforced by the overuse of costume colours (Figure 4). This dualism is further underlined by Mukherjee's use of the two classical dance styles: 'Classical ballet is very romantic to me as a form since my childhood and then I look at Bharatanatyam – especially the mathematical and geometrical aspects of it. I combined them together to portray this dualism' (Skype interview, February 28, 2013). Drawing on all the above details, I argue, this is heterotopic not because *Song* juxtaposes different times and places, but also because it presents a more profound kind of difference between concepts.



Figure 4: Dualism through colours. *Song of the City* (2011) by Ash Mukherjee. Photo: Peter Schiazza.

Conclusions

In this paper I have appropriated the theoretical underpinnings of heterotopia in contemporary Bharatanatyam practice. I have discussed how heterotopia is utilised as a choreographic device to reveal the new lexicon, grammar and the aesthetics of urbanism. Through this, I have also demonstrated how heterotopias/'other spaces' have enabled audiences to have a better understanding of the choreographers' lives as well as the performances. Set in contrast to traditional items from Bharatanatyam repertoire that are either weaving a storyline through gestures and facial expressions or representing a cyclical progression of rhythmic patterns, I have argued that these choreographies have unsettled known patterns by projecting the dislocated images and multiple temporalities. I have further argued that in these two choreographies the transit landscape (from Kolkata/Chennai, India and London) is heterotopic, alternating and challenging places, languages, histories and cultures. A future topic of interest could be to see if the digital space itself constitutes a counter-site in the Foucauldian sense.

Acknowledgements

This paper is a part of a chapter from my PhD thesis, and I am thankful to my supervisors (Andrée Grau, Ann David and Avanthi Meduri) for their guidance. A small fragment of this chapter was earlier presented at the SDHS Conference in 2012. I would like to express my thankfulness to Jessica Fiala for her comments on the earlier version of my full draft chapter. I am equally thankful to Divya Kasturi and Ash Mukherjee for sharing their thoughts and photographs. My sincere appreciation goes to Akademi for supporting me with films, photographs and other archival sources.

Notes

1. See for example, Los Angeles by Soja, 1995 and Las Vegas by Chaplin, 2000.
2. 'Space' and 'place' are two fundamental geographic concepts that are contested. Debates centring on the concept of place have intrigued many geographers in the recent past (see Massey, 1994). Researchers from diversified disciplines have also used concepts of 'space' to understand the complexity of the social world, see Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]; Massey, 1994; Soja, 1996 to name a few. However in this paper, I abstain from entering into that debate.
3. Foucault's heterotopia has been also criticised as 'unfinished, the examples varied and speculative and the outcome inconclusive' (Hetherington, 2011: 466) and 'briefly sketched, provisional and at times confusing...open-ended and ambiguous' (Johnson, 2006: 81).
4. For example, see Hetherington, 1997; Johnson, 2006; Soja, 1996 (Geography); Dehaene and De Cauter, 2008 (Urban Studies); and Chaplin, 2000 (Architecture).
5. See Anderson, 1994; Birringer, 1998; Franko, 2011; Manning, 2008; Alo & Piliang, 2010; Tompkins, 2014
6. See Banerjee (2012) for a detailed dance analysis of this piece.
7. Akademi, a London-based cultural institution, is known for its innovative dance productions and organising stirring debates surrounding issues related to 'South Asian dance' in Britain.
8. Available at:
<http://www.williamradice.com/Dancing%20Words/Song%20of%20the%20City.htm>,
(accessed: 21/01/2012)
9. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXpqua4aNZA>, (accessed: 21/01/2012)
10. Charles Jencks (1993) coined the terms 'hetero-architecture' and 'heteropolis' for depicting heterogeneity of contemporary architecture of Los Angeles.
11. Vaishnavite as a religious group worships Vishnu, a Hindu deity, in his any incarnations.

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Scoring Choreographic Process: Intentions, Bodies and Digital Forms

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Abstract

*This paper considers recently developed digital dance scores, suggesting they offer a new form of dance writing. It pays particular attention to *Using the Sky* (2013), an online score of Deborah Hay's work *No Time to Fly* (2010), developed as part of William Forsythe's *Motion Bank* project, run by Scott deLahunta. I suggest that *Using the Sky* is typical of an emerging field of choreographic 'poetics' (Cvejic 2012, deLahunta 2013), which offer a form of co-authored self-reflection, drawing on multiple modes of writing to analyse and share choreographic processes.*

UTS and similar projects shape the legacy of dance works, constraining their identity and meaning in accordance with authorial intention and centralising the choreographer's voice. I suggest that this form of process-led documentation impacts on empirical and post-structuralist notions of authorship, implicating a shift away from established paradigms and reconfiguring spectator – author relations.

Furthermore Hay's somatic practice poses a familiar challenge regarding the presence of the body when writing (about) dance. This investigation suggests that the methods adopted by Hay and her team allow for features of the body to extend into the digital realm. The flesh-less presence of the body demonstrates the primacy of Hay's practice and further impacts on readings of her work.

¹This paper provides an introduction to some of the key questions posed by the score; demonstrating how it raising and re-configuring issues of authorship, affect, representation and legacy in dance practice and research.

Introduction

This paper considers an emerging form of digital scoring for dance, paying particular attention to *Using The Sky* (2013) an online score of American choreographer Deborah Hay's work *No Time to Fly* (2010). The score was developed last year as part of *Motion Bank*, a project initiated by William Forsythe and run by Scott deLahunta. Broadly speaking, my PhD research is concerned with the way in which dance work ontology is reconfigured through digital technology. It uses this score, and related objects as case studies to examine the way in which they simultaneously reveal and reconfigure dance ontology. This paper draws on ideas arising in literary theory from Gerrard Geanette (2005) and Roland Barthes (1977), alongside dance scholars Sarah Rubidge (2009) and Laurence Louppe (2010), to suggest that the site offers a 'poetic' approach to scoring, and ask how this impacts the reading of dances.

Scoring choreographic poetics

Motion Bank is the latest of Forsythe's projects to explore the ways in which 'choreographic thinking' (Forsythe 2008) can be shared through technology. His interest in this area dates back to the production of the CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies* in 1999. More recently he teamed up with Maria Palazzi and Norah Zuniga Shaw, OSU to create the website *Synchronous Objects* (2009), this online score maps the choreographic structures of Forsythe's stage work, *One Flat Thing, reproduced*. These projects share a common interest in visualising the underlying and invisible structures of choreography and movement.

Motion Bank furthers this interest, focussing this time also on the process of dance making. The first stage of the project ran between 2010 – 2013 and resulted in the production of scores by Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion and Bebe Miller and Thomas Hauert, as well as Hay. *Using the Sky* was the first score to be completed. During the launch, Project Leader Scott deLahunta explained that a key concern for the research is the question; "What can digital media offer in the project of rendering process?" (deLahunta 2013). Forsythe and deLahunta are not alone in this interest; deLahunta borrows a term from Etienne Wenger, suggesting that *Motion Bank* belongs to a 'community of practice' (deLahunta 2013), based primarily in Europe and the USA, comprising contemporary dance choreographers such as Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Steve Paxton and Emio Greco, each of whom have recently worked with researchers and technologists to develop digital, or partially digital accounts of their choreographic processes.¹ In the UK this is further demonstrated through an abundance of after-show talks, choreographic forums, blogs, and so on. There are multiple political and economic reasons for this however, my interest here is in exploring what it is that such objects offer.

Referring to her project with deKeersmaeker, Bojana Cvejic suggests that such objects as providing a form of 'poetics', a sentiment echoed by deLahunta (2013). The use of this term is interesting. It is important to mention that the production of artist led publications is not new. As long ago as 1958 Doris Humphreys published her book *The Art of Making Dances*. It is not unusual for choreographers to publish books about their work. So, what makes these objects different? In what way are they 'poetics'? French literary theorist Gerrard Geanette (2005) draws a helpful distinction between 'criticism' and 'poetics'. He explains that criticism is an internal, formal and/or interpretive analysis of single texts or works, and that this approach does not deal with the 'immanence' of the work. A poetics, on the other hand, is not purely concerned with critically examining the work. It also addresses its expressive or 'affective' nature. Laurence Louppe suggest that, "A poetics seeks to define and uncover in a work of art what touches us, animates our sensibility, and resonates within our imagination" (2010, 4). She further suggests that a poetics has two key purposes — to "not only tell us what a work does to us, it teaches us how it is made" (2010, 4).

I want to now turn our attention to the score in order to demonstrate how it fulfils this double function. I will start by considering the second part of Louppe's account, and consider the ways in which the process of activating the work is shared. *No Time to Fly* is one of many solo works that Hay has choreographed on herself. Once the work was complete Hay wrote a score of it work through language and drawing. In order to develop

Using the Sky this text-score was sent to Jeanine Durning, Ros Warby and Juliette Mapp, each of who had worked with Hay extensively in the past. They were instructed to practice the score alone for three months. They were then recorded performing their interpretations seven times, resulting in 21 digital versions of the work. The recordings were annotated using Piecemaker,² a tool developed by Forsythe Company member David Kern. The text-score was divided into 30 sections and the recordings were aligned with the directives, so that users can view them side-by-side.

For example, viewing one of Durning's videos at section 18 of the dance viewers will see Durning standing in silence the centre of the space. She faces stage left, profile to the camera, she flicks both hands in front of her body, her left foot steps forward, flexed at the ankle. Her right leg joins behind. Her posture relaxes, micro contractions occur in her torso. Her eyes are alert; she looks quickly around the space as if searching for an unidentified sound. Minute movements ripple through her body. Her right shoulder twitches, her head bows, she looks up, then quickly away. Her arms explore space as she moves in a slow, small circle around herself. Durning's gaze is alert, yet inward. There is no explicit meaning, character or narrative to decode. Her motivations are not evident. The movement is not virtuosic.

Looking to the directives of the text-score we can see that Durning is responding to the following directive:

I start spinning, not literally but as a part of an onstage counterclockwise spinning vortex that only I perceive. I am a speck, a dot, a flake, endlessly spiraling toward center stage, and absolutely no one can possibly identify me as such. (Hay 2013)

As you can see, Hay's directives do not specify any particular movement. The work can look different each time. The multiple recordings on the site demonstrate how each executant's interpretations differ not only from one another, but also each time it is performed.

Yet, there are similarities between the interpretations. They are unified by a certain style or tone, which is demonstrative of the central role of Hay's practice. In order to instance the work, dancers must not only work closely with the text score, they must do so in accordance with Hay's movement principles, which are expressed in various ways on the site, informing our understanding of the movement. For example, in this instance the knowledge of the spinning vortex, means that it is no longer 'private', the viewer is also able to perceive this previously imperceptible feature, even if we cannot technically see it.

Furthermore, Hay's explicitly articulates her principles in recorded interviews on the site.

My choreographic work is insisting that the dancer who performs this work notice the potential for feedback from their whole body, and unless they're doing that the dance is not happening. (Hay, 2013)

This statement clearly demonstrates how ontological features of the work may be imperceptible in performance alone. So, how does Hay's explicit articulation interact with our perception?

Of course, different dance works require different modes of attention. Some level of subjectivity on the behalf of the audience member is to be assumed, we do not all pay attention to exactly the same features of the performance, even if we are often able to reach consensus about what occurred on stage. However, the result of Hay's positioning at the heart of the score is that attention is directed towards the experience of the dancer and the potential for correct and incorrect readings becomes apparent.

Hay's articulations make it clear that although the movement content is ambiguous, interpretation is not entirely un-constrained. The work is essentially linked to the experiences of the dancers. Therefore if one were to interpret *No Time To Fly* as being in some way representational, a commentary on loneliness perhaps, or a homage to Joan of Arc they would arguably be mis-understanding the work.

The digital score provides 'correct' way of reading the work in accordance with Hay's principles. This function situates the score within a historical trajectory regarding the interpretation of dance, in particular the relation between dance studies and post structuralist discourse. Janet O'Shea points out as dance studies established itself as an academic discipline in the 1980s, scholars drew connections between the reading of dances and post-structuralist thinking (O'Shea 2010, 145). In particular, the authority of the reader to determine the meaning of 'texts' proposed by French philosopher Roland Barthes (1977) and others, informed the development of a spectator-oriented paradigm.

Barthes' somewhat fatalistic view suggests; 'To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, the close the writing' (1977, 147). This view had a significant impact on the roles adopted by choreographers, critics and audience members, as discourses in dance studies have mirrored those in linguistics, critical theory and philosophical aesthetics, prioritising the autonomy of the reader or spectator to determine meaning, over the intentions of the author.

It is important to note that Hay does not articulate the denotative functions of the movement, she does not claim that movement *x means y*, so to an extent she avoids offering explicit 'final signifiers'. The decision to articulate process offers an uncovering of the work as a verb behind the dance work, and leaves some aspect of the reading open. However, contra-Barthes, the work is provided with an author, who directs the attention of the reader through the score.

Inscribing the body

We should now turn to the first part of Louppe's account, and ask; what does the work do to us? As we can see Hay's practice is led by her body, which she refers to as her teacher (2000: xxxiv). The significance of her work comes from close engagement with the body. How then can this be rendered in digital form?

The body is inscribed and described in multiple ways on the site. Diagrams are used to demonstrate the pathways, 'convex hull' or use of space and the time variance of each of the adaptations. As with conventional notation, the diagrams can be decoded, in order to gain insight into the movement of the body. However, unlike conventional notation, the specific actions of each body part are not of concern here. These images are representative of action, but do not serve practical functions. For example, Copying the pathways would not result in an instance of the work, which is intrinsically linked to each dancers' relationship to their body.

This is further demonstrated by the way in which these diagrams are overlaid – creating complex metaphysical maps and indicating a motivation to visualise the repetition and difference at the heart of the work, re-presenting the multiplicity of the body. The body is further foregrounded by an animated adaptation of the work from digital artist Amin Weber.

Black and white lines travel through imagined space. Flashes of colour (dis) appear. They have the visual texture of paint, they form a flock of virtual brushstrokes. Chasing themselves - they gather at times, echoing a body - never fully formed. The lines collapse into dots, filling the screen, they re-group into a headless form. The shapes are never still; collecting, forming, dissolving.

To develop this animation Weber worked closely with the directives of the text-score and his observations of the executants. Although he did not develop a direct representation of the human form, the imagery adopts bodily behaviours. For example, the lines move sequentially. They shift in and out of bodily shapes. Furthermore, sketched shadows create the impression of a floor, meaning the form appears to have weight and a relationship to gravity.

In an interview on the site Weber describes how he realised that to adequately interpret the score he needed to create a form that has the same abilities and ways of behaving as a body, but that he wanted to avoid direct representation, thus he developed a body in abstract form (2013). I suggest that the animation closely relates to Rubidge's discussion of digital choreographic imagery, which she refers to as 'liminal'. She describes 'liminal imagery' as existing on, "a perceptual and conceptual threshold, hovering in an in-between state that is replete with ambiguity and indeterminacy in both perception and conception" (2009, 2). The role of indeterminacy is significant. Unlike notation, diagrams and recordings, this animation does not aim to 'explain' or represent the movement, its function is expressive and somewhat ambiguous, nevertheless it is possible to see features of the work through the images.

The location of the body in this example poses many interesting questions; such as is it possible that such imagery can ignite the same form of physical response as live dancing body? Indeed Rubidge suggests that, "embodied modes of consciousness are essential to the process of understanding liminal choreographic imagery in the digital domain" (2009, 1). Whilst theorists such as Alva Noë (2004) and Maike Bleeker (2010), and Susan Leigh Foster (2014) suggest that perception is always 'embodied', there is a difference between watching the animations and looking at the diagrams.

This is perhaps to do with the notion of 'affect'. Rubidge draws on the work of Brian Massumi, who describes 'affect' as the "prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another" (Massumi in Rubidge 2009, 3). The notion has become popular in cultural studies and critical theory in recent years, and is often used to explain the non-conscious interaction between bodies. Although a full discussion of 'affect' is beyond the scope of this paper, Rubidge suggests that liminal imagery generates affective resonances and that this is related to the way in which such images are developed from the movement of the body. Thinking of the animation as 'affective', demonstrates how features of the body- to -body interaction associated with live dance performance may be extended into digital form. Thus capturing some of what

the work does to us, maintaining and repeating what Genette terms the ‘lasting traits’ of the work (2005).

To very briefly conclude, I want to ask, where does this leave us in terms of reading the work through this object? Unlike books and notation, *Using the Sky* utilises the potentials of digital media to draw together multiple modes of representation. It offers visual and aural accounts of the work, exposing imperceptible features of the work. For example, in the case of the animation, the substitution of the actual with the abstract foregrounds the affective potential of the body. Furthermore, Hay’s explicit articulations of her process and practice constrain the readers’ interpretation of the work, challenging post-structuralist perspectives and re-positioning the reader.

The role of the user is not entirely clear. Readers must draw on multiple forms of literacy to gain access to features of the score, their readings choreographed, or at least signposted by Hay and the Motion Bank team. I suggest that *Using The Sky* is demonstrative of a broader emergent interest in examining both affect and process, and that it is the combination of these two interests that formulate a poetics. This is by no means limited to digital media, the use of the term dates back to Aristotle. However, the perceptual presence of the choreographer and construction of liminal imagery proposes a highly sensorial forms of poetics, repositioning the reader. I am aware that is perhaps sounds faintly humorous to suggest a post-post-structuralist poetics, however, despite the unfortunate alliteration, I believe that digital choreographic objects such as this signify a shift in the reading of dances, and that the reconfiguration of the work/spectator/body and author warrants further academic consideration.

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Notes

1. *Capturing Intention* (Greco et al 2004 – 2007); *Material for the Spine* (Paxton 2008); *A Choreographer’s Score* (de Keersmaeker & Cvejic 2012).
2. A free version of Piecemaker (PM2GO), can be downloaded from the Motion Bank website. <http://motionbank.org/en/event/pm2go-easy-use-video-annotation-tool>

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Mississippi Stories in Motion: Authorship and the Construction of Meaning in a Museum-based Movement Installation

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Abstract

In February of 2014, a contemporary dance company based in Jackson, MS created a movement installation within the Mississippi Museum of Art. This paper examines how words shaped the experience of the participant-researcher as a docent spoke over the performers, as the dancers physically responded to words spoken by spectators, and as the performers recited text found on the museum walls. Through a process of critical reflection, the author considers how the presence of text within the museum performance space functioned to create meaning and to awaken the awareness of the performers and spectators.

In her essay, "Place in Fiction," Mississippi author Eudora Welty writes:

Place absorbs our earliest notice and attention, it bestows on us our original awareness; and our critical powers spring up from the study of it and the growth of experience inside it...It never really stops informing us, for it is forever astir, alive, changing, reflecting, like the mind of man itself. One place comprehended can make us understand other places better (1998, 792).

As a native of Michigan who has been working as a dancer, choreographer, and educator in Jackson, Mississippi for the last twelve years, I often contemplate the effects of *place* on my artistic work. How is my choreographic work situated within and responding to Mississippi? Each year spent in the state gives me a richer understanding of the culture and ways of Mississippi, but I will always be a transplant, filtering my observations and impressions through an outsider's lens.

As the co-founder of one of Mississippi's only contemporary dance companies, Front Porch Dance, I continually consider how to best engage a Mississippi audience with our art form. Mississippi is home to many great writers, including William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, Eudora Welty, and Shelby Foote. Mississippi also claims to be the "birthplace of America's music," with a rich history of blues, gospel, and country music. The strong oral history and storytelling culture of Mississippi have led me to be more conscious of the presence of narrative in my choreographic and performative work. This paper discusses the interplay of visual art, text, and dance in a series of museum-based movement installations created by Front Porch Dance with the goal of engaging audience members and performers as co-authors, meaning-makers, and storytellers. The dynamic presence of movement alongside seemingly permanent art objects and printed text revealed emergent and interwoven narratives within the gallery spaces and lived experiences of the participants.

The state's premier art museum, the Mississippi Museum of Art, contains a broad and diverse collection of artwork created by Mississippians and by artists who lived

within the state for a period of time. This collection is displayed in *The Mississippi Story* exhibition, which opened on June 9, 2007. Curator Patti Carr Black writes about the exhibition:

Mississippi artists and audiences alike tend to view art from a literary point of view rather than an intellectual exercise or emotional expression involving only the intrinsic formal elements of art. The narrative tradition is a powerful cultural phenomenon in Mississippi. While its influence is most apparent in the extraordinary literary output and language of blues, country music, and gospel, it is also clearly abundant in Mississippi's visual arts (2007, 5).

Carr Black continues with a discussion of a deep-rooted "fear of abstraction," opining that Mississippians are almost programmed to seek narrative as they make meaning of the work they observe (2007, 6). There are, of course, numerous Mississippi-based visual artists who create abstract work, but Carr Black seems to imply that even within the abstract, spectators are seeking stories. Front Porch Dance Company is faced with the challenge of presenting modern dance to an audience who tends to embrace representational, narrative art. How can we best contribute to the story of Mississippi? What is the essence of *story*, and is it present in our choreographic work?

Eudora Welty considers the essential elements of a story in her essay "*Looking at Short Stories*." She discusses plot structure, character, situation, narrative thread, and atmosphere, but she is careful to explain that a story is more than the sum of its parts. She writes, "...we must distinguish plots not by their skeletons but by their full bodies; for they are embodiments, little worlds" (2002, 6). She continues, stating, "a story behaves, it goes through motions..." (2002, 7). I am drawn to Welty's description of story because she emphasizes the importance of *liveness* in a way that connects deeply with my understanding of embodied presence and communication as a dance artist. Story certainly exists within my choreographic projects, but I often feel that my Mississippi audience longs for a clearer narrative structure or exposition.

In 2013, in an attempt to further connect with our local audience and to explore the stories of the state through movement, my company co-director Erin Scheiwe Rockwell and I conceived and created a dance performance within *The Mississippi Story* exhibition at the Mississippi Museum of Art. Dance performance within the walls of a museum is not a new idea, but in Mississippi, a dance performance within the art galleries was a radical concept. In a museum-based performance, audiences experience dance up-close, often in tight spaces and from unexpected angles. By presenting performative art in the same space as visual art objects and text, we hoped to offer the spectators fresh perspectives and perhaps more dynamic engagement with the layered meanings and narratives that might exist in each gallery and movement installation.

One of the most striking components of *The Mississippi Story* exhibition is its use of text; quotes by Mississippi authors fill the gallery walls. This text is large and easily read from a distance in contrast to the smaller print used for the descriptive text found next to each art object. The size of the text and placement of the quotes toward the top of almost every gallery wall create a prominent role for the words of Mississippi authors; the quotes help to form connections between the visual and literary arts within the state, and reading the quotes undeniably impacts the museum-goers' experiences in the galleries. As we began creating movement in the gallery spaces, we recognized that the quotes printed on

the walls could not be ignored. Just as we made decisions to adjust our spacing based on the architectural design of each gallery, we also made specific choices to reference or interact with the words present in each space.

In 2013, *Critical Correspondence*, a web-based publication of Movement Research that provides a platform for research and scholarly discourse in the field of dance, devoted time and space for scholars to discuss questions surrounding issues of dance in the museum space. One issue that stood out to me among these writings is the idea that while museum walls are often filled with words to direct and inform visitors' experiences, dance performance is rarely accompanied by the same amount of direction, information, and context. Choreography may be presented alongside a written program with a few notes, but choreographers often want the performance to "speak for itself," and for the audience to be free to construct their own meaning without preconceived ideas or context. The words on the walls of the Mississippi Museum of Art, selected by the curator of the exhibition, include introductory text, descriptions of specific works, quotes by artists and authors, and instructions to help direct spectators through the space. The curator of the exhibition is a type of choreographer; she makes specific choices to manage the flow of bodies through the space and decides how to direct the spectators' meaning-making experience by providing context and historical information through the text on the walls. How might this marriage of words and visual art inform how we present contemporary dance? How does text help to connect us to a sense of place and a sense of meaning?

Over a three-month period, members of Front Porch Dance collaborated to create five movement installations in galleries within *The Mississippi Story* exhibition. Rather than attempting a moving representation of specific works of art, the choreography was a collage of stories, images, and ideas that we discovered within each gallery. We created forty minutes of choreography, which repeated itself in four loops, as different groups of audience members were led through the space.

Front Porch Dance explored the interaction of words and embodied practice in its performance at the Mississippi Museum of Art in three primary ways: first, we wrote an interactive script for a docent to read aloud as she guided audiences through the galleries; second, we invited audience members to speak aloud their impressions of a specific visual art object within one of the galleries; third, we encouraged the dancers to spontaneously respond to heard text or to speak aloud text found on the museum walls within the performance. Due to the interactions of writing/dancing/speaking in this unique event, I discovered that the docent, the performers, and the spectators each had opportunity to *author* the emergent work. All participants were co-contributors in this story-seeking and story-making experience.

Since dance within the walls of a museum space was a new concept for audiences in Jackson, Mississippi, we thought it would be helpful to offer guides for the experience. We collaborated with an art professor and a dancer who served as docents during the event. The docent's role was to offer spatial directions for the audience, to comment upon connections discovered between the visual art, text, and movement, and to respond to the audience members in the space.

Section 1 of *Mississippi Stories in Motion* was called the "The Land." The various landscapes and regions of Mississippi inspired the movements for this section. As the audience members entered "The Land" exhibition, they were invited to wander between

four rooms in order to see glimpses of the four simultaneous solos that were being enacted on four benches. Dr. Melissa Hause, the docent for this section, spoke over the performers and roaming spectators. As a guide for the audience, Melissa provided a sense of orientation within the performance of spectating. She directed the audience through specific hallways, entrances, and exits of galleries, and she offered suggestions of possible meanings and interpretations for the audience to consider. Melissa's voice wrote new meanings in the space, and she encouraged the spectators to discover their own connections between the visual art, movement, and text.

As I reflect on this section as a performer, I realize that my experience was certainly heightened by the presence of text and by the presence of many bodies in the space. The docent's words and the audience's movements and murmurs became the soundscape of the performance. I was tasked with staying present and aware of the unfolding narratives in the space, and I acknowledged that I was sharing the act of authorship with the docent and the spectators.

In Section 2, "Life in Mississippi," the audience was led into a new gallery. Here, the docent pointed out a specific piece of ceramic sculpture displayed in the center of the room in a glass case. Rather than telling the spectators what she saw in the work, the docent asked for the audience to respond to the work. She asked, "What do you see in this sculpture? How does it make you feel?" Visitors began to respond, some softly and timidly, others with confidence. Two dancers and I were spread out in the periphery of the gallery space. As an audience member stated his or her impressions, we physically responded to the words spoken. We attempted to embody the essence of the text, identifying our body's first response to the words. Some movements were internal and small, while other physical responses were full-bodied. Gradually, spectators began to notice the pattern: as a museum-goer spoke, the dancers responded with movement. While this may seem like a simple form of call-and-response, it was radically new for many of our audience members. As the conversation between docent and spectators dwindled, a fourth dancer took command of the space, weaving the audience's impressions into an abstract narrative, with an improvised, poetic collage of images and ideas. As she spoke, our movements filled the space more fully. We began to invade the personal space of some spectators, and they were free to move about the gallery to get a preferred view, or to move out of the way. Just as the words spoken into the air were temporary, our embodied responses to the words seemed to disappear as soon as they were expressed. In contrast, the sculpture encased in glass remained a constant presence in the room. The ephemeral nature of our art form juxtaposed with the more lasting existence of the sculpture enabled the spectators to discover new meanings within and around the ceramic object.

In this section, the words spoken by docent, dancer, and spectators wove vibrant connections between the visual art and the dance expression. The hierarchy between docent, spectator, and performer was disrupted, as each participant was asked to author the emergent work. As a performer, I felt alive and present, thrilled by the opportunity to respond in real time to the impressions of the spectator. By inviting the audience members to speak, the spectators became performers in the unfolding work thus deepening the connections between the people in the space. The audience members were already performers in the choreography and improvisation of the physical environment, as they were directed through the space and as they made individual movement choices

within the walls of each gallery. However, empowering the audience to speak somehow made them *aware* of their own performativity and story-making capacity.

The third section of the work entitled, “Church,” was set in a small gallery full of images depicting the impact of religion on Mississippi culture. The gallery walls are filled with quotes about Christianity, worship, and the church-going culture of the Bible Belt. Within the choreographic structure in this space, four dancers recited text found on the museum walls. As we read aloud segments of the quotes, we improvised the pacing and selection of the quotes, so that an original soundscape emerged over time. This action of reading from the writing on the walls drew the spectators’ attention toward the quotations, which they may or may not have noticed upon their entry into the gallery space. As we danced and recited text simultaneously and independently, a poetic narrative unfolded. This narrative was distinct during each performance because the order and selection of the readings changed. As we unsettled the order of the words, interrupting one another as we spoke, we created new meaning for the words affixed to the gallery walls. We re-imagined and re-authored both the text and the movement with each new performance of the work. As a performer in this section, my awareness was awakened as I cultivated listening ears, a ready voice, and a responsive body.

Through the development of *Mississippi Stories in Motion*, Front Porch Dance hoped to engage its local audience members and collaborators as active co-authors and meaning-makers. In a post-performance survey, one audience member stated, “...using the art and words of our artists as their music, provid[ed] a very unique perspective in these familiar rooms” (Carol Hardwick). Another audience member commented, “Quite an experience: transformative for *The Mississippi Story* galleries. I so enjoyed viewing this unique collection in an immersive performative environment” (Daniel Johnson). Many attendees at the event commented upon the richness and newness of this performative experience. Since *The Mississippi Story* is a permanent exhibition at the museum, its familiar presence can produce a static and inactive atmosphere. The art objects and printed text remain fixed in time and space, but inviting dance and spoken text into the galleries enlivened the participants’ experience of meaning-making. Audience members commented in post-performance surveys that they made new connections and discoveries through the art and text due to the dynamic presence of dance and speaking in the galleries. One audience member told me that she noticed artwork she had never seen before even though she had previously visited the permanent exhibition on numerous occasions.

In the past, Front Porch Dance has presented its concerts in a more-traditional manner, with the audience sitting in a theater and observing the choreography. The structure of *Mississippi Stories in Motion* enabled a deep level of participation and exchange between choreographer, performers, docents, and spectators. Audience members were engaged with the movement in tight spaces with up-close views and had the opportunity to move thorough the galleries to choose preferred perspectives. Furthermore, spectators were engaged in dialogue with the docent throughout the event, which enabled their voices to become a part of the performative soundscape. A shared vocabulary developed as all participants inhabited the same space and had opportunity to speak, write, and read meanings in the work. All were active contributors to the unfolding stories within the dance performance: creating, altering, advancing, and deepening the emerging narratives of *Mississippi Stories in Motion*.

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Correspondence and Improvisation: Archiving the Letters of Florence Fleming Noyes

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Abstract

Improvisation, like archival research, is an act of making choices. Our bodies inform the choices we make as dance researchers, and these choices influence our historical discoveries. While archiving the correspondence between Florence Fleming Noyes, founder of an early twentieth century rhythmic dance system, and her student Valeria Ladd, I stumbled on a more well-historicized name, Margaret H'Doubler. What do these letters reveal about the small choices that differentiate the known from the unknown, the recognized name from the footnote? This paper demonstrates how principles of improvisation can inform and guide archival research methodologies.

Improvisation, like archival research, is an act of making choices. Where is my attention? My weight? My breath? Now—there, the next impulse to move. Open that box, this stack of letters. Our bodies inform the choices we make as dancers and as researchers, and these choices contain risk. Dare I reach up? If I lose focus, will I fall? If my mind wanders, will I miss a connection? We make choices without knowing the outcomes.

Hot, tired, and sweaty, I sift through boxes in the attic archives of the Noyes School of Rhythm, opening the file of 1920s correspondence between Florence Fleming Noyes and Valeria Ladd. “History,” Susan Foster notes, “keeps track almost exclusively of the known.”¹ Noyes, who established the largest “Duncanesque” school in the United States, meriting but a footnote from Ann Daly, is not in this category.² As my eyes scan the page, focused on deciphering the antique script, I recognize another name, a different name, a more historicized name, Margaret H'Doubler. Foster asserts, “The improvising dancer tacks back and forth between the *known* and the *unknown*.”³ For most dance historians and scholars, H'Doubler is known; whereas, Noyes is not. What do these letters reveal about the small choices that differentiate the known from the unknown, the recognized name from the footnote? Through a close reading of the Noyes/Ladd correspondence and reflection on over a decade of immersion in the Noyes Rhythm movement practice, I will demonstrate how principles of improvisation can inform and guide archival research methodologies and discoveries, examining how seemingly innocuous decisions, like small shifts of weight, reveal choices with unpredictable historic outcomes.

In her essay “Taken by Surprise: Improvisation in Dance and Mind,” Susan Foster offers a series of manifestos considering the broader theoretical implications of movement improvisation. She argues for an improvisational perspective through five theoretical lenses: phenomenological, historical, discursive, analytic, and epistemological. She uses these lenses to highlight a range of improvisational characteristics. How might an improvisational perspective expand these theoretical

modes? Context; the known and the unknown; patterns and habit; body and mind; middle voice; and movement and writing are topics that Foster interrogates within this theoretical kaleidoscope. How present are these characteristics of improvisation in the archival research process?

To be clear, the Noyes School of Rhythm Archive is a private, un-catalogued collection. Located in the attic of the farmhouse at Shepherd's Nine, a hundred acre property in Portland, Connecticut, the archive consists of boxes of scrapbooks, photographs, programs, brochures, correspondence, newsletters, and other organizational records related to the administration and history of the Noyes School of Rhythm Foundation. The un-winterized farmhouse at Shepherd's Nine dates to the 1740s and has been the summer home of the Noyes School of Rhythm since Noyes purchased the property in 1919, nearly a decade before Ted Shawn acquired Jacob's Pillow. The white clapboard house consists of three levels with low-ceilinged rooms, ringing sturdy stone fireplaces. A closeted staircase leads from the main level to the attic, which consists of a small bedroom, an alcove hallway packed with costumes, and a corner room marked by a handwritten sign "Archives: No Admittance Without Permission." Over the years, several members of the Noyes School of Rhythm community have taken charge of the archive project, reviewing, organizing, and labeling the materials. Past volunteers have made select historical materials available to the wider community, even producing a modest documentary in the 1990s. The current state of the collected materials reflects these attempts, over decades, to organize the materials into an accessible state, considering the needs and interests of the community. Contextualizing the materials within the wider framework of twentieth and twenty-first century dance history has not been a priority.

If, as Foster notes, context in improvisation is essential to distinguishing between the known and the unknown, how does context inform the moment-to-moment decisions and actions of the researcher in the archives? Searching for historical information in a collection of un-catalogued and minimally-organized materials is quite different from making an appointment to view a well-ordered and cross-referenced library of documents. So how did context inform the choices this researcher made in the Noyes archive?

My initial research was not really research at all. At least, I did not recognize it as research at the time. And my initial introduction to the Noyes archive was not the small room in the attic, but the embodied knowledge and collective memory of longtime practitioners and master teachers of the Noyes work. My first trip to Shepherd's Nine was ten years ago, for a week during the summer of 2004. I was living in New York, training and performing with Lori Belilove's Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation and with dance therapist Marie Carsten's Duncan Dance Collective. I first heard about the Noyes work through Linda Rapuano, a certified Noyes teacher and board member who regularly came to Duncan technique classes in the city. I was fascinated to hear about the Noyes Rhythm summer program at Shepherd's Nine: an open-walled dance pavilion with a grand piano in the middle of the woods, a spring-fed lake, outdoor showers, tent living, and a tunic-mandated dress code. It sounded a lot like Duncan's romantic vision for life as art and living in harmony with nature. If this place had been around for nearly a century, why did it seem so hidden?

My initial inquiry was guided by personal interest and not by an objective, pre-formulated research methodology. At the time, I was improvising: exploring the Noyes

movement, asking questions, seeking information, inspiration, insight, understanding. I was a student of the work, and my studentship delineated the context of my research. I was inside the work, physically, and my first line of inquiry was somatic experience. How is this movement similar to or different from what I have experienced before?

Noyes Rhythm is an image-driven improvisational dance practice. Influenced by her Delsarte studies, her work with Charles Wesley Emerson, and rhythmic movement training with Lucia Gale Barber, Noyes began to develop her own teaching methodology in the early 1910s. Noyes Rhythm technique is based on two different images for aligning and coordinating the body. The first image privileges a high center, at the top of the diaphragm, termed by Noyes dancers the “spot.” This image defines how the body moves through space, with the spot leading and the limbs following. Improvising from this image results in curvilinear, rhythmic movement patterns. The second image divides the body into spherical units threaded by a central axis and balanced vertically over gravity. This image enables Noyes dancers to balance their weight evenly between their feet and to explore movements in straight lines and angles, like tipping off of the central axis and hinging from the knees. These two images determine the improvisational movement pathways, which give Noyes dancers a specific gestural signature. Noyes termed the images that inform the dancers’ mechanics *physics similes*. Dancers also work with natural and mythological imagery, which gives a qualitative feeling to the movement and these images are usually described as *symbols*.

Dancers working with these images cultivate a receptive and responsive state of being. Evocative of Foster’s middle voice, Noyes dancers are neither willful doers of action nor inert receivers. Foster describes the “experience of middle-voicedness” as “moving with.”⁴ The language of Noyes pedagogy emphasizes allowing movement to happen. Preparation for this active listening state includes a shedding process, a letting go of physical tension in the body and of an overly active, thinking mind. The work is about disrupting patterns, and this applies to patterns of physical holding and movement as well as patterns of thought and perception.

Foster analyzes the historian’s generally-accepted process of looking for patterns, of seeking repetition of events to justify packaging historical narrative into neat incidents of cause and effect. From this perspective, the historian’s goal is to define the known. Foster challenges this notion by posing an interesting question, “What would history look like if it were to acknowledge the fact of improvisation?”⁵ What kind of historical process foregrounds improvisational insights, rather than looking for repeated patterns, as a means to make meaning of historical events? The Noyes process emphasizes not knowing, breaking patterns, and creating space for unfoldment, for new, unanticipated experience and expression. So what does this mean for the historical researcher of the Noyes work?

Four years into my Noyes Rhythm improvisational research, I sit down on the dusty floor in a corner of the attic room and start opening boxes, cabinets, drawers. I am seeking information about the genesis of the school, about the early days of Noyes’ work. I quickly discover that the absence of the Noyes system from the broader narrative of early twentieth century American dance history is not due to lack of documentation. The Noyes school is nothing if not well-documented. The small attic room boasts chests of scrapbooks stocked with articles from major newspapers and women’s magazines. There are photographs, school brochures dating to 1913, and beginning in 1924, bound volumes

of regular newsletters reporting the activities of the main studio in New York as well as of the branch schools in a range of cities throughout the United States. In the file box labeled "Other Schools" I find brochures and programs advertising Denishawn, the Elizabeth and Isadora Duncan schools, Dalcroze programs, and a host of other rhythmic and aesthetic dance studios. Here is clear documentation of the historical context within which Noyes initially developed her work. I draw a map of the room, and begin an informal inventory of my discoveries.

My plan is general, open every box, every file, every drawer, and digest it all. The process is a bit overwhelming. I am at Shepherd's Nine for six weeks, living in community, dancing a full morning of classes and taking my afternoons in the archive. It is challenging to shift back and forth between training in a practice that tasks the dancer with letting go of the end result, in a community that values unscheduled time, and then spending my afternoon hours surveying piles of documents, acutely aware of the limits of my ability to absorb everything.

Space informs the order in which I open boxes. Rather than studying the materials chronologically or according to some other thematic arrangement, and because of the uncatalogued nature of the materials, my primary goal is to remember *where* I have seen whatever it is that I might discover. Foster states, "we could never accomplish this encounter with the unknown without engaging the known."⁶ I do not know what I am looking for, but, like a dancer improvising a movement pathway for the first time, I am determined to remember where I have been.

Scanning the same shelf where I found the file box with brochures from other schools, I notice a volume labeled "Correspondence 1920s." Opening the box I find reams of handwritten letters, loosely organized by correspondent. I am drawn to the section of letters from Valeria Ladd. Ladd worked closely with Noyes as a teacher and dancer with the Noyes Group, and after Noyes' accidental death in 1928, Ladd ran the school until the 1980s. She is primarily responsible for preserving the Noyes technique and for codifying the system as the editor of the technique book *Rhythm for Dance and Art*, and some of her papers are archived in the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Most of the letters from Ladd in the file were written during the time she was teaching in the physical education department of the University of Minnesota.

The letters are written longhand on large sheets of paper, folded into rectangles, with black ink faded to green. The handwriting, though full of flourishes, is largely legible. The letters are conversational monologues, a long-distance record of daily living interspersed with news of friends and family, and updates about work. Sitting on the floor of the hot, dusty attic, the content of the letters, though interesting, seems rather mundane. Keep reading? Stay with the task of deciphering the antique script in hopes of discovering what? Or, change direction, shift focus, open another box?

I stay on task, hesitating, but continuing with one line of direction, scanning the stack of letters for the context of the conversation, hoping to spot a signpost, something known. In her epistemological manifesto, Foster acknowledges the limits of writing about improvisation, "to fix on paper certain thoughts about the unpredictable."⁷ Correspondence is a form of writing that is both fixed and unfolds over time. Correspondence reveals consideration of choice before action is taken. Handwritten correspondence, particularly, can indicate more than just the thoughts expressed through

words, for hand-writing is an embodied action. If improvisation offers the mover liminal moments when any choice is possible, what can correspondence offer the historian?

In reading these letters, I have access to one side of the conversation; they are letters from a student addressing her mentor. The updates about work are related to Ladd's program of rhythmic dance classes that she is teaching for physical education students at the University of Minnesota under the supervision of Dr. Anna Norris. A letter dated October 19 indicates Norris' possible interest in developing a teacher-training program in Rhythmic Expression at the university. Ladd inquires about the publication date of Noyes forthcoming book *Rhythm: the Basis of Art and Education*. (Noyes book was published in 1923.) The first mention of Dr. Norris is happenstance; Norris was passing by when Ladd was showing students pictures of Noyes-trained dancer Grace Christie. Norris noticed Christie's feet, and asked to post the pictures on the program's bulletin board as a good model for strong feet. This interaction sparked discussion about the normal, or teacher-training, courses in the Noyes work. The file does not contain Noyes' letters to Ladd in reply, and absent Noyes' side of the conversation, we can only improvise her possible response. Did she express interest in a normal course at the university? Earlier in the letter, Ladd referenced her own teaching as "green," possibly indicating that she was developing as a teacher herself and not quite ready to train others to teach.

Whatever Noyes' response, the next letter indicates a clear course of action. From Dr. Norris' perspective, the university needs a normal class to train students as dance teachers in a one-year timeframe. Whether Noyes hesitated or Dr. Norris preferred H'Doubler's approach is unclear. In a letter dated December 13, 1919, Ladd informs Noyes that Dr. Norris has made a decision to send the swimming teacher to Wisconsin to study with H'Doubler for a year and then come back and implement a teacher training course, "You see, they must be able to teach dancing when they go out." Ladd describes Norris as being "quite pleased" with the Wisconsin program.

In another letter, dated January 20, Ladd reiterates her circumstance at Minnesota for Noyes. She explains that H'Doubler was a student of Miss Bentley's in New York, and that the swimming teacher, Miss Baker (Gertrude Baker), will travel to study with H'Doubler in Wisconsin. When she returns, she will implement a normal class to train dance teachers. Ladd emphasizes Norris' eagerness for a normal program, stating that the program is "Dr. Norris' pet lamb and all things bend to that." In this letter, Ladd asks Noyes' advice as to her next course of action. She is not being asked to leave, she can continue teaching in the gymnastics program. In fact, she is reluctant to leave, as she recognizes the university reputation and the visibility it affords the work. She also feels like she is just beginning to really engage the students in the work. She notes the challenge of engaging students, recognizing, "the work here is slow to start" and "it is not something which all the girls are 'crazy about.'" Based on my personal immersion in the Noyes work, I understand that as an early twentieth century somatic movement practice, it asks practitioners to slow down and deepen internal awareness. This kind of work can still be a tough sell in university teaching environments. Ladd characterizes H'Doubler's work as "superficial" in comparison, but the degree to which Ladd has actual knowledge of H'Doubler's methods is unclear.

Regardless, it seems there was a window of opportunity for the Noyes method of Rhythmic Expression to become part of the normal course for physical education at the University of Minnesota. That window closed when Baker pursued studies in Wisconsin

and Ladd returned to the east coast. H'Doubler's work, and the influence of her students, established the norm for early twentieth century university dance training. Yet, as an improvising historian, I have to ask, what would the last century of dance education look like if Ladd had stayed?

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Noyes School of Rhythm Foundation, the Rhythm Committee, and the Board of Directors for permission to access the archives. Thank you, as well, to the Noyes teachers and master teachers who have so generously mentored me in this practice.

Notes

- ¹ Foster, "Taken by Surprise," 4.
- ² Daly, *Done Into Dance*, 116, 240-241.
- ³ Foster, "Taken by Surprise," 3.
- ⁴ Foster, "Taken by Surprise," 7.
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Strategies for shaping an absence

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Abstract:

Contributors to the panel “Absent Presences” agreed to discuss how what we don’t write shapes our writing about dance. In this presentation Carter explores “absent presences” in both formal and conceptual terms, discussing the importance of absence in his current writing about ballet swans in contemporary dance.

Introduction:

We began this panel with an agreement executed in chains of short messages. Here is an actual email conversation we had in September:

It strikes me that writing a long paper about absent presences seems odd.

Good point, Clare.

Since I don’t have an argument yet, this approach suits me fine.

We sketched out our anticipated moves for one another—establishing a particular kind of professional courtesy, performing our mutual willingness to hold space for one another, interested in overlapping questions and far enough apart to gesture freely without fear of collision. We forge a collective out of our sense that it’s important not to say too much about what we don’t say.

Our terms: 12→15 minutes
Provocations rather than arguments

Absent presence #1: significant claims, argumentative development

We anticipate that the absence of strong arguments will open space for us to be present as witnesses and participants in the collective project of thinking what we don’t already know. So, welcome. I’m starting off with some observations about how this absence of argumentation is present and powerful in my current writing.

My current manuscript develops trans- theory’s attention to performance by looking at swan dances—that is, dances in which people embody large white birds to different degrees and for different purposes. I’ve been exploring swan themes of transition and transformation, of luxury and romance and mortality, as these manifest in contemporary dance performance. Arguments usually deploy a linear, sequential spatial organization that acknowledges alternative paths, but primarily to limit their eruptive impact. Such textual structures guide readers to privilege particular interpretative options over others. But the archive of swan dances is brimming with contests over proper lineages, legitimate performances, authorized narratives. The more I work with this material the more convinced I am that handling this archive critically, rather than reproducing its power moves, calls for a textual form that solicits readers’ conscious participation in constructing meaning. My work is not to fasten the swans in place, or make them line up neatly, but to trace the wavering lines of their migration across time

and choreographic tradition. And so I'm working with a formal question: how to design a book that presents multiple stories, engages multiple aesthetics, and offers a range of interpretations without pitting them against one another in a contest over truth or purity.

My formal inspiration here derives in part from Jerome Bel's 2004 work *Veronique Doisneau*, which includes an aching long passage in which a single ballerina poses unmoving on an undressed stage. She is performing her job as a member of the corps de ballet petrified behind the grand pas de deux in *Swan Lake*. In such scenes—common in the Western classical dance tradition—the corps fills in the stage around the principal dancers, enriching their movement by surrounding it with stillness in the same way that a frame decorates and enriches a picture, by establishing boundary and contrast. Alone on the stage, surrounded by empty space, Doisneau frames the frame. Her body helps us see the swan corps both as present and as active in their stillness. And as we wait for something to happen, we may begin to imagine and to interpret what we see. Watching *Veronique Doisneau*, I contemplate how *Swan Lake*'s conventional staging assumes that the more people crowd onto a stage, the less important almost all of them are.

