

Introduction

Susanne Franco and Franca Tamisari

This inaugural Dossier of “Mimesis Journal. Scritture della performance” is one of the outcomes of the research project “Memory in Motion. Re-Membering Dance History (Mnemedance)”, conducted at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice from 2019 to 2023 by Susanne Franco.¹ More specifically, some of the essays collected here were first presented in 2021 at the international seminar “Performing Memory Through Dance. Anthropological Perspectives”, organised in this frame by Susanne Franco and Franca Tamisari, which aimed at bringing to the fore the centrality of the dancing body in the ongoing exchanges between dance studies and anthropological approaches focusing on experience in dance performance as well as its role and impact in specific postcolonial conjunctures.

Mnemedance aimed to explore the relationship between dance and memory, to reconceptualise dance history as a discipline with the potential to influence adjacent fields of arts and humanities. The foundational premise was that the study of memory could enrich dance history because, in dance, memory is perpetually active, encompassing the movements of both the performing and perceiving bodies. Furthermore, memory retraces the past as a continuous process rather than merely a collection of acquired knowledge. Mnemedance delves into the role of the dancing body in remembering and archiving experiences and cultures, and it examines how movement can be a means of preserving and transforming meaning. The project also scrutinises the contributions of dancers and choreographers in shaping collective knowledge and memories, including their roles in the preservation, transmission, and accessibility of these memories in the global and intertwined world in which they currently operate. During the development of Mnemedance, prioritising the incorporation of these diverse voices and experiences has involved reconsidering and potentially rewriting dance history. Lastly, the project critically examined the processes implicated in constructing canonical genealogies of artists, repertoires,

¹ This publication has received funding from the research project SPIN2-2018 “Memory in Motion: Re-Membering Dance History” (Mnemedance 2019-2023) based at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice (Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage).

and traditions, revealing how they are influenced by prevailing historical discourses. In particular, the research project aims to challenge the assumption of linear temporality as a neutral and self-evident framework for understanding dance histories to recognise instead diverse cultural influences, parallel developments, and non-linear but rather layered, multifaceted, and rhizomatic processes of memory. Research on the present and past of dance is therefore recognised as a complex task that necessitates the expansion and refinement of the toolkit amidst the current major transformation of epistemologies.

Performing memory through dance. Anthropological perspectives investigate cultural anthropology's contribution to dance studies, reflecting on the relationship between dance and memory as manifested in the diplomatic space that dance performance opens up with its complex dynamics of affective engagement, improvisation, re-appropriation, re-signification, in inventing and transmitting the past into the now. Considering dance and performance as pivotal tools in negotiating power relations and as tactics of resistance and survival (Fabian 1990, 15), especially within colonial and postcolonial contexts, this Dossier also aims to explore cultural and historical continuities and discontinuities. Dance, both as a social practice and performing art, engages embodied cognition, mobilises kinaesthetic empathy, and activates corporeal and sensory memories. As a "somatic way of knowing" (Csordas 1993) characterising a pathic way of knowing (Straus 1966), dance goes beyond communication and the referential meaning of signs, weaving complex webs of intersubjective and intercorporeal relations. Through dance, we acquire and transmit knowledge, express emotions, and remember or create stories, thereby producing lasting effects on the audience. This, in turn, transforms these experiences into personal and collective memories.

The intersection of dance studies and dance anthropology represents a rich and dynamic field of inquiry that explores the multifaceted relationships between dance, culture, and society (see David's Afterword in this Dossier)². By integrating anthropological methods and perspectives into dance studies, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted roles of dance in shaping, reflecting, and transforming cultural practices, identities, and social realities. This interdisciplinary approach

² See also the MA course "The Anthropology of Dance" taught by Cristiana Natali, at The University of Bologna: <https://www.unibo.it/en/study/phd-professional-masters-specialisation-schools-and-other-programmes/course-unit-catalogue/course-unit/2023/478579> (last accessed 5 May 2024).