Eventually this thought turned into a claim, and eventually an article, about the way that ballet's absolutist origins can persist in its aesthetic, but what matters to me here is not my claim so much as the way it emerged from Doisneau's stillness. Bel didn't make an argument about *Swan Lake*; he left me space and time to think, and I want to use that as a model for my writing. The power of emptiness bridges stage and page.

All of which is to say that absence shapes presence on both conceptual and formal levels. Moving away from conventional argumentative structures is leading me to produce a text that includes passages with little or no text in them. This strategy reflects the basic premise behind minimalism: withholding sensory stimulation creates opportunities to observe one's awareness, and space for the imagination to expand. In empty space ideas can flutter and curve like floating bits of swan's down. I'm playing with breaking the chapters open by including aphorism and lyric, all of which take shape in relation to open space on the page. The point is partly to find structures that help keep me from generating arguments by reflex, seeking to persuade because that's what historians usually do. Bel shows us that the discipline of keeping still makes every movement throb with meaning. The discipline of keeping silence makes every word reverberate like a pebble tossed into quiet water.

Sometimes, then, the absence of argumentation shapes the text at a literal formal level that seeks to provoke an active reader just as stillness in performance, or minimalism in sculpture, can provoke what Ranciere calls the emancipation of the spectator. For the section of the book I'm working on now I need empty space to accommodate a different kind of absence. That's the part about Michel Fokine's 1905 solo ballet, *The Dying Swan*.

I have come across the claim that this is the single most performed ballet in the history of Western classical dance. It seems plausible. Anna Pavlova performed it more than 4000 times between 1905 and 1931, and it has continued to proliferate into the present. In this sense it definitely matters; that is, its choreography has materialized more than any other. And yet it cannot be said to matter in that the dance has generated virtually no critical literature, no sustained historical or theoretical inquiry—only

references to its importance in Pavlova's career and influence (Fisher 2012), and one magazine column interpreting the Ballet Trockadero's drag version (Schwartz 2012).

Absent presence # 2: extant critical literature

If nobody writes about it, maybe it's not important. Or maybe what is important about it is caught up in that silent ubiquity. My first book was *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1890-1940*. It explores how mass cultural discourses of normal sexual development and marital love worked to stabilize and naturalize white dominance in the early twentieth century. Researching dominant conventions of heterosexuality as expressions of whiteness, I learned over and over how hard it can be to engage critically with what is everywhere around you. Most of the conceptual space in any given culture is filled with the things that people already know, which is why it can be important to write about the things that seem too obvious to talk about, or too trivial. Banalities are often condensed expressions of common beliefs; maybe *Dying Swan* reads as trite in part because the feelings it is used to express resonate so very widely in the culture. If that's so, perhaps the dance's apparent resistance to criticism reflects the complex and multidimensional force of the swan motif that is its core content. I've seen dying swans that represent the murder of young black and brown men, oil spills and the melting of the polar ice caps. These dances circulate alongside the many performances in which an individual ballerina demonstrates her artistic expression inside the container of classical form. And alongside the dances themselves are thousands, maybe millions of two and three dimensional objects that represent the dying swan in every medium from bronze to porcelain, black velvet paintings to cake decorations executed in buttercream frosting. Together these disparate expressions of the dying swan ask us to consider which deaths matter, and how that mattering is distributed across bodies; but they also compel attention to the persistence of, and the question of what manifests as, cultural froth.

We don't write much about the frothy, but it is one of the ways that absence makes itself physically present-- froth is air made visible by a little substance spread on a lot of surfaces, which can be a beautiful thing. The absence of critical literature on the *Dying Swan* is shaping my text by encouraging me to look at emptiness as meaningful in itself and in relation to the proliferation of the dance as a cultural image. Maybe it's not important to fill in the absences in the critical literature, with or without strong argumentative claims about what *The Dying Swan* means now; it means a lot of different things, many of them trivial and many of them obvious, and that seems to me to be how the dance matters. So part of what I'm confronting in writing about *The Dying Swan* is how the body of my text can take shape in a way that allows the sheer repetitive undeveloped proliferation of these swan dances to refract. I'm using short commentaries on the many things this dance can mean to open the structure of my writing, interrupting longer passages of prose with a feather here and a feather there, coming back to the shallow images not to connect them to any innate depth of meaning but to let their meanings pile up. This is another way that the absence of critical literature is literally shaping the text I'm generating.

Acknowledgements:

My thanks to Clare Croft, Ariel Osterweis and Anusha Kedhar for collaborating on this panel, and to Selby Schwartz for conversation about swans.

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Performing Interpretation: Writing for the Body in Three Indeterminate Language Scores

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Abstract

*This paper takes up three choreographic practices that deploy indeterminate language scoring to foreground the dancer as interpreter: Jackson Mac Low's *The Pronouns*, Deborah Hay's *Solo Performance Commissioning Project*, and Yvonne Meier's *Brother of Gogolorez*. Where Mac Low deploys chance procedures to create open-ended "dance instruction poems," Hay activates personal, corporeal experience in the transmission of solo repertory. Meier explores the impact of verbally delivered imagery, mounting a sophisticated critique of choreographic authority in the process. Each model for scoring gives the dancer tools to derive meaning from pre-determined texts, establishing corporeal interpretation as active, individualized, and productively unpredictable.*

“Will the words 'Hop, skip and a jump' mean the same thing to each person? What is 'a jump'?” (Guest 13). So asks Anne Hutchinson Guest, prominent leader and expert in dance notation, in an effort to point out the limited capacity of language to accurately and comprehensively capture movement. Hutchinson Guest describes how the “range of interpretation and leeway for misunderstanding” accompanying language-based notations stymie those aiming to faithfully preserve choreographic works (Guest 12). These very same qualities, however, render language an exemplary vehicle for those pursuing the very different aim of notational indeterminacy. The creator of an indeterminate score intentionally bends notation toward unpredictability, putting forward signifiers that effectively correspond to a multiplicity of corporeal signifieds. Such scores can be described as generative rather than representational; they suggest what might happen (within certain structural parameters) rather than symbolizing what did happen, or what should happen for an enactment to be considered faithful.

My analysis addresses three examples of indeterminate, generative language scoring that foreground the dancer as interpreter: Jackson Mac Low's *The Pronouns: Forty Dances For the Dancers*, Deborah Hay's *Solo Performance Commissioning Project*, and Yvonne Meier's *Brother of Gogolorez*. These artists create scores expressly designed to engender multiple responses to the language prompt; in fact, they might be said to take the open-ended nature of a word like 'jump' as a point of departure. Additionally, they approach the writing process as an integral component of the choreographic act, developing sophisticated compositional methods that dovetail with clear interpretive frameworks. I hope to demonstrate how these projects frame the everyday act of meaning making as a bodily process, illuminating interpretation at the corporeal level and celebrating the gap between text and idiosyncratic embodiment.

Jackson Mac Low began working with action words (or “nuclei”) as instructions for performance during a production of *The Marrying Maiden* at New York's Living Theatre in June of 1960. Actors were unexpectedly given cards bearing imperatives with varying degrees of specificity (from executing a simple bend at the waist to doing “anything negative”) (Mac Low 1979: 70). The “Action Pack” used in that production

eventually gave rise to *Nuclei for Simone Forti* (1961), in which Mac Low “generalized” each action by shifting verbs into gerund forms (“kiss,” for example, became “kissing”). In 1963, Trisha Brown used the cards as source material for improvisation at George Brecht’s Yam Festival. After seeing that performance, Fred Herko asked Mac Low if he might work with the pack, but Brown had taken the cards to California, so Mac Low used chance procedures to create a “dance-instruction poem” for Herko based on a similar set. After identifying Herko as “he” in the poem, Mac Low constructed a poem for “every word listed as a pronoun in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary;” the forty poems that resulted constitute *The Pronouns: Forty Dances for the Dancers* (Mac Low 1979: 71).

Some of Mac Low’s pronouns, such as “he” and “she,” render the subject of the poem straightforward, the question of gender normativity aside. (And in fact, in the 1979 edition, Mac Low includes a discussion of gender neutrality titled “The THEY Manifesto,” arguing for the validity of that pronoun to designate a person irrespective of gender.) Others, however, deploy more ambiguous signifiers such as “nobody,” “either,” or “each.” The 26th *Dance – Getting News* reads, for example:

*Each gives a simple form to a bridge
though seeming to sleep,
& each gets an orange from a hat, takes it, & keeps it;
each is letting complex impulses make something* (Mac Low 1979: 48)

Even such a short excerpt reveals how *The Pronouns* forcefully implicate potential interpreters, consistently revolving around dancing subjects taking action based on clear, if logically unconnected imagery. Unlike imperatives, gerunds render the authorial voice descriptive; Mac Low seems to report on a situation rather than instigating it. As Lely and Saunders have posited in their exhaustive treatment of verbal scores, gerunds can eliminate mood by evenly describing a state of affairs rather than explicitly calling for action (44). With respect to *The Pronouns*, however, the gerund effectively shifts the responsibility for creating mood more firmly toward the interpreter. Rather than facilitating ambivalent or neutral performances, in fact, the nuclei and the poems prepare a fertile ground for assertive performer choices. Mac Low recalls a “furious” performance of the nuclei by Forti, who chose a pair of cards reading “angry, cause, sock, some, plough,” as well as the action chain “giving the neck a knifing or coming to give a parallel meal, beautiful and shocking” (Mac Low 1979: 71). Forti interpreted these cues by overturning a conference table in the audience’s direction, chewing on the edge of the table, and screaming “HUNGRY! ANGRY! HUNGRY! ANGRY!” (Mac Low 1979: 71).

As is evidenced by Mac Low’s report of the Forti performance, the dancing interpreter of *The Pronouns* encounters language as the ground upon which meaning is newly negotiated with each iteration. Each poem – each word, in fact – represents not stability but potential, the starting point from which to make an individualized interpretive leap. As Forti physically connects the ideas of anger, meal, and shock, she stitches together Mac Low’s chance-derived linguistic components into full-bodied coherence, giving kinetic form to the very process of reading.

Mac Low balances interpretive freedom with clear parameters surrounding decision-making. In an instructional preface to the poems titled “Some Remarks to the Dancers (How the Dances Are to Be Performed & How They Were Made),” he notes that

performers might embrace or avoid “miming,” include or exclude props, and maintain or abandon consistency within the scope of the same poem (a single line, for example, might give rise to varying interpretations as it reappears) (Mac Low 1979: 68). He also insists that every line be addressed; performers must work out “some definite interpretation of the meaning of every line of the dance-poems they choose to realize” (Mac Low 1979: 67). Thus Mac Low anchors the radical potential for interpretive indeterminacy not only to a very careful arrangement of language, but also to a clear set of boundaries delineating an interpretive praxis.

Similarly, Deborah Hay’s scores give rise to coherent embodied performances deeply rooted in well-developed interpretive strategies. Where Mac Low’s poems derive partly from de-personalized chance procedures, however, Hay’s are deeply rooted in personal corporeal experience. Coming of age artistically within the same fertile interdisciplinary milieu that Mac Low moves through over the course of the 1960s, Hay began working with language prompts very early on, choreographing and publishing a manual for a group of “circle dances” that engender large-scale communal experiences through the practice of unison, de-skilled movement. As Hay’s own exploration of these group exercises grew deeper, she recalls letting the more explicit directions fall away, shifting her attention to imagistic prompts designed to enable individual variation (Hay and Rogers 4).

In addition to investigating the potential for language to facilitate embodied exploration, Hay also continued to pursue writing as a means of transmission. In *My Body The Buddhist*, she puzzles over the “weirdly limited lifetime” of the typical dance performance, and relates an anecdote about being approached by a dance notation specialist interested in recording her 1988 solo, *The Gardener*. When the specialist returns an incomplete score, having been frustrated by several seemingly unrepresentable elements, Hay becomes even more interested in language-based documentation. Using prose to describe her dancing, Hay came to realize that the writing process could “open the boundaries of my personal experience” and offer “a productive potential avenue for transmission” (Hay 2000: 27). In the late 1970s, Hay began working with large groups of performers in workshop settings, allowing her language prompts to blossom into the material for group performances, then distilling that material back into solos. In 1998, after performing her work *Voila!* alongside adaptations by Grace Me-Hi Lee and Scott Heron at the Kitchen in NY, Hay decided to further open up her substantial solo repertory, instituting the Solo Performance Commissioning Project (SPCP), an innovative structure in which performers “commission” a work and come together to learn its score in an intensive group setting.

The link between Hay and her commissioning artists is forged not only by the score, but also in large part through the transmission of a physical practice informed by “performance tools.” These prompts are often phrased as “what if” questions, and the performer’s goal is less to resolve these than to stay attuned to their suggestive possibilities while exploring the shifting terrain of bodily response. For example, participants in the 2012 SPCP worked with the following performance tool: “What if the question “What if where I am is what I need?” is not about what I need but an opportunity to inhabit the question “What if where I am is what I need?” (Hay 2012). Within the context of the SPCP, Hay describes the tools as vehicles for “putting shape to the practice;” they effectively cultivate a common ground upon which choreographic

structure can be built (Metcalf 2013). Thus, the performer must not only satisfy the practical demands of the score – by “walking like a duck,” for example – but also continually delve into the expanded consciousness fomented by the language of the tools. Hay famously requires substantial practice before her scores can be publicly performed – nine months in the case of the 2012 SPCP. Daily practice renders the parameters of the score second nature, and artists deepen their relationship to Hay’s choreography not by executing it more perfectly (by more successfully impersonating a duck, for example), but by deepening their relationship to the multifaceted layers of the performance tools.

Unlike Mac Low, then, Hay’s scores do not address a potentially limitless community of interpreters; performing the score without the underlying layer of Hay’s “practice” would seriously compromise its enactment. Moreover, while Mac Low’s chance-derived poems need to be translated into dance, Hay’s scores bear a much more intrinsic relation to the body – and specifically her own body. Even in Hay’s case, though, where there might be said to exist an “original” solo, indeterminate prompts give rise to a permanent instability in their openness to new interpretation. Hay’s adaptors certainly retrace her steps over the course of a dance, but they also traverse a resolutely personal landscape, one shaped by their own physical relationship to the score and the tools. In a neat inversion of the typical logic of documentation, Hay shifts writing from a means of capture to a trigger for repetition with a difference.

In *Brother of Gogolorez*, Yvonne Meier constructs a language score echoing many of the features of a Hay solo or a Mac Low poem. *Gogolorez* requires its dancers to develop a heightened responsiveness to unpredictable and often hilarious prompts. Directions like “intricate nightmare ends in vogueing” or “form a knot, but elegantly” are open-ended, highly imaginative, and richly physical (Meier 2011). Clearly designed to enable a hefty dose of interpretive license, they court indeterminacy while likewise anchoring the dancers to a pre-determined structure. Unlike the previous two examples, however, Meier’s dancers respond to these instructions in the moment of performance. Since they do not rehearse with the scores in advance, and no two performances of the work are precisely the same, Meier’s audiences witness the trajectory from delivery to reception to execution in real time. Just as crucially, Meier includes herself in the performance, spotlighted and amplified, the delivery of choreographic prompts rendering her absolutely central.

In the context of *Gogolorez*, the dancers remain in constant, evolving negotiation with the text. As its very visible author, Meier serves as an actual and symbolic source of choreographic authority. Often, though, the dancing veers into wildness in spite of her regulatory presence, and Meier seems to have wholeheartedly welcomed this approach. She seems, in fact, to court conspicuous moments of revolt. In a performance at New York’s Danspace on February 25, 2011, Arturo Vidich’s performance of “one accident after the other” propels him into a vicious and risky physicality; he darts around, tosses himself backwards into space, and hits the floor in an exaggerated pratfall. He approaches an audience member, starts rubbing the audience member’s face, and ends up licking another’s bald head. He hits the floor and rolls toward Meier, bites the microphone and tangles himself in its cord, yanking it from her grasp. Vidich’s performance seems to loosen something in the group as a whole, and Meier’s next instruction is clearly ignored. Back in control of the microphone, she repeats it a few times until the dancers snap back into focus. Later in the same performance, Meier calls for an ending as Jennifer Monson

is poised mid-relevé in the center of the space. Monson lowers her heels, looks sharply at Meier, and puts her hands on her hips. Meier responds, “You wanna do something? OK, everybody find yourself in a knot” (Meier 2011). The audience responds with laughter, and the dancers perform for a considerably longer time until Meier proclaims, “find a miserable end.” By setting up a clear relationship of authority with respect to her dancers, but also imbuing that relationship with tension and a degree of uncertainty, Meier performs a hierarchical relationship while testing its boundaries, drawing attention to the disciplinary force of her score while also subverting it.

Meier began working on *Gogolorez* in 2004, when she was asked to create a piece for that year’s Movement Research Improvisation Festival. As a committed practitioner of Skinner Releasing, Meier is comfortable translating verbally conveyed images into movement ideas: she takes this logic to the extreme in *Gogolorez*, however, turning a meditative approach on its head and enacting a sly commentary on the bearer of instructional language as a figure of power. Like Hay, Meier develops the prompts based on existing movement; unlike Hay, she might translate the movement into words as an observer, describing something she sees another dancer do with particularly evocative language. The work frames its dancers as empowered subjects searching for correspondence between an idea and its kinetic illustration; nonetheless, Meier holds the script, guiding them on a seemingly arbitrary trajectory. By centralizing her own presence, Meier positions herself as something of a benevolent dictator, orchestrating the event while remaining firmly embedded within its representational frame.

Jackson Mac Low’s daughter, dancer and choreographer Clarinda Mac Low, has worked extensively with Meier in addition to mounting a 2012 version of *The Pronouns*. She compares the two approaches: “with Meier, the instructions create a poem, inadvertently. With Mac Low the poem becomes an instruction, intentionally” (Mac Low 2012). Likewise, in a conversation with Vidich for Movement Research’s Performance Journal, Meier addresses the similarity of her approach to Hay’s work. Vidich, who has also participated in the SPCP, notes that “people have totally different ideas about similar ways of working,” bringing up one of Hay’s best-known performance tools about activating each of the body’s “73 trillion cells.” In a spirited retort, Meier responds “And I’ll just tell you to turn yourself into a pig and crumble – probably the same results (Meier and Vidich 2005: 5).” While Meier’s score bears a clear affinity to those of the other two artists, its inclusion in the moment of performance adds a significant component of reflexivity. By performing the score, Meier draws connections not only to the legacy of indeterminate notation in dance, music, and interdisciplinary practices, but also to a longer history of dance notation, where standardization and consolidation have long gone (uneasily) hand in hand with individual variation and shared authorship.

In an unfinished treatise on the interrelated problems of notational representation and interpretation in music, Theodor Adorno addresses the score, inscribed on the traditional Western staff, as a “needy” text generating an unavoidable and unpredictable “zone of indeterminacy” (Adorno 181). Since this indeterminacy arises as a byproduct of writing, he also characterizes notation as repressive, stifling a liveness that evokes a conceptual, ideal state unattainable by contingent realizations. No form of dance notation has risen to the dominance of the Western staff, and questions about how to standardize and preserve movement have largely eclipsed those, like Adorno’s, that arise when we interrogate the relationship between text and interpreter. I hope this paper might suggest

what might be gained by addressing specific relationships between dancer and score as enabled by distinct choreographic and interpretive practices. By using language to deliberately plumb Adorno's "zone of indeterminacy," rather than working against it, Mac Low, Hay, and Meier challenge distinctions between choreographer and dancer, writer and reader. Their scores create functional models for differing approaches to interpretation, giving the body tools to derive action, and thus meaning, from a pre-determined text. Moving from language to body, writer to dancer, they make a case for corporeal interpretation as active, individualized, and productively unpredictable.

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Dancing Happiness: Lyrics & Choreography in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)

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Abstract

Gene Kelly was inspired by the images of happiness in the lyrics of the song 'Singin' in the Rain' when he choreographed the iconic central number of the movie of the same title. This paper investigates how he infused movement qualities, floor patterns and movement motifs with a pattern of increasing joviality that allows dance to incarnate the state of happiness depicted in the song. My methodology is based on Janet Adshead's framework for dance analysis and on Richard Dyer's conceptualization of entertainment as a utopian sensibility that, in American musicals, characteristically portrays utopian feelings, happiness above all.

Introduction

In his collection of essays on entertainment, Richard Dyer claims that Hollywood musicals were 'predominantly conceived of, by producers and audiences alike, as "pure entertainment"' (2002: 19). In Dyer's conceptualization of the term, entertainment is a 'utopian sensibility' (2002: 24) as it was created and perceived by the dominant (bourgeois, white, male) ideology of the capitalist American society (2002: 27). By portraying utopian feelings rather than modelling utopian worlds, American musicals offered images of escapism. Unlike classic utopias such as Thomas More's, they represented what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized (2002: 20). And among the range of ideal, joyous feelings they portrayed, Dyer notices that happiness was the main one (2012: 31).

This feeling of joy, just as the rest of the utopian emotions of this form of entertainment, was delineated according to one or several properties that Dyer (adapting Susanne K. Langer's model for music) classifies in five categories: energy, abundance, intensity, transparency and community (2002: 24). Each of them apprehended the emotional signification of entertainment in a different way¹. In the case of intensity, it implied experiencing the emotion 'directly, fully, unambiguously, "authentically", without holding back' (Dyer, 2002: 23).

A prototypical example of this option of presenting entertainment through the portrayal of an intense feeling of happiness is the iconic central number² of the musical *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). Starring Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor and Debbie Reynolds, and directed by Kelly and Stanley Donen, the film was shot during the golden period of Hollywood musicals. The title number is a solo for a male dancer, conceived as a soliloquy where the main character, played by Kelly himself, shares his happy feelings with the audience. He is on a deserted street, it is dark and it is raining but he is happy (for he is in love) and cannot help feeling wonderful despite the bad weather. The number is built upon this contrast between good inner feelings and adverse external

circumstances. By cheerfully singing and dancing under the pouring rain, the character releases his immense happiness. The intensity is gradually introduced. At first, the character just starts to walk; soon afterwards he proceeds to sing and finally to dance. Both the dance and the music follow the same rising pattern, being increasingly cheerful. This paper investigates the features that delineate this feeling of intense happiness, highlighting the role of music and dance in the design of the utopian option most frequently represented in American musicals³. The music is a song, a musical format that, according to Dyer, is a particularly rich semiotic mix for the statement of feelings in American musicals. It is composed of words, sounds and voice, each with a different role in conveying information (2012: 5). Words name and ground emotions (2012: 5); sounds deploy a wide and nuanced range of affective timbres (2012: 6), and voice mainly adds physical sensation (2012: 7). Here I pay particular attention to words, exploring the way dance takes off from the lyrics, translating their semantic content into dance movements and imagery. To dissect this transformation and examine the choreography, I use the method of dance analysis developed by Janet Adshead (1988). However, since my goal is the exploration of the link between lyrics and choreography, to Adshead's four components -- music, setting, movement and dancer -- I add a fifth element frequently used in the analysis of poems, main motifs⁴.

Music

The first lines of the lyrics of the song read

I'm singin' in the rain
 Just singin' in the rain
 What a glorious feelin'
 I'm happy again
 I'm laughing at clouds
 So dark up above
 The sun's in my heart

Freed in Kelly and Donen, 2001 [DVD]

According to Kelly, the whole number is intended to be a visualization⁵ of these lines (Kelly in Delamater, 1981: 211). They describe both the activity the audience will see, "singing" (and "dancing", as it is also later mentioned in the lyrics), and the circumstances under which it will take place, "in the rain". They also refer to the effect intended with this combination of contrasting elements: to convey a "glorious feeling". The main features of the character and the setting have been thus depicted. Contrasting images have been attached to each of them: an inner sun to the former, and rain, darkness and clouds to the latter.

Setting

The rainy, dark and adverse set is an ordinary street that could be located in any

American town. The dominant colours are brown and grey, but some bursts of bright colours are scattered along the street. The municipal fire alarm posts are red, the diverse plants and trees are green, and white or orange come from the shop windows. These points of colour match with the cheery dancing, reducing the dull atmosphere of the prevailing tones but without completely cancelling its effect. As it is night time, the street is illuminated by artificial streetlamps, with a slightly yellowish quality especially evident when directed towards Kelly's smile. The street is occasionally populated by hasty passers-by who, in accordance with the sober ambience, send reproachful looks to the smiling main character.

Movement

The choreography for the cheerful dancing taking place in this dim setting is organized according to the principle of rising action leading to a joyful climax. Different types of movements correspond to different levels of happiness. The contrast is clear in the opposite dancing qualities of the first and final types of dance: the tap routine and the child-like splashes.

The tap dancing fragment corresponds to the initial release of happiness and takes place in the narrow space of the pavement. Kelly dances in front of the colourful shop windows, facing the road, where the recording camera is placed. The percussive footwork is the most distinctive feature of this dance. Rhythmic sequences enter into a conversation with the melody, offering either an accompaniment or a syncopated counterpoint. The sound made by his feet has an unusual tone, as the generally metallic sound is in this number cushioned and softened by the water (Wollen, 1997: 16). The movement that allows the tap stamping is not heavy, as it takes the smallest necessary amount of weight. His feet make a quick and light contact with the floor, leaving it immediately afterwards. The effect is an impression of lightness. The size of the steps and the space necessary to perform them are small. However, the use of the arms and the umbrella help to create the impression that they are wider. With the same purpose, the dancer generously travels through the horizontal space established by the pavement.

In contrast with these qualities, the jumps and splashes at the end are made of broader and stronger movements, conveying a feeling of extreme happiness. They take place in a big puddle at the left side of the road, where Kelly arrives at the end of the number. At first, he restrains his impulse to jump into it though he starts to amusingly play with the water. Reconsidering his decision, he finally jumps into the puddle. In the steps of this section his legs, not his feet, are the leaders. Always slightly bent, they make very wide movements. The watery ground is either their starting point of contact or their final target. The stress is always put on the moment of touching the ground when the puddle water splashes everywhere. The movement is wide and consciously stressed to humorous effect, with big steps taking up wide space. Kelly moves in all directions. The overall impression is that of a man having the unrestrained and sincere fun of a child. The enjoyment of the performer reaches its climax in this joyful moment. In Dyer's terms, the entertainment value of the film is condensed in these bold steps that shape happiness at the peak of its intensity.

Main Motifs

A similar pattern of progressive development can be found in the choreographic imagery. It relies on the repetition of simple motifs that are subtly introduced on their first appearance but which become more evident and meaningful on their successive appearances. There are three main motifs that I call the “smiling pose”, the “happy rotation” and the “child-like splash”, which respectively stand for the three features of the intense happiness they convey: it can be internally alive despite external adverse circumstances; it can be externalized, producing contagious delight; and it can bring back the child naivety that allows absolute enjoyment.

The “Smiling Pose”

The “smiling pose” is the central motif of the piece and it is the first to appear. Without any musical emphasis, it is briefly introduced at the very beginning of the number, just immediately after Kelly kisses his girl goodnight and turns his body towards the camera. He starts to step down the stairs holding the black umbrella, already open, in one hand but he calmly stops, pausing for a second. The pose is introduced in this moment. He stretches his left hand in order to feel the raindrops falling, while drawing a broad smile in his face, his eyes slightly closed and his head leaning a bit backwards, blissfully facing the cloudy sky. He holds the position for a few seconds, allowing the audience to retain the image of inner happiness despite the external bad weather that is the central motif of the number. Despite its brevity and lack of emphasis, the most important image of the choreography has been established. It will never appear again in exactly the same shape but several imaginative variations occur, each one adding important nuances while conveying the same basic meaning.

The second time the “smiling pose” is used just a few seconds after its introduction a strong musical emphasis accompanies it. It is also preceded by a sudden stop in the movement. This time the gesture is also broader, as not only the left hand but also the right hand stretch out, taking the umbrella with it and leaving the head unsheltered, at the mercy of the rain. Kelly shrugs his shoulders and closes the umbrella, adding an element of carelessness that is the first sign of a hidden childlike nature he will later disclose. The musical stress on the pose is motivated by the fact that here it has an important narrative function: it inaugurates the song.

The most famous variation of the “smiling pose” arrives while the dancer is still singing. With a graceful leap he reaches the top of the streetlamp base, deploying the pose under its yellow light. From that higher level, closer to the unfriendly cloudy sky, his arms wide open and his slightly bent legs gracefully interwoven, he benefits from the brightness of the artificial sun and offers a powerful contrasting image to the darkness in the sky: a sun stands against the rain; his inner joy beams against the adverse circumstances. The pose is sustained for some seconds, marking a pause in the movement but not in the song, which continues to be sung without interruption. The fluidity of the music in opposition to the stillness of the dancer’s body composes the most powerful performance of the pose.

On another occasion, a funny variation of the “smiling pose” is used as an element of

introduction. Placed at the beginning of the dance section, the specific feature of this whimsical variant is that the dancer's knees are bent inwardly, conveying a bold and playful nuance that matches with the tone of the subsequent steps. In addition, the attention of the audience is driven to the legs, not to the generously open arms or the bright smiling face, announcing thus the dominant feature of the dance routine that will follow. Being predominantly tap dance, the leading role will be played by the feet, towards which the eyes of the spectator have subtly been led by the pose.

The "Happy Rotation"

Less pervasive than the "smiling pose", the "happy rotation" motif is placed at the heart of the choreography, between the initial tap steps and the final wild stamps. The motif is again discreetly introduced. Its first shape is a combination of two simple spins on one leg, one to the left and the other to the right. They are inserted in the dance routine but are not particularly stressed. The motif will grow bigger just a few steps afterwards. Opening the umbrella and placing it downwards, the performer dances a whole circle around it, the palm of his hand extended to feel the falling rain suggesting careless enjoyment and spontaneous openness. As if realizing the inherent potential for fun, Kelly abandons the pavement, where he has concentrated his dancing until this moment, and he boldly invades the road. There he dances a huge circle, making precise turns with his open legs while holding the open umbrella outwardly at the waist level. The music heavily stresses this wild whirling as the volume of the melody, at this point already played by the whole orchestra, is opportunely raised. The meaning attached to this motif is that of an unrestrained joy, finally released and overtly announced to the world.

The "Child-like Splash"

The "child-like splash" motif is deeply connected with this idea of uncontrolled and wild happiness that is the dominant feature at the end of the number. However, the motif has been suggested earlier. The way Kelly walks down the street during the opening steps, with the feet coming into a graceful and light contact with the wet pavement before being emphatically raised, is its first subtle manifestation. Secondly, it is implicitly embedded in the tap dancing, where the sound has a particular tone due to the presence of water and where the image of water splashing is already present. In the last and full shape of the motif, the dancer enjoys kicking up water and stomping in the puddle without any restraint. The motif has a significant function, since it marks the end of the rising vitality of the whole number. At this point, the dance reaches the peak of uninhibited enjoyment and culminates the development of the motif that has previously, only slyly been introduced. The effect the "child-like splash" produces in its last appearance is a powerful combination of delight and revisited childhood naivety. It stands for a complete and unrestrained happiness able to produce a deep and lasting impact in the memory of the spectator.

Dancer

The performer of the number, Kelly himself, plays an important role in conveying the feeling of intense happiness embedded in these three motifs. As a dancer, he had an eclectic training that enabled him to offer a broad range of dance expression. His style was rooted in tap and musical comedy dance but also incorporated ballet, modern dance, jazz and gymnastics. In addition, he carefully cultivated his acting skills, as he was always aware that while dancing he was playing a character. His performances were intended to create meaning linked to the story, whether just a vague mood or very specific ideas (Delamater, 1981: 152-156). In this number, his dancing is vigorous, athletic, and vital, conveying an image of lightness, easiness and joviality that matches with the spirit of happiness governing the piece. This image also makes possible that the childlike movements at the end of the dance do not look incongruous but perfectly natural for an adult with an immense inner joy. He wears a grey suit, a light blue shirt, a black tie, a hat and a black wide umbrella. That is, he is dressed as any other man on a rainy evening. The sense of ordinariness conveyed by this costume helps to highlight the universality of the feelings depicted in the choreography. Happiness might be utopian, but gives the impression of being at hand.

Another important contribution of the dancer to the effect of the number is that he skilfully integrates part of the scenery in his performance. As already mentioned, the streetlamp helps him to reach a higher and more illuminated level where his smile seems broader and brighter. He also comically hugs it while he sings he is “ready for love”. In addition, he makes the most of his umbrella. Not only is it the permanent complement for his dancing, in the diverse ways already suggested, but also it stands for a woman, with whom he, amusingly serious, waltzes; and for a guitar, which he plays to seduce the voluptuous woman of the ad at the drug store.

However, objects are not the only target of his attention. He is also aware of the presence of other people on the street. He politely sends the taxi driver away, when he decides that he will rather walk back home; he respectfully greets each of the wet hurried pedestrians he encounters in his way; and he even has a short conversation with the police officer. This final interaction is placed in the closing moments of the number and functions as its appropriately funny denouement. After the sheer delight of watching Kelly’s dancing, the audience is given an opportunity to smile for the last time when hearing the simple and incongruous explanation he gives to the cop’s reproving look at his behaviour on the puddle. “I’m just dancin’ and singin’ in the rain” he sings, and as a result, not only him but also the audience expectant of entertainment is at this point, hopefully, “happy again”.

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Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks to Tamara Tomic-Vajagic and Stacey Prickett, the two intended readers of

this essay at the time of writing. Without their enthusiastic response, it would have never reached a wider audience.

Notes

1. I refer the reader to Dyer for the explanation of how each of these categories have acquired the emotional signification they possess not from their intrinsic properties but from the place they have had within the network of signs in a given culture and at a given point of time (2002: 24).
2. The term ‘number’ is used throughout this paper to refer to the segments of dance and/or music embedded in the narrative of film musicals and distinctive of this kind of movies.
3. The number and the film have been widely analysed from the perspective of film studies. For different examples, see Altman (1987), Fordin (1996), Wollen (1997), Clover (2002), Cohan (2002) and Dyer (2012).
4. I use the term ‘motif’ in the sense of ‘the concrete realisation of a fixed abstract idea’ (Würzbach, 2005: 323).
5. Stephanie Jordan defines the term visualisation as ‘the technique of creating concurrence or imitation between music and dance’. It is possible to visualise many different aspects of music, such as dynamics, textures, pitch contour, instrumental layout, etc. (2000: 74). Here I only concentrate on the visualisation of the lyrics.

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Nijinsky's *Faune* and the emergence of authorship

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Abstract

The importance of Vaslav Nijinsky for the development of the choreographic scene in Western world is unarguable. Even if he created only four ballets during his career, his works, specially his first one - L'Après-midi d'un faune (1912) - are considered as milestones for modern dance. With the revival of his notations on L'Après-midi, decoded by Ann Hutchinson Guest and Claudia Jeschke, a number of restagings of this ballet occurred worldwide.

However, in this article I focus not on the revivals that aim to be as truthful as possible to Nijinsky's original, but on two works that were inspired by it, that is, Olivier Dubois Faune(s) and Albrechet Knust Quator ...d'un faune, both created in France by french contemporary dancers.

Considering the notions of intertextuality, parody, pastiche and citation, I reflect on the concept of authorship in dance, starting with Nijinsky's own artistic project, moving towards those inspired by it.

“A faun rests, the ninphs seduce him, a scarf left behind satisfies his desire, the curtain drops so the poem may begin in all memories.” Those were the words of Jean Cocteau for the Ballet Russes’ program, at their opening season at Châtelet Theatre in Paris, 1912. Nijinsky’s first choreographic creation, *L’après-midi d’un faune*, which used Debussy’s music, after the homonym poem of Mallarmé, marks a turning point for modern choreography at the beginning of the XX century.

Restaged many times, by several different dance companies throughout the past century, this ballet has been transmitted through oral tradition by dancers who have worked directly with the russian choreographer, and/or with artists close to him. Such a process has happened until 1988 when the first decoding of Nijinsky’s own notations - dated from 1915 - was concluded. It had been kept unused for forty years after his death. Deciphered and executed by two dance notators, Ann Hutchinson-Guest and Claudia Jeshcke, Nijinsky’s code was translated into a labanotation version and then began to gain new and more accurate productions.

Available to dance students, teachers, scholars, dancers and researchers, these scores trespassed the classical ballet universe and reached the contemporary dance context as well. Of course this is not a surprising response to a work that, due to its evocative and symbolic nature, offers so many possibilities of reading. At the 2014 *Un Nouveau Festival*, an annual multidisciplinary event produced by the Centre George Pompidou, in Paris, a full day of it’s program focused on contemporary works inspired by Nijinsky’s *Faune*.

All videos, lectures and debates that were presented in this case could make me perceive how an artistic work can function as a source of different approaches. Three videos were presented then; I will briefly examine here two of them. The first one is *Faune(s)*, a work from 2008 by Olivier Dubois with the collaboration of Dominique Brun, Christophe Honoré, Sophie Perez et Xavier Boussiron. Olivier Dubois himself was there at the event. Talking about this specific work he mentioned that his aim, more than to preserve Nijinsky's piece, was to pervert it. In his own words: "to pervert is also a way of making it exist, to transform it and to transfer."

Considering the notion of parody, Samoyault argues that "the parody transforms a preceding work, either by characterizing it or by reusing it while transposing it. More than a transformation or deformation, it always exhibits a direct relationship with the existing literature... It is often related in the common sense to depreciation, pejorative imitation of a serious work"

However, despite seeing Dubois' work after Nijinsky's *Faune* as a parody, it is also interesting to try to capture such a parody in its ambivalence, remembering that a parody does not necessarily implicates in a pejorative character neither in an impoverishment of the work in question.

As I did not manage to get the video of this material, I will describe it briefly. The first scene consists in a black and white short movie piece, recorded in a urban environment. Dubois plays the *Faune*, a sort of "urban-faune", that observes a group of boys, young men playing tennis. The men, as they perceive that they are being observed, take off their shirts and a sort of provocative game starts. One of the boys stays behind after the game, the faun follows him; they go to a room, the boy takes off his shirt and leaves it behind to the faun, who, laying on top of it, seems to masturbate himself.

Despite the absence of dance movements and of Debussy's music, it's pretty obvious the analogy to the original dance piece.

The following parts are videos of stage pieces, located in an Italian proscenium. The second scene is a version of the notes left by Nijinsky. All done "by the book": the setting, the music, the costumes, and the characters, that is, the faun and the nymphs. The relationship between Dubois' and Nijinskij's material encompasses similarities and differences. Dubois' material is different because the faun here, again played by Dubois, is an overweight dancer, and that doesn't go unnoticed. Dressed with the same printed unitard as Nijinsky did, Dubois' body defies the classical ballet's aesthetics with his heavy weight figure. Even though he is able to execute precisely every step of the choreography, this material will eventually evoke new meanings to that piece.

The third act or scene will bring an extra character, a man dressed in a Bavarian costume with oversized hands, who dances and sings giving shape to a nonsensical structure. Referring to Diaghlev, at a certain point he wears a mask that resembles the Russian impresario. Dubois then mixes some of Nijinsky's classical bilateral gestures with a jazzy choreography and finishes by dropping a sort of placenta-like liquid on stage. Black out.

In the final scene Dubois reenters the stage, naked under a fur-coat, and referring again to Diaghlev, he also has horns on his head...

After watching Dubois' *Faune(s)* some questions have emerged, such as: would there be specific dance pieces which allow reproductions that go beyond its own time

and frame of reference? And at the same time what sort of values and potentialities will these reproductions aggregate to the “original” creations?

Nijinsky’s project was a very detailed one, considered by some historians as one of the first choreographic pieces associated with authorship in modern dance. In this respect, Isabelle Launay argues that

“Nijinsky was the first to impose that his choreography should not only be executed precisely as he saw it, but also followed his own artistic interpretation. No ballet had ever been taught with such a musical and choreographical precision such as *L’Après-midi d’un Faune*. Each position, each movement of the body, from its finger tips, was organised by a strict choreographic plan. (LAUNAY, 2010, p. 48)

Other contemporary artists also approached to Nijinsky’s *Faune* as a creative source. The extinct French collective *Albert Kunst Quator*, was also presented at the 2014 festival at Pompidou. Very different from Dubois approach, the Quator performed the *Faune* choreography after Guest’s and Jechke decoded scores producing a huge spectrum of possibilities. They experimented solos and duets, even trio versions of it. Their work was presented at the Festival through recordings of some experiments tried by the ensemble. In one extract, for instance, we see an inversion of roles, the faun is played by a female performer in a solo version. She wears casual clothes and sneakers, there is no setting of scenery or music, the performance is reduced to its bare movements. Another extract shows the complete inversion, a male performer plays the nymph and the same female dancer plays again the faun. Reducing the material, the *Quator* deconstructed its dramaturgy to its core, transforming an iconic work into an inexhaustible source, creatively speaking; their materials also bring to my mind the notions of originality and authorship in dance.

Taking these two creative processes as case studies, what interests me is to problematize the notion of authorship in dance, trying to detail it and recognize the complexity of its topology as well as its inner tensions. To think of authorship involves a complex sort of implications. Is the author really dead? How can we think of it without being suppressed by the obsession of originality? How can we articulate the notions of authorship and intertextuality? At what level can Nijinskij be considered as one of the pioneers of authorship in Western modern dance?

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The Choreography & Performance of Religion: Power and Ritual within an American Fundamentalist Practice

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Abstract

This paper will explore notions of choreography and performance within twentieth century American, Fundamentalist Christianity, utilizing frameworks presented by Judith Butler and Susan Foster. Additionally, this paper will examine the construction of cultural values using a model of hierarchical power within such Christian organizations. Furthermore, Michel Foucault's Docile Bodies theory is relevant to the understanding of construction and implementation, vis-à-vis choreography and performance, of ritual worship behaviors. From the positioning of bodies in space, to the actions of those bodies, this paper will examine the impetus behind the obligatory acts within Fundamentalist Christian worship.

In my memory, I enter into the sanctuary, a place that I've entered hundreds of times in the past. The arrangement of more than a hundred chairs in rows face a stage that rises nearly three feet above the congregants. Lights are dimmed in the house, but the stage is bright. It draws the focus of the people entering the space. Once the bodies are arranged, the music begins. At first the pulsating rhythm is celebratory and energizing, encouraging the bodies to move in time. Many of those present choose to move from their seats into the space between the first row of chairs and the stage. This closeness of participants encourages a community in which all might approach a spiritual threshold. After a few songs have been sung, the music shifts. Instead of energizing, it is calming and introspective; it is no longer upbeat, but drones on at a slower tempo. The music also adopts a minor mode meant to elicit feelings of piety or repentance. The focus of the congregants turns inward. Following the lead of those on stage who assume a position of authority, the experience becomes more internal: eyes are closed, faces are upturned, and arms are raised in gesture of offering, bodies are slowly swaying in time to the music, voices are calling out in unison to songs learned through calculated repetition. This practice leads to frenzy when performed correctly; a frenzy that guides the participants to a higher spirituality. In reflection, I find myself asking questions about this culturally constructed phenomenon. For example, how is it that these bodies come to know how to perform accurately? How do they come to understand the acceptable order within the worship space?

For many years in my early youth, I was deeply immersed in Christian practice. Because my father was a minister, my family went to church regularly and I also attended a Christian school, affiliated with the Assemblies of God denomination, from kindergarten until my sophomore year of high school. The longer I was involved in the realm of Fundamentalist Christianity, the more important it became for me to question the expecta-

tions that accompanied participation and acceptance within it. However, as I asked more questions, I was met with increasing repudiation from those in positions of authority, particularly teachers and chaplains where I attended school. The overall experience became increasingly negative, and, as such, became a source of anger and resentment. Upon separation from deep immersion within Fundamentalist Christianity in my early adulthood, I began to consider the ways in which organized religious practice utilizes social conditioning techniques. More specifically, I began to uncover a strong connection between performance studies and worship, as it is practiced within American Fundamentalist churches. Many of these occurrences are learned behaviors that are performed with frequency as a part of Fundamentalist Christian worship services in much the same way that one learns proper execution and performance of dance technique. Thus, I intend to demonstrate that the gesture and spatial arrangement of bodies present within these worship services can be viewed through the lens of dance studies.

In seeking to apply this unique analysis of Fundamentalist Christian worship behavior, I will draw upon frameworks presented by Judith Butler and Susan Leigh Foster. I intend to show how performance, specifically dance performance, can be seen as “a conceptual framework for sorting through... complex [cultural] issues. Focus on dance enables a more thorough understanding of the cultural constructedness of body and identity” especially in a context where movement is prevalent and even expected as a part of weekly repetitive participation (Foster 1998, 7). Following Butler’s and Foster’s use of performance studies as a lens through which to view cultural situations, I will utilize theories of Victor Turner and Richard Schechner to help support, and clarify the interpretation of ritual practice as performative, and as having a parallel to theatrical presentations. Finally, I will employ Michel Foucault’s *Docile Bodies* theory for its relevance to the understanding of construction and implementation, vis-à-vis choreography and performance, of worship behaviors. From the positioning of bodies in space, to the actions of those bodies, this paper will examine the impetus for the obligatory acts within Fundamentalist Christian worship.

In “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” Judith Butler discusses cultural behaviors that “...seek to explain the mundane way in which social agents *constitute* social reality through language, gesture, and all manner of social signs” (Butler 1988, 2). She describes gender as, “an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (1988, 2). These acts, according to Butler, are not inherent traits but are used to encourage normative behaviors within specific cultural situations. Furthermore, she suggests that because these acts are not characteristic, and must be conditioned, there exists a necessity to “renew, revise, and consolidate” them in order to achieve correct performance (1988, 6). This is similar to the way that Victor Turner and Richard Schechner discuss ritual performance. Ritual describes a “sequence of activities involving gestures, words and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors’ goals and interests” (Turner, 1973, 1100). Turner’s concepts of *liminality* and *communitas* address the conditioning of bodies within ritual for the purpose of correct performance. *Liminality* describes the spiritual approach toward a threshold. This implies an understanding that through ritual performance, an individual’s goal is to transcend one’s previous spiritual state in order to enter a higher one (Turner 1969, 95). The liminal entity “is normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructors implicitly... It is as though they are being fashioned anew and endowed with

additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life” (1969, 95). Participants within Fundamentalist Christian worship services are regularly expected to behave in certain ways, following gestural and spatial guidelines in order to find the power necessary to approach this liminal space, specifically, the acceptance of their subjugation. It represents the awareness of one’s status as learner under the authority of the spiritual leader who has taken control by their physical positioning and verbal guidance of the bodies within the space. In seeking commonality, the individuals take behavioral cues from the bodies around them as well in determining how to reach a liminal experience as a part of worship.

As emotion builds within collective worship performance, the participants’ desire for a mutuality of experience can be realized. “What they seek is a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person’s being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared” (Turner 1969, 138). Those participating in this worship become acutely aware of other performers getting into the flow of performance, thus allowing themselves to surrender to the movement of ritual worship. They arrange themselves in close proximity as a symbol of solidarity and support. In so doing, they also ensure that if someone reaches an extreme state of frenzy that they are available to protect each other bodily through direct physical intervention (Schechner & Turner 1985, 18). Physical contact through the laying of hands guarantees a close enough proximity to maintain a certain degree of control while still surrendering to the emotion of the worship performance. This spatial arrangement is as rehearsed among participants in Fundamentalist Christian worship, as the spatial pathways used in dance training and performance. This collective purpose defines Turner’s idea of *communitas*. *Communitas* intersects the idea of *liminality*, in that those seeking a similar liminal experience share mutual space and purpose.

The cultural construction of Fundamentalist worship practice contains acts within in that denote some degree of performance whether private or public. However, the acts being performed as a part of this practice are often considered to be “encoded...[as] a well-known sequence of events better known to connoisseurs than to common spectators” (Schechner & Turner 1985, 117). Those outside of regular participation within Fundamentalist Christianity may have no means to understand what they are witnessing, but the conceptual framework of dance, specifically choreography and performance, can be used to break through this encoded language and reveal a deeper interpretation of what is being presented. Susan Leigh Foster draws upon Butler’s ideas in her article “Choreography of Gender” by suggesting that “choreography, the tradition of codes and conventions through which meaning is constructed in dance, offers a social and historical analytic framework for the study of gender, whereas performance concentrates on the individual execution of such codes” (Foster 1998, 6). She suggests that choreography does not negate the use of performance as means for interpreting culturally significant behaviors, but rather enhances it. I would like to expand this further to suggest that choreography and performance as a means by which to discuss cultural phenomena, from the tradition of dance studies, complement each other in their ability to interpret and analyze. Within Foster’s discussion of gender, there is an understanding that an influence exists that dictates what acts or codes must be performed as a part of cultural construction. She suggests three ways in which choreography can be utilized as it passes to the intended performer: direct, indirect, and/or improvised. In the case of direct choreographic practice, there exists an influence that is present at the time of initial physical learning. This

influence possesses the ability to directly affect the outcome of the performance through suggestive representation. Foster describes this relationship in the following way:

Dancers who enter the studio to translate choreography into performance begin by learning the movement, its timing, and its disposition for the body in space, as meticulously as is required by the aesthetic demand of the situation. Yet they modify the movement so as to develop a personal relationship with it...They may imbue the movement with personal meanings in addition to those described by the choreographer so as to attain a greater fervency (10).

This process suggests most closely a relationship between expert and protégé in that the performer (protégé) desires to correctly convey the message or intent of the choreographer (expert). This direct influence between expert and protégé is the relationship that I suggest is evident within Fundamentalist Christian practice. The worship leader, situated as authority figure, is positioned so that they can easily direct and maintain control of the bodies within the room. This reflects a similar authoritarian practice that might be used by a choreographer or dance instructor in rehearsal practice or training.

The application of choreography as a conceptual framework for the physical conditioning of bodies within a specific context is further supported by Michel Foucault's notion of *Docile Bodies*. Foucault's focus on the training of individuals to perform in a particular way, and the emphasis on careful spatial arrangement throughout that training is applicable to the ways in which bodies operate within religious practice. *Docile Bodies*, according to Foucault, are ingrained with "a bodily rhetoric of honor," thus conditioned to accept their training without question (Foucault 1984, 179). I maintain that participants within Fundamentalist Christian worship are ingrained with a similar bodily rhetoric of piety, which allows them to accept without questions the actions that must be performed as a part of their participation. Foucault says, "Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (1984, 188). Foucault discusses the notion that docility is maintained, while power is asserted through a "spatial 'nesting' of hierarchized surveillance" (1984, 190). He is speaking specifically about the arrangement of military camps, but states that such arrangements are also prevalent in housing estates, hospitals, prisons, asylums, and schools. I would extend this to include the arrangement of the church sanctuary. Typically, a pastor, or leader, is positioned on a raised platform at the head of the sanctuary, and all of the congregants are seated in neatly arranged rows facing this figure head. From this vantage point, the pastor is able to assert a certain amount of control over those within his/her line of sight. This supports a kind of discipline (defined by Foucault as "docility-utility"), that allows for passive disciplining:

Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism and which, for the spectacle of public events, substitutes the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes. Thanks to the technique of surveillance, the 'physics' of power, the hold over the body, operates according to the law of optics and mechanics, according to a whole play of spaces, lines, screens, beams, degrees, and without recourse, in principle at least, to excess, force. (1984, 181; 192-3).

The leader is effectively employing the aforementioned “hierarchized surveillance” that denotes a physical accountability from the participants to the gaze of this leader (Foucault 1984, 190). The language used by this figurehead elicits an internal reaction on the part of those present to want to comply as a part of their accepted docility. This relationship is directly modeled after the relationship described in the gospel of Matthew between Jesus Christ and his disciples, the ideal model for docility. Christ says to his disciples, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men... and immediately they left the boat...and followed him” (Matt. 4:19-22, *The New King James Translation*). This positioning demonstrates the subjugated body as unquestioning and ready for inscription; in other words, the participant in worship, in an effort to please, reacts without hesitation or skepticism. In so doing, the participants might be able to both please those in a position of authority, and to prepare themselves for the coming ritual performance. This is a public display, whose “aim [is] not to close self-awareness in upon itself but to enable it to open up entirely to its director – to unveil to him the depths of the soul” (Foucault 1999, 143).

Through the desire to achieve a performance of worship that most closely follows the guidelines of proper performance, individual bodies might be drawn to focus their intentions more internally. The public display of internal reactions to the prompts of a spiritual leader serves as a vehicle for the participants to cleanse themselves of any perceived wrong-doings. This might be paralleled to the idea of the dancer performing movement at the behest of a choreographer’s prompts or corrections. According to Foucault:

All [the] Christian techniques of examination,...guidance, obedience, have an aim: to get individuals to work at their own ‘mortification’ in this world. Mortification is not death, of course, but it is a renunciation of this world and of oneself: a kind of everyday death. A death which is supposed to provide life in another world. (1999, 143)

This is part of the performance that the individuals within Fundamentalist Christianity work at in each performance of worship. The reason that these practices must be repeated with frequency is because in between the weekly performances of ritual practices, the participants might commit further wrong-doings. Such a practice could be paralleled to the weekly rehearsals of dancers preparing for an upcoming performance. The dancers repeat the same choreographic material many times in rehearsal sessions in the hopes that they might execute the movement impeccably in performance. Thus worship participants’ weekly ritual is a kind of rehearsed penance that, in public display, allows the individual to show a full commitment to the ritual practice. Foucault describes this practice within Christianity as *exomologesis*. This practice allows performers to “prove their suffering, show their shame, make visible their humility, and exhibit their modesty” so that anyone present can see the commitment to reaching a liminal spiritual experience (1999, 172). Perhaps they will be noticed and praised by the authoritative body within the space – a desire that exists within both religious practice and dance practice.

In America, the freedom of religion and regular religious practice are often thought to be above reproach. This is especially true regarding Fundamentalist Christianity. By this I mean that when critical analysis enters into the realm of religious acts within Fundamentalist Christianity, there is, typically, a defensive attitude surrounding what is perceived as criticism. Still, Fundamentalist Christianity as a pervasive social practice can be of interest when considering the construction and execution of learned behaviors, especially

within worship practice. This is not to say that the acts that take place within the Fundamental Christian worship require criticism. But they, like many other social constructs, invite scrutiny in seeking to understand the purpose of what is acceptable or expected within this particular setting. Foster writes that “choreography challenges the dichotomization of verbal and nonverbal cultural practices by asserting the thought-filledness of movement and the theoretical potential of bodily action” (Foster 1998, 29). Inherent in this quote is the notion that choreography is a sufficient, though rarely utilized, model for reflecting or projecting important ideas and thoughts through the dissection of the physical manifestations of human behavior. Especially where that behavior is so embodied, the parallel between dance studies and cultural phenomena is particularly keen.

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Reading between the Lines: Interpreting Cecchetti's 1894 *Manuel des exercices de danse théâtrale*

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Abstract

In 1894, Enrico Cecchetti hand wrote “un petit ‘Pro-memoria’” for his students in St. Petersburg. From this document, information related to Cecchetti’s class content, his class organisation, and influences on his work can be retrieved. Cecchetti’s 1894 manual offers an intermediary glimpse into the evolution of ballet technique in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Situated chronologically between Blasis’ early nineteenth-century treatises and the 1922 Manual of the Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Méthode Cecchetti), much can be gleaned from the advice and exercises Cecchetti elected to include in his 1894 document. In this paper, I explore and employ theories of adaptation, interpretation, and translation as they can be applied to an examination of Cecchetti’s 1894 Manuel.

Theories of adaptation often are applied to examine how a text becomes a performance, or how specific performances are re-envisioned and re-worked; theories of translation are most commonly applied to the process of moving a literary text from one language to another, while interpretation focuses on the spoken word; intertextuality is established on the principle that “every text is bound up with a host of other texts, some known and intended by the author, others known only by the reader” (Adshead-Lansdale, x). Literary works and performances, including dance performances, dominate the anthologies and texts related to the concepts of adaptation, translation, and intertextuality. The questions I asked myself as I contemplated this paper were: Where or how do dance manuals fit into this theoretical landscape? And, how might our understanding of dance manuals benefit from an examination of their contents through the theoretical lenses of adaptation, translation, and intertextuality? As a case study, I decided to employ the manual written by Enrico Cecchetti, in St. Petersburg, in 1894.

Cecchetti, upon his arrival in St. Petersburg from Italy in 1887, was first hired by the Imperial Theatres as a dancer. He subsequently was appointed to a teaching position at the school in 1892. His 1894 *Manuel des exercices de danse théâtrale* was hand-written for a class of female pupils with the full title providing additional information regarding the purpose of the manual: “À pratiquer chaque jour de la semaine, à l’usage de mes élèves.” Written as “un petit ‘Pro-Memoria’” (11) for his students, Cecchetti intended this manual to be used once his pupils were no longer at the school. His familiarity with, and

high regard for, the work and philosophies of Blasis and Bournonville are demonstrated through numerous references and quotes to their writings in the 1894 text, ensuring that his own students became acquainted with the thoughts recorded by these by-then deceased dance masters. Cecchetti begins his 1894 manual with the “Avant-propos” from the 1861 technical manual, *Études chorégraphiques*, written by Bournonville in French and Danish for his students and colleagues prior to his departure from Denmark for Sweden. A translation of the Foreword’s full text appears as an Appendix in Erik Bruhn and Lillian Moore’s *Bournonville and Ballet Technique*. Cecchetti, by including this Foreword in his own manual, appears to signal his agreement with Bournonville on a number of points, including: “The beauty which [dance] strives to maintain is not founded on vague principles of fashion or mere enjoyment, but on the immutable laws of nature;” and “Noble simplicity will always be beautiful. The astonishing, on the contrary, soon becomes boring.” Near the end of the Foreword, Bournonville states:

The summit of talent is to know how to conceal the mechanism through the calm harmony which is the foundation of true grace.

To maintain this easy grace, in the midst of the most fatiguing movements, is the great problem of the dance, and such virtuosity cannot be acquired without good exercises designed to develop the qualities and eliminate the imperfections which everyone ... is obliged to combat. (Bruhn and Moore, 26)

Cecchetti’s familiarity with a number of dance texts is revealed by his incorporation of words of advice and caution to students first written by Blasis in the 1820s. Appearing in the first section of the guide under the heading “Deux Mots à mes Elèves” (5), Cecchetti introduces this material with the phrase: “Le grand maître Blasis nous dit...” (6). Additionally, the second half of the 1894 manual is dedicated exclusively to an explanation of Arthur Saint-Léon’s *La Stenochorégraphie* (58-102). This section of the manual presents the opportunity for another entire research project. To return to the intertextual description provided earlier, Cecchetti’s own small manual clearly is “bound up with a host of other texts.”

Like many (maybe most?) teachers throughout time, both Bournonville and Cecchetti worried that once their students left the academy, the young dancers would forget the principles of movement that they had so carefully been taught. Blasis, Bournonville and Cecchetti all shared the belief that the development of strong technique was predicated on consistent exposure to, and participation in, well designed class exercises. But, significantly, Cecchetti also expressed his disapproval of teachers who restricted themselves and their students to “les mêmes choses toujours; toujours les mêmes pas, les mêmes mouvements” (6).

The codification of Cecchetti’s class content and design generally is associated with the 1922 publication of *A Manual of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Cecchetti Method)*

co-authored by Cyril Beaumont and Stanislas Idzikowsky. Cecchetti's class content prior to 1922 often is overlooked. For example, in their text, *The Cecchetti Legacy*, Hutchinson Guest and Bennett do not include the 1894 manual, focusing their attention instead on the 1932 second edition of the Beaumont and Idzikowsky manual, along with two editions (1930 and 1979) of *The Theory and Practice of Allegro in Classical Ballet (Cecchetti Method)*. However, I contend that Cecchetti's 1894 'Pro-memoria'" provides key information related to the evolution of ballet class content during the nineteenth century, and that theories related to adaptation, translation and intertextuality can be applied productively as a means through which to illuminate the changes that were introduced.

To begin, how might we contemplate the ballet class as a text? A dance performance libretto clearly is a text; a dance manual clearly is a text; I further propose that the structure of the ballet class constitutes a virtual text. The presence of this virtual text is made apparent by the fact that access to a manual is not required by teachers in order to construct a class, nor is access required in order for students to learn the structure (in other words, the story); the class sequence or narrative is absorbed through oral communication and embodied practice. As skills are acquired, additional vocabulary and exercises are inserted by the teacher, expanding the class content (in other words, adding more themes to the story). The class structure can be regarded as a narrative, with the exercises unfolding and relating a theme or series of themes (albeit movement themes, not a plot *per se*). The class content and sequence, acknowledging the virtual text, is performed prior to any documentation in the form of a manual; as such, the virtual text precedes the written text. In this context, I believe that adaptation theory can be applied to the process of translating the verbal and embodied class experience to the written document, as seen in the writing of class notes or a dance manual.

In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon defines adaptation as "a form of repetition without replication" (xviii). She also states that there are "significant differences between being told a story and being shown a story, and especially between both of these and the physical act of participating in a story's world" (xvii). In the case of the dance class, the activities of showing, telling, and participating are all present concurrently. The narrative unfolds in numerous ways, often simultaneously, much like hypertext. The dance manual consequently presents a significant challenge: how do we capture the virtual class narrative and put it into words on a page? During this process, what is lost? What is gained? What gets altered? As dance historians, how do we adapt and translate dance manuals? How much is "literal"? How much is "read between the lines"? When we examine a dance manual, what do we bring to the exercise? Do we make links backward and forward or do we restrict our attention to the item at hand?

Returning to Cecchetti's 1894 guide, the rich information it provides is apparent when its contents are examined comparatively with the Blasis manuals of the early nineteenth century, as well as with the Cecchetti 1922 manual documenting his later work. Cecchetti states that his 1894 text includes only the most useful exercises, but it appears that this

applies primarily to work performed in the centre. The value he placed on barre work is apparent: key elements associated with the execution of each exercise are provided, illustrating his philosophy that “c’est avec beaucoup d’exercices à la barre qu’on arrive à rendre ses jambes biens deliées, souples, vigoureuses et capables d’exécuter tous les exercices, mêmes les plus difficiles” (42). The explanations accompanying the barre exercises provided by Cecchetti offer unique insight into the changes that occurred during the late nineteenth century, illustrating “what can happen when stories ‘travel’--when an adapted text migrates from its context of creation to the adaptation’s context of reception” (xviii).

In the case of the barre work performed by Cecchetti’s students in 1894, the “context of reception” had altered not only in time, but also in space; as the physical environment changed, the class text was adapted. The overall class structure remained constant, with barre work repeated in the centre, followed by adagio and then allegro sequences. However, significant changes in content and sequence are found. Some of these changes are related to the evolution of performance demands and the increased emphasis on pointe work. Others, I believe, are related to the geographic migration of the material. In this paper, I will focus on the adaptations revealed in the barre work.

In his *Traité élémentaire, théorique et pratique de l’art de la danse*, published in 1820 as well as in *The Code of Terpsichore* from 1828, Blais offers guidance on the proper execution of the “First Exercises,” subsequently referred to by Cecchetti as “les exercices à la barre.” Both authors list *pliés* as the first exercise, but the descriptions of how they are to be performed differ. Blais informs his reader to keep the heels on the floor, suggesting that all *pliés* were what we now refer to as *demis pliés*. Cecchetti, on the other hand, reminds his students to “levez les talons le moins possible” (48), suggesting that *grands pliés* in some positions had been introduced. In the 1922 manual, both *demis* and *grands pliés* are explained, but the reader is informed that “When the pupil is instructed to ‘pliez,’ the *grand plié* is understood” (39).

The second adaptation of note is found in the second barre exercise: Blais lists *grands battements* after *pliés* (all spelling throughout is faithful to that used by the original authors), Cecchetti does not. In the Cecchetti class of 1894, *battements tendus (à terre)* – *lents* and *battements dégagés (demi position)* – *vifs* occur immediately after *pliés*; *grands battements* then follow, completing a logical progression of gradually increased leg extensions (*à terre*, *demi position*, and *hauteur de la hanche*). In the Cecchetti class, *grands battements* are performed again at the end of the barre. The 1894 change in the placement of *grands battements* within the class sequence might be attributed to the realities of the Russian climate compared with balmy Italy. Perhaps Cecchetti recognised the possibly negative physical ramifications of performing higher leg extensions so early in the class. However, it is interesting to note that in the 1922 Cecchetti manual, *grands battements* are once again featured as the second barre exercise, and not repeated at the end of the barre. Here, their stated purpose is “to make

the hips free and easy” (36), much like the common current practice of performing *battements cloches* as a warm-up exercise. Today, even in Cecchetti syllabus work, *grands battements* most commonly are performed near the end of the barre. Hutchinson Guest and Bennett list *grands battements* second in their text, but elaborate on the position of the exercise with the statement: “Originally performed after the *pliés*, *grands battements* are often now performed later in the barre” (112). They also include *grands battements* and *battements balancés* at the end of the barre, with the explanation that: “This exercise is not recorded in the manuals but is traditionally often given at the end of the barre” (115). These shifts in the placement of barre exercises indicate that the virtual class text is not fixed. Adaptations can be introduced at the discretion of individual teachers, taking into account the skill set of the students, choreographic demands and, potentially, the studio temperature and time of year.

Another adaptation in the Cecchetti 1894 class is found with the inclusion of *battements frappés* following *ronds de jambes à terre*. *Battements frappés*, provided an important class element for Cecchetti, who stated: “*Les battements tendus sur tout, les battements frappés sur le cou-de-pied, les petits battements*, sont les gammes les plus utiles et les plus nécessaires” (13). He does not elaborate on why these three exercises are so necessary. I propose that *frappés*, together with the other exercise not found in the Blais class, *dégagés*, signal a significant adaptation of class work in response to a shift in performance and choreographic demands. Looking forward to the 1922 Cecchetti manual, *dégagés* are reported to “render the insteps supple, to strengthen the toes, and to strengthen and render elastic the muscles so that you may attain a good elevation” (34), while the identified purpose of *frappés* is to “strengthen the insteps, to strengthen the toes” (34). Both exercises are linked to attaining good elevation, but is that the sole reason behind these additions? To rise *sur les pointes* also requires strong insteps and toes. I propose that the increased emphasis on use of *les pointes* in the latter half of the nineteenth century contributed to, and possibly necessitated, the development of these particular exercises. Since Cecchetti wrote the 1894 manual for a class of female students, it makes sense that he would place emphasis on exercises associated with use of the lower leg and strengthening the foot.

In all the above examples, intertextuality, described by Hutcheon as “the dialogic relations among texts” (xiv), serves as a means through which to illuminate shifts in, and additions to the virtual class text. When manuals are examined in isolation, patterns of adaptation can be missed. Manuals can be used as touchstones, revealing changes and adaptations over time but they do not communicate the full story. Hutcheon states that “every live staging of a printed play could theoretically be considered an adaptation in its performance” (39) since gestures, expressions, and tones of voice are not necessarily communicated in the text. These gaps must be addressed by the actor and director. In the case of dance, it is vital to remind ourselves that as we translate text to movement, we become interpreters as well as creators. The information obtained through manuals can

assist us to trace changes in the class text, but the energy, dynamics and environment associated with the physical class are more difficult to document. As Micheal Worton states in the Foreword to *Dancing Texts: Intertextuality and Interpretation* edited by Janet Adshead: “interpretation is a performative act ... a response both to the contexts in which the text was created and the contexts in which one is reading it” (xi). The activities of “reading between the lines,” making links between texts, and even physically experiencing and experimenting with the work are crucial if we hope to nurture interest in past dance practices and remain true to their spirit.

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Writings as operations of (dis) enfranchisement, investigating manuscripts and choreographer's notes between 16th-19th centuries. Advantages and problems in reconstructing from the papers

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Abstract

Bharatanatyam has manifold systems of writing/documentation. They are in the form of sculptures, paintings, inscriptions and treatises. They are also in the form of personal notes by dance masters (Nattuvanars), notated descriptions by scholars, by wealthy merchants, travellers and the court and temple dancers (Devadasis) themselves.

The female mind, body and voice were used to embody the choreographies envisioned by the male Nattuvanars. But the qualitative fulcrum of this dance remained in extempore exposition. Every repertoire had a pedagogy that was fundamentally dynamic in its transfer and performance, but also written and preserved for memory. The Devadasi envisioned compositions, as a representation of her psyche, each time both in practice and performance. Therefore the same repertoire gets reinterpreted every time by her, but within the structured pedagogy accorded by the composition and the choreographer. Let us investigate if the term choreography is useful in representing this unique process?

Introduction

I am a performer, tutor and historian of the South Indian dance form called *Bharatanatyam*. Not only the historiography of what we call *Bharatanatyam* but also its very form, vocabulary and technique draws from myths, *puranic* lore, legends, treatises, temple sculptures and epigraphs, cultural artefacts, role of Kings and patrons, the hereditary community dancers or temple dancers, the court dancers or the courtesans, colonial and post-colonial influences, various other cultures, languages etc. *Bharatanatyam* is the post-modern cousin of *Sadir*. *Sadir* is the ancient nomenclature for a dance performed exclusively by the court and temple dancers. They belonged to now what is called the *Devadasi* community. Many men of the same community were usually the dance masters. These masters would initiate a girl into dance by teaching her the basic techniques (*adavus*). He would then begin teaching her some of the repertoires he already knows or is danced by other senior dancers and also would conduct the musical ensemble by wielding the brass cymbals for rhythm. However, the teaching processes of these compositions involved a unique technique. They taught and encouraged the dancer to create extempore, and not simply reflect, represent or reproduce each composition/repertoire, verbatim.

Bharatanatyam, considered the classical dance form of South India, particularly the state of Tamil Nadu has been attached to a two-pronged history. The first one, traced to the times earlier to the extant treatise called the *Natya Sastra*. This treatise was, written/compiled arguably at least 1500 years ago. It is a work on Dramaturgy. The term *Natya* is a composite whole of music, dance and theatre. The dance elements in *Natya*,

therefore is to embody a theatrical presentation. A story or narrative is represented using dance and mime along with music and dialogues. The *Natya Sastra* and a few other early extant texts provide the material that allows the discerning historian and practitioner to reconstruct the basic dance vocabularies used for this theatrical presentation. The untiring attempt of a senior *Bharatanatyam* exponent¹ and research scholar brought to light this holistic vocabulary that are called *Karanas*. I was fortunate to learn these directly from her. *Karanas* are units of dance. These composite units are made up of smaller parts and movements. These smaller movements form a major part of body training and technique. *Karanas* can be interpretative and abstract at the same time.²

The usage of *Karanas* and there are 108 of them documented as sculptures on temple walls, helps us understand that they were very much in vogue and practice as part of *Natya* and later evolved as dance, per se. Sculptures therefore became a sort of pre-photographic visual documentation of dance. Dr. Subramaniam would have been grateful to the vision of the great monarchs who decided, out of their love and passion for dance, to commission sculptures of these dance pedagogies on many temple walls in South India. By the 20th century when she was attempting her reconstruction, the usage of *Karanas* was obsolete in current practice. Never mind that, parts of these older techniques were visible but assimilated into modern *Bharatanatyam*. They were indivisible and subsumed to an extent that their original form as *Karanas* was unidentifiable. So, one of the biggest challenges during her reconstruction, was to prove that these poses on the temple walls were not actually poses but were freezes, or if we can call them so, the “Kodak moments” in a movement. The concepts of “*stithi* and *gathi*” or “static and kinetic” inherent in these sculptural documentation, had to be proved. She showed that every movement has a beginning freeze or *stithi*, a sequence of kinetic movements or *gathi*, which end at another place of *stithi*. While the visual documentation helped in serving as a guide to the dancer, the text helped in binding these visual representations within a pedagogy and long lost practice of an entire system. Training for every part of the body from the head to the toe is categorized and given as preliminary methodology to learn the 108 *Karanas*.

By the medieval era, however, the dance of *Bharatanatyam* aka *Sadir* had undergone, much more cultural assimilations and had been through so many political eras, that it had become even more cosmopolitan and a state-operated cultural identity of “classical”. But the exciting aspect was that it continued to freely assimilate from the more rural “*desi*” indigenous art forms as ever before. So, when I embarked upon my doctoral research to reconstruct the lost dance repertoires of the medieval centuries (16th-18th centuries) of South India, particularly Tamil Nadu, I had some other kinds of challenges. *Bharatanatyam* was always *Sadir* to me, for I learnt dance from the hereditary community artistes (my *gurus*) from the age of three. In my years of learning/ training with the *Devadasis* of Tamil Nadu, I got a sense that their art comes from a place of deep acceptance. These women performers were/ are quick to adapt, assimilate and create spontaneously. Surprisingly, while *Bharatanatyam*'s nationalist discourse attaches the burden of tradition as a sort of strict unchanging or unbroken transfer of choreographies of repertoires, *Sadir*, even though performed by the actual hereditary practitioners with a long unbroken ancestry, always kept spontaneity and adaptability as its keystone. I realised that this elemental quality comes with historical authority and sanction. *Sadir* or *Bharatanatyam* has a multi cultural and interdisciplinary past. It may have been

preserved as a seemingly simple art, by a sect of people- the *Devadasi* community. But in its practice was the co-existence of older traditions and newer sensibilities, strategically placed in the milieu of larger political, diplomatic narratives.

Dancing girls or *Devadasis* stand at the fulcrum of both texts as well as traditions. What became important to me was the tracing of the immediate cultural memory of *Sadir*. This cultural memory comprises of medieval documentation, texts, writings, sculptures, palm leaf manuscripts, copper plates, paintings political climate and patronage, as well as the ancestral memory of *Devadasi* women and dance masters the *nattuvanars*. The *Devadasi* was an ambassador of a secular, democratic art that was *Sadir* in the 16th century and later all the way until the postcolonial era.

In my work, I had reconstructed about 32 different repertoires that were in vogue during the *Nayak*³ era. Each of them has a separate history, politics, regional flavor, origin, texts, sensibilities, costumes, colors, and textures. A few of them have been retained in present, as is. Some have changed in name but intact in form. Some have retained names but changed in form. But most of these repertoires are only in the pages of unread history books and books of dance, while I went looking for them. They are quoted as forgotten histories and pasts. To me, this seemed similar to how we have made a relic out of the dancing body- the *Devadasi* without acknowledging that their vestiges are strewn all over modern *Bharatanatyam*.

Reconstruction

At the fulcrum of Indian dance is its music. Dance and music are intertwined in structure and creation, melody, rhythm, lyrics or poetry as well as histories. I therefore had to reconstruct the music before attempting the dance. The music for every repertoire had to consider aspects of historical situation, with the help of texts of that contemporary period, cross cultural references and existing oral traditions. The challenge was to understand, that each dance repertoire has a cultural connection to a particular geographical region and the community that lived there. Some of these are today still living cultures and some others are lost. This meant, that everything from costumes for the dances of each *Nayak* repertoire, the music and poetry for the songs etc had to be carefully recreated. The fact that these dances came under the gamut of “classical” state patronized high art was evident, as I found much literary and sculptural data describing these dances in detail as court and temple traditions. Another feature was that the remnant elements in the costumes, jewellery and hairdo of the *Nayak* era could still be found in the living *Devadasi* and her memory of ensemble called the *melam*. These were some of my crucial links for reconstruction.

The post-medieval period (16th 17th and 18th centuries) was when the last vestiges of dramatic elements in the dance forms (reminiscent of the *Natya Sastric* theatrical traditions) such as, the use of a curtain for character introduction, the employment of a jester to entertain and introduce the dance to the audiences, were still in vogue. They were, to be done away with in the next centuries (19th-20th centuries) to come, when *Sadir* became increasingly solo. Some of the most significant metamorphosis that dance underwent in the medieval times was it paving the way for the evolution of a solo, female oriented dance form today identified as *Bharatanatyam*.

Just to give you an example of what kind of multicultural assimilation *Sadir* had and the extent of interdisciplinary comprehensions I needed to reconstruct a repertoire, I shall

briefly tell you about *Jakkini*.

The manuscripts and texts describe *Jakkini* as a dance favoured by *yavanas* (Persians) and in the Persian language. To historically prove, that at this historical time in India, the term *yavana* denoted the Persians, was in itself a challenge. But with archeological and other sources, I had created a strong case for substantiation. Since that debate is irrelevant to the current paper, I am not explaining the same here⁴.

Going through Persian lexicons to identify the linguistic connections in the prototype of *Jakkini's* poetry was a huge challenge. *Farsi* had undergone tremendous changes through time. India adopted *Farsi* and also assimilated much from it into *Urdu* and in that, Southern *Urdu* called *Dakhni* was different in its own way with a mixture of *Farsi*, *Telugu* and *Sanskrit*. All researchers before me, had concluded that the terms *Elilam elilam lale elilam elilam deva* found like a refrain, in every *Jakkini* prototype (there are perhaps about twenty in all) was a set of pure dance syllables (*sollus*), which effectively mean nothing or called *prathisushkaksharam*, meaningless syllables. But old Farzi lexicons shows that *Dakhni Urdu*, made dialectic changes to the original words *ilahi ilahi deva* meaning "Oh lord Oh Lord" as *elilam elilam deva*. *Ilahi* in *Farsi* means God.

Then came the reconstruction of the dance. The treatises, described the usage of *Bhramari-s* or continuous whirling-s, as an important feature of *Jakkini*. Historical study points to the influence of Sufism in South India from very early times and the movements of West Asian travellers in the Southern coast and their influence on the local cultures⁵. *Jakkini*, therefore, when reconstructed closely resembles the whirling dervish of the *Mevlavi* order of Sufism.

Was really an *Islam* influenced dance performed on a daily basis in the court of the staunch *Hindu* kings as part of their "classical" repertoires? The answer is, yes. The physical reconstruction of the repertoire was possible from the written texts and historical data that I put together, but a particular palace painting from *Ramanathapuram* which I found, further helped reiterate the reconstruction. In this painting, a dancer clad in a *Hindustani* costume⁶ is depicted in a whirling movement with one hand up and the other down, performing in the presence of a seated *Hindu* king. This visual data or what I call as "visual writing" also greatly helped in the reconstruction. Not to mention that it also helped in the recreation of costume and jewellery for *Jakkini*.

It is of immense significance and contemporary relevance to note that Jesus Christ's last words before crucifixion were

"*Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani?*" (Ilahi Ilahi-Eloi Eloi-Ellilam Ellilam)

"*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Psalm 22)

The coming together of aspects of major religions of the world *Hinduism- Islam* and *Judaism* and *Christianity* under the umbrella of one dance repertoire, the reconstruction of which was possible from written texts is testimony to writing dance (the treatises) and dancing writing (the reconstructions).

But in the centuries to come, especially the later half of the 19th and 20th centuries, the texts documenting dance were also used to dislodge the dancing bodies from their positions as practitioners or rather as the sole practitioners. The nationalist movement gave rise to translations of works that focused on dance as a "spiritual ascendance" of the

human soul towards God, rather than as a ritualistic and cultural emblem. It also focused largely on the “dancing God” concept, which took great precedence over the “dancing body”. This was to create, according to arguments, a “respectable” identity for the burgeoning *Bharatanatyam*. This new identity meant to keep away from the image of the “dancing girl” this “high art”. There was also a sort of compelling need to create this newer identity rather quickly and this was done by producing many new compositions celebrating the spirit of dance as spiritual, distancing it from its locus, *Vis á vis* the temples and courts.⁷ Interestingly, however, the renaissance crusaders such as Rukmani Devi didn’t/ couldn’t do away with all the compositions/repertoires used by the *devadasis* all together. This was because the technique of *Bharatanatyam* is closely meshed with its repertoires. The elemental vocabularies of *Bharatanatyam* are finely exploited through a very thoughtful series of repertoires, which are built in a sequential order called the *margam*. These *margams* or sequences are the most acknowledged tenets of *Bharatanatyam*. Doing away with them would mean a complete detour, making it unidentifiable, which they couldn’t afford. Therefore there began a process of “skimming, cleaning, and scrutiny” of existing repertoire for its “*Dasi*-ness”. That is, aspects of dance that contained high erotic or sexually explicit poetry that were performed by the *Dasis*, which stood diametrical to the newly emerged ideas of spirituality, nationality in a political atmosphere charged with a strong moral discourse about the *Devadasi*, were omitted. And then, generous liberties of (re) misinterpretations were allowed, such as substitution of certain words of sexually explicit nature or erotic nature, with more bland words or sometimes words of devotion instead of love, ode to a patron and his name changed as an ode to the God etc. This sort of meddling, with the poet’s original thought process and creations, in the name of cleansing is a profound “rewriting” process in the 20th century dance writing, I argue. I call this as the “classicalization” processes of the 20th century. Classicalization is something that has happened through many centuries in history, starting from even the pre *Natya Sastric* times to the *Nayak* era and post *Nayak* periods. But the 20th century classicalization is particularly important, as it is then, that through decided writing and discourse, the artiste was disenfranchised from her practice. Dance writings have had traditional use in reiterating the commitment of artistes and art to each other, until this time. Therefore “writing dance” during this period was not merely a recording of the form but a dislodgement of a particular community and engagement of another. It was the “rewriting” of dance, both as a vocabulary and in history that is of investigation during this historic time. The super-text of this classicalization process was the attachment of a philosophical discourse about the divine union between the supreme soul and the human soul meant to be the superaltern found, even in a more mundane description of love, sex and eroticism between human bodies in songs and dances. Interestingly, songs/poems with such depictions were not completely obscured but what and how a *Devadasi* would have depicted in a very aesthetically teasing extempore manner of performance using subtle expressions and intelligent gestures, were battered to learned lengths and attached with a new skewed super-text in this classicalization, that they became pieces of perfection from monotonous practice without much/any creativity. This audacity to reshape the practice and “traditions” (here is I use this as a loaded term with all its attached meanings) of hereditary performers and creating a renewed pedagogy out of it, I call this entire movement “classical jingoism”. This jingoism’s upside may be

globalisation, democratisation and institutionalisation. But the down side became, the lack of need for virtuoso geniuses who, would sing, dance and create spontaneously. The accent went from the creating mind and the compelling body that depicted what the mind visualised, to the body merely training to represent someone else's vision, often repetitive, while not reiterative. This repetitive learning and reproduction in "classical" *Bharatanatyam's* approach, to the same repertoires of *Sadir* is often called as "choreography".

Commercial visibility to Indian dance, globally, during this period was attributed to this newly created "respectable" art but little admission was made that the sheer quality of the repertoire it appropriated from *Sadir* and the curiosity the West had for the temple dancers, were largely behind this global success. This jingoism took on board, dance masters (the male heirs) of the community as allies, by assisting them and commissioning them to write books of dance. I use the proposition "of" dance here, carefully, to distinguish their writings as recording of technique, pedagogy, repertoires from their memory and teaching, while writing "on" dance was done by the nationalists and crusaders of new age *Bharatanatyam*, stirring it towards their desired direction. Many dance masters were also made to compose newer compositions befitting this new history.⁸

But the truth seems to be, that all these dance masters or choreographers knew that their notations and choreographer's notes limited the scope of what the *Devadasi* would have created spontaneously. So the dance masters used their notes mostly as personal references, student guide books or penned only those aspects that would have been pre-structured in a repertoire anyway and did not attempt to author every aspect of the dance composition⁹, leaving much ambiguity during reconstruction. Of course, this is also partly because of the structure of many of the repertoires themselves, which lend to only partial choreography. The rest, as Susan Foster in her book *Choreographing Empathy* quotes Cynthia Novack is "contact improvisation" where dance is produced rather than merely reflected or reproduced. The participation of the viewer, the directives provided by the pedagogy, the mood and moment that the dancer is in, similarly the mood and moment that every musician in the ensemble is in and their interaction add to this production. Therefore, I put forth that the concept of dance as choreography by a single creator on the objective body is not entirely relevant to *Sadir*.

More than seventy percentage of the *margam* is this process of production. Even the extant treatises never attempted to document all aspects of dance for it factors the thinking or active mind as an entity in dancing and therefore the spatial liberty for extempore ideation is merely marked and left blank. Thus, I also realised that my own training with the *Devadasis* in *Sadir* played a significant part in this dancing writing or reconstruction process. Because, my job at reconstructing any repertoire would have been only half complete if I had depended entirely on written directives for the whole repertoire. My corporeal experiences with the production process and the producers themselves *Vis á vis* the *Devadasi*, along with musicality were greatly needed.

The 20th century dance notes, as learning guidebooks, simply tried boxing the unboxable! This was done mainly because the time for training non- hereditary dancers was less. They had to learn and learn fast. They had little time and taste for the development of the technique of extemporary production. Even today, creations of *Bharatanatyam* as rigid choreographies reflect simply only their need for quick and easy transfer as well as a well tested and curated repertoire for proscenium success. It rarely showcases the

thinking and participatory mind or composite virtuosity of the performer, if there.

While on the one hand this curation gives scope for the globalisation, and standardisation of *Bharatanatyam* amongst world audiences, in many ways the intrinsic qualities of *Sadir* is lost in this writing/ written dance. These writings of dance are not just on paper, but also on bodies. Institutionalisation of *Sadir* has left dancing bodies writing choreographies, which are at best repetitive and clone-like. While in fact, *Sadir* is a participatory virtuosity where music, dance, emotions, the moods, moments intercourse. Each time, every time and then sometimes, maybe not. It needs the impetus of a moving, emotive presence of skill, love, appreciation, patronage, participation and spirituality.

Therefore, dancing writing has its challenges of interpretation and writing dancing is not entirely a competent process for *Sadir*. I believe the need of the hour is to create a whole new renewed view at written dancing. With technology, some have worked with extensive documentation and archiving, as writings of the production processes of the *Devadasis*. But again, it would be balder dash to think that these documentations are rigid choreographies or visual writings in entirety, because they are in fact, only some ideas for that particular moment, from an artiste whose scope is boundless.

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Notes

1. Dr. Padma Subramaniam worked along with archaeologist Dr. T. N. Ramachandran in the 1970s to reconstruct the *Karanas* of the *Natya Sastra* as a pedagogy of the by gone era. She has today culled for herself a dance idiom and calls it *Bharatanrityam*.
2. *Karanas* are units of dance primarily to represent a holistic idea. For example the movements of *Talapushpaputam* the first *Karana* are a group of several smaller movements of specific parts of the body such as hands, legs, wrists etc. This entire *Karana* can be used as decorative dance interspersed in abstraction or as the name *Talapushpaputa* suggests the offering of flowers from a basket, it can be used to interpret the idea of offering flowers.
3. The *Nayaks* were rulers under the larger empire of *Vijayanagara Rayas*. They ruled primarily from *Madurai*, *Tanjore* and *Gingee* all in Tamil Nadu. These *Nayaks* were of Telugu origin and were from Andhra regions. They had high taste for music, poetry and dance. In fact as Pandit N. Venkataramanayya observes in his writings, "Song and dance were the principle pre occupations of the society of which they (*Nayaks*) were the Kings..."
4. Refer to my article titled "*Past performing practices of the Nayak period as vestibule to today's Bharatanatyam*", The Madras Music Academy Journal; Vol 84, 2003, pp 108-118
5. *Ibid*
6. *Hindustani* was a term used to refer to the Northern parts of India although all of India is called *Hindustan*. In this context, the dancer wears a long *kurta* or tunic and a pair of *pyjamas* or tight fitted pants with a veil around her shoulders covering her head. This is the typical costume wore by women in the North India today. It comes from the Persian Islamic traditions and can be seen more widely in *Mogul* court paintings.
7. Read Avanthi Meduri's "*Temple stage as historical allegory in Bharatanatyam, Rukmini Devi as Dancer- historian*", where she talks about the staging of the *kirtanai* (poetic composition) "*Natanam adinar*" as a confiscation of temple and spirituality to a proscenium stage, with the double reeded history of dance from the "dancing God" and away from the "dancing body"
8. Tanjore K. Ponniah Pillai comes from the venerated lineage of the *Tanjore Quartette* who were temple musicians and dance masters during the *Maratha* rule in the 19th century attached to the *Tanjore Brihadeeswara* Temple and are credited with having formulated the *margam* of *Sadir* at

that time, which was adopted as is, in *Bharatanatyam*. Ponnai Pillai, was commissioned by the *Tamil Isai Sangam* in the 1950s to compose a series of songs that fit within the *margam*, compositions that projected Tamil as the language for *Bharatanatyam* which was identified as a regional dance, *padams* based on *Aintinai*, the five geographical divisions propounded in *Tolkappiyam* and so forth.

9. Note books of Nellaiyappa Nattuvanar, Arunachala Nattuvanar carry *jatis* and compositions but not the entire choreography, “*Natanadi Vadya Ranjanam*” by Gangai Muthu Nattuvanar carries the notation and composition but again no choreographies.

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***Mexican Trilogy/ Trilogía Mexicana:
Writing Bodies Through Five Hundred Years***

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Abstract

Fifteenth and sixteenth-century Mexica writing utilized a largely pictorial system in which bodies undertaking actions (pictorial-iconic presentation) and hieroglyphic text were used to both document and communicate information. Between 2006 and 2010 one of Mexico's most renowned innovative and interdisciplinary performance ensembles, La Máquina de Teatro, worked with Mexica documents and sculptures in the creation of their Trilogía Mexicana (Mexican Trilogy). I discuss fragments of the performance and studio-based creative processes as they translated from the wordless fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writing into an embodied, corporeal, moving form for a twenty-first-century performance stage, specifically aiming to explore notions of memory, temporality, history, and postdramatic theatre.

Ethnocentrism

My paper configures the title of the conference as dancing-writing/writing-dancing, translating from fifteenth and sixteenth-century writing to twenty-first-century dancing/writing on a performance stage; and from twenty-first-century dancing/writing on a performance stage to squiggles on a page or electronic screen. In a history of writing that defines “writing” as visible speech or spoken language that is recorded or referenced phonetically by observable marks, an embedded ethnocentrism frames literacy as the ability to read and write in alphabetic script.¹ However, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Mexica writing, pre- and post-conquest, utilized a largely pictorial system in which bodies undertaking actions (pictorial-iconic presentation) and hieroglyphic text were used to both document and communicate information.

In a similar vein, stone sculptures and architectural elements were equally important forms of “writing,” as record and communication.² Using these concepts of “writing” as a framework, the focus of my paper is on a trilogy of physical theatre works, *Trilogía Mexicana—Mexican Trilogy*—created by one of Mexico's most renowned innovative and interdisciplinary ensemble companies, La Máquina de Teatro—The Theatre Machine. The company worked through studio-based creative processes as they translated from the wordless Mexica writing into embodied, corporeal, moving forms for a twenty-first-century performance stage, specifically aiming to explore notions of memory, temporality, and history, crossing boundaries between past and present. My interest is in how such Mexica writing has been translated into dance/scenic art/theatre in the twenty-first century.

Translation

My current research project involves analysis of *Trilogía Mexicana* in terms of the creative processes of the ensemble and the resulting performances, using these guiding questions:

- Through which means and forms do body-focused experimental theatre practices provoke and enable engagement with, and reflection on concepts of temporality, historiography, knowledge, and the politics of memory?
- Within the broadest spectrum of contemporary, postdramatic theatre (in other words, theatre not dominated by a narrative script crafted by a single playwright), how do scenic techniques allow audiences and creative artists to scrutinize historic events of the past even as they continue to resonate in present lives?

Notions of translation are central to the creative project. Translation — *translatus*— involves being carried across, being converted, moving from one place or condition into another, and expressing in another language. At heart *Trilogía Mexicana* is an investigation into translation, for all creative processes fundamentally involve translation from one language and form into another: from the stones of pyramids and sculptures; from painted codices; from the written text of conquistadores and priests; from intangible memories and experiences; from emailed fragments of personal lives; from the absence of facts — all these into languages for a theatre stage. Particularly speaking to the theme of this conference, of vital importance are the politics and significance of scenic arts/theatre, dance, and choreography in relation to the concepts of writing and embodied knowledge. In this paper I provide a glimpse of some fragments of the *Trilogía* that specifically encompass physicalities drawing on Mexica and Mesoamerican writing in the form of codices and sculptures.

Difficult theatre

With the aim of work at the cutting-edge of scenic arts and theatre-aesthetics, the work of La Máquina de Teatro is risk-taking and difficult theatre, in which explorations of concepts of theatre aesthetics are specifically and fundamentally integrated into explorations of the material/the contexts. The theatre form does not pre-exist for the material to be worked through. Difficult questions and investigations about pressing individual- and collective-life issues are merged with difficult questions and investigations about theatre concepts, producing theatre in which aesthetic discoveries are apposite for the specific material. Founded and directed by Juliana Faesler and Clarissa Malheiros, La Máquina de Teatro's work is consistently stimulating and provocative, as they probe and push boundaries, examine weighty subjects, and challenge their audiences. Both directors are prominent artists in their own right: Juliana is a renowned theatre and opera director, architectonic designer, and lighting designer; Clarissa is an established physical-theatre actress, performer and teacher, who trained with Jacques Lecoq for three years, and who implements his body-centred work, with an impulse and imperative to constantly generate and develop ideas through and with the body.

It is worth emphasizing that although this performance work is labelled as “theatre” it is fundamentally body-centered – a form of “dance” – with intricate choreographies. I refer to the participants as performers not dancers, and, of course, we could have a wider discussion about the politics of classification. I encourage you not to be label bound, but to regard “theatre” as “dance.” As with much experimental theatre and performance it is a challenge to classify and categorize the theatre aesthetics, company dynamics, and creative processes of La Máquina de Teatro. The terms “collective creation,” “laboratory,” “devised,” and “ensemble” are all pertinent, as are “experimental,” “postdramatic,” “total,” “physical,” “avant-garde,” and “alternative.” Particularly appropriate are the total theatre aesthetics of Antonin Artaud’s 1930s manifesto, calling for a visceral, sensory, physical and plastic rather than psychologically-based theatre.³ Also, the palette of repeating concepts and traits of twentieth-century experimental theatre that have been analysed and categorized under the rubric of “teatro posdramático” or “postdramatic theatre” by Hans-Thies Lehmann are useful analytical tools. La Máquina de Teatro works with stylistic traits that include: the importance of visual, spatial dramaturgy and architectonics; equal communicative and experiential importance of physicalization, spoken text, lighting, space, and objects; the concept of simultaneity, multiplicity, and density or scarcity of signs; the shift between real and fictional, and identities rather than characters; temporal shifts; transversality, crossing boundaries and borders; and strong thematic traces rather than plot and linear story-lines.⁴

Who am I?

Between 2006 and 2010 La Máquina de Teatro collectively created a suite of three interdisciplinary theatre works titled *Trilogía Mexicana*. Juliana conceived of the project after a moment of provocation, walking down a street named Xicontenatl in Mexico City, while eating an ice-cream. She found herself asking that most fundamental of questions: “Who am I?” The weighty question encompassed her own sense of fragmentation of identity; her awareness of the saturation of the past in the present; and her need to be truthful in her theatre work, and as a result she noted: “I discovered history as portal from which to speak because there I felt comfortable.”⁵

Over the course of four years the company created and performed *Trilogía Mexicana*, with a core aim of bridging past and present, and personal and collective identity:

Trilogía Mexicana is a provocation to create three performances drawing on a reflection of our present history and the relationship that we sustain day by day with out prehispanic past... Our aim is to tell the history of the daily relationship that all we Mexicans have with the stones, with monographs, with languages, food, and our traditions. How do we share our lives with what is left?⁶

This project delves into the particularity of dealing with profound moments of historical importance, yet always and emphatically in relation to contemporary politics and life in Mexico, from the micro to the macro. The framework for the exploration of *Trilogía*

Mexicana was three weighty historical figures: firstly, Nezahualcōyotl, the fifteenth-century poet ruler; secondly, Moctezuma, the ruler of Tenochtitlán–Mexico City in 1519 when Spanish colonizer Hernán Cortés arrived, and thirdly, Malinche, the indigenous woman who acted as translator for Cortés.