Introduction

combines the analytical perspectives of dance studies, which focus on the aesthetic, historical, and choreographic aspects of dance, with ethnographic methodologies that, without neglecting representation, and the cultural, social, and symbolic dimensions of dance practices within specific historical contexts, explore the lived here and now experience of performance.

Anthropological studies have demonstrated that body movement does not *stand for* reality but *is* reality (Best 1978, 137). Rituals and performances serve as pivotal occasions for individuals to shape their cultural practices, preserve and transform traditions, and (re)enact and (re)interpret their past by combining history and memory. Anthropology stands out as a discipline closely aligned with dance studies, having significantly contributed to challenging its theoretical boundaries and methodological assumptions. Among the aspects of anthropology that have garnered the most attention from dance scholars is the involvement of the anthropologist's body and kinaesthetic empathy in the learning process, which continue to be discussed as valuable reference points.

Another fundamental aspect of anthropological research, which has deeply enriched dance studies, is the ability to observe and document phenomena through participation in socio-cultural practices during sustained ethnographic research attuned to the cognitive, embodied, cognitive, and affective dimensions of relating. From a performative, experience-based engagement with others, anthropologists share knowledge acquired in the field through an innovative use of writing. As Fabian (1990, 6) notes, the notion of performance does not only refer to what presents itself only “through action and enactment” beyond the discourse in which the ethnographer is engaged, but it also involves “the communication of the results of our research especially through writing”. These interdependent activities have been involved in the profound reconsideration of ontological assumptions and disciplinary theoretical frameworks. Finally, anthropologists are more and more experimenting with innovative research methodologies, such as collaborative ethnography, autoethnography, and multi-sensory ethnography, to explore the complexity of dance performance as an embodied cultural, and social practice and politics (David 2013; Grau 2011, 2016; Hahn 2007; Reed 1998; Sklar 1991, 2000).

Dance studies and anthropology have been both imbued with ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism. Thanks to the post-colonial critique and the ongoing pervasive process of decolonisation led by Indigenous scholars (cf. Tuhiwai 2008; on dance see Welch 2019), they have engaged in a steady course deconstructing the ethnocentric presuppositions upon which Western performance practices, narratives, and theoretical approaches are

based. For dance studies, this meant reconsidering the subject of study and methodologies, questioning whose stories one writes, from what perspective, based on which sources, and in what language. The seminal essay by dance anthropologist Johan Kealiinohomoku titled “An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance” (1969) conceptualised Western classical ballet as a form of ethnic dance for the first time. This marked the beginning of a new approach to examining the pervasive ethnocentrism ingrained in Western dance history and the narratives produced, revealing their bias and limitations. Within this framework, the historicity and cultural context of dances became increasingly linked to the historical-cultural situation of their observers, prompting an inquiry into their historically and culturally determined character from an anthropological perspective. Despite the slow uptake among dance scholars trained within cultural or more specifically historical studies of these stimulating theoretical perspectives (Desmond 2000), with the new century a few publications in multiple languages have facilitated a broader dissemination of concepts, methodological tools, and translated texts, fostering the productive convergence between the two disciplines (see for instance Brandstetter and Wulf, 2007; Grau and Wierre-Gore, 2005; Del Monte 2009).

For Cultural Anthropology, from the early cultural critique to the most recent participative projects, the discipline keeps on renewing its commitment to dismantling the power of the interpreter, the strategies of Othering, as well as debunking the pitfalls of essentialism, the illusion of objective truth and the partiality of ethnography while experimenting with new forms of collaborations and engagement (Clifford 1988; Fabian 1983; Lowe, George and Deger 2020; Marcus and Fisher 1987; Rosaldo 1989; Todd 2015; Torgonvick 1991).