Although traces of the lives of the three individual figures are present, the works are not concerned with creating biographical representations, but rather investigating present-day realities through and with their lives. As recent critics have noted it is: “theatre to rethink or think again about history” and a project that “deeply penetrates the labyrinthine passageways of our history, delves into the vestiges of the myths, removes the dust of forgetfulness and puts a giant mirror centre stage that requires audience members to come face to face with their ancestors” and “without a doubt, one of the most brilliant demonstrations of theatrical vanguard of our time.”⁷

Fragments

I turn now to a fragment from each work in the *Trilogía*.

Fragment One

Work One: *Nezahualcōyotl // una ecuación escénica de tiempos y memorias* (A staged equation of time and memories) explores the life of the fifteenth-century poet-ruler Nezahualcōyotl with and through the lives of inhabitants of the twenty-first-century conurbation of Nezahualcōyotl City, a city neighbouring Mexico City.

The five performers stand face to face, close together, arguing and shouting. Almost imperceptibly they shift their bodies into choreographed stances to create a single embodiment of the iconic statue of the goddess Coatlicue. Performer one stands at centre, her hands facing down and her tongue sticking out; performers two and three stand behind with hands either side, up and down; performers four and five stand each side forming the breadth of the body. For a count of five seconds their bodies are motionless, as if in a moment of statuesque solidness and silence, frozen in time. While remaining immobile, performer one speaks two sentences of extended vocalization. Suddenly she pushes out of the statue, and strides away from the iconic Mexica deity body. Her gait, her posture, facial expression, and vocalization are all instantly recognizable as a stereotype of a twenty-first century politician in Mexico.

In this brief moment the five performers collectively re-member and dis-member the iconic body of the sculpture of the mother goddess Coatlicue, offering a powerful reading: one body formed of many bodies. The actors breath together, as if giving life to the goddess. In the Mexica cosmogony Coatlicue is one of the most iconic of deities. She is Mother of the Gods, who gave birth to the moon, stars and Huitzilopochtli, the god of sun and war. One of the most famous sculptures of Coatlicue (housed in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City) is a large multi-limbed embodiment. With multiple hands, a skirt of ...and a head... As Juliana describes, the creative artists of La Máquina sought multiples way of bringing this sculpture to life:

We worked a lot doing many exercises to try and give movement to particular sculptures. So we worked on reconstructing Coatlicue and then developing her – how she moves, how she can stay in her body while containing that energy, because it is also a matter of energy, matter has a form and when you liberate it, it acquires another.⁸



Figure 1: Statue of Coatlicue, housed in the National Museum of Anthropology and History, Mexico City.

Fragment Two

Work Two: *Moctezuma II // La Guerra Sucia* (The Dirty War), which examines the scenario of conquest—the meeting between Moctezuma and Cortés—and the destruction of a civilization, exploring massacres, subversion and revolution, guerrilla movements, indigenous rights, historiography and the writing of history. All the actions are framed through the question “do you remember?”

Two small piles of grey bricks are placed about three feet apart. Performer one enters stage left, walking slowly toward the bricks, pulling behind her a small, antique, toy wooden horse. She mounts the pile of bricks. Simultaneously performer two enters stage left, walking slowly toward the other pile of bricks. She mounts the pile of bricks. The two women performers stand facing each other on their separate piles of bricks, their bodies in profile to the audience. Performer one takes the identity of “Cortés”; performer two takes the identity of “Moctezuma.” Both performers wear contemporary clothing of shirt and a skirt, recognizable as of “now” but distanced with a white-ish mottled coloring, as if covered in dust. Performer one, “Cortés,” wears a painted attachment on the side of her body of full body armor and helmet. Performer two, “Moctezuma,” wears an in-profile head and a feathered headdress, with a long cloak and train. The 2D in-

profile outline head is a face in profile, with only the eye in place. It does not overwhelm or transform, but simply co-exists. The outline is painted, referencing a painted codex, emulating the color, texture, and aesthetic qualities. As bodies from the past these outline heads generate a sense of duality, multiplicity, and shape-shifting. The head has it's own life, yet it is a ghostly and phantasmagorical presence that that can be looked through to a living person beyond. The head is both there and not there, seeming to appear and disappear. The performer is both carrying it and supporting it. It is as if Moctezuma is looking over the shoulder of the performer, even as history is being told through the head. They are not masks, because they do not mask and cover a face, yet when the performer stands in profile the Mexica head dominates, even though the real face behind is visible, giving a sense of looking through one face to another face. These moments are fleeting, in brief instants of stillness. At all other times the Mexica head is always transforming.

The scenario of encounter has the sense of being a freeze-frame image, with minimal movement. The two bodies are separated by two small piles of bricks. Performer one, with the in-profile head of “Cortés,” seems ridiculous, comical and childlike, as she pulls the little toy horse behind her. The words of Moctezuma and Cortés are voiced in the first-person present tense, distanced and narrated by Performer Two. The mouths of the in-profile Moctezuma and Cortés do not move, yet the gentle hands of the two women move to the real face of the other, as two people who are attracted yet unknown to each other. Performer One turns her head to face front, looking through the face of Cortés.



Figure 2: “Moctezuma” in *Moctezuma II // La Guerra Sucia* by La Máquina de Teatro.
Courtesy of La Máquina de Teatro.



Figure 3: “Cortés” in *Moctezuma II // La Guerra Sucia* by La Máquina de Teatro.
Courtesy of La Máquina de Teatro.

Fragment Three

Work Three: *Malinche // Malinches* examines the life of Malinche, the extraordinary, indigenous slave woman who acted as translator for Cortés the colonizer, and who bore a child by him. Almost five hundred years later her name is still used to signify a deceiver: “malinchista” is a pejorative and gendered term to describe traitorous behavior. Few factual details are known of her life, yet her persona remains at the foundational core of Mexican history as one of the most celebrated and hated figures, never far from consciousness. Deemed to be a whore and a traitor, she represents contradiction and duality. Her life is reconstructed through the lives of multiple fragments of twenty-first-century women’s lives, narrating a journey from birth to death, encountering fear, joy, rape, chaos, prejudice, solitude, pain, and success.

At the start of the scenario of rape, four performers stand in line side-by-side facing front and in profile, holding freeze-frame embodiments reconstructing an image from a sixteenth-century codex—the raised hand in the gesture of piety and Roman Catholicism (two fingers together raised, two closed held over the palm with the thumb) is a specific, and still frequently used, corporeal motif, connecting here with the domination of one religion over another. Performer Three wears the helmet, taking the identity of “Cortés.” Performer Two holds her grey suit jacket over her shoulders as she takes the identity of “Malinche.” The violence contained in the unmoving painted bodies of the Codex begins to take form as spoken words of insult emerge from the freeze-frame image. As the spoken insults become louder, Performer Two breaks out of her piety position, and turns to hit Performer Three, who pushes her. The scenario develops into a

increasingly ferocious and realistic reconstruction of domestic violence (they grapple; she grabs a broom and hits him with it; he puts a stool to his face to defend himself; she grabs his hair; he grabs her and throws her forcefully on the floor face down; he pins her down with his body, pulls down his pants and underwear and forces himself on her).



Figure 4: *Malinche/Malinches* by La Máquina de Teatro.
Courtesy of La Máquina de Teatro.

Valorization

Central to this project is the ideological significance of these valorization and translation processes, shifting from visual images understood as writing, to visual interpretation on a stage, giving equal place and significance place to an older system of Mesoamerican recording keeping and communication, effectively recuperating and reconstructing from another mode and translating into another. There are connections here with another recent project of dance scholarship that focused on sixteenth-century Mesoamerican documents incorporating pictorial and literary modes. I am referring to Paul Scolieri's work, *Dancing the New World: Aztecs, Spaniards, and the Choreography of Conquest*, in which Scolieri analyzes European-created documents for representations of notions of "dance" and the role this played in the processes of power relations between Spanish invaders and colonizers, and the indigenous peoples.⁹ To some extent Scolieri and the artists of La Máquina de Teatro are working with many of the same materials, but the project of La Máquina is a very different one. Their key objective is to valorize those non-verbal forms and the indigenous literary documents and to place them on the twenty-first century performance stage in front of audiences, as a means of examining processes of knowledge-making and identity-construction in the present, thereby intervening in local and national politics.

Returning to the iconic Mesoamerican images of sculptures, codices, and architecture, it is important to comprehend the presence of such pictograms, hieroglyphs, and other prehispanic images in everyday life in Mexico City. They are utilized in multifarious ways—for example as icons for subway stations, and as marketing symbols

(logos) for shops and brands in commercial contexts. And of course there are the literal stones of pyramids, sculptures and murals in and around Mexico City. So, with notions of validation, knowledge, and temporality in mind, I suggest that giving the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Mexica writing embodied form through dance is potent. This is more than "simply" embodying the 2-D painted and sculptural bodies in a twenty-first-century performance space. The process of using these bodies to embody and envoice twenty-first-century concerns in Mexico City fundamentally merges and fuses the temporal space. Audiences are given access to value another system of recording and communicating, and this is a key element of La Máquina de Teatro, as they challenge concepts and notions of "knowledge," asking who owns knowledge? And how is it transmitted and validated?

In their volume *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes*, editors Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter Mignolo stress the potency of the political project in valuing a notion of "writing" other than words as we know them:

The history of writing, or so the standard story goes, is an ascending process, evolving toward the alphabet and finally culminating in the "full writing" of recorded speech. *Writing Without Words* challenges this orthodoxy, and with it widespread notions of literacy and dominant views of art and literature, history and geography. Asking how knowledge was encoded and preserved in Pre-Columbian and early colonial Mesoamerican cultures, the authors focus on systems of writing that did not strive to represent speech. Their work reveals the complicity of ideology in the history of literacy...¹⁰

Here there is a challenge to notion of "progress," where chronological time is not the only conceptual framework. As Boone notes in her introduction, the "Pre-columbian situation seems to defy the usual meaning of words such as 'art' and 'writing.' Writing specialists have constructed a history of writing to result in modern alphabetic systems. In these histories, indigenous American systems lie either at the beginning or outside the developmental sequence"¹¹ As Dennis Tedlock notes, "Here are writing systems that are visual to their very core, free from the march of linguistic sounds."¹²

Moving back into squiggles

My own project continues the valorization and translation processes, yet through distinctly different processes, as I aim to position the vital artistic and choreographic practices of La Máquina de Teatro in an international scholarly and artistic arena. One objective of my artistic/political project is to document the production *Trilogía Mexicana* and translate the live performance into squiggles—words on page or electronic screen—making yet another shift of writing/dancing. "Simply" documenting the production of *Trilogía Mexicana* and undertaking a conceptual analysis of the work involves translation and interpretation of the complexity and density of the languages of the stage work into words. Paradoxically, by translating the work of La Máquina de Teatro into the writing of words I aim to valorize it, for experimental theatre and dance practices created in Mexico are infrequently documented and disseminated in international scholarship.¹³ This study,

then, is part of the documentation – part of the trace, part of the “what is left.” The paucity of studies is problematic, and I bring to mind Diana Taylor’s important work on archives and repertoires, where she notes, “The West has forgotten about many parts of world that elude its explanatory grasp. Yet, it remembers the need to cement the centrality of its position as the West by creating and freezing the non-West as always other, ‘foreign,’ and unknowable. Domination by culture, by ‘definition,’ claims to originality and authenticity have functioned in tandem with military and economic supremacy.”¹⁴ I join with La Máquina de Teatro in their quest to challenge notions of “writing” “knowledge” and “progress.”

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Acknowledgements

I am profoundly grateful to Juliana Faesler and Clarissa Malheiros, of La Máquina de Teatro, for all their extraordinary interventions. ¡Mil gracias!

Notes

¹ Boone 1994: 27-29.

² Boone and Mignolo 1994. See also Boone 2007 and 2008.

³ Artaud 1978.

⁴ Lehmann 2007 and 2010. See also Diéguez 2012, Rizk 2001.

⁵ Faesler 2010, author translation.

⁶ *Trilogía Mexicana*, Program Notes, author translation.

⁷ Flores 2010; Ortega ; Valdez Medellín. Author translations.

⁸ Faesler 2010.

⁹ Scolieri 2014.

¹⁰ Boone and Mignolo 1994:cover.

¹¹ Boone 1994.

¹² Tedlock 1994: back cover.

¹³ See Hellier-Tinoco 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014a & b for other recent publications aiming to position Mexican dance/theater into an international scholarly framework.

¹⁴ Taylor 2003: 11-12.

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The Relationship between Ballet and Manga in Japan

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Abstract

In this study, I analyze how ballet manga has greatly contributed to helping the establishment of ballet in Japan. Ballet manga, in which the heroine withstands numerous trials to become a notable dancer, has been very popular among not only girls but also adults. It emerged in Japan during the 1950s; with an increase in its popularity, more children began attending private ballet classes, since Japan had no official ballet schools. After some decades, many Japanese dancers began winning international dancing competitions. Manga artists have been producing ballet mangas based on the life of Vaslav Fomich Nijinsky or Marie Tall Chief and incorporating the New York City Ballet or the Bolshoi Theatre. Ballet manga has become so popular that even manga artists famous for horror or adult comics have written them. In addition, baby ballerinas at that time, such as Yoko Morishita who won gold medals at the 1974 Varna International Ballet Competition, became cover girls for teen magazines and models for heroines in light novels. Thus, ballet manga, in combination with teen magazines, light novels, and the recent Japanese “kawaii” culture, has played a significant role in familiarizing the Japanese with ballet.

Introduction

Ballet manga, which tells the story of a heroine on her way to becoming a notable dancer, emerged in the 1950s Japan and still remains very popular among not only girls but also adults. I would like to emphasize that ballet manga, collaborating with other subcultures, has played a unique role in aiding the popularity of ballet in Japan. The first postwar ballet performance in Japan was a full-length production of *Swan Lake* by the Tokyo Ballet Company in 1946. Thereafter, *Swan Lake* became synonymous with ballet in Japan. Against this backdrop, girls' manga experienced an overwhelming ballet boom in the latter half of the 1950s. During that time, many private ballet schools opened, and after some decades, many Japanese dancers began winning international dancing competitions.

A Brief History of Ballet Manga

Although some points remain uncertain about ballet's arrival in Japan, it was introduced during the Meiji period (1868–1912) and began to gain acceptance as an artistic refinement by artists, intellectuals, as well as art and music lovers during the Taisho period (1912–1926). Late in the Taisho period, Anna Pavlova's 1922 visit to Japan gained considerable attention when many Japanese people witnessed ballet performances for the first time. Meanwhile, general and woman's magazines frequently published articles covering activities of the Ballet Russes. At that time, illustrations in these magazines often depicted ballerinas and probably influenced the depiction of ballerinas in the current manga (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Kasyo TAKABATAKE, *A Butterfly*, 1926

According to Yoshinori Yonezawa, a representative Japanese manga critic, “Girls have always had princesses and celebrity stars, the way boys have superheroes, but ballerinas came forward as having a more realistic and concrete form.”¹ Immediately after World War II, partially as a reaction to not only the lifting of harsh restrictions on expression but also girls’ desire for more entertaining content, girls’ culture blossomed. Prewar girls’ magazines focused on lyrical illustrations and stories for young girls, but in the post-war period, the role of manga increased. A girls’ theme adopted by manga was ballet. The wounds of the war had not healed, and for girls at that time, ballet served as a motif that embodied their dreams and aspirations; the image of a dancing girl dressed as a swan appeared as the most popular iconography.² In the latter 1950s, ballet mangas became so popular that even manga artists famous for horror or adult comics wrote them. For instance, Shigeru Mizuki (1922–), most known for his horror manga *Gegege no Kitaro*, had unwillingly created a ballet manga. And, Mistuteru Yokoyama (1934–2004), known for his many comics based on original stories using material from Chinese history, also drew ballet manga.

The Collaboration of Ballet Manga and Other Popular Culture for Girls

Yoko Morishita (1948–), who is a Japanese prima ballerina, began studying ballet in the 1950s. She won a gold medal at the 1974 Varna International Ballet Competition. Thereafter, she performed with many legendary dancers, for instance, Rudolf Nureyev and Jorge Donn. During the early 1960s, she was often featured as a cover girl for teen magazines, along with other baby ballerinas, and also became a model for heroines in light novels (Figure 2). Many girls were attracted by her pictures and began studying ballet. Furthermore, many girls were attracted by illustrations or stories of Maria Tallchief or Margo Fonteyn and began ballet studies. Moreover, girls have become familiar with the ballet programs drawn in ballet manga. Nowadays in Japan, ballet has begun to collaborate with other cultural forms, such as DS games and Japanese “*kawaii* (cute)” fashion.



Figure 2: Yoko Morishita on the Cover of *Shojo (Girl) Friend*. (1964) Vol.9

Conclusion

To summarize, ballet manga, along with teen magazines, light novels, and the recent *kawaii* culture has played a significant role in familiarizing the Japanese people with ballet.

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Acknowledgements

Research for this article was supported in part by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. The authors would like to thank Enago (www.enago.jp) for the English language review.

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‘Neo-Realism’: Nikolai Minsky on the Ballets Russes

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Abstract

Exiled in Paris, the Russian Silver Age poet Nikolai Minsky (1855-1937) wrote several reviews of the Ballets Russes company, notably discussions on the three choreographies of Vaslav Nijinsky (L'Après-midi d'un Faune 1912, Jeux and Le Sacre du Printemps 1913) for Utro Rossii. In his reviews, Minsky connects dance with emerging movements in Russian modernism and offers a fascinating interpretation of the relationship of real and staged life, reality and art. Minsky argues that Nijinsky's choreographies presaged a new kind of dance, no longer ballet but 'neo-realism', a kind of formalization of everyday life, which for Minsky seems to have included new Russian literature from Maksim Gorky to the Acmeist poets. Minsky's shifting allegiances - his early association with populism, (his first collection was destroyed by the censor in 1883), his participation in the Symbolist Mir iskusstva and Novii put, followed by his editorship of Novaia zhizn (the first legal Bolshevik paper) that forced him to leave Russia - make him difficult to categorize. This draws attention to how we simplify narratives about the past and categorize authors in dance or in literature.

Introduction

This paper was a chance encounter and one of those instances where you end up doing quite a bit of research that does not "fit" anywhere. The starting point was a series of reviews in the Russian daily paper *Utro Rossii* on the Ballets Russes company, signed "N. Minsky". I found these reviews both insightful and difficult to understand; hence, my quest to find out more about their author.

As with many people writing on the Ballets Russes, it turned out that dance was at best a marginal interest for Minsky. Yet, looking into the author's background raised questions about how we categorize authors into styles, why we remember certain authors and not others, and whose authorship actually counts in dance history and why.¹ On the way, as usual, some surprising connections emerged. Reading Nijinsky's interview for *L'Intransigeant* (13.6.1912), I noted that Nijinsky alludes to how he had not seen the work of Raymond Duncan, Isadora Duncan's brother, whose work Minsky had connected to Nijinsky's choreographic style in his review for *Utro Rossii* a few days earlier (Minsky in *Utro Rossii* 24.5./6.6.1912). This may just be a coincidence - or had Nijinsky actually read Minsky's piece? As Virginia Woolf (1973, 57-58) put it, "it is the nature of the artist to mind excessively what is said about him", so it might be that Nijinsky had read this piece (the review was in Russian, so Nijinsky was likelier to have read it than the French and the English sources that have become hegemonic in our dance history discourse). Also, Minsky was actually in Paris at the time - he had been living in exile since 1906 - and he knew Diaghilev. But who was Minsky?

Pseudonyms and Identities

Nikolai Maksimovich Vilenkin, who used the pseudonym Minsky (after the city of Minsk where he was raised after his parents died), is a fascinating character because his views and career force us to rethink aesthetic categories often seen as in opposition in Russian literature and arts more generally. Born in Glubokoe in the Belarus in 1855 to a Jewish family, in the notably anti-Semitic Imperial Russia, Minsky published under a more Russian-sounding pseudonym. He was a poet, a dramatist, and a philosopher as well as a journalist, and as Michael Basker (2001, 137) stated, Minsky's "formative influence on his younger contemporaries is greater than is generally acknowledged".

Because Minsky had a degree in law from the St. Petersburg University (he graduated in 1879), he could reside in the capital; but like many Jews, he was drawn to the budding civil rights movement, which took the form of Populism (*народничество*). He wrote to the prestigious journal *Vestnik Evropy* and to the "formerly well-respected Populist journal" (as Avril Pyman 1994, 19 puts it) *Severnii Vestnik*, which became the hotbed of Russian Symbolism. Although Minsky also wrote to Jewish periodicals (Horowitz 2010), he is not prominent in lists of Jewish Russian authors - for example, Alice Stone Nakhimovsky's *Russian-Jewish Literature and Identity* (1992) does not include him, although the book starts with a quote from the musicologist Nicolas Slonimsky, related to Minsky by marriage. This may be, as Maxim D. Shrayner suggests (2007, xxxiv, xlvi), because in 1882 Minsky converted to Russian Orthodox faith in order to marry Iulia Iakovleva. Such conversions were common - the Ballets Russes designer Léon Bakst (Lev Rozenberg by birth) similarly converted in 1904 to marry Liubov Tretiakova.

This, in turn, raises questions about definitions of ethnicity and religion - whether being Jewish was one or both - as well as of inclusions and exclusions in national identity vis à vis the Empire. Certainly, in Imperial Russia, conversion did not shelter one from accusations of being "a Yid" or "a dirty Jew", as Leonid Livak (2010, 192-193, 419) notes; and in fact, Minsky's work was also attacked in the Russian press in anti-Semitic terms. But Minsky's wife brings me to another kettle of fish: queerness.

A Queerer Biography

Minsky's conversion, as noted, was because he wanted to marry. Iulia Iakovleva was to be the first of his three wives, who deserve a chapter of their own, not the least because women are so often excluded from literary canons. Better known under her pseudonym 'Bezrodnaia', Iakovleva was a novelist and dramatist who wrote for papers like *Vestnik Evropy*, *Russkaia Mysl*, and *Severnii Vestnik*. (Zirin 1994, 83-84). Despite similar interests, her marriage to Minsky did not last. In 1896, Minsky moved in with the much younger poet and translator Liudmila Vilkina, whom he officially married in 1904 or 1905 (sources disagree). Vilkina, too, had converted to Orthodoxy in 1891. (Rosenthal 1994b, 711). However, they had what we would call an "open relationship" - Minsky pursued Zinaida Gippius and Vilkina was very close to Valery Briusov, for example. Also, in 1904, Vilkina's aunt (her mother's younger sister) Zinaida Vengerova moved in with Minsky and Vilkina and lived with them in a *ménage à trois* for about two years - an arrangement with which Vilkina was less than happy.

Moreover, Vilkina's collection *Moi sad (My Garden)* of 1906 includes scenes of

lesbian eroticism and had a very suggestive cover (see Burgin 1993, 186-187), although deducing anything of the author's life from such scant, fictional evidence is somewhat dubious. Also, the arrangement of Minsky, Vilkina and Vengerova was anything but atypical in the St. Petersburg artistic circles at the time. They attended the *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art) salons around the eponymous journal, and were guests in the Tower Wednesdays, so they would have known the similar "marriage" between Dmitri Merezhkovsky, Zinaida Gippius, and Dmitri Filosofov (the latter being Sergei Diaghilev's cousin)² as well as Viacheslav Ivanov's and Lidia Zinovieva-Annibal's ménage with Sergei Gorodetsky. Although in terms of career or canonicity, being polyamorous or otherwise queer is less of a reason for discrimination than being a woman is, queer relationships and the contributions of unofficial partners still do tend to remain invisible in processes of canonization.

In Minsky's case, however, he married women who were already famous in their own right. The third of these remarkable women, Zinaida Vengerova, was probably more famous than Minsky ever was. She was the sister of Minsky's good friend Semen Vengerov; a feminist, a journalist, and a translator specifically known for her insightful analyses of Symbolist art - not merely literature, although her article on French Symbolist poetry in 1892 was hugely influential (Rosenthal 1994a). Unlike Minsky, Vengerova worked internationally and wrote on Russian philosophy and literature for *Mercure de France*, where she published one of the first appraisals of Chekhov (1899) as well as paraphrased articles from *Mir iskusstva*. For two years (1902-1903) she also worked for the *Saturday Review* introducing the work of Gippius and Gorky to the English-speaking public, and later she wrote for *The Fortnightly Review* as well. In Russia, she was one of the earliest Russian advocates of French Symbolists and Decadents, from Baudelaire to Huysmans, as well as of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and William Morris. In 1906, Minsky, Vilkina and Vengerova worked together to translate Maurice Maeterlink into Russian, in a volume illustrated by Nikolai Roerich, the designer of the 1913 Ballets Russes *Sacre* production (Neginsky 2006, 116). They also enthused about Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, before either was well-known in Russia (both were banned by the Imperial Censor). Vengerova finally became Minsky's third wife sometime between 1922 and 1925 (again, sources differ) after Vilkina died in 1920 "of overall misery and consumption", as Vengerova's biographer Rosina Neginsky (2006, 48) puts it.

Ballet, Aesthetics, and Politics

In terms of ballet, Nijinsky's *Jeux*, which depicts the flirtation of a man and two women of different temperaments would definitely have rang a bell with Minsky, who sort of tried to stay aloof of his two, related, wives. Unfortunately for us, in his review in *Utro Rossii* 30.5./12.6.1913, Minsky only alludes to *Jeux* as heralding the public outrage against *Sacre*, even if he goes on to speak of Nijinsky's choreographic style in general terms. Hence, it is impossible to say if he even saw the work.

Minsky did like what Nijinsky was doing and he knew the value of scandal. His first collection of poems had had the questionable honor of being banned by the Censor in 1883 because of its political content, and his narrative poem *The Last Confession* is said to have inspired Ilia Repin's famous painting of a revolutionary returning from Siberia (Pyman 1983, 135). Minsky's treatment in the hands of the Censor may have contributed

to his aesthetic disillusionment about the possibility of poetry to deal with social injustice, which is why he turned towards the florid language of Symbolism and more philosophical themes (Basker 2001, 137; Pyman 1994, esp. 24-27.) The following year, 1884, Minsky published what has been called the "manifesto of Russian decadents" *The Age-Old Controversy*, and in *With the light of conscience: thoughts and dreams about the purpose of life* of 1890 he actually developed his own theory and epistemology of Symbolism. He called this theory Meonism (from the Greek "me on", non-existent), and it was a heavily idealist and somewhat pessimist philosophy, that is: it referred to the transcendent, higher-than-sensory reality and presented symbols as reflections of this higher reality in everyday objects and practices; but it also postulated, in Nietzschean terms, that God was dead and that the main purpose of humanity was nonexistence, achieved in moments of ecstasy brought on by art (Pyman 1994, 25-26). Unsurprisingly, in 1900, Minsky was one of the founders, with Gippius and Merezhkovsky, of the Religious-Philosophical Society, and in 1904 he published *The Religion of the Future* (Read 1979, 32) his first salvo in the contemporary debate on the relationship of religion and society.

To an extent, Minsky's review of Nijinsky's choreographic style recalls his meonist theory in that he seems to conceptualise the relationship between stage and life in idealist terms. However, Minsky calls Nijinsky's style "neo-realism" and he explains that whereas in realism, the goal of art is to imitate reality, in neo-realism, reality is but a starting point. The goal of neo-realism, and the goal of art more generally, is always artifice.³ Since Minsky also chides Mikhail Fokine, Nijinsky's predecessor as the principal ballet master of the Ballets Russes, with the words of Tolstoy, his point is clearly a modernist re-appropriation of the Russian realist tradition. In fact, Nijinsky's later interest in Tolstoy makes this connection almost too neat a fit for historical plausibility.⁴

Minsky's view that Nijinsky abandoned the "special movements" of ballet,⁵ seems close to how Nijinsky himself had explained for *Le Figaro* (14.5.1913) that he dreamed of movement of the modern era, which did not look like similar, everyday movements of earlier periods: a man on the modern streets did not walk like a man from the seventeenth century, the dances of the 1910s were not minuets and a newspaper was not read reverentially, with care.⁶ But what is at stake, here, is more than period style, it is the aesthetic of grace and harmony, seen as integral to all dance that sought to be art. Minsky, unlike most of his Russian colleagues who appreciated this break, directly connected Nijinsky's choreographies with the discourse of Russian literary modernism - his term 'neo-realism' is somewhat puzzling because it is so strongly reminiscent of Maksim Gorky's 'new realism' used for the circle around the Znanie (Knowledge) publishing company where Gorky worked between 1900-1912.

Unsurprisingly, Minsky knew Gorky and had worked with him. Just before the 1905 Russian Revolution, Minsky had applied for a permission for a new newspaper and thus became the editor-in-chief of what became the only legal Bolshevik paper *Novaia Zhizn*. During his honeymoon with the Bolsheviks,⁷ Minsky translated "Workers of the world, unite!" a short version of the *International*, but although in name he was the editor-in-chief of *Novaia Zhizn*, he apparently had little say in what went into it - it really was Lenin's paper (see Pyman 1983, 145-150). When the Revolution withered, thanks to the alliance of the liberal royalist Kadet party and the merchant estate (Owen 1981, 173-205), Minsky was arrested for "inciting his readership to overthrow the existing order" (Pyman

1983, 136; also Shroyer 2007, 84; Sapozhkov 2005, 65) and released on a kind of bail - which he never paid - awaiting trial. Of course, he immediately left the country, and Vengerova soon followed. Minsky lived in exile in Paris for the next six years, working as a correspondent for various Russian newspapers, including the Moscow paper *Utro Rossii*, where he wrote of the Ballets Russes. He also wrote a dramatic trilogy, translated Flaubert, founded a Russian-language paper for the émigré community called *Slovo*, gave public lectures, and generally tried to scrape together a living of sorts (Neginsky 2006, esp. 121).

After the general amnesty in 1913, Minsky returned briefly to Russia but soon left and was caught by war outside of the borders (Sapozhkov 2005, 70.) Hence, he was abroad during the war and, after the October Revolution, chose to remain there.⁸ After 1921, Vengerova followed Minsky to exile. In Berlin, in 1921, Minsky was involved in the Dom Iskusstv publishing house, and he then lived in London and Paris. Despite their exile, Minsky and Vengerova continued to support socialism and the new Soviet Union, which estranged them from some of the émigré community - for example, Zinaida Gippius called them "traitors" in her correspondence (Neginsky 2006, 162). Vengerova tried to get her work on Eleonora Aveling, Karl Marx's youngest daughter, published in the Soviet Union; and Minsky even worked for the Soviet embassy in London for a time. However, he spent his last decade in Paris. After he died of cancer in 1937, Vengerova moved to New York where she died of Parkinson's in 1941 (Neginsky 2006, 172-173).

Conclusions: On Canonization

The little research that I did on Minsky - and this really is very little - revealed an odd, queer, figure. Older than most of the stars of the Silver Age art world and little-known today, for his contemporaries Minsky was one of the key figures and founders of Russian Symbolism (Pyman 1994, 27). Yet, was Minsky really even a Symbolist? Certainly, his Populist roots and socialist sympathies are not an easy fit with how Symbolism and the fin-de-siècle are usually represented, but there are also other strange fault lines in his œuvre that make him difficult to place in aesthetic terms. Minsky, as Pyman (1983, 137) points out, "did not adapt to his time but went his own way, usually in the forefront of change, frequently in conflict with public opinion and with his allies of the moment."

My quest for Minsky left me with questions like what was 'neo-realism' - was it merely this author's idiosyncratic term or did it actually relate to similar terms used in modernist Russian literature at the time, namely the 'new realism' of Gorky and 'acmeism' of Gumilev and Akhmatova whom Minsky knew through Vengerova. Certainly, like for the other "God-builder"⁹ writing on the Ballets Russes, Anatoly Lunacharsky, (later the People's Commissar of Enlightenment in the new Soviet regime), Nijinsky's choreographies inspired Minsky to see choreography as one of the modernist trends in contemporary Russian art, but also as a vehicle to a "higher truth". Also, Minsky's fate is a good example of the importance of hegemonic narratives to dance history. The reason these Russian authors have not become canonized as offering insights on the Ballets Russes is not merely that they write in Russian. It is that they are tied to political ideologies and aesthetic legacies that seem antithetical to the elitism and escapism of the Ballets Russes; and, in Minsky's case, having allegiances usually thought of as exclusive of one another. If anything, I now understand just how imperative it is for dance

historians to do careful research not only to the contexts in which reviews and other source materials appeared (such as the editorial policies of particular papers, contemporary views on gender, class, citizenship, nationality, etc.) but to the actual people who wrote these sources, their personal and professional lives.

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Notes

1. This issue was first raised with American reviews of the Ballets Russes, where dance canon seemed to regularly ignore the opinions of leading contemporary music critics in favor of critics whose opinions reproduce the canonical reading. See Järvinen 2014.
2. Also, Minsky, Vilkina, and Vengerova all seem to have fancied Gippius. See Vilkina's diary quoted in Neginsky 2006, 49 where Vilkina says Minsky was with Vengerova and possibly Gippius, implying sexually, also 70-86 on Gippius.
3. "Если исходная точка его балета чисто реальная, то цѣль его - насквозь эстетическая. Посредствомъ ритма онъ отрываетъ реальное движеніе отъ дѣйствительности и дѣлаетъ его не только объектомъ искусства, но искусственнымъ, почти автоматомобразнымъ. " "Although the starting point for his ballet [is] clearly the real, his goal [is] - thoroughly aesthetic. Through rhythm, he tears real movement from the everyday [movement] and makes it not only the object of art but artificial, almost automaton-figurative." *Utro Rossii* 30.5./12.6.1913.
4. During the war, Nijinsky began to plan a school of dancing, the charters of which he drafted out, beginning each with quotations from Tolstoy - see Krasovskaya 1979, 326, 336. He also became a vegetarian, adopted Tolstoyan religious ideas and reinterpreted his life and career in his so-called *Diary* (Nijinsky 1999, written between 19.1.-4.3.1919 under the influence of psychoactive drugs administered by a sports doctor in love with Nijinsky's wife - see Ostwald 1991, esp. 174-175, 184), eerily similar at times to Tolstoy 1904.
5. "не спеціальныя движенія, которія принято находить легкими и изящными, а рѣшительно всѣ движенія, которія могутъ быть одухотворены ритмомъ." I.e. "not special movements, which are taken for light and elegant, but absolutely all movement that can be spiritualized rhythm." Minsky in *Utro Rossii* 30.5./12.6.1913.
6. "L'homme que je vois avant tout autre sur la scène, dit-il, c'est l'homme moderne. Je rêve d'un costume, d'une plastique, d'un mouvement qui seraient caractéristiques de notre temps. Il y a sûrement dans le corps humain des éléments qui sont significatifs de l'époque où il s'exprime. Lorsqu'on voit aujourd'hui un homme se promener, lire un journal ou danser le tango, on n'aperçoit rien de commun entre ses gestes et ceux, par exemple, d'un flâneur sous Louis XV, d'un gentilhomme courant le menuet, ou d'un moine lisant studieusement un manuscrit au treizième siècle." Nijinsky in *Le Figaro* 14.5.1913.
7. During the 1905 Revolution, Vengerova recollected: "Do you remember our negotiations with Gorky, who still in the summer [of 1904] seemed to us to be extreme? Our views now have changed, because of the changes in the Russian reality." Quoted in Neginsky 2006, 103.
8. One of the reasons may have been Vilkina's health - she had tuberculosis - but researchers seem to agree that Minsky's relationship with the Bolshevik cause had also been severely strained by their lack of support during his exile.
9. Inspired by Feuerbach, Nietzsche and others, "God-building" (*богостроительство*) was an ideology within the Bolshevik party where God and the supernatural were replaced by a new "religion" of communism, compatible with science and inspiring humanist values and morality. Notable members of this faction were, in addition to Lunacharsky, Maksim Gorky and Lenin's brother-in-law Aleksandr Bogdanov. Read 1979, *passim*, esp. 77-94

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The narrative of the dance in the *Letters* by J. -G. Noverre : studying the concept of action

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the term, "action" in Letters (1760) by J. -G. Noverre. The term of "action" appears 119 times as a very important, but ambiguous technical term in Letters. Noverre gives two meanings to "action": the body expression and the composition of the scene, which catches the interest of the public by composing an illusion. If these two actions are accomplished, the libretto, that is bad or too long for the reader, appears vivid and new. Therefore the concept of action shows the characteristic of the narrative of dance.

Chapter 1 The purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to examine the term “action” in the writing of *Letters on Dancing and Ballets*¹ (1760) by Jean-Georges Noverre. Jean-Georges Noverre (1727-1810) is a very famous dancer and choreographer in the 18th century. There are two reasons to analyze the term “action” in the *Letters*.

Firstly, because the term appears with such a high frequency-119 times to be precise. Moreover, there are many types of technical terms that are composed of action, preposition and noun. For example, Scene d'action(1: 8,9), Danse en action (1: 13, 7:115, 9 :201) ,Ballet en action (2: 21, 3 :44, 8 :178). In this light it is easy to understand how important the term "action" is. At the same time, it is clear that "action" is a very ambiguous technical term. Thus we cannot reduce the meaning of this term to the usage in this time, that is, we need to search for the meaning of action based on Noverre's text

There is another reason to analyze the action. Noverre has been said to have reformed the ballet as he thought that the dancing in ballet should have some scenario to it. Thereby he has been regarded as the inventor of the “ballet d'action,” that is dramatic ballet or story-telling ballet. However recent studies pointed out that many other choreographers in the 18th century tried to create dramatic ballet², meaning that Noverre is not the sole inventor of the ballet d'action. Moreover, strictly speaking, Noverre never used the term "ballet d'action³," and in the 18th century, no one used it in French. Supposedly the first time the term "ballet d'action" was used is the English translation of *Letters* in 1782-83. The anonymous translator translated all terms, such as Scene d'action (1: 8,9) ,Danse en action (1: 13) into the one term: ballet d'action. The fact that Noverre never uses the term "ballet d'action" makes his place in history very ambiguous. We can ask as follows. If many other choreographers made the dramatic ballet as Noverre and Noverre never uses the term ballet d'action, What is the importance of Noverre's work?

From the above, since "action" is a very important technical term in Noverre's text, if we can understand the meaning of the action, we can understand the difference between Noverre's dramatic ballet and other choreographers' dramatic ballet. Hence the main objective of this article is to analyze the term "action".

Chapter 2 "Action" as body expression

Part 1 The definition of action

The analysis of the term action in *Letters* reveals that Noverre employed this term by dividing it broadly into two meanings; the first as a means of body expression and the second as a means of scenic composition.

Concerning the first meaning of the action, Noverre defined as below.

By the word *action*, I do not mean anything which only makes for bustle[...]. Action, in relation to dancing, is the art of transferring our sentiments and passions to the souls of the spectators by means of the true expression of our movements, gestures, and features. Action is simply pantomime⁴. (10: 261-262)

Based on this definition, I would like to propose three steps to make the first meaning of the action clear. The first step is "movement, gesture, and facial feature" as well as "passion", the second step is "pantomime," and the third step is "true expression." I will examine them in this order.

Part 2 From the passion——movement, gesture, and facial feature

Noverre often criticized dance which only repeated the model taught in academy. (2:15, 6:122) It is because Noverre considered the passion inside the body as below.

All men having the same passions, differ only in proportion to their sensibilities ; they affect with more and less force all men, and manifest themselves outwardly with more or less impetuosity⁵. (1: 12)

The essential point here is that according to the quantity of the sensibilities, the internal passion manifests to the outside of the body. That is to say, in Noverre, the movement, gesture, and facial feature should form on the basis of the passion of the dancer.

"our sentiments and passions," which Noverre referred to in the first citation does not necessarily equate to the modern expression of the dancer itself. Noverre insisted that the dancers should be penetrated (*se pénétrer*) with the scenes/characters which they have to represent, then be overwhelmed with the enthusiasm. (4: 58-59, 9: 212-213, 9:227) For example, Noverre illustrated an actor overwhelmed with enthusiasm with the very famous actor in England, David Garrick (1717-1779) as below.

[...]a man [Garrick] was transformed. It was no longer Garrick to whom one spoke; the change once effected, the actor disappeared and the hero was revealed; and the actor did not become his natural self until his task was done⁶. (9: 212-213)

In short, through this penetration and enthusiasm, the "passions," in other words the dancer's passions, transform into the character's passions. Therefore, the movement, gesture, and facial feature are formed on the basis of the passion possessed by the character. In this way, the dancers represent the scenes/character by the movement, gesture, and facial feature.

Part 3 action pantomime

In this part, I would like to consider the “pantomime” in *Letters*. Noverre criticized some ballets whose scenario is represented not by the dancing but by the words or allegorical costumes. (7: 114-116, 9: 201-209) According to Noverre, the dancers must take off their heavy and thick costumes so as to represent the scenario with their bodies.

Moreover, the words/speeches were treated even more critically in *Letters*. Noverre said “I do not appreciate the subject of the pantomime which counts on the narrative monologue to have the spectators understand the scenario⁷.” (7: 121) That is, the term “pantomime” in *Letters* means the work where the scenario is represented by the dancing itself.

Noverre combined the action and the pantomime and created the term “action pantomime.” In this term, Noverre tried to emphasize the character of the action which can represent the scenario without the superfluous explanation.

For example, Noverre contrasted “action pantomime” with “speech” as below.

The voice of nature and the true movements of pantomic action (action *Pantomime*) should be equally effective [...] ; each of them makes an equally strong impression provided that the thoughts expressed in mime be as lively and animated as those rendered by speech. It is impossible to create this interest by [...] merely executing some beautiful steps ; the soul, facial feature, gesture and attitude must all speak at once and always with energy and truth⁸. (10: 286-287)

In this citation, Noverre insisted that the action pantomime can make as strong an impression as speech. In order to make a strong impression, however, Noverre required energy and truth. Particularly, what is this truth ? I would like to consider this next.

Part 4 The variation of nature and the true expression

As mentioned above, Noverre considered the movement, gesture, and facial feature as the manifested passion. That is why he stated that it is not suitable for ballet to choose an idealistic subject, for example, the Comet, the Zodiac, the Hours and so on. Instead of those idealistic subjects, Noverre recommended to “depict our fellowmen” that is, depict the passion of the human. (8:191-194) Especially, Noverre considered the depiction of passion as the imitation of nature. (9: 195-200)

Then, how can we accomplish the true expression in the imitation of nature? Noverre defined nature as below.

[...]I find that it (uniformity) falsifies truth and destroys verisimilitude. Is nature uniform in her productions?[...] Is not everything different? [...] Undoubtedly the variations of nature’s productions are infinite; their variety is immense and incomprehensible⁹.

Like this, Noverre claimed the infinite variety of nature. Therefore, the movement, gesture, and facial feature have to be varied, and the true expression is accomplished as below.

to vary the attitudes, to diffuse the shades of expression, it would be more true[...] It would result in being [...] a faithful imitator[...], to put variety in the expression of the heads,[...]this variety is the more attractive in its likeness to nature¹⁰. (1: 12-13)

In brief, Noverre suggested that the more varied the body expressions are, the more true the imitation of the nature is.

Therefore, the first meaning of the action, that is, "action" as body expression, is the movement, gesture, and facial feature on the basis of the passion possessed by the character, and if they are various like nature, they can represent the passion of the character without the support of words.

Moreover, there is an important aspect in this action. According to Noverre, if the dancers try to imitate nature, they can create the new expressions, because the variety of the nature gives them newness or novelty. (9: 198) Noverre said although the scenario invented by the poet never changes, the dance which represents/executes the unchanging scenario should be new. Therefore the action as body expression gives newness to the scenario by imitating nature.

Chapter 3 “Action” as scenic composition

Part 1 the action in the same period.

The second meaning of “action” that I would like to talk about is the scenic composition. I would like to make clear that although the same word "action" is used, the meaning is completely different. This meaning of action relates to the unity of the action/plot in the Aristotelian tradition. However the action as scenic composition used in Noverre's text differs slightly to that used in Aristotelian tradition.

Through comparing Louis de Cahusac’s text and Noverre’s text, the difference can easily be understood. Louis de Cahusac(1700/06-1759) wrote many writings about dance in the 18th century, and almost all items concerning the dancing in the Encyclopedia were written by him. Thus we can consider his action as a representation of the era.

It is well known that Noverre often cited the writings of others, including the citation below from Cahusac. It is certain that both texts were almost identical in structure, however, their meanings were different in terms of the context. Cahusac explained the action by dividing it into three parts according to the Aristotelian tradition; first the introduction, second the plot and third the climax and concluded as below.

[...]each act and each scene should possess its introduction, plot and climax; entirely like the whole action of which they form the parts¹¹.

Like Cahusac, Noverre said that

[...] each scene should possess, like the act, a beginning, central portion and conclusion; that is to say, its introduction, plot and climax¹². (3:32-33)

In this way, Cahusac and Noverre said the same things. However, Cahusac stated how the scenario should be developed, on the other hand, Noverre stated how only one scene

should be composed.

It can be seen from here that Noverre was more interested in the momentary unit, "scene" rather than the long unit like the development of the scenario. In the 18th century writings, the action generally means the unified development of the scenario like Cahusac. Then what is Noverre's action as only one scene? By analyzing how one scene is composed, I would like to consider it.

Part 2 The whole composed with the parts

The following citation explains the relationship between the action as body expression and the action as scenic composition

A maître de ballet should endeavour to accord to each of his dancers a different action, expression and character. They should all contribute to the same end, but by different means, and always acting in unanimous concert, should depict by the fidelity of their gestures and imitation, the action which the composer has been at pains to invent for them¹³.” (3: 37-38) (emphasis added)

From this citation, we are able to understand that the actions as body expression are provided for each dancer, and those actions are the materials/parts of the action that I am going to talk about now. How does the one action store those various parts?

Noverre illustrated the relationship between the whole and the part with the composition of the extras as below.

[...]although the other actors are not charged with such important parts [like the principal characters] , they contribute none the less to the general action and dramatic development, which would be broken and suspended if one of these characters were missing from a performance of that piece. Not a single, unnecessary personage should appear to the spectator, [...]:and only the exact number of persons introduced whose presence is required for the performance of the drama¹⁴. (3: 32)

As Noverre explained, it is necessary to provide important roles not only for the principal characters, but also for the extras. Noverre often referred to a stage where the extras are neither lacking nor exceeding in number as “the general action,” and emphasized it as an important way of composing the stage. (8: 175, 14: 416, 15: 461)

Why did Noverre value the general action comprised of the parts? Noverre explained it by illustrating the paintings as below.

So many combatants[...] contribute mutually to the perfection and beauty of these masterpieces; each head has its own expression and particular character,[...] everything has meaning and arouses interest because everything is true, because the imitation of nature is faithful.[...] Then, afterwards, if a veil be thrown over those portions of the pictures which represent sieges, battles, trophies and victories so that the two heroes alone are seen, the interest will be enfeebled. Because there will only remain the portraits of two princes¹⁵.

(3: 42-43)

In this way, a painting composed with many objects arouses “interest,” however a portrait of only two princes depletes “interest.” Then why does the picture composed with many objects arouse “interest”? Let us consider this next.

Part 3 The embellishment of nature and the illusion

Noverre insisted that “the eye likes to see, but not look for” and defined beauty based on this nature of the eye, claiming “beauties brought together in a small compass appear to greater advantage than when they are scattered.” In this way, since the eye does not like to look for, the objects should be not scattered, but brought together in order to form beauty.

Noverre insisted that when the spectator glance across stage, if the stage is not well organized as one unit, it is difficult to catch the spectators' eyes. Therefore, to Noverre, the every moment is valuable, and he said “the moment is the God who determines the spectator¹⁶.” (9: 232)

In order to compose a momentary scene that can catch the spectator's eye, Noverre insisted to make an illusion on the stage. According to Noverre, it is necessary to correct nature which is not always perfect, in other word, to embellish nature. And this embellishment of nature is to compose the illusion. When we try to embellish nature, Noverre said, it is important never to force the art to stand out, but instead to hide the art. In short, “Art captivates only in proportion as it is concealed, it does not succeed except it be so disguised as to be mistaken for nature herself¹⁷.” (6: 90)

Then, what is the embellishment of nature, in other words, the illusion by the hidden art? Noverre explained it by giving concrete examples from his own work, “Ballet of huntsman (Ballet de Chasseurs).” Noverre said that in this work he can compose the illusion by giving attention to the gradation of the heights of the dancers. Noverre's composition is as follows. There are six roads on the stage. The six groups of dancers are assembled according to their heights. The tallest group is arranged in the road nearest to the spectators. Behind them, those of the second followed by the next road, and so on. In the final and deepest road, a group composed of little children is arranged.