Dance anthropology is receiving new fuel from this paradigm shift and from performance, gender, postcolonial, and decolonial theories, to investigate how dance both reflects and shapes cultural identities, histories, and narratives. It examines the processes of dance transmission, preservation, and adaptation across generations and cultural contexts, the roles of dancers, choreographers, and communities in creating, performing, and interpreting dance, as well as the power dynamics inherent in these processes. Finally, dance anthropologists are increasingly employing embodied and sensory research methods to understand the ways in which dance engages the body, emotions, and senses, fosters kinaesthetic empathy and social cohesion within communities, and shapes cultural identities. Researchers are investigating the transnational circulation and reception of dance forms, the dynamic processes of cultural hybridisation, the impact

Introduction

of migration and diaspora on dance practices, and the many ways in which dances can transform in new cultural contexts. Digital technologies are contributing to the field offering new insights in the study of digital media and virtual realities into globally interconnected dance practices. Emphasis is given to the study of participatory dance projects and inclusive dance practices to promote accessibility, diversity, and the empowerment process of marginalised communities.

The essays collected for this Dossier aim to offer various perspectives on the intricate interplay between dance, individual experiences, and collective memories—be they shared, reinvented, or rejected. While in the essay by Waterhouse, this theme is considered within the ballet tradition, Franco and Tamisari consider dance performance not only as the embodiment, renewal, and reproduction of past memories and knowledge into the present, but also as one of the preferred and most efficacious means Indigenous people deploy to redress historical narratives, fight stereotypical representations, educate non-indigenous audiences, affirm their political presence and autonomy, and claim Indigenous sovereignty. Additionally, they reflect on the active role of mnemonic processes and transmission strategies in dance as a means to negotiate the past.

Elizabeth Waterhouse is an American dancer and researcher who participated in “Auto_Bio_Graphies” (2020-2024), a Swiss National Science Foundation research project based at the University of Bern under the direction of Christina Thurner. The project that developed in close dialogue with Mnemedance focussed on autobiographies of dancers as records of knowledge and experience and therefore as unique sources of information to (re)describe and (re)write dance history.³ Waterhouse engages here in autoethnographic research to explore the choreography and embodied experiences of William Forsythe’s piece *Duo*. Her essay offers a comprehensive exploration of this piece blending personal experience as a former Forsythe dancer with ethnographic methodology and dance studies analysis, and from this perspective, shedding light on the complex interplay between choreography, embodiment, and artistic practice. She focuses particularly on the “showerhead”, a spiralling movement beginning with the dancers’ right hands that is a key motif in *Duo*, and its inter-

³ “Auto_Bio_Graphy as Performance. A Field of Dance Historiographic Innovation” (2020-2024, Grant number 192436), Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Universität Bern. Direction: Prof. Dr. Christina Thurner Team: Dr. Elizabeth Waterhouse, Dr. Julia Wehren, M.A. Nadja Rothenburger, B.A. Claudio Richard, B.A. David Castillo. See <https://data.snf.ch/grants/grant/192436>.

section with balletic practices. She also examines the dancers' breathing movement, a hybrid medium of movement and sound that serves as a crucial element in creating movement quality and fostering partner coordination. Drawing on fieldwork notes, interviews, and videos, Waterhouse reflects on the interrelation of time, memory, and dance to understand how choreography itself embodies temporal dynamics. Her inquiry reveals how "showerhead" is cultivated over time through repeated rehearsals retracing a generational shift in the incorporation of breath scores and highlighting its significance in shaping the dancers' relational bonds and performance expressivity. From this viewpoint, Waterhouse examines not only the physical execution of the movement but also its historical context, its transmission between dancers, and its adaptation within the balletic tradition. Waterhouse explores how the dancers re-signify their bodies and challenge ballet conventions through their movements in *Duo*. Despite the reverence for balletic virtuosity, the performers subvert traditional norms by modifying steps, attire, and bodily expressions. The incorporation of non-white dancers and influences from popular culture further enriches the re-inscription of balletic codes within *Duo*. Ultimately, the study elucidates the entangled relationship between dancing *Duo* and the shaping of dancers' bodies, highlighting the dynamic interplay between individual embodiment and collective choreographic negotiation. Through autoethnographic inquiry, the research illuminates the evolving nature of *Duo* as both a choreographic work and an embodied history, rooted in the collaborative exploration of movement, embodied memory, and identity.