That is, in addition to the physical perspective, Noverre strengthened the optical effect by making use of the gradation of the dancer's height itself and even the height of the children. Noverre referred to this composition as below.

The grading was so precisely arranged that the eye was deceived: so that what was only the result of art and perspective had the most true and natural appearance. The illusion was such that the public attributed the gradation to the distance of the objects, and imagined that it was always the same horsemen and horsewomen who crossed by the different roads in the forest.[...]This, Sir, is the illusion produced on the stage when the details of the production are in harmony, and when artists take nature as their guide and model¹⁸. (6: 104-105)

This citation shows that in addition to the natural perspective, the illusionistic space based upon the hidden art is “the most true and natural.” In this way, Noverre can

accomplish the embellishment of nature, that is, a composition where although the art deceives the spectator's eye, the art is interpreted as nature itself.

As mentioned above, Noverre insisted the whole should consist of the parts. Moreover, those parts should be brought together in order to create beauty and catch the spectator's eye. In the *Letters*, the composition which accomplishes to store the parts in harmony is the illusion. According to Noverre, this harmonious illusion is "interesting."

[...] everything would contribute to a concerned goal, [...] In short, the illusion would be complete and therefore interesting, because the strictest harmony would prevail throughout, and each part, being in its proper place, would mutually aid and strengthen the others¹⁹. (8: 134)

On the contrary, the moment there is something to disturb the harmonious composition, for example, unnecessary extras, a heavy mask which conceals the variety of nature, speech and so forth, this interesting composition and unity breaks down. Noverre sometimes put the term "action" and "interest" side by side and insisted that the "action" and "interest" weaken in those broken compositions such as the above. (1:9, 6:95, 7:121, 8:132-133) Therefore, the action as scenic composition is concerned with not only the Poetics of the choreographer, but also the appreciation of the spectator.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

When Noverre described the scenario of his work, he sometimes said "feeble in reading" or "loses everything in reading"²⁰ and insisted that it is important to execute those scenarios in the dancing works. It can be presumed that this concept of the execution has to do with the action which we are considering.

As for the action as body expression, Noverre insisted that the movement, gesture, and facial feature tried to imitate nature and this imitation gave newness to the scenario. Then the action as scenic composition stores those actions which are always new in unity every moment, and arouses the interest of the spectator. Therefore the body action relates to the dancers at that time and the scenic action relates to the spectator at that time. This concept of the action which has a strong relationship to the execution is described well in the following citation.

[...]the sure effect of *dance en action*, it always appears new because it speaks to the soul and interests alike the heart and eye²¹." (15:463-464)

As explained previously, *Letters* by Noverre was written in order to promote the possibility of narrative in dance. This is why Noverre has been referred to as the inventor of the ballet d'action, even if he never uses the term himself. According to the above consideration of the action, however, Noverre did not merely insist that the dancing work should have a scenario, but rather that the existing scenario be executed in new and interesting ways. Therefore Noverre's philosophy of dance is based on the concept of the action, that is, the scenario is executed and animated on the stage through the action.

Appendix: The examples of action and intérêt used in unison. (emphasis added)
(1: 9-10) Voilà ce que j'appelle une Scene d'action, où la Danse doit parler avec feu, avec

énergie; où les figures symétriques & compassées ne peuvent être employées sans altérer la vérité, sans choquer la vraisemblance, sans affaiblir l'**action** & refroidir l'**intérêt**.

(6: 95) La dégradation dans les tailles & dans les couleurs des vêtements est inconnu au Théâtre; ce n'est pas la seule partie que l'on y néglige, mais cette négligence ne me paroît pas excusable dans de certaines circonstances, surtout à l'Opéra, Théâtre de la fiction; Théâtre où la Peinture peut déployer tous ses trésors; Théâtre qui souvent dénué d'**action** forte & privée d'**intérêt** vif, doit être riche en Tableaux de tous les genres, ou du moins devroit l'être.

(7: 121) Conséquemment un Ballet bien fait peut se passer aisément du secours des paroles; j'ai même remarqué qu'elles refroidissoient l'action, qu'elles affaiblissoient (affaiblir) l'intérêt. Je ne sais aucun cas d'un sujet Pantomime qui pour se faire entendre, a recours au récit ou au dialogue. Tout Ballet qui dénué d'intrigue, d'**action** vive & d'**intérêt**, ne me déploie que les beautés mécaniques de l'Art, (...)

(8: 132-133) Ces accessoires & ces épisodes étrangers à l'action nuisent à l'ouvrage; ces objets contraires & toujours désunis; ce cahos de choses mal cousues partagent l'attention & fatiguent bien plus l'imagination qu'ils ne la satisfont: dès-lors le plan de l'Auteur disparoit, le fil échappe, la trame se brise, l'**action** s'évaunoit, l'**intérêt** diminue & le plaisir s'enfuit.

(8: 177-178) Ce plan peut paroître mauvais à la lecture, mais il fera le plus grand effet sur la Scene; il n'offre pas un instant que le Peintre ne puisse saisir; les situations & les Tableaux multipliés qu'il présente ont un coloris, une **action** & un **intérêt** toujours nouveau;

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Endnotes

¹ Although the *Letters* by Noverre has many versions, in this study I used the first version following as the source text.

Jean-Georges Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets* (Lyons, 1760)

Citations are written as follows. eg.(1:23)=Letter #1: page #23.

² Judith Chazin-Bennahum, "Cahusac, Diderot, and Noverre: three Revolutionary French Writers on the Eighteenth Century Dance", in: *Theatre Journal*, Vol.35, No.2 . May (1983) , pp.168-178.; Laura Carones, "Noverre and Angioloni: polemical Letters", in: *Dance Research* ; vol. V. no.1, Spring (1987) , pp.42-54.

³ Sibylle Dahms, "Choreographische Aspekte im Werk Jean-Georges Noverres und Gasparo Angiolini", in: *Tanzforschung Jahrbuch*, Bd. 2 (München: Florian Noetzel, 1991) pp.98-99.

⁴ As for the English translation of Noverre's text, I referred to the anonymous translator [Parkyns MacMahon] in 1782-83 and Cyril W. Beaumont in 1930 and modified their translation as needed. (However, the original text of the translation by Beaumont is not the version in 1760, but in 1803.) As for the original text, although it is sometimes different from the present writing, it has been untouched.

Je n'entends point au reste par le mot d'*action* celle qui ne consiste qu'à se remuer[...] L'*action* en matière de Danse est l'Art de faire passer par l'expression vraie de nos mouvements, de nos gestes & de la physionomie, nos sentiments & nos passions dans l'ame des Spectateurs. L'*action* n'est donc autre chose que la Pantomime. (10: 261-262)

⁵ Les passions étant les mêmes chez tous les hommes, elles ne diffèrent qu'à proportion de leurs sensations; elles s'impriment & s'exercent avec plus ou moins de force sur les uns que sur les

autres, & se manifestent au dehors avec plus ou moins de véhémence & d'impétuosité. (1: 12)

⁶ [...]il se transforme; ce n'est plus *Garrick* à qui l'on parle, ce n'est plus *Garrick* que l'on entend: la métamorphose une fois faite, le Comédien disparaît & le Héros se montre; il ne reprend sa forme naturelle que lorsqu'il a rempli les devoirs de son état. (9: 212-213)

⁷ Je ne sais aucun cas d'un sujet Pantomime qui pour se faire entendre, a recours au récit ou au dialogue. (7:121)

⁸ Le cri de la nature, ou les mouvements vrais de l'action Pantomime doivent également toucher; [...]ils seront l'un & l'autre une impression aussi forte, si cependant les images de la Pantomime sont aussi vives, aussi frappantes & aussi animées que celles du discours. Il n'est pas possible d'imprimer cet intérêt[...] en faisant tout simplement de beaux pas; il faut que l'ame, la physionomie, le geste & les attitudes parlent toutes à la fois, & qu'elles parlent avec autant d'énergie que de vérité. (10: 286-287)

⁹ [...]je trouve qu'elle [uniformité] altere la vérité & qu'elle détruit la vraisemblance. La nature est-elle uniforme dans ses productions? [...]Tout n'est-il pas varié? tout ce qui existe dans l'Univers, n'a-t-il pas des formes, des couleurs & des teintes différentes? [...]Non, sans doute; les gradations & les dégradations des productions de la nature sont infinies; leur variété est immense & incompréhensible. (9: 218)

¹⁰ [...]il y auroit donc plus de vrai à diversifier les attitudes, à répandre des nuances dans l'expression,[...] Ce seroit être [...]fidelle imitateur[...]que de mettre de la variété dans l'expression des têtes, [...]cette diversité est d'autant plus séduisante qu'elle est l'image de la nature. (1: 12-13)

¹¹ Or, chaque Acte, chaque Scène doit avoir son exposition, son nœud & son dénouement, tout comme l'action entière dont ils font les parties. Louis de Cahusac, *La danse ancienne et moderne ou Traité historique de la danse*, t. 3 (La Haye, 1754), p.163.

¹² [...]chaque Scene en particulier, doit avoir, ainsi que l'acte un commencement, un milieu & une fin; c'est-à-dire, son exposition, son nœud & son dénouement. (3:32-33)

¹³ Un Maître de Ballets doit s'attacher à donner à tous les Acteurs dansants une action, une expression & un caractère différents; ils doivent tous arriver au même but par des routes opposées, & concourir unanimement & de concert à peindre par la vérité de leurs gestes & de leur imitation, l'action que le Compositeur a pris soin de leur tracer. (3: 37-38)

¹⁴ [...]mais quoique les autres Acteurs ne soient point chargés de Rôles aussi beaux ni aussi importants, ils ne concourent pas moins à l'action générale & à la marche du Drame qui seroit coupée & suspendue, si l'un de ces personnages manquoit à la représentation de cette Pièce. Il ne faut point d'inutilité au Théâtre, [...]n'y introduire que le nombre exact d'Acteurs nécessaires à l'exécution du Drame. (3: 32)

¹⁵ [...]cette quantité prodigieuse de combattants, de vaincus & de vainqueurs[...] concourt unanimement à la beauté & à la perfection de ces chef-d'œuvres; chaque tête a son expression & son caractère particulier; [...]tout parle, tout intéresse, parce que tout est vrai; parce que l'imitation de la nature est fidelle; [...]Que l'on jette ensuite sur ces Tableaux un voile qui dérobe à la vue les sièges, les batailles, les trophées, les triomphes; que l'on ne laisse voir enfin que les deux Héros; l'intérêt s'affoiblira; il ne restera que les Portraits de deux grands Princes.(3: 42-43)

¹⁶ [...]que les beautés réunies dans un petit espace frappent davantage que lorsqu'elles sont éparses. L'œil aime à voir, & n'aime point à chercher. Tout ce qui ne se présente point à nos sens avec les traits de la beauté, ne nous flatte que médiocrement. En fait d'Art agréable, on fuit la peine, on craint l'examen, on veut être séduit, n'importe à quel prix. L'instant est le Dieu qui détermine le Public; que l'Artiste le saisine, il est sûr de plaire. (9: 232)

¹⁷ il(Art) n'est séduisant qu'autant qu'il se déguise, & il ne triomphe véritablement, que lorsqu'il

est méconnu, & qu'on le prend pour elle. il n'est séduisant qu'autant qu'il se déguise, & il ne triomphe véritablement, que lorsqu'il est méconnu, & qu'on le prend pour elle(nature). (6: 90)

¹⁸ La dégradation étoit si correctement observée que l'œil s'y trompoit; ce qui n'étoit qu'un effet de l'Art & des proportions, avoit l'air le plus vrai & le plus naturel; la fiction étoit telle, que le Public n'attribuoit cette dégradation qu'à l'éloignement des objets, & qu'il s'imaginait que c'étoit toujours les mêmes Chasseurs & les mêmes Chasseresses qui parcouroient les différents chemins de la forêt.[...]Voilà, Monsieur, l'illusion que produit le Théâtre, lorsque toutes les parties en sont d'accord, & que les artistes prennent la nature pour leur guide & leur modele. (6: 104-105)

¹⁹ tout marcheroit au but & de concert;[...]; tout enfin seroit illusion & deviendroit intéressant, parce que tout seroit d'accord, & que chaque partie tenant la place qu'elle doit occuper naturellement, s'entr'aideroit & se prêteroit réciproquement des forces.(8: 134)

²⁰ mauvais à la lecture (8: 177), perd tout à la lecture (14: 408), longue à la lecture (15: 444)

²¹ [...]; effet certain de la Danse en action; elle paroît toujours nouvelle parce qu'elle parle à l'ame, & qu'elle intéresse également le cœur & les yeux. (15:463-464)

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When Words Don't Get It: The Challenges of Writing about Ritual Dance

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Abstract

Practitioners of ritual dance often insist that what they are doing when they dance cannot be captured in words. What words can say represents a distortion of what is otherwise a transformative experience. This paper evaluates three responses to this challenge (dance is a text; dance is not a text; dancing is/not a text) represented by three scholars who study the Kalahari Bushman and their communal, healing dance. The paper concludes with a proposal for a philosophy of bodily becoming in which writing and dancing appear as interdependent movement practices, educating our senses to overlapping spans of possible thought, feeling, and action.

Introduction

Paper people. This name is what the Bushmen of the Kalahari call the people of the modern west—namely missionaries and anthropologists—who, since the 1950s, have been coming to visit them, study them, learn about them, and in some cases, learn from them.

The Bushmen are one of the few remaining cultures following a hunter-gatherer model of social organization and ecological interaction. Until recently, they have not practiced reading and writing. As a nomadic people, they have lived their lives free of encumbering possessions, including books, paper, and writing implements.¹ What they do is dance. A distinguishing feature of Bushman culture is a regularly occurring, all-night, inclusive, communal dance, performed outside, in a circle, around a fire, under the stars.

Yet, in their encounters with paper people, the Bushmen confirm what they have known from centuries of colonial rule. There is power in paper. If something is written down, it can be passed from hand to hand and read by others who are far away. It can be consulted as a point of agreement, and its terms enforced. It can serve as a declaration of identity, a claim to human rights.

In the past couple of decades, the Bushmen have asked several different paper people to tell their story. In particular, they want paper people to write about that aspect of their lives that they perceive as the source of their endurance, their longevity, and their well being: the communal dance. It is in this dance, they insist, that people get healed, bond with one another, learn to share, and otherwise find their “ropes” to the Creator god.

For the Bushmen, then, the project of writing about dancing is not an academic question. It is *vital* to their *survival* as a people and as a culture. Increasingly crowded off what was once their land by agriculturalists, herders, and poachers, they need international support from people who value their way of life in order to pressure the governments of Namibia and Botswana to honor their territorial claims.

For paper people who have embraced this challenge, the task of writing about the Bushman dancing is daunting. *How can I write about you? What can I say in words*

about what you dance? Why you dance? What can my writing do for your dance? Or not? How will my writing about your dancing make a difference? Or not?

In the following paper I take a look at three approaches to such questions represented by three tellings of the Bushmen's story: Dancing is (like) a text—a symbolic act whose grammar, syntax, and meaning may be read. Dance is *not* (like) a text—a nonverbal, visceral act of transformation. Dance is *and* is not (like) a text—both of the above, and forever locked in a conflicted, generative embrace with the act of using words.

While the authors I discuss all share a passion for honoring the dance tradition of the Bushmen as a valid and vital aspect of Bushman society, how they go about doing so has different implications for the past, present, and future of the dance. Looking closely at these three anthropological accounts not only helps us get a handle on what is at stake in such approaches, it also opens us to hear more from the Bushmen about their perspective on dancing and writing—and why it matters now.

I. Dance is (like) a text.

Mathias Guenther is a sociologist interested in the symbolic aspects of Bushman culture—most notably, its beliefs and rituals—as these express and relate to a social structure characterized by foraging. From the beginning of his book *Tricksters and Trancers*, Guenther is clear that such a project requires setting aside two primary approaches to the anthropology of religion: the structuralist and functionalist paradigms. As Guenther explains, both of these theories presume that a rational, semantic interpretation of symbols and practices is possible. As a result, neither provides much help when confronted by the ambiguity, complexity, and fluidity of Bushman stories and songs, their gods and their universe (1999: 4, 228-9).

Instead, Guenther sets out to affirm this seemingly chaotic proliferation of Bushman symbols as generative of meaning. As he observes: “ambiguity creates salience, rendering the ambiguous entity an object of beguilement and intellectual and aesthetic elaboration” (1999: 235). He adds: “fluidity is a mainspring for creativity and explanation... because of its being cut loose from structure” (1999: 235). In such ways, Guenther not only seeks to affirm the value of Bushman symbology in its own right on its own terms, he also seeks to demonstrate how useful the Bushman case can be for advancing anthropological theories of religion. The Bushman case reveals how ambiguity can serve as an integral, productive, dynamic dimension of religious life.²

Nevertheless, Guenther spends most of his time focusing on aspects of the Bushman symbology that look like texts: songs and stories. It is not until chapter 8 that Guenther turns to consider the all-night communal dance. Here, his own position is decidedly ambiguous. While he admits that the dance is the people's “central ritual” and “defining religious institution,” he stresses (as he does throughout the book) that the Bushman society displays an “undeveloped ritual dimension” (1999: 181). There is only a dance, and only one dance.

In an attempt to comprehend the dance's relevance, Guenther focuses on two “experiential processes” by which it is effective (1999: 182): the mental or psychological experience of altered states of consciousness that individuals undergo; and the moral, social, synergetic process of caring and “emergent fellowship” that the group undergoes.

Both of these experiential processes, Guenther explains, for the individual and group, are effected by the “vigorous, sustained, and physically exhausting activity of dancing around a nocturnal fire” (1999: 183).

Having discerned these two experiential processes, Guenther then interprets their meaning in terms of other text-like symbolic elements of the culture he has previously introduced. Trance dance, he writes, is the “expressive equivalent to the social dichotomy of individualism and communalism which runs also through all the other expressive, symbolic, moral, and institutional spheres of Bushman culture” (1999: 198).

In this approach then, dance is like a text. In so far as dance is a physical action on a material plane, its meaning is given by the symbolic contexts—already laid out by Guenther—in which it occurs. His approach presumes an adequate, continuous, representational symmetry between (their) dancing and (his) writing. In other words, by framing the dance in terms of “experiential processes,” Guenther sets himself up as one who can decipher the meaning that has been ascribed to them. He describes the dance in ways that guarantee his ability to write about it.

While this textual orientation does provide Guenther with ample means to affirm the dancing as having value (i.e, for the way in which it serves as, or at least aligns with, other symbolic aspects of Bushman culture), it does not provide him with the resources for assessing why the *dancing* is so important to the Bushmen or how the bodily movements of those who dance effect transformation in the realm of thoughts and ideas. By assuming a continuous symmetry between writing and dancing, Guenther effectively displaces bodily movement from the symbolic sphere. Bodily movement, in his account, has no *symbolic* agency apart from other text-like cultural expressions provide. Its agency is physical. The dancing of the dance disappears in the interpretation of its significance.

II. Dance is not (like) a text.

While Guenther bases some of his observations and analyses on the work of Richard Katz, Megan Biesele, and Verna St. Denis, their approach differs from his in the assumptions they make about the relationship between the Bushman dance and their writing about it. These paper people place the dancing of the Ju|‘hoansi³ at the center of their book, *Healing Makes Our Hearts Happy*, from the beginning. As they insist, the dance is, “A highly social outlet for tensions, a spiritual vehicle for reinforcing the groups’ mutual reliance on one another, and a sense of place in their environment” (1997: xiii). The authors then go to great lengths to emphasize that the dancing is *not* like a text. Its meaning cannot be read and rendered in terms of symbols. The dance is nonverbal. However, the authors also affirm that the dance, as nonverbal, is not merely material or experiential either. The dance itself is wholly physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual, and on all of these registers, it defies translation from bodily to verbal form.

In order to write about the dancing, then, these paper people adopt several strategies. Most notably, the authors quote the Ju|‘hoansi directly as much as possible. They invite the Ju|‘hoansi to describe their experiences of the dance, and the experiences they have in the dance, so as to bring the dancing to life for their readers.

Further, the authors continually call upon their readers to examine their western, materialist bias, insisting that the Ju|‘hoansi do not operate with the same conceptual

categories of sacred and profane, religious and secular, material and spiritual, as most of their readers do. As they aver, “in the healing, the Ju|‘hoansi make no distinction among their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs” (1997: 18). The key to understanding the Bushman dance, as these authors describe it, is *n|om*—a “spiritual energy” that the bodily movements of dancing stir, tap, and release in acts of healing (1997: xxiii). It is this spiritual energy at work in the dance, the authors explain, that sustains the matrix of intimate, egalitarian social relations that the Ju|‘hoansi need in order to survive in the desert (1997: 48).

Third, these authors emphasize that as they write, they are not just writing *about* the Ju|‘hoansi, they are writing *for* them. The authors not only want to tell the world about the Ju|‘hoansi, they want to encourage the Ju|‘hoansi in their struggle to resist ongoing oppression. These three authors believe that Ju|‘hoan dance is more than simply a defining element of Ju|‘hoan identity. They believe that it could be a potent resource for helping the Ju|‘hoansi navigate the challenges they face in losing their land, attending settlement schools, hosting a western medical clinic, and stemming the tide of alcohol abuse unleashed by contact. As they write: “*N|om* and healing could be the linchpin to creating more constructive forces of social change for the Ju|‘hoansi” (1997: 8).

While these writing strategies carry the authors far in honoring the dance, they fall short when it comes to explaining how the dance can effect sharing relationships and social change. At this point the authors default to a distinction that again, as in Guenther’s approach, marginalizes the *dancing* of the dance. The authors tag the efficacy of the dancing to the “spiritual visions” it may induce (1997: 132-3). They write “Perhaps... the Ju|‘hoansi will weave some of their future from spiritually guided experiences that are shared throughout the community. The healing dance could then become a central source of change, the boiling *n|om* a central energizer, helping give people the strength and confidence necessary to speak out and act out for their rights” (1997: 142).

Additional troubles with framing the dance as a nonverbal source of spiritual visions soon appear. As the authors report, the Ju|‘hoansi insist that the dance has no relation to these possible uses. The Ju|‘hoansi resist the authors’ attempts to convert the dance into a political, social, or even medical instrument. The dance is a dance. It is valuable as a dance, apart from the uses to which it can be put. The authors quote ≠Oma Djo: “If it’s something like a person who’s hungry, we just say that we’re all hungry and why is hunger persecuting us. You ask each other in an ordinary way about ordinary things. You don’t dance about it” (1997: 133-4). When the authors persist: “What are the things you dance about?” ≠Oma Djo’s response was: “You just dance.” (1997: 134). For the Ju|‘hoansi, the actions of stepping, hopping, stamping, clapping around a fire *are* what have value, and when paper people make dancing into a tool or an idol, they kill it.

III. Dance is/not (like) a text.

Bradford Keeney is a third anthropologist who has traveled to the Kalahari—thirty-eight times over a period of twenty years. The Bushman healers have recognized him as one of them, what they call a Heart of the Spears. They have asked Keeney not only to tell the story of their dance, but to teach its healing methods. In a series of books and workshops,

as paper person and shaman, and now with his wife Hillary, Keeney has been leading people to the dance, by means of the dance, and by means of his dancing words.

Keeney begins his most recent book on the Bushmen as if it were easy: “The world’s most enduring culture has been the custodian of the original way of making connection with the sacred. They have asked me to share their straightforward means of finding and entering eternity” (2010: xi). This “straightforward means” is the dance; and the “finding” happens as we allow the dance to transform us. As Keeney writes, “In this ecstatic dancing, or shaking, we tap into a magical, mysterious force or energy—*n|om*—that is an entry to a world the rest of us have heard very little about.” (2010: 5).

Right from the start, however, we learn that any progress along this straightforward path involves resisting the power of words over our thoughts and feelings. Keeney quotes Toma, a Bushman healer, who explains that words just don’t get it: “The wordy people string together one word after another, and the line gets longer and longer. Then they twist that line in all kinds of directions and end up with a bunch of broken sticks. Then they make other sticks until they have a stack of sticks. The only thing worth doing with this stack is burning it. It would make a nice fire for a dance” (2010: 237).

What words cannot help paper people understand, according to Keeney, is the experience of having one’s heart awakened (2010: ix). As Keeney qualifies, the dance “is not simply a trance state as has been suggested by many anthropologists. It is waking up our feelings and being in a heightened state of emotions. Its purpose is to make you feel reborn. When you wake up, you tremble and shake, what they call *thara*” (2010: 51). He quotes Toma, who confirms: “We are waking up our feelings. Don’t forget that our word for this experience is *!aia*, which means to wake up our strongest feelings. When we dance, we are trying to enter *!aia* and arouse the most powerful emotions of our heart” (2010: 57).

The Bushmen, then, saddle Keeney with a task of whose paradoxes they and he are very much aware: he must use words—words that tend to harden the hearts and minds of users against the dance—in order to soften people to the possibility of having the experience of awakening their feelings in the dance. Yet the Bushmen are sanguine about the possibilities. Such a task is not just impossible. It is life. It is what they are always already doing on a day-to-day basis. As Toma affirms: “Words get you stuck unless you play with them and move them around. How do you do that? By letting your heart awaken the words. You see, your mind puts words to sleep, and your heart brings them to life” (2010: 59). That is, a heart awakened by dancing.

Moreover, as Brad and Hillary Keeney have come to a deeper understanding of the Bushmen universe, they have come to understand how this generative tension between dancing and writing is inherent in the Bushman universe. As they explain, the Bushmen distinguish a First Creation—in which identities and shapes are constantly shifting—from a Second Creation, in which the movement stops, is arrested, by names (2013: 67). These names fix identities and shapes in place, and everything so fixed suffers sickness, pain, and death. The only solution, so the Bushmen believe, is to shake things up—to tap into the creative energy of the First Creation, and be moved by it. The paradigmatic act for this “crossing”—the “general paradigm for all Bushman transformative performance”—is the dance (2013: 79).

Yet the Bushmen are clear. There is no “First Creation” or “Second Creation,” only the constant, endless transformation of one into the other and back again (2013: 83). The

challenge of a life, as they see it, involves learning to participate in this ongoing creation. As Keeney explains, it involves learning to “live in the very heart of unfiltered transformative process” (2010: 10). It involves learning to laugh—as Nietzsche said—to dance and laugh away over yourselves (1954: 407-8).

Toma again clarifies the task at hand: “I know what you are thinking... This does not mean that we should be silent and stop using words. Words... help us. They help us change. They are the agents of change. Behind everything is the great force of change. We call it *n/o’an-ka’ae*, the original force that changes everything. It is our most important word. It is that which creates” (2010: 238).

What the Bushmen ask Keeney, then, is to use words, but to do so from the place where he has gone while dancing their dance—the place of an open heart. Keeney’s response is to use his written words in a way parallel to the Bushmen’s own use of spoken words: as a means to open up a capacity to know the dance in the only way it is capable of being known—through the experience of being moved by it. He writes with a beguiling mix of personal anecdote, scholarly engagement, and sympathetic description. His wit bites; his humor hits. The impact sends the reader rolling in the aisles, as her heart cracks wide open. His words evoke and reveal a generative, paradoxical tension between writing and dancing as the enabling condition of any writing or any dancing at all.

A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming

This third approach to writing about ritual dance, seen in the Keeneys’ accounts of the Bushmen, is resonant with the philosophy of bodily becoming that I have been developing over the past eight years (LaMothe 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2015). From the perspective of bodily becoming, writing and dancing cannot be distinguished from the outset as two separate media: dancing and writing are interdependent movement practices.

Both dancing and writing involve repeating and mastering precise patterns of bodily movement. In both cases those patterns of movement serve to train our senses to certain ranges of possible feeling and thought. Yet they do so differently. Whereas the bodily movements of paper-pushing train our senses away from our concrete, felt engagement with the sensory world, the precise, rhythmic movements of the dance train our senses to the currents of energy flowing through a bodily self—to the movement that is making us who we are.

The implications here are several and I have time only to hint at them. First and foremost is the recognition that the act of learning a dance is not just about making movements or mastering steps. It is about cultivating a capacity to notice and recreate movement patterns. The implication for scholars is that their ability to understand the meaning of a dance hangs on their own sensory awareness—on their ability to discern how the movements of a dance are educating the sensory awareness of those who make them. An ongoing practice of dance, regardless of style, is itself a critical, crucial asset for exercising a capacity to sense and respond to movement patterns—including those patterns expressed in spoken and written words.

Second, the challenge of writing about dancing is different than imagined. It is not about translating one medium into the other. It is about embracing the idea that the practices of dancing and word-use are interdependent. One cannot exist without the other. Human civilization hangs in the balance between the two.⁴ The challenge in writing about dancing, then, is to stage a mutually catalyzing encounter in which the practice and style of writing yield to the movement patterns of the dancing, even as the dancing comes into view through the movement of those words. The task is to communicate participation in the transformation that occurs as a person dances, so as to catalyze appreciation for what the experience entails and yields. Of course, the writing cannot deliver the experience. But there is room to appreciate the shape of a transformative experience—and how and that it is one.

Conclusion

It might be that the Bushmen are intentional in their requests. By asking different paper people to tell their story, they knew they would get different stories, told from different perspectives, expressing different assumptions about the role of writing in relationship to their dancing. In fact, they probably could tell who would write which kind of tale. They may even have perceived this multiplicity as an advantage. They may have surmised that each paper person would tell the story in a way that some other audience members would be able and willing to receive. Not everyone can hear every story.

Moreover, they may also have believed that the proliferation of conflicting stories would do more to help their cause than any one in particular. The dance would be more likely to appear among the stories, between the lines—in the movement from story to story—as the elusive, enabling, ever evolving condition of them all. In this way, the writing could never be seen to dominate or represent the dance, but rather land as an invitation to explore, to move with... to join in.

What else would we want our writing to do?

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Notes

- ¹ The Bushmen live in the Kalahari Desert—an area of land spanning East Namibia and Western Botswana—where they were relocated in the nineteenth century by black Africans and White colonialists. By most counts, until forced to settle, each adult owned approximately 25 pounds of possessions—an easily portable load. The Bushmen consider themselves neither black nor white, but a separate lineage. Genetic studies confirm their identity as one of the oldest continuous peoples on the planet.
- ² Guenther makes this point especially in relation to Turner's theory of a three-stage ritual process, arguing that the Bushman live in a permanently liminal space that does not defer to a structure.
- ³ A Bushman name for themselves, used as well by these authors, that means the 'real people.'
- ⁴ This point challenges those who claim that writing evolves out of dancing, or that literate societies are more civilized than non-literate ones. Dancing is not just a precursor to writing. Writing is a species of the dancing it exists to serve.

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Your Body is Not a Shark: Discourses of Somatic and Poetic Engagement on the Page and the Stage

Denise Leto and Cid Pearlman

Abstract

*Choreographer Cid Pearlman and poet Denise Leto discuss the success and challenges of their interdisciplinary collaboration, *Your Body is Not a Shark*, a performance piece encompassing music, poetry, dance, and movement. This was a collaboration with the cellist/composer Joan Jeanrenaud and the conductor Maya Barsacq. Denise and Cid will use digital media and other forms of documentation to present, analyze, question, and explore their creative process to bring to the surface the interstices and intersections of interdisciplinary collaborative work in the movement and literary arts.*

Denise Leto explores disability poetics, somatics, and physical difference as a generative force. She discusses strategies of collaboration and the possibilities for multiple forms of expression within underrepresented and marginalized artistic communities when the “limit” becomes the art. Through a feminist poetics of interdisciplinary practice and engagement, the relationship between language making, speech formation, and movement is re-envisioned. She asks: How to create an exacting aesthetic that is capacious enough to explore the body in pain, the body in transformation, and the unexpected subject?

Cid Pearlman examines the inevitable fragility of the human body and the complications of representing that in performance. Using the poetics of Leto’s libretto as scaffolding and generator for meaning-making, Pearlman explores the discontinuity of the stutter and stumble, and the possibilities that arise from interruption, limitation, and change. The moment just before the lapse, the anticipation of falling as metaphor, informs this collaboration. In much the same way our culture deals with aging – anticipating, hiding, or trying to fix our bodies – we cannot ultimately deflect the processes and impact of time.

Introduction

In the delivery of our presentation, we’re working with issues of communication, the embodied voice, and audience reception. Denise has a neurological condition called Laryngeal Dystonia, which impairs speech and movement. At times, it makes it difficult for her to speak fluently and with adequate amplification. If her voice breaks or pauses in a way that makes it difficult to understand, I may act as a “human voicer” or “interpreter”. In this way, we will be engaging in a collaborative presentation *about* collaboration.

The Project

Today we’re talking about the collaborative, interdisciplinary performance piece, *Your Body is Not a Shark* which was choreographed and directed by Cid, with an original score composed and performed by the cellist Joan Jeanrenaud – best known for her work with Kronos Quartet. I wrote a series of six poems and acted as dramaturge. A chamber orchestra composed of seven members of CADENZA, a Santa Cruz based ensemble conducted by Maya Barsacq, performed the score along with Joan as soloist and Willie Winant on percussion. The world premiere took place in January 2013 at ODC Theater in San Francisco and Motion at the Mill in Santa Cruz.

History

The idea for a collaboration started in 2008 when Cid and I were artists in residence at Djerassi Resident Artist Program. We were both interested in combining movement, text, and sound in ways that challenged and questioned the idea of a “normal” body. We talked about the expected artistic expression of embodiment *on* the page *and* in movement and sound structures. Cid was particularly interested with the way I was integrating my experience of dystonia into my art and writing practice.

During the summer of 2010, Maya Barsacq approached Joan and me about collaborating with her orchestra. I suggested including Denise, and the meaning and artifice for *Shark* developed over the next few years and grew from multiple conversations among the collaborators.

Shark is a rigorous investigation into the notion of the heroic or virtuosic body. Working with dancers, aged 18 to 62, we explored issues of ability, age, and gender. We used the idea of the “stutter and the stumble” to question differences in physical capacities and a diminishing of social presence. As women aged 41 to 55—Denise with dystonia and Joan with Multiple Sclerosis—we wanted to upend the notion of a universal body and foreground difference as valued subject.

Denise Leto Introduction

What drew me to the project were the past conversations I had with Cid and the videos I saw of her amazing work, a desire for interdisciplinary practice and engagement, the idea of experimenting with language, sound, and movement, to complicate the representation of disability not as projected metaphor but as embodied presence, and the opportunity to work with the incredible collaborative team that became the force behind *Shark*.

Because of my interest in working in multiple disciplines, the possibilities for this kind of collaboration was clear. I had been trying to find a form of poetics that rearranges and sort of explodes the sometimes conventional, sleep-inducing, podium-bound, static-poetry reading. I knew that it would be an unprecedented experience working with Cid’s choreography and Joan’s compositions, that it would stretch what I knew about the logistics, labor, and aesthetics involved in creating a production of this breadth and depth, and that it would transform my thinking about art and bodies.

I see the physical form as a store of experience—that movement is relevant in all bodies and that words are performed as sentient, tactile communicators both in art and in daily life. But how to create an exacting aesthetic that holds the body in pain and the body in transformation? Who defines what movement is? What communication is? What happens when the movement or the voice strains the “able-bodied” expectation?

This isn’t a new set of questions or approach; but it was new to me. I started experimenting with how to render written and spoken language *as* movement: the articulation of words as sound waves, as particles—somatic patterns that form through the resonance of air.

The vocal cords move 225 times a second. Dystonia, as a neurological condition wired in my body that seizes the vocal chords shut, forces me to *feel* how words are made, to feel their texture and resonance. This affects my work both on and off the page. My voice was no longer an accurate indicator of intended poetic inflection or emphasis. So, I’ve become more aware of self-presentation and more critical of wholeness and closure. I feel a sense of urgency to shape and contort the lyric and narrative impulse, to make sound and gesture the most immediate expression and the meaning or content a kind of phantom body. However much my speaking voice was changed so was my poetic voice.

I’ve had to create adaptive strategies for presenting my work. I started with co-reading—having a human voicer stand with me to read the words I couldn’t get out, this

developed into a kind of choral reading where sometimes the co-reader would tow me in to a line or we would read simultaneously, our voices would overlap and omissions, errors, and fragments became part of the presentation.

This transformed into reading with music, with vocalizations from nature, working with performance, sound, and movement artists, and using visual art and video as backdrop and as integral elements. Rather than trying to avoid, override, mask or fill in the gaps, I began to see them as new facets, to include them, much as I would welcome or include any other kind of difference. They became an encounter rather than a disruption.

The feminist idea: personal reflection *as* culture creation.

Because of my work on *Shark*, I understood even more keenly that difference does not equate limitation, yet both are generative. The question became: what are the possibilities for multiple forms of expression when the limit *becomes* the art?

Cid Pearlman Introduction

Working with Denise's poetry is provocative, inspiring, and challenging. It shifts how I make dances, inviting me – and sometimes forcing me – to break apart my structures and rebuild them in unfamiliar and fascinating ways.

In many of my dances, I consider individuality in relationship to social complexity: how we perform ourselves, how we perform identity, subjectivity, intimacy, desire. And I have been thinking about performance and embodiment, that is, how to create environments in which dancers can be wholly themselves while simultaneously working with the choreography that we have created together.

Shark takes into consideration bodies that are often written out of artistic or social narratives. I'm interested in the often unheard stories these bodies can tell; engaging in a conversation with audiences that makes it clear that there is much at stake in the rendering of these bodies and that they matter to the larger narrative.

While my dances are not specifically about gender, I have examined for nearly a decade the ways that gender operates and is performed in my work as a model for theorizing and choreographing what I hope are other more complex, democratic, and inclusive ways to be in the world. *Shark* is a logical extension of this research. Much like whiteness, and maleness, the "supposed" virtuosic body stands in for "normal." The stories that solely young, hard bodies can tell are limited by their ubiquitous physicality. The vulnerable body – imperfect and weathered with its callouses and scars – invites us to contemplate mortality and consider how we maintain our subjectivity in a world that discounts difference.

Collaboration is at the center of my art practice. Working collectively has the potential to influence how we create. I am intensely interested in social relationships both on stage and off. How do we negotiate being together, how can we be intimate and compassionate without losing our sense of irony, or sense of humor? I grew up during the political movements of the 1970s. So, while there is sometimes darkness in my work, and it can certainly be ironic, there is also an inherent optimism in the dances I create.

I had been looking for a project that was truly immersive, one with a deep research component where I could learn to do something new as a choreographer. I wanted an experience that would challenge me intellectually, aesthetically, and somatically.

Joan and I had collaborated twice before – on 2004's *Strange Toys* and 2006's *small variations*, which premiered here at UCLA. While working with Joan is always amazing, it was adding Denise and her writings to the collaboration that made *Shark* a site for this particular kind of rigorous experimentation.

Theoretical Basis and the Politics of Representation

Through research in kinetics, poetics, music structure, feminist disability studies and through formal techniques we looked at the idea of cultural competency as vital to aesthetic experimentation and vice versa: meaning-making that encompasses experience and abstraction. We wanted a collaboration of empowerment and indeterminacy that resides in *actual* bodies moving through the physical world.

We asked ourselves: How are we, as artists and as women seen and heard in multiple mediums and across cultural sites? How does accessibility in the creating of *Shark* relate to accessibility in its presentation? Who is the audience? What is the relationship between “avant-garde” or “experimental” works and politically conscious works? Do they occupy oppositional spaces? Do current discussions perceive one as having a “higher” mandate than the other?

These questions have been formulated and re-formulated many times over. Our attempt to engage them in our work, whether successful or not, was critical in process and production.

Methodology and Tactics

The piece is divided into sections each with a different poetic, choreographic, and musical structure. For example, the second section uses the poetic form of the Tanka as scaffolding for the dance and the score. It embodies a sense of closure and flow with short and long lines and a series of patterned syllables or accents. For the choreography, Cid engaged equally with the content of the poem and the explanatory text I wrote. The dancers embodied the structure, taking the writing guidelines as movement instruction.

The dancers worked with the Tanka in a number of ways – coming up with a variety of solutions. For one part, we took the instructions you see and corporealized the punctuation in a simple walking phrase. Then we worked with the text using its sound and imagery to generate movement. Once we had refined this choreography, we lay it over the timing and spacing of the walking phrase, so that we were doing these two aspects of the Tanka simultaneously.

In the performance as a whole, the poems are heard as recitation within the musical score and experienced as silent counterparts. Ideas, sounds, and movements are taken from previous sections, changed, and given a different emphasis or position. This lends a modulated sense of repetition and continuity. Dancers’ bodies move through space and time; words on a page rest in space and time.

Each of us engaged with the material in our own way. Joan’s compositions and her solo performance balanced, disturbed, and coalesced the piece. Joan wrote: “There will be a CD with Denise’s voice—which is sometimes manipulated—and additional sounds such as rain, ocean waves, ice dripping and women’s voices...I [also] studied several scores like Bela Bartok’s ‘Music for String Instruments, Percussion...’ to help me in my orchestration for the work.”

The stage and page became interchangeable, shifting the site of discovery.

Logistics

During our communication: phone, skype, meetings, rehearsals etc., we worked with the actual disabled body even as we worked with its artistic expression. Joan’s MS was present; Denise’s dystonia was present. How we met, where we met, how we discussed the issues at hand, how time was handled, were adapted in real-world, real-time dynamics.

I live in Santa Cruz, 70 miles south of where Joan and Denise live, in San Francisco and Oakland. This meant that negotiating travel was part of the process. From August through December of 2012, I rehearsed with a predominantly local cast of dancers. I did the administrative and production work over the two years leading up to the premiere, with extensive help from Denise in grant writing. However, each document we created contained contributions from each of us – and all publications were vetted by the group. The majority of the structural and design decisions came from two meetings that took place during the summer of 2012.

In a meeting that followed ten days later with Joan, Denise and Cid, we decided on the length, poetic structure, and central idea/metaphor for each section. We wanted a cast of dancers who would reflect the complicated world we live in, older dancers, queer dancers, dancers of color. And I wanted to work, when possible, with performers who I already had a relationship with. The final cast included Sara Wilbourne who is 63, David King who is 49, Damara Ganley 34, Sarah Day who is 30, Molly Katzman who is 24, and Nahshon Marden who is 18. I had worked with all of these dancers before. They came from a variety of backgrounds and trainings, and their individuality was foregrounded throughout.

Central to the creation of the movement material was thinking about different kinds of virtuosity. Denise and I had many conversations about representation and disability. Though we made decisions—for example, *Shark* would look at issues around disability and limitation as a way to discuss difference but would not assume the pretense of representing a supposed universal, disabled body—it was always an open question. The relationship between “subject” and “subjects” is not resolute. Should we have a dancer with an identifiable, visible disability on stage? And how did Denise and Joan’s disabilities factor in the movement score? In their presence on stage? We tried to explore the complexity of these questions in our work, which we hope might become a small part of the much larger conversation.

I like work in which dancers are virtuosic where they are *right* now. We excel at different things at different points in our lives. So, for example, Sara Wilbourne, who is 63, can get down to the floor just fine, but she either needs more time or some help getting back up. My partner David King is 49 and he is dealing with issues around having the body of an aging dancer - not only the physicality, but also the emotional impact of “I can’t do what I used to be able to do, and so with that limitation, what can I do differently and/or better now?”

At the outset, we decided that we would like to have Denise on stage with us, as the visible author of the work. She would sit at a desk stage right and also participate in some of the danced movement. We factored in the unpredictability of her dystonia and made it part of the work. On a good day, Denise would perform the choreography as planned, but on a bad day she might experience physical constraint and vocal difficulties that mitigated her involvement. We created structures where if Denise’s performance included sitting and nothing else, the work would hold its shape.

Denise and Joan’s Working Process

Joan and I conducted two long studio sessions during which we recorded our conversations about *Shark* and my voice reciting poetry. Joan ended up using sound files of both the formal recitation of the poems and the spontaneous conversational content. The music co-created the poetry as much as the text informed the music.

Joan’s first music files contained more text than we had expected. Although the finished piece contained sections with no words, the text became a central focus in a way that altered the nature of the piece.

In terms of formal poetic and prosodic considerations, I explored the relationship between experimental forms and the innovative and subversive poetry that has risen from the politics of identity. I also chose forms that I thought would most effectively lend themselves to movement and music such as the tanka, as Cid discussed, the sestina, pantoum, Oulipo, concrete and performance poetry.

For example, Oulipo, (which is a poetics of chance, artifice and constraint, with one of the methods being the $N + 7$, where each noun in a text is replaced by the noun seven places away in a dictionary) was of particular interest. To employ this constraint and grapple with the materiality of experience I felt that I could contest the conventions of both form and content, and in that way assert a feminist presence: a female body with a voice moving through the world that is subject to random, shaping forces *and* social control. I imagined the words—and the bodies—in space and time with each person moving according to the formula while overlapping and/or occupying the same and different places.

The intertextual collaboration allowed me to question authorial ownership and enhanced my understanding of artistic consensus. The collaboration became a source of entrustment *and* risk, creative output *and* community creation.

Cid's Working Process with the Text, Music, and Staging

Exploring the possibilities inherent in limitations is not a new choreographic strategy, but in the context of this work – thinking about limitation in terms of both form and content – it was extremely generative. The dancers and I worked closely with each of the poetic forms, using Denise's explanatory texts a map. The first form we unpacked was the concrete poem.

Denise writes: "This poem is in the tradition of "concrete" or "shaped" poetry. The words in the poem take the shape, either literally or figuratively, of the subject the poem addresses. The page is used more openly to break away from the prosaic reading of the left to the right margin and the white space can be as important as the black print."

With this poem, we took a birds eye view of the page, imagining that the dancers were words of the poem, embodying both the line structure and the content. As a way of understanding the structure better I created an excel spread sheet that parsed the poem so that I could look at how Denise's use of repetition and broken lines accumulated. The spread sheet looks like this:

The orange indicates the first time a phrase occurs, and the repetitions accumulate below.

I think one of the most interesting puzzles was the Sestina. I had no idea of the complicated nature of this form – it sounds like a classical Italian structure. In fact it works like this:

Denise writes in her explanatory text: The sestina consists of six stanzas of six lines each with the final stanza being three lines....I kept thinking of a body at some kind of risk moving through the day, not a perfect body in a perfect day but an uncomfortable body in a painful day, of being in 'sixes and sevens.' And also the numbering, the archetype of a grouping of sixes became a haunting of the sextet—which also equals the number of sections in *Shark*."

We took the last word from each line in the first section: "name, duration, position, air, pattern, and back." These reoccur in each stanza in the order proscribed by the form—and so they appear in the same way in each section of the choreographed sestina, set in a different frame and context. This repetition, along with Joan's composition for this section, evokes a broken wholeness.

Equally fascinating was the Oulipo. For this section, we first choreographed Denise's choice of source poem – "Makeup on Empty Space" by Anne Waldman – as double duets. Then we replaced the nouns in one or the other duet, so that you would see the

original poem and oulipo simultaneously. We also reused some of the prime material for a duet in the final section of *Shark*. One of my favorite moments is when the “bird” becomes a “bishop” in the following lines:

“When you look most like a bird, that is the time to come around to it”

became

“When you look most like a bishop, that is the tinder to come around to it”

One additional section was created from material two dancers shared. Damara was on tour a lot, so Molly learned her material for some early work in progress showings and for a lecture demonstration we did at TEDx Santa Cruz. We then made a duet based on that shared material.

Money

I only want to touch on money very briefly. Early in the process, we had applied for a MAP grant, but decided that if we didn’t get it we would do the project anyway, and that we would donate our time. We made it to the final panel of the final round of MAP, but were not funded. We did receive funding from the Zellerbach Family Fund, the Rainin Opportunity Fund at ODC Theater, the CASH grant co-administered by Dancers’ Group and Theater Bay Area, and the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County, which accounted for one third of our funding. The second third came from individual donors who gave to United States Artists’ crowd funding campaign, and the final portion came from ticket sales. While the collaborators did donate their time, everyone else was paid reasonably for their contributions.

The Press

We had a fantastic PR person but I still had to debate the kind of language and tone to use and how ideas of the body were presented. The difficulty has partly to do with the kind of language used in PR versus that used in academia or the arts.

But any stated representation of physical difference is fraught. There is no universal standard of wellness or ability. It is important regarding the *performance* of difference not to sentimentalize disability or physical “otherness” as forms of enlightened transformation alone, that is, depict “suffering” as primarily uplifting or inspirational—when sometimes it’s just painful—but to also acknowledge the fact of difference.

How to announce the details of an event that partly contains the presence and experience of pain and alienation without *causing* pain and alienation?

In terms of our press interviews, questions were asked about the aesthetic choices we made and disability was discussed or referenced. It was sometimes framed as a catalyst for artistic experimentation. This is both true and untrue. Having a disability did change the trajectory of my work and Joan’s. She became a solo musician and began composing because she could no longer endure the grueling physical demands of touring with Kronos. But I don’t see disability so much as a catalyst than I do a condition or a state of being *in*—among many other possible states—that informs and re-defines artistic practice. I wanted to avoid valorizing disability at the expense of its vagaries— though I was not very good at sound bites (as you can probably tell!), but I did improve.

The many encounters we had with the press would require an entire analysis of their own. For our purpose here I will say that, for the most part, they were quite good, if

sometimes necessarily over-simplistic because of the magazine, newspaper, Internet, blog, or social media forms.

One review is worth talking about in more detail. Allan Ulrich is a sharp-tongued Bay Area critic, and I admit I had mixed feelings when I heard he wanted to review opening night. And while he did not write a completely positive review of *Shark* it wasn't as mean spirited as some of his past reviews I have read. This is an excerpt from the SF Chronicle that I find particularly interesting because it brings to the foreground some of *Shark's* central questions about agency and subjectivity.

"...the Santa Cruz artist, the same Pearlman who ran the Nesting Dolls company a decade ago, feels it necessary to inform us that her collaborators suffer from ailments like multiple sclerosis and laryngeal dystonia. The fact that some observers might consider that advertising that feature of the piece just a wee bit exploitative probably never struck Pearlman. But it's a thought that casts a bit of a pall on the 60-minute work."

Reading this brought to mind Arlene Croce's non-review of Bill T. Jones' "Still Here" which she refused to review because it was what she referred to as "victim art." Ulrich had the press release, the ear of our publicist, a prior relationship with Joan, and all the information he needed to understand the backstory of our project, and yet he chose to create a narrative in which Joan and Denise were not equal collaborators in the work – erasing their agency, insulting their intelligence, and trivializing their accomplishments. By suggesting that I exploited them, he places me in a paternalistic position, as the "able bodied" collaborator taking advantage of the "dis-abled" exploitees, who he sees, not as co-creators of the piece, but as *non-artists*.

In fact, Denise and I had an ongoing dialogue about the difficulty of finding the right language to speak about disability, and I was always both very conscious and self-conscious about my language choices. After each piece of press came out, I would invariably text and consult with Denise looking for assurance that I was on track with how we wanted to discuss these issues.

Conclusion

In terms of the future: Poetry readings and multi-genre poetry performances are not often recorded or archived in the same way as some of the other arts. So, I'm interested in creating a documentary-poetry-multimedia book of *Shark* inspired by Cid's choreography notes, staging schematics, and logistics. I hope to use photographs, video, unfinished sound files, revised text and outlines, email communications, press, audience responses, interviews with the dancers, musicians, set, lighting, costume designers, and my own notes and sketches of the process.

We aren't sure what comes next for the live performance of *Shark*. We received very positive responses from audiences and continue to engage in interesting conversations about the work. We all took a much needed break after the premiere and are now considering the future of the project. Joan is not available for touring, and having a live orchestra is expensive and cumbersome. Currently we are considering remounting the project as a dance for the camera and discussing other performance engagements.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Joan Jeanrenaud for her great artistry, expertise, and generous collaboration.

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rapture/rupture***Cynthia Ling Lee****University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

This contemporary solo performance work utilizes the tools of Indian classical *abhinaya* to reinterpret the intimate and bittersweet rapture of poetic love-in-separation (*viraha*) through cultural and gendered difference. The work reconfigures *abhinaya* to evoke queer female desire, to queer gender, and to express cultural queerness. *rapture/rupture* was developed through the Post *Natyam* Collective's "Subversive Gestures Feedback Loop" (<http://www.postnatyam.net/work/subversive-gestures/>). The Subversive Gestures Feedback Loop was a web-based collaborative process in which we engaged in creative and theoretical research on performing gender non-conformity and queerness in contemporary South Asian dance. Performed by Cynthia Ling Lee, *rapture/rupture* is directed by Shyamala Moorty, with poetry by Cynthia Ling Lee, theoretical dramaturgy by Sandra Chatterjee, and original music by Ravindra Deo.



photography by Justin Tornow

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Kazuo Ohno's Dance and his Methodology: From Analyzing his Butoh-fu

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Abstract

Kazuo Ohno is considered as a dancer of improvisation, and it's not clear what kind of methods he used for creating his butoh. This is because Ohno didn't establish his choreographic language or systematize his methods. However, the notations or notes for creation called 'butoh-fu' are important object for revealing the secrets of his butoh because he wrote them each time he created a new performance. How did these notes work in his dance and what kind of process was there between notes and his movements? I aim to find his methodology from this relation of words and movements by analyzing his process of making pieces.

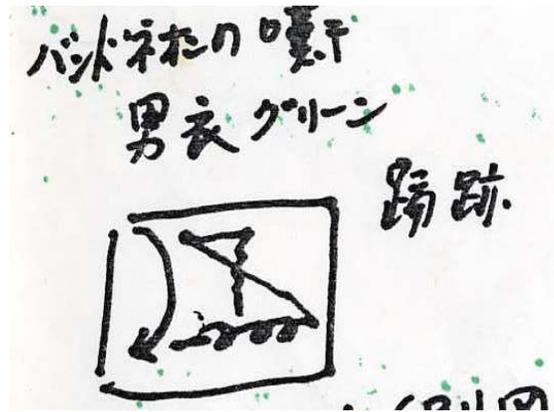
Introduction

Kazuo Ohno (1906-2010) is known as the co-founder of butoh with Tatsumi Hijikata (1928-1986). We consider him a dancer of improvisation and it is still shrouded in mystery how Ohno created his movement and his butoh. Though, Ohno left notes for creation called butoh-fu quite a lot, and they are seemed useful to reveal the method of Ohno's butoh. In my research, I analyze three performances by Ohno, *Admiring La Argentina* premiered in 1977, *My Mother* in 1981 and *Water Lily* in 1987, using both his butoh-fu and videos to show how his butoh-fu worked in his pieces. In the process of researching, it will become clearer that there are several types of words or directions for movements in butoh-fu.

First, it will be better to define what I call butoh-fu. Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura define butoh-fu as 'visually/poetic images used as the basis for butoh movement and gestures; they are sometimes referred to as notation used to guide the dancer or inspire dance movement and choreography'.¹ In the creation of each new performance, Ohno wrote his ideas, images of the performance, and directions on pieces of paper. When he recreated his masterpieces, he made copies of these papers and added some words and drawings, underlined some phrases. For example, there are more than 130 papers for *Admiring La Argentina* just counting digitalized ones. We call these papers 'Sousaku-note' in Japanese, a 'note for creation' in English. In addition to these notes, we could include manuscripts for publishing and notes written on blanks in Ohno's collection of books in his butoh-fu. In this paper, I will focus on the first one, the notes for creation, in order to explore the relationship between Ohno's movements and these written words, because these notes were really important in the process of creation, and were used in his studio or theatre. Ohno left more than 1000 papers of this butoh-fu, and each paper is numbered according to pieces, text for publishing, and written date if it was clear, and they are now in the process of digitalizing these. Ohno's butoh-fu is not systematized or codified so it is hard to make a concrete division, but we can observe certain types according to the contents. To reveal their function, I use the examples from the analysis of the three pieces I mentioned above.

1. The traces of movement

There are some traces that show the quality or direction of movement. In the notes for *Admiring La Argentina*, especially for the part of dancing with tango music, “Bandoneon in a grief”, there is a typical drawing which signifies the traces that Ohno would dance or actually danced on the stage.



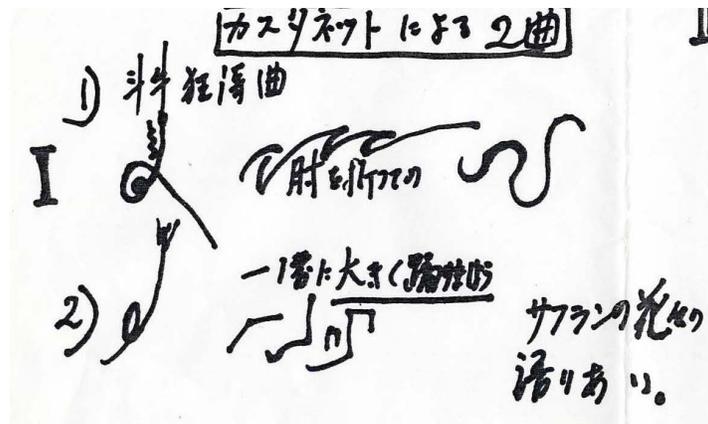
[Figure1: Note for *Admiring La Argentina*, 1986, part, ©Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio]

As figure1 suggests, Ohno entered the stage from the left back, and moved to the front. He changed the direction and turned moving to the right. Then, he ran to the start point, and repeated this path again. We can observe this movement of Ohno in the video recorded in 1986 at Fukushima, Japan and also in that of the rehearsal.

These drawings show how Ohno danced on stage in his performance. It is also close in style to the modern dance in Japan, that appeared in the early 20th century and that Ohno had studied in the 1930-1940s. Takaya Eguchi, Ohno's teacher and a pioneer of modern dance in Japan, wrote about the role of drawing traces in his book about creating modern dance.²

For the dynamics or quality of movement, Ohno drew the traces that mean floating the hands or arms and Ohno also had images of turns. Figure2 is about the part of dancing with castanet music, which is played by La Argentina herself, the dancer whom Ohno watched only once in his youth but got a deep impression from her performance.³ The figure on left signifies the turn of his hand with opening of his palm, and the right parts show the movement of his elbows because there are also written words; ‘bending with elbows’. Ohno created or decided his movement using these signs and words.

These traces suggest that they become a part of the arrangement for the movement, even though Ohno said that he danced in improvisation. It also shows that Ohno retained the method of Japanese modern dance even after he started the movement of butoh with Hijikata from 1959.



[Figure2: Note for *Admiring La Argentina*, 1986, part, ©Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio]

2. The words of Tatsumi Hijikata and linguistic instruction

There is another aspect in Ohno's butoh-fu. In that of *My Mother*, Ohno wrote down the instructions from Hijikata who participated in the creation of *My Mother*. The instructions of Hijikata in this butoh-fu become evident by comparing it with those of disciples of Hijikata. Kayo Mikami studied butoh with him in the late 1970s to the beginning of 1980s. She records the choreographic words of Hijikata and she has edited a book about Hijikata's choreographic method. Another disciple, Yukio Waguri has also collected Hijikata's words and he created DVD material.⁴ So, even if it is difficult to say that they perfectly reveal the structure of Hijikata's choreography, we can know how Hijikata's words worked in the process of creating dance, movement, and its influence for the dancers, thanks to these works. Mikami explains the process of the operation.

By imaging "a board of water on the top of the head", his/her head doesn't wobble, the lower jaw turns close to his/her body and he/she keeps the height regularly.⁵

Or, Bruce Baird examines the words of Mikami and describes the system using Mikami's testimony.

An instruction such as "softness from below" is a relatively straightforward attempt to alter the quality of the movement by getting the dancer to move in a soft manner. Other instructions were direct but very concrete. For example, an instruction such as "in the mud storehouse, in the dark, it (one's shadow) becomes chilly and spreads out", may be asking the dancer to imbue a movement or posture (or the entire space) with a dark and chilly feeling by imagining a dark chilly shadow spreading throughout a cellar.⁶

Hijikata threw many words to his dancers so that they couldn't think of the meanings of words, but they were required to respond through movement in an instant.

In the creation of *My Mother*, especially in the first part called "Dream of the Fetus", Hijikata choreographed Ohno in the same method. We can observe the trace where Ohno wrote down the instructions of Hijikata in his butoh-fu. And we can discern the words that come from Hijikata by comparing with notes from his disciples. For example, A) the flower of Dalia, B) Monet's water lily, C) Pigeon which has hair in braids, D) Head of Johannes, E) Ophelia etc... A) D) E) also appear in the book of Mikami, and others are seen in Waguri's DVD. But it is hard to say which movement corresponds to the

instruction in words because the words are not marks or symbols of each movement. There is an operation common to Hijikata's dancer's notes and this operation determined a part of Ohno's performance. In accordance with this function, Ohno repeats the same movement in several performances in different years. The premier presentation in 1981 and at a production in 1982 in Copenhagen, Ohno danced or repeated the same quality or characterized movement in almost the same timing during the performance.

Left: 1981, in Tokyo

Right: 1982, in Copenhagen



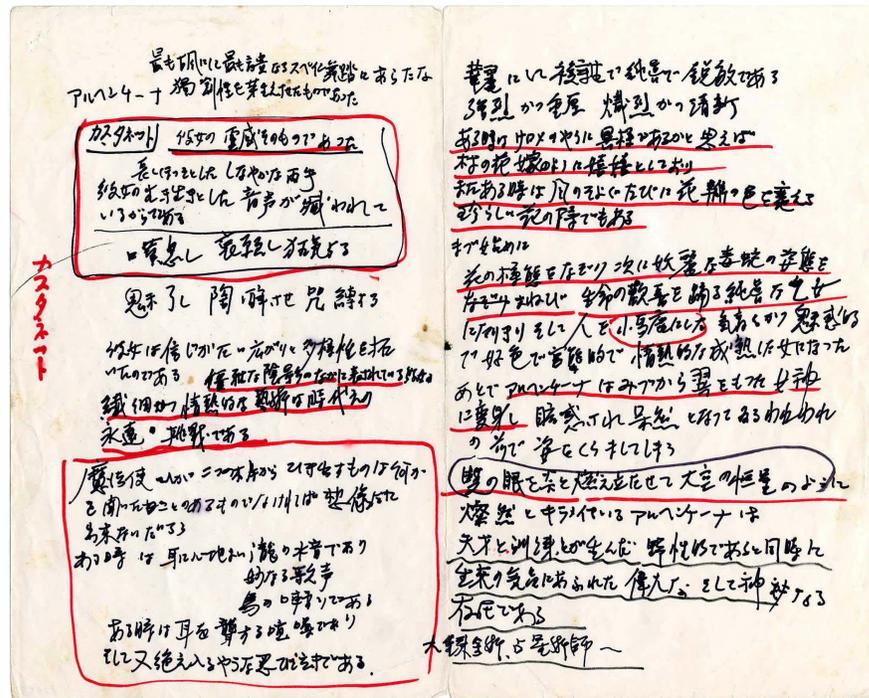
©Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio

3. Phrases of Ohno himself that keep his idea of butoh and his imagination

There are essays in which Ohno recalled his memories, quotations of books he read, and some poetic words. The most characteristic aspect of these words is that Ohno made copies of these notes and rewrote, added and spread his images wider. In the note for *Admiring La Argentina*, Ohno developed his impression of her, and it grew richer by mixing Ohno's original memory and quotations from other books or articles.⁷

A. Creating memories

In the scene entitled 'Memory of La Argentina', which was added after his first tour in Europe, Ohno elaborates his image by reading some articles about her and rewrote the phrase of the books for enriching his imagination.



[Figure3: Note for Admiring La Argentina, date unknown, ©Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio]

In the right side of this paper, Ohno quoted the phrase from the Magazine *Yasou* published in 1983. But the phrase itself originally comes from the article written by Gérard D’Houville in 1927 for the magazine *Revue des deux mondes*. D’Houville wrote the impression of La Argentina in this article. Then, Ohno rewrote some words in another paper for the scene. Here is the applicable one translated from the French text.

After transforming to a flower, (...), a beautiful and lascivious serpent, and after transforming from a young naive girl who dances innocently the joy of her life, a mocking, spiritual woman who reveals or conceals with the most mischievous and charming rebellion, languishing, voluptuous, passionate and eager, she becomes a winged goddess who disappears in front of our dazzled eyes (...).⁸

So the dance is not just made by his memory or the words from an interview he quoted frequently; La Argentina then addressed me, smiling warmly. “Ohno-san, I’m going to dance, so please let’s dance together”.⁹

Ohno also mixed the idea of La Corrida, bullfighting in Spain. It turns to characteristic movement. He danced imitating the figure of the bull with his forefingers, because in the chain of Ohno’s imagination, La Argentina is linked to a bull in a bullring. Here are words written in the notes that say:

Auditorium: there was a crush in the bullring. The crowd surrounding the auditorium, including policemen, all looked like bulls for me. The Bulls burst into the arena. Oh, poor La Argentina, she becomes a bull, there is a wild crucible unifying audience, bull, and La Argentina.¹⁰[Note for *Admiring La Argentina*, 1991]

From the book of Eiryuu Ashiwara, who wrote a critique about La Argentina and published the book about dance, Ohno also got a suggestion for the image of this bullfighting. Ohno underlined the phrase below.

The matador's action when he enter the arena and when he stabbed a bull ... I don't have any words to express these wonderful choreographies.¹¹

This image of bullfighting includes the metaphor, which says life and death are opposite sides of the same coin. It is a fundamental question to Ohno when he started dancing butoh after 1959. In notes of 1990s, Ohno also mixed the impression from *The Dead Class* by Tadeusz Kantor.¹² Ohno made richer his memory and image by adding these inspirations. Amanda Hamp noted that the process of dancing also has the function of creating memories, and analyzing what the changes of dance mean.

Like the memory process, the re-performing of a dance changes the dance. Lehrer peers into Proust's writing process, which was one of continuous rewriting as he re-understood events from the present moment. Similarly, though the parts and sections of *Admiring La Argentina* are identifiable and can always be done in the same order, Kazuo's performance of the various figures – a prostitute, a young girl, La Argentina, and his own everyday self – requires the openness to interpret and express them as his body and mind understand them in the present moment, and not how he understood them during a previous performance or rehearsal.¹³

Exactly, Ohno changed details of movement at each representation, but there are some movements common in them. Ohno didn't improvise perfectly, he created the frame of his dance by writing words and elaborating his images to keep his memory more vividly and to recreate it. I would like to give a name, 'the choreography which has undetermined elements' to this method of Ohno's.

B. Instruction for the qualities of movements

For the second part of *Admiring La Argentina*, called "Daily Bread", Ohno noted the poetic words that evoke or instruct qualities in his movement. This is the case with the presentation in 1986. There, we manage to find the relationship of words that reveal movements and gesture, which has a common image among others, with those of pantomime. In this part, Ohno danced almost nude, and he did gestures closely concerned with daily life. Nevertheless, there are really rich images created by words behind his simple movements. These words melt into Ohno's body and transform the quality of movement to construct this scene.

His pedestal of wings, rather than his back, lifts slowly guided by the wings.
(Descend low)
Don't surprise birds. (Softly, softly)
A heart dripping blood was thrown upward.
[Note for *Admiring La Argentina*, 1986]

In note mentioned above, we can observe his poetic language, and with letters in parentheses, we can understand what this language meant for Ohno. In the video of 1986, he lowered his body but his back was a little bit raised as if there is an opposing force. The quality of Ohno's movement in this scene is soft and silent. The most characteristic gesture is that of throwing his heart upward like pantomime. Ohno put his hands to his chest, then, he imitated grasping his heart and threw it upwards. But it is the most noticeable example, and many of these words weren't intend to be decoded by a third person; more strictly interpreted, they were only intended for Ohno himself to dance. It is a different, and also a difficult aspect to recognize Ohno's butoh-fu as a notation. But Ohno's imagination could remain or recreate by being notated on paper and Ohno could

dance, reinterpreting his memory or image and it can be said that this process also changed the movement on the stage.

In addition, we can observe here the similar function of Hijikata's own linguistic choreography that changes the dancer's bodily condition.

C. Ohno's intention

The examples I mentioned above are from the piece in which both Ohno and Hijikata participated in the creation. But After Hijikata's death in 1986, was there any change in Ohno's butoh or his process of creation? To know more characteristic aspects of Ohno's butoh-fu, I analyze, finally, the notes for *Water Lily*, which premiered in 1987. Here is a possibility to know what kind of movement Ohno aimed to arrive at in his dance, and how he got inspiration for his dance from pictures.

Ohno created *Water Lily* inspired by Monet's series of pictures and Monet's garden in Giverny. It is not an imitation or tracing the scenery painted by Monet, but Ohno adapted these pictures in a more particular way. We can see this process from his butoh-fu. He wrote about the motive to create this piece below.

"I (Monet) can see grasses wavering down below. They are wonderful, but I feel annoyed when I try to draw them. They are uncontrollable for old me. However, I want to express clearly what I feel really such lively." For Monet, the series of etudes of water lily is a record and also a challenge to something that looks impossible, because he was also suffering from the decline of his eyesight. With a guidance of Monet, I intend to perform the world of virtual, real, and transparent risen from beauty by using all of myself. [Note for *Water Lily*, date unknown]

Ohno didn't intend to perform the figure painted in the picture but he got the inspiration from Monet's experimentation with painting. Monet's intention to draw something changes every time or is in transition, it is not stable, it is veritably experimental because to paint, or to draw a picture, means to fix the scenery on a canvas.¹⁴ It is also an important point to dance because dance is always performed live and it is not possible to "fix" the figure but it has to represent something changing. Not imitating a figure completely like (dancing) the figure of a woman, Ohno's fragile frame is linked to Monet's way of painting.

It is also interesting that the first part of *Water Lily*, entitled "the Woman lying down by Halley's Comet", Ohno got inspiration from religious art and, in later years, he added the quotation from the book about Jean Genet. Here, Ohno danced wearing a long white dress with a parasol in his hand. To be more correct, he doesn't dance but repeats sensitive gestures. He could dance more lightly but he trembles and is really careful, he even looks as if he will stop the movement and only quiver. Ohno added the image of the lament of the Virgin Mary in *The Descent from the Cross*, painted by an anonymous artist.

The Woman lying down by Halley's Comet, going on space walk endlessly. I can't help to think this woman whom I saw in the universe, is the Virgin Mary. (...) The arms of Mary, whose tears drop and dry, the arms almost like those of the dead, are thin, and they never stop looking for Jesus, lying down, bloodied. [Note for *Water Lily*, date unknown]

'Regret for the Virgin Mary' by a painter from Rouen

The bloodied thin body of Jesus being descended from the cross. The movement of descent of the Virgin Mary who extends her arms to throw herself on his body, draws me. This movement becomes earnest with sublation by the God of heaven and John

who is supporting Mary's body. [Note for *Water Lily*, date unknown]

In the video recorded in 1990, Ohno moved his arms as if he had a baby in his arms and stretches them in the air as if he wants to hold something in his arms. Perhaps, they are traces from this image of the Virgin Mary.

Also, Ohno added the quotation from the book about Jean Genet written by Kuniichi Uno.¹⁵ According to the part about Genet, the phrases suggest the ambiguity of male and female, and there are metaphors of gestures that lose their outlines and flow to another sex.

There is a woman in a man, and a man in a woman. Which is a mineral and which is a plant? What I thought about exists in reverse. In this situation, an androgyne will be born. She loses her outline as woman and she pours into various men. (...) It is because of love that she loses the outline and an androgyne is various men who have no limit. The instant that we crystalize the idol in such a situation, is a moment of gesture of butoh. This idol demands the death of body, which covers the shape, in order to accomplish itself. An experience of the death for the androgyne is the same one as life. [Note for *Water Lily*, date unknown]

We can observe from these quoted phrases, how Ohno thought about his butoh and its distinction. Ohno suggested here that his butoh is such a gesture to create this idol. It might be a thin trace but shows us that Ohno considered his butoh around these notions and how he elaborated the idea of butoh by getting inspiration from books. Ohno was not simply poet or dreamer, but he intended to elaborate his butoh more and more and deepen the dance that he created.

Conclusion

From the analysis of these butoh-fu, we can observe what Ohno aimed to establish in his dance, what lay behind his dance, and the process of making his pieces. But it is still difficult to conclude that there is a 'methodology' that Ohno confirmed in his life. Ohno didn't define his method or dance, but his dance and butoh-fu give us a great deal of suggestion for reconsidering his butoh, the notions about the dance pieces, or the choreography.

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Acknowledgements

This paper would not have been possible without the documents of the Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio. I would like to express my gratitude to the studio and also Canta Co., Ltd. for offering me the precious materials.

Notes

1. Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo*, Routledge, NY, 2006, p. 54.
2. Takaya Eguchi (1900-1977) published the book about 'modern dance' in 1961. He wrote about drawings to dance in this book. See, Takaya Eguchi, *Buyou sousaku hou*, Kawai gakufu, Tokyo, 1961.
3. La Argentina, her real name is Antonia Mercé Luque (1890-1936) was born in Buenos Aires and learned Spanish Dance. She established the neoclassical style of Spanish Dance. She was also well-known for her talent of castanets.
4. See, Kayo Mikami, *Utsuwa to shite no Shintai*, ANZ-Do, 1993 and Yukio Waguri, *Butoh-*

kaden, Nousite, 2006.

5. Mikami, p.103.

6. Bruce Baird, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Butoh-Dancing in a Pool of Gray Grits*, Palgrave Macmillan, NY, 2012, p.165.

7. It have to be note that there are no distinction or quotation marks in Ohno's Butoh-fu so it is difficult to completely divide the word of Ohno and those of others.

8. The original French text written by Gérard D'Houville is in *Revue des deux mondes* (May, 1927, 918-925 (p.919). Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France, last access: 2014/11/7).

9. Kazuo Ohno & Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's words from Without and Within*, trans; John Barrett, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, 2004, p.266.

10. All citations from Ohno's note are translated in English by the author for this paper.

11. Eiryō Ashiwa, *Buyo to Shintai*, Shinjyuku Shobo, 1986, p.193

12. By the comment of Catherine Diverrès, Ohno told her about this piece of Kantor in 1981. See Irène Filiberti, *Catherine Diverrès mémoires passantes*, L'Œil d'or, 2010, p.74.

13. Amand Hamp, "Score as Catalyst, Memory as Creative Act: Connecting the Work of Tatsumi Hijikata, Kazuo Ohno and Stephanie Skura." *SDHS*, 2011, 45-51(p. 47).

14. For the painter of Impressionism, 'Something' is mainly the light that changes the impression of vision. (See the dictionary, *Le Robert illustré d'aujourd'hui en couleur*, 1996, p.734 and *Musée de l'Orangerie Les Nymphéas de Claude Monet*, Édition de la Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris, 2006.)

15. Kuniichi Uno, *Genet no Kiseki*, Nihon Bungei-sha, 1994.

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Resistance and Resilience: Embodied Dissonance in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

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Abstract

*Embodied histories of underrepresented communities are becoming increasingly expressed through fictional literature as a way of “generat[ing] emancipatory and empowering political effects beyond the individual healing of [their] author[s]” (McKegney, 2005). Exploring these creative works offers a deep pool of corporeal experience through which we can trace how multiple intersections of oppression manifest on/in/through the body to create subjectivities of resistance and resilience. Much has been written on the ways in which music is represented as “productive dissonance” (Krotz, 2009) in Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) yet no attention has been paid to the dance aesthetics or the literary techniques Highway employs that create embodied dissonance. Highway’s fictional narrative tells of the struggles of two Cree brothers to navigate the impacts of the residential school system during the latter half of the 20th century. This paper argues that Highway’s engagement with indigenous and balletic dance forms construct literary strategies that choreograph text as movement to provide an emancipatory mechanism through which contemporary Indigenous subjectivities are articulated. This navigation does not undo the history of colonialism but rather embraces a morphology that re-writes the history of colonization as a heroically epic chapter of Aboriginal resilience. I approach this exploration through an understanding of national histories of erasure (Francis, 2011) and accounts of North American censure of Aboriginal dance (Shea Murphy, 2007) concluding that Highway’s text can be understood as an important destabilization of neo-colonial Eurocentric nationalism through the choreographic subtleties embedded in his writing style and character narratives.*

In 1998, Cree author, playwright, and concert pianist Tomson Highway published *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, a fictional novel about two Cree brothers in Canada and their lives from birth into adulthood and the myriad ways that Indigenous peoples continue to struggle against oppression and systemic colonial violences. The work is based on the real lives of Highway and his brother, Rene. Highway writes the body as the site where colonial violence and abuse occurs and neo-colonial racism and violence are played out, but also as a reparative mechanism in itself. By mapping coloniality onto and through the Indigenous body, Highway illustrates how contemporary Indigeneity struggles in and through settler nation-building processes toward empowered Indigenous subjectivities that are resistant of neo-colonial power structures and resilient in their continued insistence on decolonization and re-Indigenization. Articulating subjectivity in this way shapes real and fictional bodies as testimony to the embodied dissonance victims of colonialism must contend with in our contemporary moment.

Kiss of the Fur Queen enunciates what Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey describe as “accounts of traumas of exceptional violence and of historical injustice [that] proliferate alongside stories of everyday discrimination or misdemeanour” (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001, 1) in that exceptional violence and historical injustice brought about through colonialism are emptied of their significance and redefined in nation-building discourses as mere discrimination. Yet the text also works through this problematic by writing the body “in time and space in ways that create agency,” what Hyunjung Kim spoke about at this conference on Friday when she argued that contemporary Korean bodies “respond to the past, the present, and imagine the future.” However, it is perhaps more productive to argue that bodies do not just imagine the future, but actively create it, capturing hopes and promises as affective motivations for continuing to resist the status quo that coloniality engenders.

The novel begins in 1951; Champion Okimasis, modelled after Highway himself, is born in the northern Manitoba wilderness near the fictional reserve of Mistik Lake. His brother, Ooneemeto, which in Cree means ‘dancer’ and who is shaped through Highway’s brother Rene, follows several years later. The brothers are each introduced through the Cree mythological figure of the “ghostly foetus” that tumbles from the sky to the earth and journeys through the wintery forests to find its mother’s womb. Champion’s spirit child runs to its birth somewhat blindly, tripping over and bumping into animals and trees as he stumbles determinedly into the unknown. For Ooneemeto, time is not urgent and he “alight[s] on the occasional spruce, the occasional pine, the occasional birch as the fancy tickle[s] him, like a subarctic hummingbird” (33) until he hears his mother’s wail, what Highway calls his “cue,” and then loses himself in the pregnant woman’s belly to emerge in the physical world moments later. Here, Highway indicates Ooneemeto’s destiny as a theatrical dancer by using a ‘cue’ to signal his embodied entrance into the world, as though stepping onto a stage, and his promiscuity with nature foreshadows not only his later sexual proclivities with other men, but also frames his promiscuity as a coping mechanism for dealing with trauma. Like many Indigenous children, both brothers attend state-mandated, church-run residential school, where they suffer extensive sexual abuses among other forms of colonial violence and erasure. Champion is renamed, baptized as ‘Jeremiah’ and Ooneemeto as ‘Gabriel,’ which ushers in a process of erasure that the brothers learn to unwittingly enact themselves, becoming the very agents of cultural genocide that colonial ideology envisions. Yet also as unwittingly, the brothers take to settler cultural production as both a way to distract from their colonial realities and as a natural progression of their individual interests; Jeremiah, to piano, and Gabriel, to dancing. Their respective forms become oases of humanity but also weapons that continue self-inflicted colonial legacies of cultural erasure, a duality echoed in their continued struggles to disengage from, and reengage with, their Cree heritage and the racial politics inherent in settler nation-states.

Gabriel’s first abuse follows a square dance performance that Jeremiah accompanies on piano. The boys have gone to sleep in their separate, barrack-style beds, Gabriel dreaming of “a do-si-do made particularly complicated because his partner, Carmelita Moose, [keeps] floating up, balloon-like, so that while his feet [are] negotiating quick little circles, his arms [have] to keep Carmelita Moose earthbound” (77). This dream, in which Gabriel envisions his body repeatedly jumping up to catch his “balloon-like” partner as she floats away, is how his dreaming mind interprets the sexual abuse he is

suffering *at that moment*. He wakes to the school's principal, Father LaFleur, hovering over him with his hand in Gabriel's pants. Fearful of angering the priest, Gabriel pretends to continue to be sleeping, assuming (like many victims do) that this is normal. "[T]hrough his slitted eyes" (78), Gabriel is able to see an expression on Father LaFleur's face that he interprets as pleasure and understands that his body is the source of it. Gabriel hears Elvis Presley's "Love Me Tender" playing from a nearby radio, as the crucifix around Father LaFleur's neck, bearing the body of Christ, repeatedly slaps against Gabriel's face while the priest flagellates both himself and the boy. The convergence of sensory influx Gabriel experiences constructs a sense of identity that is rooted in bodily pleasures with his body at the centre of it for himself and others.

As presented to Gabriel in school, the body of Christ is a holy and divine entity, which Gabriel's young mind connects with pleasure through this abuse:

The subtly throbbing motion of the priest's upper body made the naked Jesus Christ – this sliver of silver light, this fleshly Son of God so achingly beautiful – rub his body against the child's lips, over and over and over again. The pleasure in his centre welled so deep that he was about to open his mouth and swallow whole the living flesh – in his half-dream state, this man nailed to the cross was a living, breathing, man, tasting like Gabriel's most favourite food, warm honey . . . (78-79)

The conflation of religion, the holy body, sex, and pleasure, is an integral moment for Gabriel. Highway replays such scenes throughout the novel in which the adult Gabriel seeks out sexual partners in dive bars and back alleys, often with reference to the taste of warm honey, and framed through this image of swallowing the Holy body. Highway also opens up the thoughts of Gabriel's long-term partner Gregory to illustrate how some might see Gabriel as "a piece of dirt, a slut, a whore, a slab of meat fucked through every orifice, from Tokyo to Toronto, from Rome to Buenos Aires" (266). As readers, we are obviously never fully able to experience Gabriel's abuse and promiscuity as though it is our own. Yet it is precisely because of this that we bear witness to his struggle for coping with a life riddled with abuse and erasure internalized as pleasure and value. Our position in the text as witness has the potential to create an empathetic connection through which we are subjected to mainstream judgments of sexual promiscuity from Gregory; while we can understand how Gabriel arrives at such a dangerous place, Gregory cannot, and Highway writes Gregory's contemptuous attitude so that only we, not Gabriel, experience it. This insider/outsider position places us in a difficult spot. We have been a victim-as-ally in reading of Gabriel's abuse and yet are also complicit in Gregory's judgment by way of our inability to communicate his disdain to Gabriel. Highway turns the tables on the reader, particularly the settler reader, by shifting our position from ally to accomplice. This moment of judgement occurs in the 1980s, long before Truth and Reconciliation committees, and so succinctly illustrates how Indigeneity has had to contend with not just trauma, but the silencing of trauma and the mainstream's inability, or, arguably, unwillingness, to understand how colonial violence manifests in its victims.

While Gabriel has experienced abuse on his body, it is through his body that he manages to repair some of this damage. Dance offers Gabriel an un-silencing not

available to Indigenous peoples through public discourse. Gabriel's first encounter with ballet comes in 1969 when the brothers are given tickets to a New Year's Eve performance of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet (where Gabriel would later train). Jeremiah's mind drifts off during the performance but mid-teen Gabriel is mesmerized by the "one throbbing mass" (144) of the company; an image that again foreshadows Gabriel's voracious sex life. Yet this image also teleports Gabriel back to a moment before he entered residential school that was harrowing and petrifying and yet safe and comfortable for him. As young children, Jeremiah and Gabriel are caught up in a stampede of caribou, too far from their horrified parents to be saved by them from being trampled. But the boys hold their ground, Gabriel wrapped in the warmth of his brother's embrace, and miraculously they surface unscathed. For Gabriel, the horns of the caribou can be seen in the arms of the throbbing mass of dancers and his place as a child in the center of the stampeding caribou connects him to the place he would later hold as a prominent dancer and choreographer. But it also connects him to a later scene in which he is the center of attention in an orgy. These are all places in which he feels safe, comfortable, and alive, contrary to much of the way Jeremiah experiences life; threatening, stagnant, and suffocating.

By connecting the safety of Jeremiah's embrace in the onslaught of caribou with the enchanting corps de ballet and the throng of pulsating nakedness, Highway maps out a corporeality that propels Gabriel throughout the narrative. That is, the body and its senses are what drive him. During his training at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, a guest choreographer and teacher offers Gabriel a moment of tutelage that would forever change his body in more ways than just how he embodies ballet. This is when Gabriel meets Gregory, who offers a suggestion; "[t]hink of your pelvis . . . as a plate with an offering" (200). This conception of the pelvis does indeed articulate a useful image for a ballet aesthetic, but it quite obviously also offers a suggestion of another sort. Taking this advice to heart, Highway documents Gabriel's next grand jeté through both a real and imagined sense of feeling; "Gabriel felt his whole groin area opening, breathing. Suddenly, he felt himself devoured" (ibid.). The implication, here, is that Gregory has devoured Gabriel. Gregory has gone from watching the 'Indian' from the doorway, to guiding him into a pronounced pelvic alignment, to devouring him with his eyes; particularly Gabriel's pelvis-as-offering as Gabriel flies through the air. This also nods to the abuse scene with Father LaFleur, in which Gabriel "was about to open his mouth and swallow whole the living flesh" (78). This idea of devouring is fundamental to Highway's narrative, the novel's structure, and Indigenous ways of knowing a colonial existence.

This devouring is particularly evident in an earlier scene where the brothers enter a Winnipeg mall to shop for clothes, and where they experience all the trappings and excesses of capitalism (Belghiti, 2009; McKegney, 2005). Sam McKegney connects this production/consumption model to the figure of the Trickster, or *Weesageechak*, that appears throughout the novel and who Highway describes as "as pivotal and important a figure in [North American Indian mythology] as Christ is in the realm of Christian mythology" (n.p.). Another figure in Cree mythology is the Weetigo, known for devouring children, who some say has been killed by *Weesageechak*. The brothers recount this story, in which *Weesageechak* is disguised as a weasel, and crawls into the rectum of the Weetigo and destroys it from the inside. *Weesageechak* is expelled from

the Weetigo and “comes back out with his white fur coat covered with shit” (Highway, 118) and is then held by his tail in the river to be washed clean. The tip of his tail, however, remains stained by the shit, as this is where he is held in the water. In this way, the brothers’ exit from the mall replicates *Weesageechak*’s expulsion from the Weetigo; they emerge appearing mostly white (in their clothes and attitudes) with just a touch of brown marking them as different: their skin.

This connection highlights the prominence of the body in articulating difference. The body is where race lands, where it holds Indigenous peoples (and, by extension, all racialized peoples) in place. Highway repeatedly draws attention to this by dressing Indigenous characters in white clothing. As a teenager, Jeremiah bears witness to the expulsion of a drunk Indigenous woman from a local bar in Winnipeg. The “Indian princess . . . teetering dangerously on white high heels . . . in soiled white polyester” (Highway, 106) is lured into a white convertible by four white men; she gets into the car and it drives off. The next day, Jeremiah reads on a back page in the *Winnipeg Tribune* that “the naked body of Evelyn Rose McCrae – long-lost daughter of Mistik Lake [where the brothers are from] – had been found in a ditch on the city’s outskirts, a shattered beer bottle lying gently, like a rose, deep inside her crimson-soaked sex” (ibid., 107). Evelyn thus embodies *Weesageechak* although within this framework she is ultimately unsuccessful in destroying her Weetigo. She is expelled from the body of the bar, wearing a white coat and white shoes, and the only mark of ‘shit’ on her is her skin, where she is *held* by the settler nation in an effort to wash clean all other markings of Indigeneity. This characterization demonstrates how a putting-on of whiteness, literally and figuratively, cannot imbue its wearers with any ability of racial passing because their skin, the body, holds them in the space of difference. Skin becomes the location of savagery in that despite all of the cultural erasure and whitening that Indigenous peoples have to contend with, dominant notions of ‘Indians’ as uncivilized remain.

This Trickster narrative of consumption, expulsion, and racialized place-holding can also be read through Gabriel’s ballet career, one in which he places himself in the body of the dominant culture and puts on and performs whiteness, only to have part of him remain, in a colonial framework, dirty. For Gabriel, then, his body has meant many different things: a source of pleasure for men, a symbol of physical prowess, and a spectacle of racial difference, which redeploys colonial understandings and uses of the Indigenous body. But unlike the “Indian princess” Evelyn, Gabriel’s body exists as a mechanism through which he can transcend the present, as evidenced by his first sighting of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, to recall a happier, safer life untarnished by colonialism. This transcendence also allows him to reconnect with his waning Cree heritage and build a contemporary artistic practice that honours and, at times, mends his Indigenous past; not in ways that ignore or forget the horrific violences acted upon him and Indigenous communities, but with specific reference to them and how they have shaped his life, unifying the past, the present, and the future.

In a turn of character, Gabriel becomes the pragmatic brother who re-engages with his Cree heritage at a pow wow where he “had to admit, if only to himself, that never had his body moved with such gracelessness” (243). ‘Gracelessness’ is not evaluative of the dance itself, but rather of Gabriel’s embodiment of it; his colonized body is rendered graceless by the Indigenous dance, inverting the colonial gaze that has dominated his life. This also inverts a sense of cultural value, offering Gabriel an Indigenous embodied

knowledge through which he begins to reconcile his own experiences of colonialism. Gabriel later draws his brother into a collaborative project that reinvigorates Jeremiah's piano playing, after having ceased playing many years previously, that allows a re-Indigenization of the brother's bodies and beings. Their joint-effort is presented to a theatrical audience in which sits Gabriel's now former partner, Gregory. This production launches them into new-found fame:

Like a thunderclap, silence struck. Jeremiah leapt from his [piano] bench, and with a beaded drumstick pounded at the bass strings of the [piano]. The quintet of circling dancers launched into a pentatonic chant, 'Ateek, ateek, astum, atsum, yaoh, ho-ho!' And, suddenly, the piano was a pow wow drum propelling a Cree Round Dance with the clangour and dissonance of the twentieth century. (267)

And with this, Highway finds a way to articulate contemporary ways of Indigenous knowing that do not even attempt to undo the history of colonization but rather embrace a morphology that re-writes colonization as a heroically epic chapter of Indigenous resilience. The work of the brothers documents not only a still-developing history of colonization but uncovers reconciliatory potentialities. The chanting in the piece was written by a young Champion, which he would play for his father, the caribou hunter: "caribou, caribou, come to me, come to me" (307). By bringing forward this mantra from their past, the brothers unite past and present, to create a future that responds to their dying father's last words; "with these magic weapons, make a new world" (267).

The audience of this performance bears witness to dancing bodies that subjectively create futures full of hope and promise. While the body has been a specific site of abuse and terror brought about upon Canada's, and, indeed, the world's, colonized peoples, Highway writes the body as emancipatory and cleansing, but with a clear and definitive reference to its ongoing subjugation. The body resists being devoured and is resilient in its assertion of the self, and it is Gabriel who makes this bodily affirmation rich and vibrant. Thus the Weetigo is not destroyed, but is morphed into a tool of decolonization and reindigenization. As such, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is an important destabilization of neo-colonial nationalism that offers strategies for repair and reconciliation by placing embodied praxis at the forefront of identity, citizenship, and community.

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Image Schema and Metaphor in Dance Analysis

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Abstract

Bodily-derived conceptual metaphors were first proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (Metaphors we live by, 1980). Image schemas of bodily experience are conceived as mapping onto abstract conceptual areas, building systems of thought based on metaphors which are expressed both linguistically and in other channels of communication. CONTAINER is one image schema, based on embodied knowledge of 'in/out', 'inside/outside'. I argue here for a complex metaphor of SELF AS CONTAINER in the choreography and technique of Martha Graham. A contrasting example will combine the schema of NEAR/FAR with spatial movement analysis in a plotless work, Lin Hwai-Min's Cursive II (2003).

Image Schema and Metaphor

The confluences between writing and dancing as bodily communication that inspired this conference title chimed with my own interest in the theory of the bodily basis of metaphor first set out in the 1980 book by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. Much of this early work on conceptual metaphor came from the authors' fields of linguistics and philosophy, but since then interest has burgeoned. There are examples of subsequent applications in poetry, law, politics, mathematics¹ and music². In the last decade, neuroscience and the phenomenology of movement have been called upon as theoretical allies to underpin this way of understanding concepts as being bodily based.³ So is there anything useful for dance analysis in these studies of the body-mind organically making meaning? How might theories of conceptual metaphor have an explanatory role in the reception of dance in performance? I refer later to the analysis of Martha Graham's *Night Journey* (1947) from the theatre historian Bruce McConachie (2003). Stephanie Jordan (2011) has applied the theory of conceptual blending to her choreo-musical analysis of Mark Morris's *Dido and Aeneas* (1989) but it is still rare to encounter image schema and conceptual metaphor applied to dance analysis. This paper sets out some preliminary case studies with some thoughts on future applications.

Theories of the embodied nature of language identify a source of shared meanings, stemming from human sensorimotor experience interacting with a specific physical and cultural environment. Such basic experiences as the effect of gravity, moving and being moved by muscular force, and achieving a balanced stance, are so deeply inscribed in the body from babyhood that they constitute a source of pre-linguistic and embodied meaning which we retain into adulthood. Lakoff and Johnson named these structures of sensorimotor experience 'image schemas'. The term 'image' is not to be understood visually. To emphasise the chemical and neurological nature of image schemas, Johnson writes: 'They do not so much "picture" or "represent" objects and events as they simply *are* the patterns of our experience of those objects and events.'⁴ Many are central to notions of force and spatial orientation which are also integral to the field of dance

analysis—UP/DOWN, NEAR/FAR, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, CONTAINER, BLOCKAGE, are some schemas that have been listed—so it should be possible to find a relationship to meaning in dance. Acting below the level of consciousness, schemas can share meanings that are ‘not verbal and linguistic, but rather bodily and felt’⁵ thus operating in non-verbal forms of symbolic interaction. As ‘structures of sensorimotor experience that can be recruited for abstract conceptualization and reasoning’⁶ they form the basis of metaphors in which we understand vague and abstract concepts in terms of concepts that are clear to us from our physical experience. For example (my own example) what does it mean to be ‘narrow-minded’ unless we understand the difference between the feelings of wide and narrow bodily stance or wide and narrow visual focus? In dance the wide body (chest free, limbs open) is read differently to the constricted body. This metaphor is widely understood in both verbal and non-verbal communication. In this paper I am working with the CONTAINER and NEAR/FAR schemas and some of their metaphorical extensions in dance works.

In conceptual metaphor, inferences from a source domain in bodily experience enable us to understand concepts that are not materially graspable. For example, how can we rationalise our feelings? They are so real to us and yet impossible to describe as regular perceptions. We claim they can be located (e.g. the ‘deep matters of the heart’ that Graham spoke of⁷); can have taste (bitter or sweet memories); can have mass (lightness of spirit); and can be manipulated (worked upon like clay). These are instances of the metaphor FEELINGS⁸ ARE SUBSTANCES, recruiting understandings from image schemas formed in our sensorimotor systems: the ones in my metaphor examples above are gustatory, proprioceptive and haptic.