In her contribution, cultural anthropologist Franca Tamisari, deals with the acquisition, embodying, renewing, and transmitting of knowledge in dances performed by Australian Yolngu Indigenous people in Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia. Drawing from her long-term ethnographic research, and especially from her active participation as a dancer in ceremonial events, she focuses on how she learnt many aspects of Yolngu knowledge through dancing and how her body can, now, literally, *re-members* it. Her experience of dancing, recorded in veritable "bodynotes", allowed her not only an analytical, but also an empathic understanding of how Yolngu knowledge associated with country is embodied by reenacting the past in the present, how it is negotiated and transferred to the next generations, how its efficacy is reckoned by its capacity of affecting others and being affected by others, and why it is deployed to create a diplomatic space in which non-indigenous institutions and visitors, including the anthropologist, are invited to entered respecting Indigenous principles and are required to participate and respond.

Introduction

Shifting attention from the symbolism of the gestures and representation to the sensuous and affective nature of intercorporeality as well as the truth conveyed through expression, Tamisari explores Yolngu dance as a form of knowing and empathic understanding that reconfigures meaning and shapes experience. Dancing *with* and *for* others in the context of Indigenous performances and during fieldwork represents a modality of co-presence and co-presencing fostering an ever-deepening engagement with others. In local contexts, dancing can be a way of knowing and activating relations with human and more-than-human beings and the environment. In the arena of political confrontations with Australian institutions, Yolngu dance performance becomes a “performative tactic” in which non-Indigenous people are prompted to learn Yolngu ways of beings, are challenged to recognise the history of Australian race relations, and are required to take up the responsibility of redressing social injustices by acting on them.

Performing Salome in the Pacific. Three Works by Yuki Kihara by dance historian Susanne Franco explores a selection of dance performances and video works by the Sāmoan-Japanese interdisciplinary artist, researcher, curator, and activist Yuki Kihara. Focusing on Kihara’s portrayal of the character Salome—the artist’s alter-ego—Franco traces the historical and cultural significance of this character, and its implications for cultural and gender representations in the Western artistic tradition. Through Salome, who wielded dance as a tool for political manipulation, Kihara navigates complex intersections of Pacific and European identity constructions, disrupting colonial power structures and challenging stereotypical representations of the Pacific as an exotic and paradisiacal other. Particularly, the two video works by Kihara discussed by Franco further explore the aftermath of natural disasters, decolonizing cultural narratives and amplifying marginalised voices. Franco connects Kihara’s reenactments of *tavaluga*, a solo Sāmoan dance accompanied by choral music and percussion and usually performed in ritualised social occasions, to broader themes of indigeneity, gender identity, and the environment crisis, analysing how these dance and video works prompt reflection on the interplay between individual experiences, collective memories and the processes of re-appropriation and re-signification. Lastly, Franco discusses to what extent Kihara’s works echoing Salome challenge traditional Western perspectives on this character while exploring themes of memory, colonialism, and the role of dance in cultural expression and resistance. These works are also contributing to the most recent critique of the long-standing canonical approach to dance modernism as limited geographically to Western culture and to rethink it rather as a transtemporal and translocal phenomenon. Finally, Kihara’s

artistic research is impacting contemporary museology, particularly when she raises issues such as the role of reenactment in challenging dominant narratives, and the concept of time as fluid and multidimensional, directly addressing the museum's visitors to foster new understandings of their identities and history.