The metaphorical location of feelings (for example in the heart) is an extension of the CONTAINER schema, patterned on embodied knowledge of containers in our environments such as cups and bottles but also of our own bodies as containers. To elaborate on the physical experience of CONTAINER (here we might use the example of a bottle) there are a number of entailments or consequences of the schema that give rise to metaphors. The container protects the contents, but it can break, allowing spillage. So feelings can be controlled or they can pour out, or break free. The container implies limitations for what is within but, depending on the opacity of the vessel, the contents can be hidden or held up for close observation, the surface of the container giving evidence of the contents. Finally, containers are themselves contained, nested inside each other, like Russian Dolls (bottle/hand/room/house/ street/....). In a logical sequence, what is in the bottle is also in the city; what is in my hand is also in society.⁹ I will illustrate these metaphorical entailments of the CONTAINER schema in relation to Graham’s work.

If CONTAINER is the schema (the pattern of experience from which we develop metaphors for abstract concepts), what container metaphors extend from it? It would be inconsistent to say that the body is metaphorically a container since that perpetuates a dualistic comparison between the impure body and the pure soul. We really do experience our own bodies as containers and that is nearly always tainted by corporeal anxiety about what we harbour, let in and let out. The unreliable container body is vividly real in how we think about our physical bodies so it is generally not metaphorical to conceptualize the body as a container. Instead I posit here the metaphor of SELF AS CONTAINER where the concepts, emotions, memories, and cultural identities of selfhood are indivisible from the sensorimotor and fleshly personhood which is the means of forming a sense of self in the world. It is intrinsic to the theory of conceptual metaphor that the biological and

chemical body-mind that evolution has provided is the means for forming concepts in interaction with its specific socio-cultural environment. The meanings and understandings of the life inhabited are thus indivisibly physical and conceptual. This integrated self, of thinking, remembering, feeling and doing establishes the SELF AS CONTAINER metaphor I am working with. Importantly, though, this is by no means a singular and simple metaphor. FEELINGS ARE SUBSTANCES can be seen as a metaphorical ‘sub-mapping’¹⁰ of the SELF AS CONTAINER metaphor. Knowledge of the behaviour of tangible substances in tangible containers is mapped onto the intangible target domain of SELF. There is further complexity in that the SELF is both CONTAINER (of the aforementioned ideas, memories, identities, physicalities etc.), and also itself contained, restrained or blocked (BLOCKAGE is another related schema) by other circumstances and other CONTAINERS in the manner of nesting containers as described previously in this paper.

The CONTAINER schema in Graham’s work

In his book *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War : producing and contesting containment, 1947-1962* (2003) Bruce McConachie argued that the CONTAINER schema, formed a particular ontology for the reception of theatre in this period of American life in the early Cold War when containment of perceived threats (communism, the atom bomb) was intensely felt. Martha Graham in *Night Journey* (1947) is one of his case studies. While McConachie suggests how Graham’s performance could have been interpreted by audiences in accordance with the ‘containment liberalism’ typical of the Cold War, I wish to argue that container metaphors are central to Graham’s expressive concerns from the late 1920s giving rise to very fundamental metaphors of experience which are markers of Graham’s style in choreography and technique.

We can observe how selfhood was a conscious theme of Graham’s choreography. She was concerned with what it meant to be an American woman in the early twentieth century, an identity growing from her own vision of American history and identity, read within the modernity of what she identified as ‘zig-zag’ rhythms.¹¹ So this SELF of Graham’s ‘contains’ not only the contemporaneously situated woman (in the widening sphere of female sexual identity and agency) but the historical one (Puritan oppression versus the freedom of ‘the frontier’); and her own feelings of grief, fear, divine inspiration, love, jealousy.

In its earliest manifestation Graham experimented on her own body, to discover ‘significant movement...fraught with inner meaning’¹² so it seems that demonstrating in movement the contents of her SELF was central to her purpose. The developing technique based in the spine—breath, contraction, release and spiral—engendered a profound activation of the whole organic system from pelvis to skull. Her early students were exhorted to feel the effect of breathing on the body, filling and emptying the lungs with air, to harness the release of energy outwards.¹³ Containment and discharge were explicit in her instructions. ‘Energy’ was conceived as a substance swelling up to fill the dancer, even in stillness. It could be reined in (contained) ‘like a spirited horse’¹⁴ or expelled with a movement of such power that, according to Graham, its dynamics alone could actually split a rock.¹⁵ Dee Reynolds argues that this intensification of outwards energy ‘reversed the tendencies towards repression and containment of emotions that characterised the puritan tradition’.¹⁶ In this, Graham was forcefully establishing the agency of American

women. Students learned to feel the connection between the physical and emotional, experimenting with the dynamics of breath from laughing to sobbing.¹⁷ This visceral stirring of the core physical organs is deeply sensuous, connecting physical effort with emotional metaphors (the pit of the stomach; the bated breath; the broken heart). In its most specific exploration of the human body-mind, the pelvic base of the technique recalls female sexual identity in a way that came to its most advanced expression in Graham's dances after 1938 when she accepted Erick Hawkins and other male dancers into her company and could explore the consequences of female lust more fully in her compositions, for example in her mythological Greek sequence including *Cave of the Heart*.¹⁸ So my point so far is that Graham's movement exploration proceeded from an integrated body-mind SELF containing prominent national and gender-based identities. This metaphorical SELF AS CONTAINER integrated its physical breath, energy and articulate torso to provide the impulses for movement.

'The puritanical concept of life has always ignored the fact that the nervous system and the body as well as the mind are involved in experience, and art cannot be experienced except by one's entire being.'¹⁹ In this quotation Graham's understanding of the formulation of her SELF fits well with the theory of an integrated body-mind forming meaning in the world through experience from Johnson and others. Despite this unity of body-mind-self in Graham's work the body surface was called upon to be the visible 'boundary of conflict'²⁰ where struggles of the self were visible in movement, to be limited or not, but often painfully transparent. Graham deliberately drew attention to the body surfaces. In the 1920s and 30s she used stretchy jersey, body defining costumes, not only for her solo roles *Lamentation* (1930), *Satyric Festival Song* (1932), *Ekstasis* (1933), but for chorus costumes, for example in *Heretic* (1929), so that the constraining role of the container is emphasised by the restrictive fabric. In *Ekstasis* according to Dorothy Bird 'she would watch the image in the mirror as it took on shapes....It was odd and absorbing to see how each time the costume seemed to pull her back.'²¹ In wide-skirted dresses the emphasis still went to the torso as the seat of emotional power. The conflict was further played out on the surface of the face, which, until the mid-1930s, was usually to be an impassive, mask-like barrier to expression, while the orifices of eyes and mouth were heavily delineated with makeup as if ready to give away everything withheld even while the locus of expression was diverted to the torso. But often the SELF does not give up its secrets easily. The 'boundary of conflict' called into attention at the body surface is frequently expressed in movement that is conflicted, cut off, muscle groups inhibiting each other, one part of the body working against another—bound flow movement in Laban terms²² evidence of turmoil within. The female soloist at the beginning of *Errand into the Maze* appears almost frozen by her conflict, percussive and bound flow movements coming from deep in her torso, hardly allowing her to move off the spot. But we should not forget that Graham's outlook was not always tragic. *Satyric Festival Song* has been called 'a study in irrepressibility'.²³ The dancer is having fun with us so that the container is breached in a good way.

Metaphorically the SELF AS CONTAINER fills and empties, discharges and withholds, just like the transparent container held up for analysis. Two vivid examples: in Medea's Dance of Vengeance in *Cave of the Heart*, she vomits up a red snake—guts, bile hatred—not to be rid of it but to enjoy it, display it, only to ingest it again. In *Primitive Mysteries* (1931) in contrast the dancer's SELF AS CONTAINER is opened to receive a divine force, the 'ecstatic body' as described by Dorothy Bird arching back in high

release, chest and face and cupped hands the whole SELF reaching out to be filled by spiritual transcendence.²⁴ So, in these examples, jealousy and spirituality, these FEELINGS AS SUBSTANCES, move in and out of the SELF AS CONTAINER as kinaesthetic form.

One of the entailments of the CONTAINER schema is that containers nest within each other. A choreographic theme used again and again by Graham was of the single, embattled female (a character for which she plundered her own selfhood). She typically pitted this self against a force metaphorically representing the constraints of another container. Many times it was puritanical society (notably *Heretic*, 1929; but also *American Provincials*, 1934; *American Document*, 1938; *Appalachian Spring* and *Deaths and Entrances*, 1943). In *Errand into the Maze* that force was fear. In *Night Journey* it was fate. In *Errand*, the Noguchi structure materially symbolized containment but in early choreography that outer container was often expressed in block-like chorus work, the dancers of the group, in their dark jersey tubes forming a solid visual and movement counterpoint to Graham as soloist. In *Heretic* they physically blocked and overpowered her. In *Primitive Mysteries*, the group was no less monolithic but supported her in this metaphorical RITUAL AS CONTAINER, for the apotheosis of a 'chosen one'. In *Steps in the Street* (from *Chronicle*, 1936) a single dancer battled to make progress against a tide of walkers.

NEAR/FAR in *Cursive II*

The paper so far has argued for recurring metaphors in Graham's work, both in her choreography and technique, derived from the CONTAINER schema and intrinsic to her aesthetics and her world view. This central metaphor proves useful in decoding Graham's work and pinpointing how it has the potential to be so disturbing. However, this is only one kind of analysis, with much depending upon contextual and historical research. If image schemas and their metaphors are as organically necessary in meaning-making as Lakoff, Johnson and others suggest, then they should be demonstrable in those fleeting, unstructured, personal moments of ongoing interpretation as we look at a dance regardless of the intentions of the choreographer.

When I first saw *Cursive II* by Lin Hwai-min, I did not know of Lin's specific stimuli for the dance, Chinese calligraphy being one. I reacted primarily to the spatial aspects of the dance which I felt quite viscerally. Limbs shoot out but where do they go and why?²⁵ To get what? Torsos undulate, seemingly drawing into themselves something grasped out of the air. But what do they possess and when they seemingly give something back into space, where does it go? Who is it for? Bodies are in proximity, complementing, contrasting, but the gap between them often suggests an incomplete relationship, a void aching with potential. The abrupt dynamic contrasts in time and flow heighten the spatial contrasts between central and peripheral movement, so that I wonder where these dancers truly belong in space.

The NEAR/FAR schema is one of a number of locational schemas formed out of our experiences as grasping, locomoting, needing, human beings. Things or people far away are more difficult to attain, take longer to get to, may be out of focus; while close up they can be examined or possessed. Knowing what is near and far establishes the unique point of view and location of an individual, thus establishes an identity.

I focus here more on the schema as something that speaks viscerally to me rather than trying to develop specific metaphors. However, it is clear that I am thinking metaphorically as I watch. I identify with: the difficulty of grasping ideas that float somewhere in the air, too far above me; my own butterfly thoughts; the devouring pleasure of ingesting something desired but how quickly that dissipates; what it means to be close or distant from a person as a metaphor for intimacy. It seems to me that the schema of NEAR/FAR recognized in the dance promotes a flow of metaphors that are as fleeting as the passing impressions of the dance but connected through a shared image schema.

Conclusion

In this paper I have suggested that image schemas and conceptual metaphors have a place in dance analysis. While it is possible to see that a specific choreographer's themes and movement material can be explained in terms of image schemas and metaphors through movement analysis and contextual research, the intentions of the choreographer are not the whole issue. If image schemas mean anything at all as pre-verbal and shared modes of meaning, then, as we watch a dance, gathering fleeting metaphors that can make sense to us as individuals, image schemas can give access to deeply engrained ways of finding meaning in the world through dance. How to investigate this further is an ongoing project for which I welcome comments and suggestions.

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Notes

¹ Summary in Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, pp.267 – 271.

² For example Johnson and Larson, 2003.

³ Johnson, 2007, makes frequent reference to the works of Antonio Damasio (e.g., *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. 1999; *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. 2003) as well as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (*The Primacy of Movement*. 1999).

⁴ Johnson, 2007, p. 243.

⁵ Johnson, 2007, p.242.

⁶ Johnson 2007, p.141.

⁷ Graham in *A Dancer's World* (film, 1957).

⁸ I use the term 'feelings' following Damasio (1999, 2003) as does Johnson (2007). Damasio, as a neurobiologist, understands emotions as chemical and neurological responses normally active automatically below the level of consciousness. Emotions become 'feelings' in the later stage of the process when the organism (in this case a human) becomes aware of the changed bodily state.

⁹ Johnson, 1987, p.22.

¹⁰ See Johnson (2007) pp.189 – 190 for an explanation of sub-mappings in a complex metaphor.

¹¹ As quoted in Snyder p. 36, referring to an article in *The New Yorker*, 27 December 1947. See also Graham's 'Affirmations: 1926 – 37' in Armitage, pp. 96 – 110, for statements on American identity and modernity.

¹² Lloyd, p. 50.

¹³ Bird and Greenberg pp. 42 – 44. See also de Mille p.251 for Pearl Lang on the working of breath in class work from base of spine to top of head, involving genitals, navel, lungs, and skull.

- ¹⁴ Bird and Greenberg p.20.
¹⁵ Bird and Greenberg p.37.
¹⁶ Reynolds p.118.
¹⁷ Bird and Greenberg, pp.49 – 50.
¹⁸ See Bannerman, 2010.
¹⁹ Graham, 1992, p.137.
²⁰ McConachie's words, 2003, p.227.
²¹ Bird and Greenberg, p.95. See also Ailes Gilmour in Horosko, p.9. 'Wearing it was to become a piece of sculpture as our bodies strained against the tubing.'
²² See Reynolds, p.125.
²³ Quoted from 'an early programme note' in programme for 1997 *The Singular Voice of Woman* at The Place Theatre, London.
²⁴ Bird and Greenberg, p.71.
²⁵ I analyse in particular a section of the female duet 1'.36" – 3'.22" into the DVD.

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Cancan vs. the State: archival traces of the battle for Parisian bodies

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Abstract

The surveillance of the early cancan by the Parisian police in the 1820s and 1830s left a range of archival traces, including instructions, ordinances and memos, as well as journalistic accounts of the trials of arrested cancan dancers in legal newspapers. In such sources, the cancan and associated dances emerge as physical battlegrounds for negotiating the terms of liberalism and in/decency on which the new post-Revolutionary social order would rest. This paper argues that each of these sources preserves a different narrative of this danced dispute, all of which are necessary to understand its polysemic complexity.

Very few sources document the early history of the cancan, and related dances such as the *chahut*, during the first decade of their recorded history in 1820s Paris. Although the earliest discovered reference to the dance is in 1821, there is little further evidence until 1828. Over the next five years, however, a body of archival evidence emerges relating to the state surveillance and legal repression of these ‘indecent’ dances, which continued to be a concern of the police until at least 1870. In this paper, I intend to explore the different ways that such sources might be read, drawing on John Moreland’s (2006) archaeological reading of textual sources as material culture and Michel de Certeau’s (1984) concepts of strategies and tactics.

The archive of the Prefecture of Police in Paris holds a range of sources relating to the massive police effort to control the dancing at public balls in the 1820s and 1830s. Public balls were considered to pose a threat to monarchical authority through their improvised, unruly dance movements and disenfranchised, politically liberal clientele. The records concern, for example, the mandatory authorisation necessary for venues to establish balls, the policing of balls, and the ordinances issued by the Prefecture listing the regulations by which ball owners had to abide. The Ordinance of 31st May 1833 became the standard to which later regulations would defer. Its seventh article states that,

Each Organiser of Public Balls, should prohibit, in his Establishment, all indecent dances, and call upon Police Officers to evict these dancers, as well as all persons who indecently commit public outrages. (Préfecture de Police, 1833, p. 7, trans. CJ)

A reading of these bureaucratic sources based on the records in the Prefecture archive alone might conclude that a Foucauldian (1991) surveillance of popular dancing was taking place. One might imagine the docile bodies produced by such a panoptic regime. However, such a reading omits a crucial element: the uses to which these documents were put in their lifetimes and the practices surrounding their production and circulation. John Moreland (2006), an archaeologist working between history and archaeology, argues that both disciplines would benefit from thinking about texts and objects not just as evidence, but as having had efficacy in the past. He shows how texts can be put to a

range of uses beyond their intended or supposed purpose. The uses of a single text might range from repressive to liberatory, and these uses are not necessarily obvious from the content of the text itself. Following Moreland, I suggest a focus on the practices in which archival sources participated as a means to understand their contemporary efficacy, or indeed, inefficacy. In the remainder of this paper I will apply this methodology to the Prefecture Ordinances.

In order to flesh out the practices through which the ordinances were mobilised, a range of other contemporary sources can be brought into play. These include image sources, such as a caricature by Eustache of the interior of the Folies de Belleville café and dance hall, published in a satirical journal in 1842-3 and held in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Philipon, 1842-43). It shows how the Prefect's ordinance forbidding indecent dancing was conveyed from the ball owners to the dancers – via signs proclaiming that the cancan is forbidden. The image appears straightforward enough, but like many caricatures in the July Monarchy, it contained a double meaning. Although the orchestra above the sign looks calm and orderly, it is described in the text as playing “Resounding, diabolical music, ornamented with trumpet, bass drum, tom-tom and pistol shots” (Philipon, 1842-43, p. 305, trans. CJ). A conductor named Philippe Musard had risen to fame in the 1830s for exciting dancing crowds to a state of frenzy through his quadrille arrangements in which the musicians broke chairs and fired pistols. Musard's innovation spread, causing the Prefect of Police to issue a circular in 1844 banning all noisy instruments during the dancing of the quadrilles including bass drums, timbales, cymbals, tom-toms, bells, hunting horns, fire arms and artillery pieces. He justified this instruction by claiming that, “noisy instruments, overexcite and upset the persons who attend the dances” (Anonymous, 1844, p. 1, trans. CJ). To a Parisian in 1842-3, therefore, this image may have registered an implicit contradiction: the sign forbids the cancan, and yet the music of the orchestra is designed to encourage it. Indeed the rest of the illustrated story in which this image features underlines the inability of the sign to regulate musical and dance practices in the dance hall. In the subsequent caricature, the dancers jump the barrier between the seating area and the dance floor and begin to dance the cancan, at first with “irreproachable decency”, but,

soon their gestures become so gay, so expressive and so light that the distributeur de cachets (a kind of rural policeman for balls outside the city limits) feels it necessary to signal to the magistrate the men who are too friendly, the too lively [female] dancers. (Philipon, 1842-43, p. 307, trans. CJ)

This fictional account corresponds closely with the offences that led to numerous real trials of cancan dancers in the 1820s to 1840s.

In accounts of cancan trials, ordinances and prohibitive signs are repeatedly depicted not as regulations that discipline bodies, in the Foucauldian sense, but as what Michel de Certeau (1984) would call the ‘strategies’ of those in power, which challenge the dance hall's clientele to creatively invent antidisciplinary ‘tactics’ through which to evade authority. The ordinances participate in this game of ‘cat-and-mouse’, which continues in the courtroom where arrested dancers were put on trial. The court records of these trials were destroyed in a fire at the Hôtel de Ville during the Paris Commune in 1871. However, several newspapers in the 1820s-40s were dedicated to providing detailed

reports of court cases, and these are held in the Bibliothèque Nationale. In a trial of 1829, documented in the *Annales des Tribunaux* collection (Anonymous, 1829), prohibitive signage becomes part of the testimony. The trial at the Paris Magistrates Court is of a young man called Isidore who had been arrested for fighting with a military drummer at a ball. The owner of the ball, a Monsieur Rouyer is called as a witness and during his testimony the prosecution accuses him of allowing Isidore to dance the indecent *chahut*. Rouyer defends himself by saying:

“Certainly not, Sir; the *chahut* is strictly prohibited at my establishment, as well as all excessive and reckless gestures and remarks; it is even written in big lettering above the band” (the witness here makes an *avant-deux* and a *balancé* which were not without grace); “that,” he adds with great earnestness, “is the dance style of M. Isidore.” (Anonymous, 1829, p. 35, trans. AD)

Monsieur Rouyer supports his claim to be a responsible ball owner, in line with the Prefecture’s ordinances, by citing the public presence of a sign prohibiting the *chahut*. But he immediately augments this testimony with embodied evidence in the form of an imitative performance of Isidore’s dancing. The imitation of a defendant’s dancing style was a regular form of testimony at trials against cancan dancers, although it was normally performed by the prosecuting policeman. Cancan trials often engaged in a performative play with verbal and physical languages for giving evidence. Policemen were asked to dance rather than speak, and defendant dancers were required to speak but not move. Monsieur Rouyer’s testimony combined both verbal and physical evidence in quick succession, countering the official authority of the prohibitive sign with the physical authority of imitative dance movement. As in the illustrated story earlier, the police ordinance is invoked but immediately undermined by dance practice. Rouyer succeeded in his defence, but Isidore was condemned to a month in prison, evidencing the reassertion of legal authority, although perhaps in attenuated form, as one month was the minimum sentence.

The role played by the ordinances in these scenarios is that of articulating, communicating, and archiving strategies of power in written form. But as we have seen, in practice these documents participated in various physical and verbal performances in the dance hall and courtroom, through which the power of the written ordinance was continually evaded, challenged, negotiated, and reasserted. I argue, in conclusion, that when interpreting archival popular dance sources, particularly legal ones, the uses to which those sources were put, practically and discursively, in their lifetimes, can often tell us as much as the content of the documents themselves.

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Acknowledgements

The research for this paper was supported by the University of Chichester; and the Arts and Humanities Research Council [grant number AH/L010879/1]. I am deeply grateful to my research assistants on these projects, Dr Anna Davies and Dr Claire Jones, whose detailed translations and dialogues about interpretation have brought the material to life. Their translations are credited throughout using their initials, AD and CJ.

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Texts, Bodies, Multimodality: Dance Literacy in Context

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Abstract

*Crossing between texts, bodies, and the senses, dance literacies bring fresh perspectives on how new literacies can function, especially non-alphabetic or non-text-based literacies. Reading and writing in an expanded understanding of literacy are interpretive means of interacting with texts, of embedding and discerning meaning, of making sense of movement or choreographic information, of composing and performing, and of creating documentation and archive. Makers and viewers of dances act as readers and writers, and authors. These roles are permeable in dance literacy, shifting with the context of the dance phenomenon or artistic practice. This paper engages with the dance practices of two dance companies to explore issues of shared-authorship, documentation, multimodality, body-text relationships, and reader-writer permeability: the Bebe Miller Company during their creation of *A History*; and RikudNetto who composes through Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation. What literacy events and practices are present in the studio? What range of written literacies are used and how? Where and how were these literacies learned? In what ways might they cross the so-called literacy-orality divide? Drawing from questions and frameworks of the New Literacy Studies, this paper invites a critical look at dance literacy in context.*

Introduction

Literacy in dance emerges through contextualized uses of reading and writing in/with/through/about movement. Dance literacies cross between texts, bodies, and the senses. I should note, that in Literacy Studies (Akinaso 2001; Finnegan 1973; Finnegan 1988; Goody and Watt 1968; Street 1993), there has been a historical “divide” between “literacy” and “orality.” This divide has been challenged by a proliferation of “new” literacies, such as visual literacy, digital literacy, and even dance literacy. This literacy/orality divide splits along similar lines to the Cartesian mind-body split, with similar associations, connotations, and consequences attributed to each side. Likewise, this divide is seen in scholarship relating to “dance literacy,” with arguments falling along the lines of 1) dance literacy is only through uses of notation systems; or 2) dance literacy is only multimodal, embodied ways of meaning-making¹. I would like to posit that dance literacy, in fact is both.

In this paper, I examine relationships between dance and literacy in two ways: first, the ways in which written literacies — such as journal keeping, notations — are used in dance practices and how they affect dance-specific knowledge; and second, multimodality in interpretive and meaning-making practices dancers utilize in the studio. Multimodality, as described by Gunther Kress, positions the body at the center of one’s interaction with the world for meaning-making purposes. Multimodality occurs through

multiple modes — visual, aural, spatial, linguistic, gestural, and textual — which are read and interpreted together. Additionally, I will use multimodality to stand in for “orality.” This stand-in has been noted by anthropologist Ruth Finnegan (2006), wherein “orality” is usually more than spoken words, and includes movement, gesture, music, visuals, etc. — everything that is not written. Under this understanding of orality as multimodality, we can frame dance multimodality.

In this paper, I am broadly defining reading and writing in dance literacy as interpretive means of interacting with “texts” — both movement texts and residual texts of journals, notes, and scores. Reading is the interpreting, analyzing, and consuming of multimodal information in order to create understandings about movement. Writing is the enacting of movement through demonstrating or repeating a known dance phrase, generating or improvising movement, and/or the documenting of movement and choreography. Writing subdivides further in three ways: physical acts of inscription, pen to paper and physical enactment; composition, the generating of movement; and authorship, creator/ownership of dances. Through various modes — visual, kinesthetic, aural/oral, tactile, verbal/linguistic, alphabetic/textual, etc. — dancers process sensate information about what they see, feel, hear, and sense. Roles of reader and writer are permeable within dance literacy, shifting with the context of the dance phenomenon or artistic practice.

This paper engages with the compositional practices of two dance companies to explore multimodality, body-text relationships, and reader-writer permeability. First is the American postmodern dance company, Bebe Miller Company, specifically the development of the Reset section of their most recent dance, *A History*, which premiered in 2012. This dance reflects back on shared creative and choreographic processes of several members of the company, and the duet practice of dancers Angie Hauser and Darrell Jones. I had the privilege to work with the Bebe Miller Company as an embedded archivist during the development of *A History*. Second is Israeli postmodern dance company RikudNetto. Led by choreographer Tirza Sapir, the company uses Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation as a compositional framework for creating dance cycles. Company dancer and scholar Shlomit Ofer shared the company’s compositional practices with me during her 2012 sabbatical research at The Ohio State University. Creating dances in these two companies necessarily relies on multimodality and textual/scriptural/notational acts.

Bebe Miller Company: Reading/writing Overlaps, Scoring Menus

Composition is one aspect of writing, the generating, creating, and re/arranging of movement into a larger piece of choreography. Composition in dance can be the product of both reading and writing dance literacy events. When choreographers rely on dancers — bodies outside of themselves — to compose the dance, they must read the phrases, tasks, or improvisations the dancers present in order to write the dance-at-large. Prominent modalities in the Bebe Miller Company include visual, kinesthetic, language/verbal, alphabetic. Miller, Hauser, and Jones’s compositional process utilizes prolific alternation of improvisation and discussion. They generate specialized language and terminology for each dance in order to create shared understandings between them

about their work. The Reset section of *A History*, which I will focus on for this paper, demonstrates the deep scoring practices and combined reading/writing events of Bebe Miller Companyⁱⁱ. Their scoring practices generate “improvisational states” — the company’s term for collections of movement vocabulary, dynamics, imagery, and movement qualities used as the basis for generating improvisation-as-performance.

The Reset section of *A History* was one of the most difficult improvisational and compositional moments of the dance. While developing this section, they arduously worked through trial and error to find source material or entry points into the improvisation that would elicit the quality of movement, relationships, and use of space and rhythm that Miller wanted to see. In Reset, Hauser and Jones begin standing side-by-side upstage, and proceed with alternating improvisations that travel downstage. As one dances, the other watches, and then they trade roles as watcher (reader) and mover (writer). Before each turn, they “reset” to upstage in order to begin anew.

We can visualize composition as layers of simultaneous and alternating reading and writing. The outermost layer is writing or composing the dance-at-large, i.e. the choreographic work, in this case *A History*. Then there are inner layers where movement is generated (writing), and then arranged, revised, or edited (writing). Reading intertwines with writing in these inner layers to facilitate writing of the choreography. Miller must see and make decisions about what the dancers, their movement and bodies, are doing (reading and writing). Miller reads how the larger choreographic structure meets her conceptual and narrative goals for the dance. She also reads the movement Hauser and Jones generate as they improvise. Then discussion follows to direct Hauser and Jones on how to change or develop their improvisation in order to get at the ideas she is looking for (writing). Additionally, Hauser and Jones read both their own and each others’ movement and bodies as scores as they improvise (simultaneous reading and writing).

The Reset section developed into a juxtaposition and fusion of the Hauser’s and Jones’ contrasting movement qualities. Miller could read the inherent Angie-ness and Darrell-ness of the improvised movement that she wanted. Miller’s directing is writing as composing and structuring the choreography of the dance-at-large, but Jones and Hauser must understand the parameters of their improvised compositions within the dance. Because the movement in Reset was improvised and not set into specific actions and phrases, the struggle in rehearsal came in Miller being able to verbally articulate to the dancers which qualities of movement, timing and rhythmic phrasing, and spatial and dynamic relationships she wanted. In order to kinesthetically write each improvisation in Reset, Hauser required a score from which to read and respond in movement.

Eventually, Miller, Hauser, and Jones identified several mini-scores of entry points and improvisational states. They named and wrote down the “menu” of mini-scores on strips of paper for Jones and Hauser to choose and improvise from to continue developing Reset. The mini-scores in the menu have unique descriptive names that follow the language development and naming practices the company typically uses: Line (both, energetic, curving, distal initiation); Swipe (evocative of the word swipe); Compact (condensing of space, whole body or isolated parts); Bird Cage (image about the “thoracic body being the container” heart and lungs, which can move separately from rib cage and thoracic spine)ⁱⁱⁱ.

The written menu of mini-scores provided concrete items to reference, and on which Miller could comment, giving feedback about how to frame the improvisation. For Hauser, “[Reset was] not about completion of that score [items from menu], it was just figuring out a way to talk to each other about what we were trying to do”^{iv}. Having the written choices broke down the images and improvisational source material into smaller, more defined entities, and supplied specific language for what they were doing. some comment about written?

RikudNetto: Systematic Composition, Systematic Fluency, Conceptual and Notational Scoring

Writing dances within the RikudNetto dance group occurs in three phases: a two-part compositional practice of creating choreographed dances, and writing Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation (EWMN) scores of the dances. As we saw with the Bebe Miller Company, choreographing dances involves alternating reading and writing events. With RikudNetto, composition is shared between choreographer Tirza Sapir and the dancers, although through a different dance-devising model than that of the Bebe Miller Company.

The first part of RikudNetto's choreographic practice focuses on movement generation. Tirza Sapir's choreographic interests with RikudNetto focus on systematic and structural variations of movement phrases based on particular movement concept motifs. Dancer Shlomit Ofer describes Sapir's process as “composing ‘from the head’ — deciding on a certain movement principle or motif as it is defined in the system [Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation], and then experimenting with the physical outcomes (for example – giving the same movement instructions for the arm, the leg, the torso),” then choosing from the resulting physical outcomes^v. Sapir verbally relays the movement instructions to her dancers, who then use them as the basis for improvisation in order to generate phrases of movement. In the second part of the choreographic practice, Sapir arranges those movement phrases into the choreographed dance.

Writing and reading alternate throughout the process of creating RikudNetto's dances. Sapir writes by composing systematic motifs (movement instructions); the dancers physically write solutions; Sapir reads their solutions for aesthetic sensibility and directs them to try particular body part combinations^{vi}. Sapir reads the dancers' movement solutions in order to make compositional choices about body part combinations and their arrangement into choreography (reading and writing). One of the main movement instructions for “Onwards and Backwards” (Sapir and Al-Dor 2011) describes arcs that move peripherally across a plane in opposing directions. For example, the main instruction arcs 1-unit clockwise/4-units counterclockwise, 2-units clockwise/4-units counterclockwise, 3-units clockwise/4-units counterclocks, and so on, until the series reaches 8-units clockwise/4-units counterclockwise. Any plane could be chosen, such as one of the major three sagittal/wheel, horizontal/table, or coronal/door plans or one based on a tilted, diagonal plane. Likewise any body part could be chosen, such as an arm, leg, head, torso, thigh, although anatomical structure may determine certain modifications to the movement instructions. Timing and spatial pathways (2-D or 3-D) can also be manipulated.

The dancers of RikudNetto navigate two major fluencies to create their dances: the conceptual expertise of the notation system, and the physical coordination in executing the movement instructions. The former aids in developing the latter. Dancers must first have sufficient fluency in Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation to understand and work creatively with Sapir's movement instructions. This fluency enables dancers to coordinate their bodies with the time and space parameters of the movement instructions. Conceptual knowledge of EWMN can be accessed separately from expertise in its notational script.

Once dancers have trained in a particular notation system such as EWMN, they adopt methods of movement analysis inherent to that system and incorporates it into her own conceptual and physical understanding of movement, even when they do not have paper and pencil on hand to write notation symbols. Literacy in a dance notation system is, therefore, physical and conceptual, affecting how one thinks and moves, as the compositional practices of RikudNetto demonstrate. The dancers of RikudNetto are literate in the organization and grammar of EWMN as a *system of organizing movement* and the limbs of the body into combinations or sequences. The dancers must understand the structural conventions of EWMN as a choreographic system — how EWMN conceptualizes space and pathways, and produces a particular method of choreographic invention through specific patterns. What may be of most interest is despite the fact that all of the RikudNetto dancers are literate in EWMN as a notational script, they do not use the notational script for the development of their choreography. The recording of movement in notation occurs *after* the dance has been completed. EWMN provides the *conceptual* framework for the dancers to conceive of various movement aspects and generate phrase material.

Concluding Thought

To recap, the composition -- WRITING -- practices of these companies demonstrate overlapping reading/writing processes in addition to overlapping multimodal-notational/textual presences. There were many additional instances of these overlaps, for which there is not time in a short conference presentation, but I will mention them briefly: journal writing as creative thinking practice; journal note-taking as marking of kinesthetic memory triggers; and notation scores that map structure as opposed to documentation of dance steps.

One may ask, "What is gained through an exercise of claiming literacy for dance?" On the surface, literacy and orality/multimodality are often taken as opposites, incompatible ways of knowing, creating, or communicating. Even within the field of dance, partnerships and interplay between multimodality (orality) and notational/alphabetic modes (literacy) go unrecognized. However, several Literacy Studies scholars (Clanchy [1973] 1993; Graff [1979] 1987; Harris 1989; Heath 1983) have challenged the assumption that that literacy replaces orality when in reality they exist side-by-side. Describing modern relationships between literate and oral (multimodal) communication, Ruth Finnegan (1988, 143) writes, "In practice people switch from oral to written to electronic communication and back and from personally generated to mass-media forms, without any sense that there is some radical change

involved.” The same can be said of the interactions between dance and literacy, as seen in this paper. Dance literacy, then, is especially situated to further blur the boundaries between the literacy/orality divide. We, as dancers, should embrace the breadth of intersections between dance and literacy, while simultaneously acknowledging and honoring our embodied knowledge as well as recognizing the importance of residual texts and interactions with notations and textual sources.

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Notes

ⁱ This paper presents a small part of my dissertation research on examining dance literacies in their contexts, and where I speak more at length about this alleged divide and its presence in dance scholarship: 2015. “Dance Literacy in the Studio: Partnering Movement Texts and Residual Texts.” Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University.

ⁱⁱ My analysis of Reset comes from fieldwork observations of Bebe Miller Company rehearsals in April 2012 during their residency at The Ohio State University Department of Dance.

ⁱⁱⁱ Angie Hauser, interview with author, July 18, 2012.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Shlomit Ofer, e-mail message to author, June 26, 2014.

^{vi} Shlomit Ofer, interview with author, May 9, 2012.

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Choreographing the Historical Novel: Adaptation Theory and Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*

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Abstract

The popularity of Walter Scott's historical fiction in nineteenth-century Italy inspired Emanuele Viotti's six-act ballo Rebecca, which was produced repeatedly in the 1840s and 1850s. This paper uses Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory to interpret Viotti's Rebecca as a "palimpsestuous" text and identifies Francesco Hayez's lithographs as a possible influence on Viotti's choreography. Hutcheon's theoretical framework also provides insights into Viotti's reworking of Scott's material; through techniques of compression, conflation, and the external concretization of internal emotional states, the ballo flattens the novel's historical component, accentuates a suggested romance, and heightens the novel's blatant anti-Semitism.

The historical romances of Sir Walter Scott were immensely popular during the nineteenth century, and *Ivanhoe*, the story of a young knight returning from the crusades, was among the best known. Indeed, the novel and its characters provided fertile territory for knock-offs and adaptations in a variety of media, including plays, operas, paintings, and prints of scenes or characters—some of which functioned as illustrations of elaborate editions. On the Italian peninsula, translations of *Ivanhoe* were published in twenty known editions between 1822 and the end of the century, in cities as diverse as Milan, Naples, Florence, Venice, and Parma. Thus it is not surprising that, like painters and composers, Italian choreographers also mined Scott's tale for characters and scenarios already favored by the public. My question today is, what do we know about these *balli*, and why should we care?

Three known Italian productions of *Ivanhoe*-based ballets are recorded in extant libretti: a version by Giuseppe Turchi entitled *Ivanhoe*, mounted during the 1838-39 season in Cremona (which is better known as the home of the Stradivarius violin-makers); Emanuele Viotti's *Rebecca*, produced at the Nuovo Teatro Comunale in Modena during the fall of 1841; and Dario Fissi's *azione coreografica* entitled *Rebecca* in Florence, during the summer 1869 season. Turchi is an obscure figure, not included in any standard reference works, and the *ballo* inspired no reviews (not even any mentions) in the theatrical journals of the day. Dario Fissi's 1869 *azione coreografica* is likewise obscure; I have not yet been able to examine a copy of the libretto. In contrast, Emanuele Viotti's *Rebecca* enjoyed productions in the northern Italian cities of Modena, Venice, Bologna, Brescia, and Verona in the 1840s and 1850s, and it did elicit some press attention. Libretti from these productions, while differing slightly amongst themselves, demonstrate how Viotti cut Scott's novel drastically and reoriented the plot, focusing his version of the tale on the story of one of the novel's two heroines.

This paper examines Viotti's *Rebecca* through the lens of Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory, whose principles I use in teaching an undergraduate page-to-stage seminar. Following Hutcheon's lead on several points, I explore Viotti's *ballo* as a palimpsestuous work, identifying parallels to other Italian works inspired by Scott's novel, and ultimately identifying the messages of Orientalist essentializing and gender attitudes the work conveyed to mid-nineteenth-century audiences. When Hutcheon refers to an adaptation as palimpsestuous, she is, of course, referring to the medieval practice of recycling a piece of parchment or vellum by scraping off the ink and reusing the sheet. In practice, this was not fully successful; typically some ink from the original text would still be visible, and it showed through after a secondary text was written on the surface. An adapted work, then, is one whose prior source shows through, "haunting" the adapted work. The question then becomes, which aspects of the original work are allowed to show through?

The first translated edition of *Ivanhoe* appeared in Italy in 1822. Six years later, a highly regarded Italian painter, Francesco Hayez, issued a series of lithographs based on Scott's novel, not as illustrations for a specific edition of the book but just as a visual narrative series inspired by the novel. The 22 lithographs included six character portraits and 16 scenes illustrating passages from the text with lines from the novel functioning as captions. (See Figure 1.) These lithographs sold widely, and so broad was their distribution that an observer writing as late as 1883 recorded, "To very few of us who have lived over half a century, would it have happened not to know them."¹



Figure 1: Hayez, "Rebecca." Illustration included in G. Barbieri's 1840 edition of Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

Even many who never read the novel would have likely been exposed to these images in the late 1820s and early 1830s, and still more people would have encountered Hayez's images when engravings based upon them were included as illustrations in a Milanese edition of the novel in 1840.² (Figure 2.) It may or may not be a coincidence that Viotti's *ballo* premiered the very next year, but I would be very surprised if he embarked on this project without some familiarity with Hayez's images, given their widespread distribution.

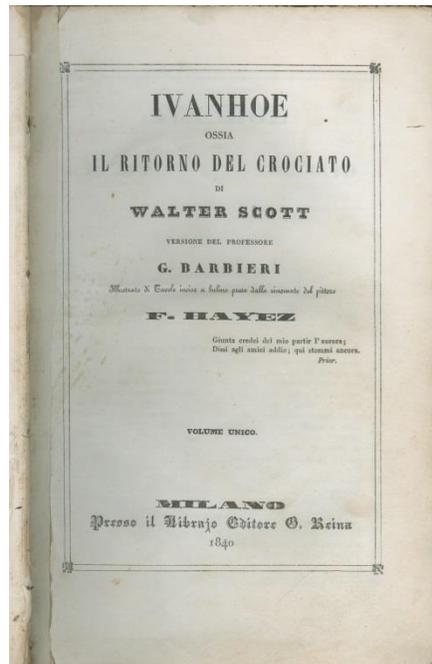


Figure 2: Title page of G. Barbieri's 1840 translation of *Ivanhoe*, with illustrations by Francesco Hayez.

Hutcheon asserts that "In the process of dramatization there is inevitably a certain amount of re-accentuation and refocusing of themes, characters, and plot."³ She also states that "shifts in the focalization or point of view may lead to major differences."⁴ Both statements prove true as Viotti shifts the *ballo*'s emphasis from *Ivanhoe* to Rebecca. A simple page count of scenes in the novel that include the two main female characters reveals that Rowena appears in approximately ten percent of the text and Rebecca figures in twenty percent. Of the scenes illustrated by Hayez in the 1840 edition of the novel, two include *Ivanhoe*'s chosen fiancé Rowena, while ten feature Rebecca, the Jewish maiden who falls in love with *Ivanhoe* while nursing him back to health after he sustains wounds in the tournament at Ashby. (One scene shows them both.) Hayez thus changes the original one-to-two ratio to one-to-five, clearly accentuating Rebecca's presence in his visual narrative.

Hutcheon posits that when transferring a work from the "telling mode," meaning a strictly narrative format, to the "showing mode," meaning a performance that enacts a story, the original literary work must be abbreviated and rendered less complex.⁵ Viotti's *ballo* offers dramatic proof of this: the libretto truncates the novel severely, eliminating

Scott's first 27 chapters. Much of what characterizes *Ivanhoe* as a historical novel is thus lost. This includes the novel's political framework, in which *Ivanhoe*'s father, Cedric the Saxon, represents the dying Saxon hierarchy struggling to maintain its traditions in the face of the Norman conquerors. Related issues of language, dress, and custom that surface throughout the novel are thus eliminated. Moreover, the *ballo* ignores *Ivanhoe*'s banishment by Cedric for accompanying the Norman king Richard Lionheart to the Holy Land. A host of characters are also cut, including (1) King Richard himself, whose identity as the Black Knight embodies the popular Romantic topos of the disguised nobleman; (2) Prince John the usurper and his companion De Bracy, who desires *Ivanhoe*'s beloved Rowena; (3) Athelstane, the Saxon nobleman Cedric envisions as the ideal husband for Rowena; (4) Cedric's servants Wamba and Gurth, who provide pretexts for local color in the novel; (5) Robinhood in disguise as Locksley the archer; (6) Ulrica the hag and her story of disgrace; and (7) assorted religious figures. When the *ballo* opens, the novel's tournament at Ashby has already taken place. The *ballo* mentions no abducted traveling parties, no imprisonment at Torquilstone, and no heroic battle of liberation accompanied by raging fire. The elimination of so many chapters and characters coincides with the loss of key plot events that cement the book's identity as a historical novel. Those who read Scott's novel through a lens of Carbonarist resistance to Austrian domination in northern Italy, which was a common reader response, would have found much less to appreciate in the balletic version.⁶

In exchange for this lost material, Viotti created a new first scene out of whole cloth for the initial production in Modena. *Ivanhoe* is shown at the castle of Isaac the Jew (his identity is essentialized throughout the *ballo*), whose daughter Rebecca has finished nursing the wounded knight back to health. *Ivanhoe* receives a letter from his father Cedric, who encourages him to return home speedily for his wedding to Rowena. There is no hint of the novel's political discord between father and son, which constitutes a distinct flattening of the historical component. As a delaying tactic, Rebecca begs *Ivanhoe* to stay for a friend's wedding they are hosting that day, and *Ivanhoe*'s "gentility" during the celebration further inflames her passion for him. Beyond the obvious opportunity for diegetic dancing here, the invented marriage scene suggests Rebecca's desire to be united with *Ivanhoe*. When the two are alone on stage, she pulls back her robe (as if uncovering her heart, or innermost desires) and throws herself at his feet to confess her love. Here, as throughout the libretto, the description suggests the *ballo* genre's elaborate mime passages: "if Rebecca's lips are quiet, her eyes speak and express the dramatic change that has come over her."⁷ *Ivanhoe*'s departure renders her "delirious," and she is further upset by an approaching storm that she fears may threaten *Ivanhoe*'s fragile health. The storm soon breaks: water falls in torrents, the wind blows, and thunder roars—a concrete externalizing of Rebecca's tempestuous inner emotions that also suggests the opera house's production capacities. In this scene, as Hutcheon observes, "External appearances are made to mirror internal truths."⁸

Having eliminated the chapters containing Rebecca's abduction by Brian, Viotti now inserts the visually arresting kidnapping scene in a fabricated context. Brian and his followers, caught in the storm, stop to ask Isaac for shelter. Seeing Rebecca who has just bidden *Ivanhoe* adieu, Brian is smitten with her and decides to abduct her. The libretto's wording here is neutral; while Viotti does not explicitly condone the kidnapping, neither does his wording suggest a censoring attitude towards Brian's destructive lust. His

associates set fire to a nearby cabin as a distraction, and Brian kidnaps Rebecca in the ensuing confusion. The scene described in the libretto contains striking parallels to Hayez's depiction of the abduction as it occurs in Scott's story, although in the novel that abduction through flames takes place during the fall of the Castle at Torquilstone, not at Rebecca's home. (See Figure 3.) In other words, Viotti has retained the idea of the dramatic scene, which was concretized visually by Hayez, and has repurposed it for his altered narrative.



Figure 3: Hayez, “Rapimento di Rebecca.” Illustration included in G. Barbieri’s 1840 edition of Scott’s *Ivanhoe*.

As Hutcheon observes, “the adaptor is an interpreter before coming a creator.”⁹ The process of shortening a long novel into a ballet requires making choices, and the material Viotti chose to retain, or added in, accentuates the novel’s blatant anti-Semitism by presenting Isaac as a highly ineffectual character. After Rebecca’s kidnapping, her desperate father is overcome by sadness and “cade boccone,” or falls on his face.¹⁰ Thus both father and daughter are shown as powerless figures: Rebecca (though she struggles against her captors) is overwhelmed physically, and Isaac, whose position in an anti-Semitic society renders him helpless under the law, is overwhelmed emotionally, which is externalized through his physical collapse.

In Act II, the *ballo*’s scene shifts to Cedric’s castle, where his ward Rowena is tormented by the fact that she does not know the identity of the knight who crowned her the Queen of Love and Beauty at Ashby. In this scene, simple props concretize identities and issues crucial to the narrative. Rowena kisses a portrait of Ivanhoe, demonstrating her love for the absent knight, and then she is brought a letter by a veiled stranger. Learning from the letter that Ivanhoe will soon return, Rowena responds with such

effusive joy that the stranger—Ivanhoe in disguise— unveils himself at her feet. In its transcoding of the novel the libretto suggests extensive mime passages without specifying danced interludes: Cedric joins the scene, and Ivanhoe narrates how he was mortally wounded in battle and barely escaped death.

Act III begins with dancing to celebrate Ivanhoe’s return. By way of movement description, the libretto states only that “the dances interweave.”¹¹ In this act, the novel’s matter-of-fact anti-Semitism is manifested when Isaac shows up at Cedric’s castle asking for help. Initially Cedric and Rowena rebuff Isaac, but Ivanhoe intervenes—he takes Isaac by the hand and explains that this man and his daughter sheltered and healed him. Only after this presumably mimed explanation is Isaac encouraged to communicate his message. Throwing himself at Ivanhoe’s feet (another sign of his dependency), Isaac tells of Rebecca’s abduction by Brian de Bois Guilbert, the Knight Templar. Now understanding the situation, Cedric, Rowena, and all present encourage Ivanhoe to go save Rebecca; in fact, in a show of solidarity they even accompany him to the Templars’ lodge house, where Rebecca is being held.