Works cited

- Best, David. 1978. *Philosophy and Human Movement*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Bandstetter Gabriele and Christoph Wulf. (2007). *Tanz als Anthropologie*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink.
- Clifford, James. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Csordas, Thomas. 1990. "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology." *Ethos* 18 (1): 5–47.
- David, Ann R. 2013. "Ways of Moving and Thinking: The Emplaced Body as a Tool for Ethnographic Research." In *Performance & Ethnography: Dance, Drama, Music*, edited by Peter Harrop & Dunja Njaradi, 45-66. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.
- Del Monte, Diana. 2009. "Antropologia della danza: una disciplina in espansione." *Danza & Ricerca. Laboratorio di studi, scritture e visioni*, no. 0, 137-62.
- Desmond, Jane. 2000. "Terra Incognita: Mapping New Territory in Dance and "Cultural Studies." *Dance Research Journal*, 32 (1): 43-53.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1990. *Power and Performance: Ethnographic Explorations Through Proverbial Wisdom and Theatre in Shaba, Zaire*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Grau, Andrée. 2011. Dancing Bodies, Spaces/Places and the Senses: A Cross-Cultural Investigation. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, 3,1 & 2, 5-24.
- . 2016. Why People Dance—Evolution, Sociality and Dance, *Dance, Movement and Spiritualities*, 2 (3): 233-254.
- Grau Andrée, Wierre-Gore Georgiana (eds.). 2005. *Anthropologie de la danse: genèse et construction d'une discipline*. Pantin: Centre national de la danse.
- Kealiinohomoku, Joann. 1969-70. "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance." *Impulse: Extensions of Dance*, 24-33.
- Hahn, Tomie. 2007. *Sensational Knowledge. Embodying Culture Through Japanese Dance*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown.
- Lowe, Sebastian J., Lily George, and Jennifer Deger. 2020. "A Deeper Deep Listening: Doing Pre-Ethics Fieldwork in Aotearoa New Zealand." In *Indigenous Research Ethics: Claiming Research Sovereignty Beyond Deficit and the Colonial Legacy*, edited by Lily George, Juan Tauri, and Lindsey Te Ata o Tu Macdonald, 275-291. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Ltd.

Introduction

- Marcus, George E. and Michael J. Fischer. 1987. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Reed, Susan A. 1998. 'The Politics and Poetics of Dance.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27 (1): 503–32.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Sklar, Diedre. 1991. "On Dance Ethnography." *Dance Research Journal* 23(1): 6-10.
- . 2000. "Reprise: On Dance Ethnography." *Research Journal* 32(1): 70-77.
- Straus, Erwin W. 1966. *Phenomenological Psychology*, trans. E. Eng. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Todd, Zoe 2015. *Indigenizing the Anthropocene, in Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics and Epistemologies*, edited by Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, *Art in the Anthropocene*, 241–252, London: Open Humanities Press.
- Torgonvick, Marianna. 1991. *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Tuhiwai Smith, Linda 2008. *Decolonising Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Zed Books, London, pp.107-122.
- Welch, Shay 2019 *The Phenomenology of a Performative Knowledge System Dancing with Native American Epistemology*, Palgrave Macmillan.

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

Elizabeth Waterhouse

Introduction

This essay performs an autoethnographic spiral around a movement called *showerhead*—a spiralling motion that is a key motif in the duet *Duo* by William Forsythe.¹ Taking a praxeological approach, I grasped *showerhead* as a focus to explore the dancers’ extended practice of this duet over time, longitudinally over two decades. Since its creation in 1996 for the Ballett Frankfurt, *Duo* has been performed over 148 times in over 19 different countries by 11 *Duo* dancers (Waterhouse 2022, 122-23). *Duo* was reconstructed in The Forsythe Company and performed internationally under the title of *DUO2015* for the touring programs *Sylvie Guillem: Life in Progress* (2015) and retitled *Dialogue (DUO2015)* for Forsythe’s touring program *A Quiet Evening of Dance* (2018–2021), both produced by Sadler’s Wells Theatre of London. The piece lasts approximately fifteen minutes and involves precise motions in which the dancers, either two women or two men, perform side by side without touching. A program note from 2004 describes the dance as follows:

In the small space just in front of the curtain, just at the edge of the stage, *Duo* is a clock composed of two women. The women register time in a spiraling way, making it visible, they think about how it fits into space, they pull time into an intricate, naked pattern in front of the curtain, close to the eyes of the audience.... Their bodies brilliant in a shimmer of black, the women fly with reckless accuracy, their breath sings of the spaces in time. Distant music appears and vanishes as the women follow each other through the whirling, etched quiet (Caspersen 2004).