Act IV conflates various incidents from Scott’s novel as part of Viotti’s ongoing program of simplification. At the lodge house, Brian tries to win Rebecca over, first with supplications and then by the sword. Rebecca is virtuous and haughty, first chastising her kidnapper and then threatening to throw herself from a parapet if Brian approaches her. Rebecca’s threatened jump from the window is a dramatic high point of the novel—like the abduction scene, it is one of the incidents selected by Hayez for illustration.



Figure 4: Hayez, “Rebecca che vuol gettarsi dalla torre per sottrarsi dalle insidie del Templario.” Illustration included in G. Barbieri’s 1840 edition of Scott’s *Ivanhoe*.

As with the abduction scene, Viotti has cut a well-known passage from one of the deleted chapters and pasted it into a later point in his narrative. While I am not suggesting that Viotti's choreography contained this exact image, I do believe that this scene was so strongly entrenched in the public imagination that it would have come naturally to Viotti to cut and paste it in to his reconfigured plot line, thereby allowing a palimpsestuous image to show through the choreography.

Act V comprises Rebecca's trial for witchcraft in the judgment hall at the lodge house. In the novel, Rebecca herself throws down a glove in a gesture of challenge, demanding a champion to prove her innocence in battle. In Viotti's *ballo*, it is Ivanhoe, not Rebecca, who throws down his glove. This change robs the female protagonist of her power and courage; her expressions of faith are diminished as the focus shifts to Ivanhoe's arrival to save her. Indeed, it is an example of the *ballo*'s mixed messages. Viotti focuses his *Ivanhoe* ballet on the role of the novel's "other woman," seeming to elevate Rebecca by making her the title character. At the same time, as a Jewish woman Rebecca is repeatedly shown to be weak, dependent, and not fully in control of her own fortunes. She is continually presented in terms of her interactions with men, and her situation is defined in terms of her dependence upon them.



Figure 5: Hayez, "Rebecca alla presenza de' suoi Giudici." Illustration included in G. Barbieri's 1840 edition of Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

The *ballo*'s final act is set in a field outside the Templars' lodge house, with a temple visible in the distance. All major characters are now onstage, and Rebecca is taken to the foot of the stake where she will be burned if her champion is defeated. (As part of his truncation, Viotti has eliminated the long wait and the suspense of knowing whether or not someone will step forward to defend her.) The libretto states that Ivanhoe and Brian advance with their palfreys, a detail which suggests that in Viotti's production horses may have actually appeared on stage, although the fight itself seems to have been staged as simply a duel. The anxious Isaac is once again described as "semi-vivo" (half

alive or half dead) with fear. In contrast, Viotti's libretto suggests that Rebecca remains full of faith: "Rebecca encourages him with her eyes, and with every gesture, and invites him to trust in God and in her innocence, and in the dexterity of her knight."¹²



Figure 6: Maurin, "Giudizio di Dio." Illustration included in G. Barbieri's 1840 edition of Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Note the presence of Rebecca praying in the background.

Thus begins the final struggle. After a fierce blow from Ivanhoe, Brian expires before the Grand Master can interfere to save him. (See Figure 6.) And here the libretto again departs significantly from the novel in ways that flatten the richness and complexity of Scott's characters. In the novel, time passes between the combat and Ivanhoe's marriage to Rowena, and many more strands of the plot are resolved before Rebecca eventually pays a visit to express her gratitude—not to Ivanhoe himself but to his new bride. In contrast, the *ballo* not only compresses time but also heightens emotional tensions between the primary characters. The rescued Rebecca, full of joy, throws herself upon her liberator's neck in an embrace. Rowena, who in the novel is unaware of any possible improprieties between her beloved and Rebecca, in the *ballo* becomes "fiercely jealous" at Rebecca's display of affection and furtively approaches Ivanhoe (the melodramatic tone here is hard to miss). The knight, carried away by Rebecca's grateful embrace, seems on the brink of returning her affection, but he stops when he sees Rowena. He is momentarily dumbfounded and immobile (the *ballo*'s signal for emotional stress so great that it prevents a character from moving or acting). Rebecca, sacrificing her own feelings, encourages Ivanhoe and Rowena to depart for their nuptials at the temple seen in the distance, but she bids Ivanhoe a final adieu with her eyes. Left alone with her father, Rebecca shakes at the sound of the wedding music; with anguish and shortness of breath she falls and expires of grief. A note at the bottom of the page explains that this scene is to be played while the wedding party en route to the

temple is still visible, further heightening the contrast between Rowena's happy outcome and Rebecca's tragic one.

In conclusion, this analysis suggests how nineteenth-century Italian audiences would have encountered Scott's story in a choreographed adaptation. The libretto of Viotti's 1841 production, mounted just one year after the translated edition with Hayez's illustrations, drastically flattens the novel's historical components, accentuates the suggested romance between Ivanhoe and Rebecca, and heightens the novel's blatant anti-Semitism. Because as a genre the Italian *ballo* depended upon mime gesture rather than language, its formulaic narratives tended to reduce characters to visually comprehensible profiles, reshaping texts to the point of distortion in order to satisfy the need for theatrical clarity. Thus, Viotti's *Rebecca* not only *referenced* accepted stereotypes but also *reinforced* them. While Rebecca is ostensibly this *ballo*'s protagonist, and would seem to be shown sympathetically, she is also an acceptable scapegoat whose tragic fate enables a romantic resolution in keeping with social mores. Indeed, although Viotti elevates Rebecca to the title role and reorients the novel to tell her story, his work ultimately sacrifices her to confirm the work's identity as a *ballo eroico-tragico*.

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Notes

¹ "A ben pochi tra noi che hanno varcato il mezzo secolo, non sarà accaduto di averle conosciute." Hayez, a cura di Maria Cristina Gozzoli e Fernanco Mazzocca (Milano: Electa Editrice, 1983), 351.

² Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe ossia Il ritorno del crociato*, trans. G. Barbieri, illus. F. Hayez (Milan: G. Reina, 1840). A few of the illustrations, including my Figure 6, are by artists other than Hayez.

³ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, Routledge, 2006), 40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶ For more on political readings of *Ivanhoe* on the Italian peninsula, see Murray Pittock, "Introduction: Scott and the European Nationalities Question," in Murray Pittock, ed., *The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 1-8.

⁷ "Se tace il labbro parlano gli occhi, che esprimono l'alterazione convulsa di cui è tutta invasa Rebecca." Emanuele Viotti, *Rebecca* ([Modena, 1841]), 6.

⁸ Hutcheon, *ibid.*, 58.

⁹ Hutcheon, *ibid.*, 84.

¹⁰ Viotti, *ibid.*, 7.

¹¹ "S'intrecciano danze...." Viotti, *ibid.*, 8.

¹² "Rebecca lo incoraggia cogli occhi, e con ogni gesto e lo invita a confidare in Dio e nell'innocenza di lei, e nella destrezza del suo Cavaliere." Viotti, *ibid.*, 12.

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Written Out of History: Black Square Dance Traditions

Susan Eike Spalding

Abstract

Old time square dancing (in a big circle) was an early twentieth century home-and community-based recreation among all ethnicities in the Central Appalachian region. It disappeared in most places by the 1940s, re-emerging in white rural communities in the 1960s. By contrast, one Virginia African American community continued square dancing until the early 1970s, much longer than others. Their last dances were held just as square dancing again became popular in white communities. The movement of the dance itself, its context and meaning to the dancers, and elements of regional and national society and culture may have contributed both to its longevity and to its demise. The presentation is based on interviews and movement analysis as well as on bibliographic research. It is based upon research for the author's book Appalachian Dance: Creativity and Continuity in Six Communities, University of Illinois Press, 2014.

Introduction

In the early twentieth century, old time square dancing (done in a big circle) was a - popular home- and community-based recreation among African American, Native American, and European American communities in the Central Appalachian region.¹ In many places, these kinds of dancing moved to public venues like the American Legion Hall in Dante, VA in the 1940s. Old time square dancing faded and had almost completely disappeared as early as the 1920s in some areas and by the 1940s in most. It experienced a revival in various white communities during the 1960s to 80s. In every case, the national folk revival provided a strong supportive atmosphere.²

At least one community had a completely different experience: The African American community outside Martinsville, Virginia, in the eastern foothills of the Blue Ridge. They kept dancing “the old Virginia breakdown” as they called it, until the early 1970s, much longer than others. Fiddler Leonard Bowles said, “we were strong in this music” in the 1940s and it was still “in full bloom” in the 1960s.³ Yet it came to an end in the 1970s, just when white communities were reviving their square dancing. My questions are: why did this dance community continue so much longer than others and why did it come to an end when it did?

The Martinsville Community

The longevity of the dance was supported by a large and cohesive African American community that had developed in and around Martinsville during the nineteenth century. Some black families there can claim ownership of their land dating to before the Civil

War, and African Americans have continuously constituted a significant percentage of the population, sometimes constituting twenty-five to forty percent.⁴ Central to the Martinsville African American community was “The Block,” a vibrant black business district established after World War I by Dr. Dana Baldwin.

The Block boasted thirty eating establishments, five hotels, several cab companies, insurance companies and savings and loans, a movie theater, bowling alley, dance hall, swimming pool, ballpark, a newspaper and many more businesses all owned and operated by and for African Americans. An annual ball brought in famous artists like Cab Calloway and Count Basie. There was even an annual Black Fiddler’s Convention that took place in the winter, usually February, from 1928 until well into the 1940s. Leonard Bowles said: “People from Danville, what we used to call far away – thirty, forty miles away – would come and stay all night ... Hundreds of people would come. Black people would look forward to the fiddlers’ convention every year. They’d start around 8:30 or 9:00 in the evening and wouldn’t stop until they finished around 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.” Competitions were held among fiddlers, banjoists, and other musicians. Once they were completed, everyone danced the old Virginia breakdown til the wee hours.⁵ Except for the Black Fiddlers Convention, the old breakdown was essentially a rural, home-based recreation. It was held in homes every Saturday, all year round, one week in one family’s home and the next in another. It was rarely held in lodge halls, as white square dances were.⁶

The primary structure of the old breakdown was a stable, almost unchanging circle.

All

dancers faced inward and visually took in the whole group, almost never turning. All action – solos, couples, and foursomes – took place in the center of the circle, enfolded, protected, and supported by the stepping and patting dancers. The steady circle both reflected and supported the strong black community that, until the end of the Civil Rights era, existed around Martinsville, in which teachers, ministers, shopkeepers, and families were all part of a unified fabric.⁷

The concept of “partner” was key in the old breakdown in Martinsville. The dance progressed from “bow to your partner,” to “change partners,” to “choose your partner,” and finally to “treat your partner,” the calls used for the standard figures each time the old breakdown was danced, several times a night. The greatest intensity came during the “choose your partner” solo in the center of the circle, when each person took a turn showing their most exciting steps before choosing someone to dance with, even stealing another’s partner. Though as caller Ernest Brooks said, “You do not choose someone else’s real special girl!” Second in intensity to this solo was the swing performed as part of “choose your partner” and as part of “change partners.” With its small bouncy polka-like step, it lasted a full thirty-two counts and was referred to as a “hug.”⁸ Change partners is a two couple figure similar to one known to white square dancers as Georgia rang-tang or Georgia Alabam, in which each man takes right hands with his opposite lady and turns her, then takes left hands with his own partner and turns her and repeats the process, ending with a smooth eight-count walk-around swing. In white square dance communities it is usually performed as a fluid figure eight, but in Martinsville it is punctuated by a long swing with the opposite lady and concluded by a long swing with the partner. Dancers in a nearby white community described the figure by saying, “you

catch hands and go around.” Martinsville dancers said, “you change partners and hug ‘em,” emphasizing the partner interaction rather than the pathway.⁹

At the end of each thirty minute dance, or *set* as it was called, the caller would sing out “Treat your partner,” and each couple would dance to the kitchen for a short break. Food and drink would be laid out for the men to buy for their partners. Like rent parties elsewhere, the breakdown served as a means of supplementing the family income. According to Leonard Bowles, “Most of what they were giving a dance for was to try to survive. The people that owned the house sold an orange for a nickel, a piece of candy for something, chickens from their place. ... they were trying to make a living, and have some fun at the same time. ... share and have fun too.”¹⁰

It may be helpful to illustrate with a comparison with nearby European American communities. Instead of performing only one single two-couple figure, these dancers chose different figures for every dance of the evening, and sometimes three or more for each dance: cage the bird, dive for the oyster, willow basket, lady ‘round the lady, chase the rabbit, and more. When I asked Leonard Bowles about other figures, he said emphatically, “No, no, no, no. That was not *in* the old breakdown! Only change partners.” In the European American communities, the circle typically changed shape several times during the course of the dance, morphing into bridges, snakes, and spirals, with dancers sometimes greeting everyone in the circle with a grand right and left. Dancers passed each other in close proximity, bowed under arches of arms, and took hands at least once with each of the others. The community in these cases appeared more flexible and in motion, rather than being stable and solid like the Martinsville breakdown.¹¹

Changing Times

The movement and context of the old breakdown sustained it for at least five decades. By 1970, dramatic social changes made many features of the old breakdown less relevant to the community. During the second half of the twentieth century, the area around Martinsville experienced nearly full employment for both blacks and whites.¹² There was no longer a need for the financial support provided by the dance parties. Greater mobility allowed for other kinds of socializing, and the emphasis on impressing, choosing, and holding a partner lost importance. Desegregation created integrated schools and allowed blacks to frequent white businesses, leading to the closing of the black business district, and to the end of the close-knit community. Urban renewal began, and the buildings on the Block were torn down. In the midst of all this upheaval, the stable, inward-gazing circle may no longer have been representative of the community. Dancer Naomi Bowles also felt that the association of the old breakdown with the plantation helped to bring its era to an end. She said of Martinsville’s black residents, “They don’t like to think about how we came up.”¹³

In addition to features of movement and context, the mid-twentieth century folk revival had a significant influence on the decline of the Martinsville dance. An early and important focus of revivalists was white Appalachian string band music closely associated with old time dance, like that of Kyle Creed, who lived not far from

Martinsville. Though a strong black fiddle and square dance tradition also existed in the area reaching back to the eighteenth century, with rare exceptions, folk music collectors and folk festivals, as well as the recording industry, mostly chose to ignore black string band music. According to music historian Charles Wolfe, a number of black string players like Martinsville's Lewis Hairston and Marvin and Turner Fodrell began playing blues, even though this music was not predominant in their communities. This way they hoped to attract the attention of collectors and festivals, and to have their music recorded.¹⁴

But the black dancers and string players around Martinsville fully identified with the music and dances that interested folk revivalists, seeing rural Appalachian traditions as their own, and not only white. They called the music they played and danced to "country" or "old time," and had grown up listening to the Grand Ol' Opry and other country music on the radio.¹⁵ According to folklorist Kip Lornell, they "grew up in an era when the differences between black and white folk music were less clearly defined," than they later became. Black and white musicians are known to have traded tunes and many of the same dance tunes have been documented, such as "Bile them Cabbage Down," "Leather Britches," and "Old Joe Clark," with only some stylistic differences distinguishing the black and white versions.¹⁶

Though they were ignored by revivalists, the Martinsville dance community still drew some encouragement from their identification with the music and dancing of the revival. In the 1978 video of the group, the dancers all wore identical costumes they had made for the occasion, though they would have ordinarily worn their usual clothing for the old breakdown. Dancer Naomi Bowles remarked, "We wanted to look like the square dancers on TV."¹⁷

In 1976 and again in 1992, the desire was repeatedly expressed for the return of the dance and the times that it represented, with close family and community supporting each other. Banjoist Irvin Cook said, "I'm hoping it will come back. There always used to be a square dance somewhere!" Leonard Bowles was hopeful too, seeing the growing folk revival interest in music and dance similar to his. "I think the world turns and it is coming back a little bit. It will be back."¹⁸ Even so, they were mostly passed over. This fact was not lost on Mr. Bowles, and he pointed it out to me. He had earlier said, "Ain't nobody gonna listen, I ain't gonna play. I just play when guys get together at the clubhouse and go deerhunting."¹⁹ Bolstered by the folk revival, some white square dance communities established public venues during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, supported by non-profit organizations, state parks, arts councils, or private businesses. No such institution or organization did the same for the old breakdown in Martinsville after the Fiddler's Convention came to an end. The fact that it was still "in full bloom" in the 1960s, despite this lack of support, speaks to the continuing strength of the community and the families who loved the dance, and to their committed identification with their traditions. The last accounts of an old breakdown are of a dance at the home of musician John Lawson Tyree near Martinsville in 1972, just at the time that white communities nearby were experiencing a revival of old time dance.²⁰ By the early 1990s, the Bowles family danced only at reunions, when their children urged Mr. Bowles to take out his fiddle. On these occasions, Naomi Bowles said that she danced both the old breakdown and the electric slide. The Bowles children seem to have felt some commitment in their adulthood to the traditions with which they grew up. Naomi Bowles said, "My children can square dance.

They can really get down.” The Bowles’ oldest son, a teacher in New York, taught his students the Old Breakdown. Mrs. Bowles said, “That was the prettiest thing you’ve ever seen. They just danced that figure eight (Change Partners). Oh, they just turned around that figure. And he called the set and it was so pretty.”²¹

Now there is renewed interest in black string band music and square dance, due to the Black Banjo Gathering and groups like the Carolina Chocolate Drops that emerged from or were influenced by it, and whose members studied with older players like Joe Thompson. However, we have a relatively small number of recordings of the many older players and only the barest documentation of the old breakdown, because they were of little interest to folk revivalists and collectors of the mid twentieth century. The context for today’s musicians and dancers is of course different. It is no longer based in the community from which it emerged, and though performers may replicate the sounds and the moves, the meaning will of course be different.

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Notes

- ¹ Calhoun, presentation; Cabbell, interview; Powell, interview; Wolfe, “Rural Black String Band Music,” 32-35. Mathews, “Eight Hands Up!” 12-15. For this paper, the area under discussion is comprised of Southwest Virginia, Western North Carolina, Northeast Tennessee, Eastern Kentucky, and West Virginia.
- ² For further discussion of the decline and revival of old time square dance and flatfooting, see Susan Eike Spalding, *Appalachian Dance: Creativity and Continuity in Six Communities*.
- ³ Bowles, interview, February 28, 1977.
- ⁴ Lewis and O’Donnell, *Ivanhoe, Virginia*, 68-69; Data from United States Census Bureau.
- ⁵ Siler, *Fayette Street*, 31, 54-59, 66, 46; Virginia African American Heritage Program, “What is a JGB?” and “Going to the Ball;” Lornell, *Virginia Traditions*, 4; Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992.
- ⁶ Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992; Brooks, interview.
- ⁷ All description and analysis is based upon the 1978 video documentation of the Martinsville dancers by Kip Lornell. See Blue Ridge Institute, *Way Out West: Video Documentary of Black Virginia String Players*. Conversations with Leonard and Naomi Bowles and Ernest Brooks helped me to understand the dancing.
- ⁸ Brooks, interview; Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992.
- ⁹ Calvin Cole, interview; Brooks, interview; Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992.
- ¹⁰ Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992.
- ¹¹ Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992; for more detailed comparisons, see Spalding, *Appalachian Dance*. Footage of several European American dance communities can be found in the Berea College Hutchins Library Department of Special Collections and Archives.
- ¹² Siler, *Fayette Street*, 50.
- ¹³ Siler, *Fayette Street*, 92, 98, 106; Gates, *Colored People*, 184; Powell, interview. Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992.
- ¹⁴ Winans, “Black Instrumental Music Traditions in the Ex-Slave Narratives,” 50-51, 53; Wolfe, “The Lost Tradition of Black String Bands,” 1-2; Mathews, “Eight Hands Up!” 12-15. Kip Lornell and the Blue Ridge Institute made efforts to rectify this omission in the late 1970s, with interviews and recordings like *Virginia Traditions: Non-Blues Secular Black Music*.
- ¹⁵ Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, 51-52. Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992; Brooks, interview.
- ¹⁶ Lornell, *Virginia Traditions*, 10; Conway, *African Banjo Echoes*, 141-151.
- ¹⁷ Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992.
- ¹⁸ Bowles and Cook, interview; Leonard and Naomi Bowles, interview.

¹⁹ Bowles, interview, February 28, 1977.

²⁰ Lornell, *Virginia Traditions*, 10.

²¹ Bowles, interview, July 23, 1992.

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Using 18th c. Dance Notation to Create Contemporary Dance Today

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Abstract

The dance notation system developed in late 17th century France and first published in Paris in 1700 by Raoul Anger Feuillet in his book, Chorégraphie, ou L'art de décrire la dance, was originally used as a way of recording and disseminating dances. Using excerpts from video recordings I will illuminate the value of this notation system in creating new, abstract choreography for audiences today.

Introduction

Dance notation of the 18th century reflects the line and beauty of early ballet. The spatial path of the dancer as he/she travels through space interacts in a very complex manner with other bodies; the dancers carve dimensions in music and time. The notation reveals rhythm in movement, direction, body levels and simple actions of walking, jumping, turning and falling.

Paige Whitley- Bauguess has created a webpage for period dance notation systems explaining and illustrating the Feuillet system. This explanation is particularly useful to beginners.

<http://www.baroquedance.com/research/dancenotation.htm#readingfeuillet>

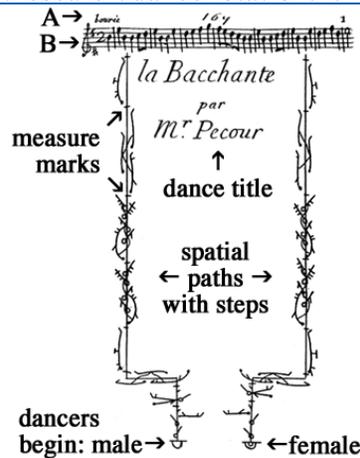


Figure 1: Notation example, first figure of La Bacchante

Period Notation as a Game Plan for New Choreography

The period notation can become a game plan for a new dance, separate from its own time in history. For choreographers, playing with the dance notation system liberates the mind. For example, one can play with existing period notations and re-imagine them with contemporary movement by:

1. Using period notation, itself, as a graphic art tracing dance patterns to be travelled in space, one can create contemporary movement to be danced on these patterns.
 - a. Page 2 of Mr. Prince's Minuet (from Edmund Pemberton's book of 1711) is an example of geometrical floor patterns which could serve as a basis for creating a new work inspired by dance's literature.

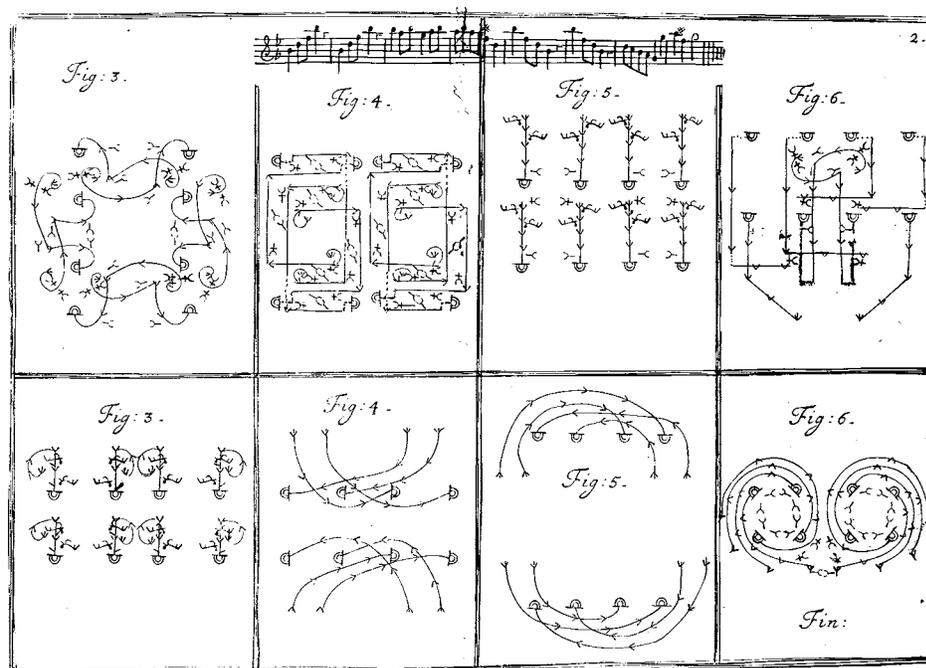


Figure 2: Simplified notation system used in 18th century for minuets and contredanses. This is a dance for 8 women

2. Or, one can take the steps from a notation and refigure, repeat, invert, slow down, simplify or ornament the composed dance steps. In my 1979 concert, *Sarabande for a Siren*, produced at Dance Theater Workshop in New York City, I presented an evening of new work in the modern style based on 18th century dance forms and step vocabulary. Music ranged from Scarlatti to Judy Garland singing "I've Got Rhythm." Since 2012 in our Santa Barbara workshops we have been training dancers to "re-purpose" Baroque conventions and notation in their own creative works. This link shows examples of choreographic exercises from these classes with Sarah Edgar (The New York Baroque Dance Company), Bruno Benne (Compagnie Beaux-Champs), Joseph Caruana (Elements Contemporary Ballet of Chicago), Justin Coates (The New York Baroque Dance Company) and Katie Gardner (CALARTS graduate student)

<https://vimeo.com/channels/nybaroque dancesbhd/73491405>

Examples of Produced Professional Choreography Inspired by 18th c. Notation

1. In 2007 The New York Baroque Dance Company produced *Points of Departure* at the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn. Here is a link to the archived video: <http://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/collection/data/212641242>

Choreographers creating Neo-Baroque works were Patricia Beaman, Sarah Edgar, Austin McCormick, Catherine Turocy and Seth Williams.

2. In this 2014-15 performing season Joseph Caruana premiered his new contemporary ballet in Chicago, *The Sun King*. Here is a link to excerpts of rehearsal footage on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fi8janqnhU>

Here is the full production on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78Lx5mvLKbY>

3. *Que ma joie demeure* by Beatrice Massin. These are excerpts from a full evening work choreographed to Bach's Brandenburg Concertos.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RX5RAV89xcM>

Final Section: Discussion and Conclusion



Figure 3: Plate from Tomlinson's *The Art of Dancing*

Just as Picasso learned his craft by copying paintings of Renaissance masters... becoming literate in 18th century dance notation allows dancers today to study the "Masters." Just

as an actor can develop his own interpretation of a role in Shakespeare... dancers can interpret the choreography as an art work. Being literate in a dance notation system can empower the performer to creatively express a deeply considered interpretation and/or performance of the notated dance.

However, have we been chained to the past in our thinking? Are we regarding 18th century dance notation as a forgotten written language? I suggest that Feuillet's system can be used today to record movement patterns, levels and steps when a dancer would like a short hand memory notation of the dance, regardless of the style. Like any written language, the system does not need to be restricted by its time and place in history. Unfortunately some scholars are under the impression that Laban "rejected" the Feuillet notation system as stated by Professor Brenda Farnell in the panel discussion following our presentations. Having looked at Laban's description of the Feuillet system in his 1926 publication: *Choreographie:Erstes Heft*, which is translated and online (<http://www.laban-analyses.org/jeffrey/2011-Rudolf-Laban-1926-Choreographie/chapter-17/Feuillets-choreography-pg54.htm>) anyone who works daily with the Feuillet system can see that Laban had not only printed mistakes in his publication, but that he had no working knowledge of Feuillet's system. (I have not found any evidence of Laban "rejecting" this system of notation.) For those who are interested in Laban's understanding of the minuet, please see this thoughtful paper presented by Jeffrey Scott Longstaff, Andrea Treu and Darren Royston: *Rudolph Laban's Minuet in Choreographie (1926)* http://www.laban-analyses.org/jeffrey/2007_laban-choreographie-minuet/workshop_handouts.htm

Since my days as a student in 1972, I have actively worked with the notation system, taught the notation to my company dancers who also read fluently and employ the notation in their own dance practice; and I have taught and lectured on Baroque dance and its notation to dance, music and acting students. I think it is time we re-examine the value of 18th century notation beyond its own time period.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to Mariel McEwan for her video recording of our workshop and to the dancers who participated in the Neo-Baroque class. I would also like to thank former dancer with the New York Baroque Dance Company, Paige Whitley-Bauguess, for her dedication to developing literacy for historical dance notations through designing/uploading a clear lesson on her website.

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Dance Notation as Super Text: Applications of Dance Notation to the Choreographic Practice of Landscape Architecture

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Abstract

Dance transposed to a notated form elucidates the importance of human movement in designed spaces. Our paper addresses two specific systems of notation: Beauchamp-Feuillet notation (developed at the behest of King Louis XIV in 1662), and Motation (developed by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin in 1965). Both systems are examples of the close relationship between dance and landscape architecture. By scrutinizing both systems adjacent to each other, we identify areas of deficiency and areas of advantage. We conclude by articulating our findings in the form of movement notation parameters towards the development of a movement symbology system that can serve as a supplement to traditional, stationary architectural notation.

Introduction

In this paper, we address a lacuna in the transferable knowledge between dance and landscape architecture. We present applications of dance notation for a choreographic practice of landscape architecture.

The definition of the adjective “Super-” includes “above and beyond; to a great degree; and having greater influence” (Merriam-Webster). “Super-text” as related to dance notation and applied in landscape architectural design connotes more than a documentative or sharing-tool, rather, it goes beyond by locating dance notation in a position of greater influence where it has the potential to serve as a determining, generative tool that prioritizes movement in the landscape.

Our argument posits that aspects of dance notations have the ability to help create a new landscape architectural movement symbology system, which addresses the essential interplay between human site visitors and their environment. It is our belief that the field of landscape architecture employs a choreographic process as it prompts and supports experiential movement through design. However, movement is rarely included in landscape architects' current design processes. Therefore, we find it vital to consider ways in which we can integrate movement as a design tool.

Figure 1: (left) Lawrence Halprin's *Ira Keller Fountain* design in Portland, OR. (right) Maya Lin's *Vietnam War Memorial* design in Washington DC.



Our paper's structure is two-fold. We begin by interrogating two specific systems of notation. First, we discuss Beauchamp-Feuillet notation, widely employed during the first half of the 18th century, and developed at the behest of Louis XIV of France. We then consider *Motation*, produced in the 1960's by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. Both systems are examples of the close relationship between dance and landscape architecture. By scrutinizing both systems adjacent to each other, we recognize areas of deficiency and areas of advantage. We will conclude by articulating our findings in the form of movement notation parameters for use towards the development of a movement symbology system that will serve as a dynamic supplement to traditional design notation.

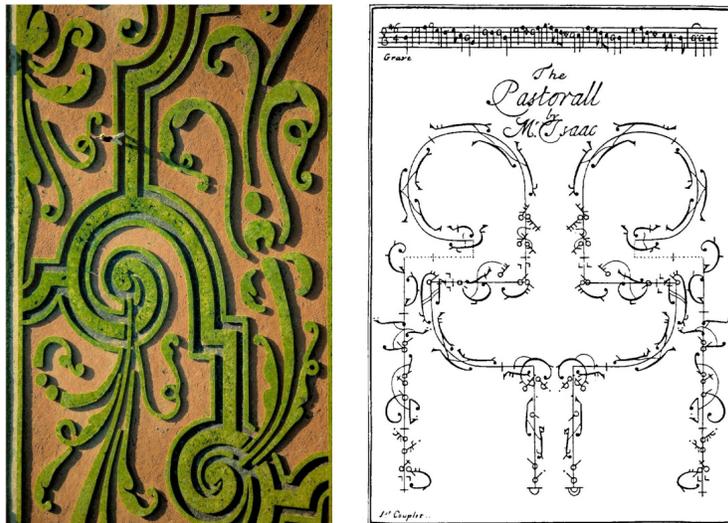
Beauchamp-Feuillet Notation

We have selected Beauchamp-Feuillet Notation from amongst the myriad of dance notations for the following reasons and within the following historical context. When viewed in its historical framework Beauchamp-Feuillet notation illustrates an aesthetic proximity between landscape architecture and dance notation. The strictly manicured style of French formal gardens was developed alongside the precise ornaments of Beauchamp-Feuillet notation. Both were developed under the autocratic auspices of King Louis the XIV in 1662. Aware of the extravagant and newly assigned importance of baroque dance within the palace, designer André Le Notre was charged to expand the gardens of Versailles in a style that would surpass its predecessor Vaux le Vicomte and express Louis' magnificent power. Le Notre worked on Versailles until his death in 1700; the same year that Raoul-Auger Feuillet published *Chorégraphie, ou l'art de d'écrire la danse*, the text that preserved Pierre Beauchamp's dance notation in the manner in which it was commissioned by the "Sun King" himself in the late seventeenth century. This notation aids us now in seeing the similarities between Baroque dance choreography and garden spaces, both of which helped to manifest Louis' supremacy. Jennifer Neville, in

Dance and the Garden: Moving and Static Choreographies in Renaissance Europe speaks briefly to the exchange of design ideas taking place during the Baroque period. She observes that while it may now be difficult to uncover how and to what extent these ideas were actually exchanged, it is clear that a flow of design principles circulated among the court designers of Louis XIV.

Visually, the comparison between Andre Le Notre's *parterres de broderie* and Beauchamp-Feuillet notation is striking. The *Parterres de broderie* had been developing in France since the mid-sixteenth century and became a prominent feature of the French formal garden style. These manicured shrubs, carefully delineated by arcing pathways of colored gravel, produce curling arabesques that embroider the garden space. Similarly, the visual effect of Beauchamp-Feuillet notation is that of artful embellishment. The prescribed pathways and notational flourishes shape the page upon which they are written.

Figure 2: (left) photo of parterre by Yann Athus-Bertrand. (right) example of Feuillet Notation from *Chorégraphie, ou l'art de d'écrire la danse*.

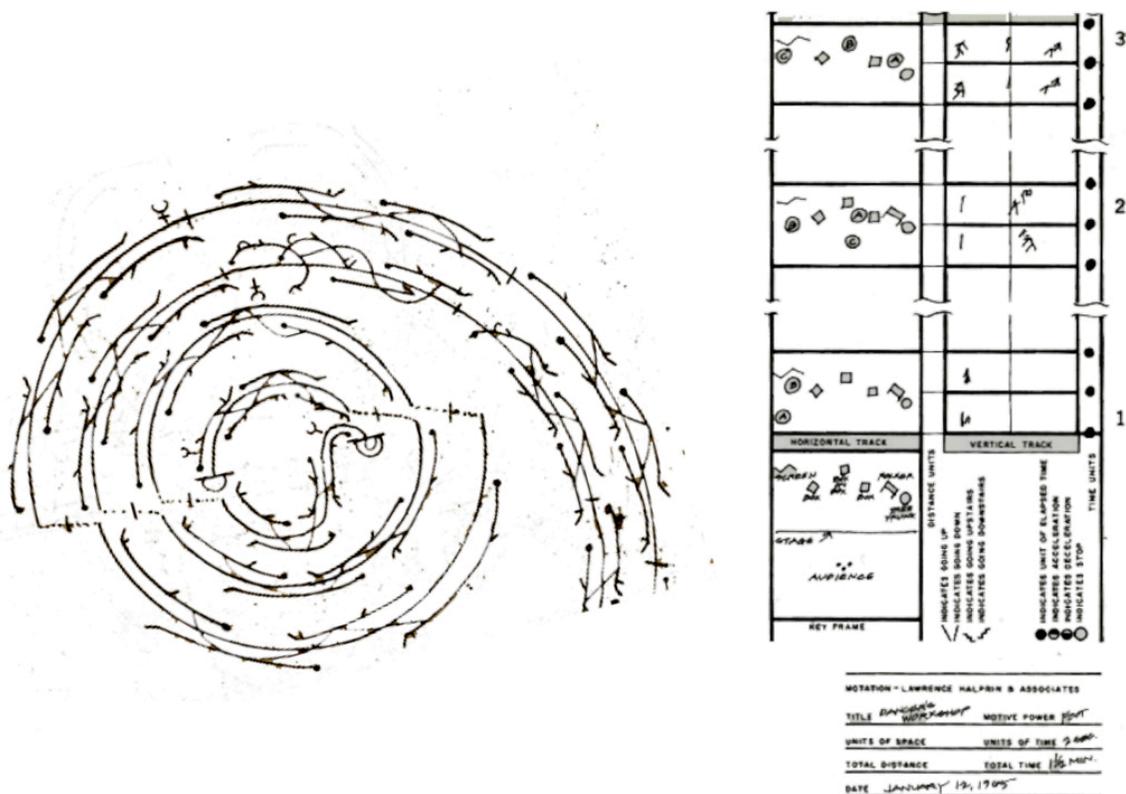


Beauchamp-Feuillet notation centers on the pathways, directions, and specific movements created by the legs and feet. In his article *Writing for the Body: Notation, Reconstruction, and Reinvention in Dance*, Mark Franko evaluates Beauchamp-Feuillet notation in terms of its correspondence to language-based symbolization. He proposes that the floor pattern can be equated with the page and the body as a cipher on the page. “The page itself becomes the floor one traverses in dancing, obliging the decoder to read not only in a linear but also in a diagrammatic manner. [...] These spatial relationships--the relations of [danced patterns upon the dance floor to notational script upon] the page--underlie the sense that baroque dance existed largely in relation to the conditions of possibility of its own notation.” In consideration of landscape architectural notation, we believe that the lack of human-representation symbols causes design to remain at an

underdeveloped state. Designs without people are three-dimensional arrangements of static objects. Notation that represents the human experience of space has the potential to fundamentally reprioritize the elements of design.

Several features of Beauchamp-Feuillet’s notation system, when considered side-by-side with Halprin’s *Motation*, reveal ways in which the moving body might be considered as having a dialogue with its environment. As we shall see, landscape architectural notation need not prescribe steps, rather, through expressive symbology, it can serve more effectively to make visible designers’ experiential intentions for their site visitors.

Figure 3: (left) Beauchamp-Feuillet Notation from *Chorégraphie, ou l'art de d'écrire la danse*. (right) Halprin’s *Motation* from *Progressive Architecture*, July 1965.



Motation

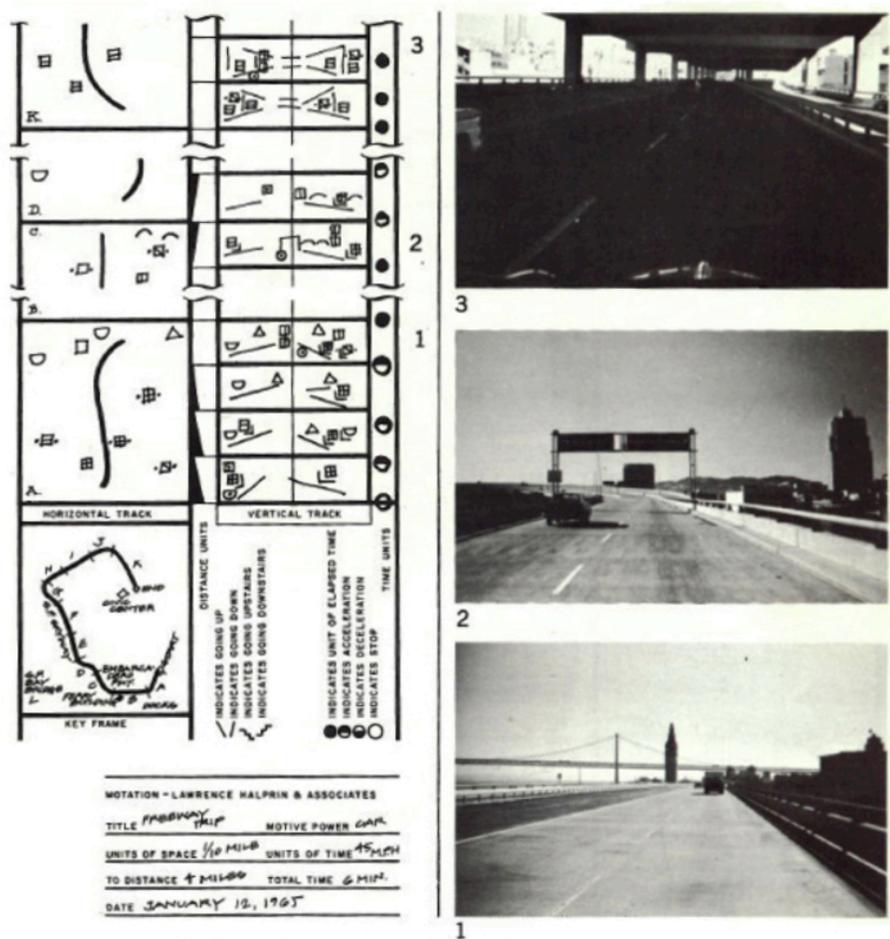
In 1965, Lawrence Halprin (1916-2009), the renowned and prolific landscape architect, developed Motation, which is one of the only, if not the only, specifically landscape architectural notation system for movement. However, Halprin’s system never caught on and even the inventor himself abandoned it.

In large part due to the influence of his wife, the dancer Anna Halprin, Lawrence Halprin understood movement's crucial role in experiencing landscape architectural design. He expressed his concern for the lack of movement in the design process, which existed in his most prolific years, around the 1960s, and continues to exist in design fields today, when he said, "In order to design for movement, a whole new system of conceptualizing must be undertaken." Much like Mark Franko's observations on Beauchamp-Feuillet notation, Halprin continues, "Our present systems of design and planning are inevitably limited by our techniques of conceptualizing and our methods of symbolizing ideas" (126). Here, Halprin is referencing to the traditional, static design methods for visualization known as plan, section/elevation and perspective views. None of these include a standard graphical symbology for considering the moving body in space.

In his article "Body Consciousness," Richard Shuster points out, "the body must be recognized as our most primordial tool of tools, our most basic medium for interacting with our various environments, a necessity for all our perception, action and even thought" (4).

Halprin considers dance, "...the purest form of movement" and he states that Labanotation is the most complete system for recording dance. Though, he points out that it does not "grapple with the issue of the environment" (128) within which the movement takes place. Through *Motation*, Halprin attempts to attend to the elements of the environment surrounding the mover. In his expository article within *Progressive Architecture*, July 1965, he introduces *Motation* to designers, thoroughly describing it and contextualizing it amidst the static symbols and notational methodologies, which are traditionally employed.

Figure 4: Example of Motation by Lawrence Halprin and Associates
 Found in *Progressive Architecture*, 1965.

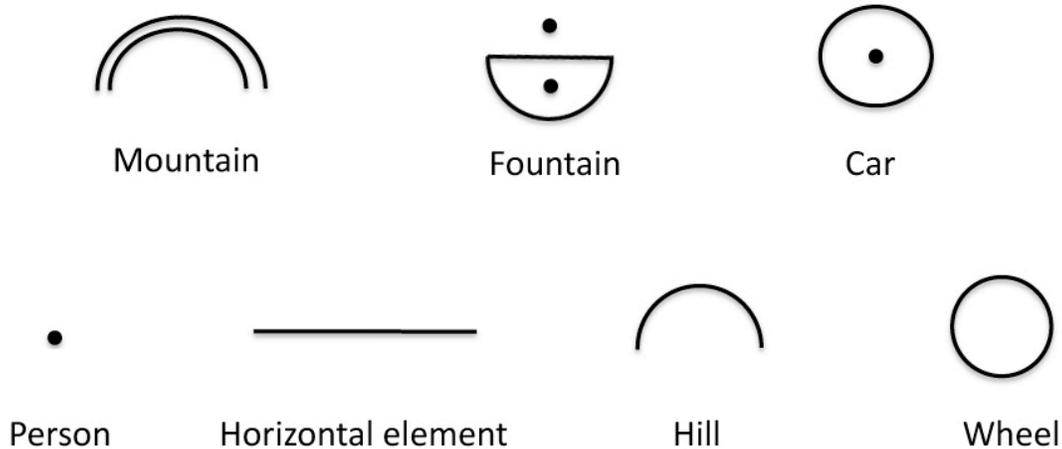


Halprin’s system notates movement from the point of view of the mover. He reasons, “...in terms of the individual whose only true continuity is his own awareness, it can be said [...] that the environment moves” (126, 128). In other words, rather than a body moving through environment, the environment moves around the body. “This is an essential basis for my notation system” (128). This belief helped to determine the framework of Motation on the page. Generally, a plan, or top view of the traveled path is depicted on the left via a single, flowing line amid abstracted environmental elements. Pictures can also be included. Immediately to the right, a narrow strip provides information on changes in elevation such as slopes, and steps. This is followed by another wide section, demonstrating Halprin’s moving environment concept in a storyboard manner where, at specific intervals, here the mover’s view is abstractly depicted at eye-level. Finally, another thin strip depicts changes in speed where dots close together denote slower speeds and dots further apart denotes faster speeds.

The system intentionally employs abstract symbols to represent select elements within the mover’s environmental experience. These abstract symbols—dots, straight lines, arcs, circles, and others developed as needed—are keyed into the legend. The

combined effect of abstract environmental element symbols with a mover's point of view and a single line, representing pathway, offers a conceptual illustration of the spatial moving experience within a given design. In this way, the system does provide movement information but fails to represent aspects of movement that were not, for the most part, already available within traditional design notation.

Figure 5: Motation Symbols



We question why Halprin uses abstract symbols for elements, like buildings, trees, and water features that can be precisely determined and constructed in place. Here lies a major flaw--and one reason why his notation system may have failed to attract designers--the system is essentially redundant. It asks for additional time to redraw that which a designer would have already drawn in her traditional notations—plan, section, elevation and perspective. Rather than abstract environmental elements, we believe that it is the human movement that requires abstraction because of its complexity. Furthermore, as visitors' will always retain their movement autonomy within the built design, the movement need not be notated at all. We posit that it is the ability to address the interplay between the mover in the design that is lacking from traditional design notation; and that this aspect can be garnered by representing the intended qualitative, or attitudinal, experience of the site visitor.

Now, over 50 years later, we have the privileged opportunity to draw from pros and cons, of both Motation and Beauchamp-Feuillet. By critically employing our findings we are working to develop a viable option towards fulfillment of Halprin's movement notation hopes for landscape architecture.

Proposed Parameters

After interrogating Beauchamp-Feuillet notation in tandem with Motation, we have gleaned and propose the following initial parameters and ideas for consideration towards a complete designer's notation system:

1) A movement symbology system needs to offer a lively interface with its established partner traditional design notation, making visible, and viable the interplay between visitor and environment. Once this essential interface is ensured, this system, rather than prescribing steps, notates the intended quality of experience, not the literal physical movement. Similar to the shaping of ideas made possible through the act of writing, where specific words must be chosen and appear on the page, this new symbology system will offer the designer the opportunity to a) decide on a specific design experience; b) add layers of complexity and refinement to his intentions at various levels of detail within his design; and c) be consistently aware of the site visitor's presence in his design.

2) A movement symbology system needs to work when juxtaposed in relationship to the entire design. We propose that it be used most often in planview where the mover's trajectory and immediate environment can be shaped concurrently. This may result in not only a design that works much more efficiently with movement, but also a more comprehensive experience for the mover.

3) A movement symbology system needs to be flexible and find applicability in multiple phases and scales of design development.

4) A movement symbology system needs to be generative, refining, and evaluative.

5) A movement symbology system needs to be able to work in parts of a design and upon the whole as a comprehensive application.

Conclusion

Now that we have more clearly identified the parameters of our experiential goals for movement symbology, we offer our first guesses at the appearance of this "Super-Text" system. We believe it may align with Laban Phrasing, upon which the Laban practitioner Vera Maletic has written saying, "Phrasing is an organizing factor underlying the performance and perception of movement within the effort continuum and therein understood to apply to the inner attitude of the person." We believe Laban Phrasing also holds applicability to the outer attitude that is found between the person and their environment. The elements of Laban phrasing carry the deeper implications of both effort and attitude. Now, with further informed comprehension, we step towards our goal of pushing "above and beyond; to a great degree, and with greater influence" the real possibilities within landscape choreography.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dr. Hannah Kosstrin and Dr. Karen Eliot, professors in the Department of Dance at The Ohio State University, for taking the time to advise us in the writing of this paper.

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