As this program text makes palpable, *Duo* breaks the heterosexual norms

¹ American choreographer William Forsythe (b. 1949) directed Ballett Frankfurt (1984–2004) and The Forsythe Company (2005–2015) in Frankfurt/Dresden, and currently works as a freelance choreographer.

of ballet duet conventions by staging a plotless, poetic atmosphere in which two women (or two men) cooperate. Together the duet partners weave motion in choreographed patterns, sensing time rhythmically and attuning to one another.

Here, I would like to return to fieldwork notes, interviews, and videos made in the context of my doctoral research (2016–2019) as well as previously published writings in order to rethink the interrelation of time, memory, and dance in my research into *Duo* as well as my prior writings and analytic strategies (Waterhouse 2022, 137–58). The intensity of *Duo* in performance is built up through long-standing aesthetic practice, and the particular example of *showerhead* helps illustrate how this transpires. My decision to focus in detail on one movement—to compare enactments across times and to learn the movement like a novice—enabled me to richly unfold a movement world from a close, embodied study. Beyond the issue of how to perform the movement well, I was interested in the praxeological aspects of how the movement was cultivated through logics inside and outside the individual body. I also sought to understand historical aspects, such as how the movement was ‘passed on’ from dancer to dancer, as well as how balletic conventions and ideologies were adapted through the iterative process of rehearsal and performance. These topics will be the focus of my writing that follows.

By researching a dance practice that was closely related to my own lived experience as a Forsythe dancer, my doctoral research had an autobiographical component.² Autoethnography was practised by writing from my ‘insider’ standpoint as a former Forsythe dancer, blending ethnographic methodology and dance studies analysis. Importantly, I had not danced *Duo* before commencing my research, enabling me to use my body as a “research tool” to learn the choreography and to compare the dancers’ perspectives with my own (Müller 2016, 78). Like anthropologist Deborah Reed-Danahay, I found it constructive to view my approach to autoethnography “as lying at the intersection of insider and outsider perspectives, rather than setting up a dualism that privileges the insider account,” or that of the distant outsider (Reed-Danahay 2017, 145; Hilari, Rothenburger, Waterhouse and Wehren 2024 forthcoming; Reed-Danahay 1997, 4-9).

While there are specific difficulties to researching the intimacy of duets

² I joined Ballett Frankfurt as a guest dancer in 2004, while *Duo* was on tour, and danced in The Forsythe Company from 2005–2012. In 2014 I enrolled in the Doctoral Program Studies in the Arts (SINTA) at the University of Bern in partnership with the Bern University of the Arts.

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

like *Duo*—such as the expertise level and gaining access to backstage processes—many of the methodological challenges I faced as a dance world insider and academic researcher, negotiating multiple commitments and practical logics, are obstacles well considered within the scholarship of dance ethnography (Davida 2012; Waterhouse 2023). Like many dance ethnographers since the 90s, I approached my fieldwork on *Duo* not in an ‘exotic’ or ‘foreign’ location, but in European dance contexts in which I was highly familiar. I constructed ‘the field’ around an artistic work by travelling to Rome, Paris, and London to watch performances of *Duo* on tour. I invited the dancers to dance with me, instruct other dance students, record interviews, and share memories elicited by watching archival videos. These meetings were interwoven with my life as a doctoral student at the University of Bern, often jarring me with the discontinuities of switching identities and contexts. While I valued learning closely from the dancers, I was not striving to ‘go native’ and become a *Duo* dancer; instead, I preferred the unique vantage point that allowed me to move between conditions of dance practice and theory. Thus, I practised participant observation through my stiffening doctoral-student body, vacillating roles as an ‘insider-outsider.’ I conscientiously engaged my body as a tool for remembering, learning, and narrating my research (cf. Okely 2012). In my theoretical writing, I have consciously drawn upon my memories as a Forsythe dancer—which I recognise as an active process of remembering—to reflexively develop this praxeological understanding of the group that I had danced with. Interweaving the dancers’ narratives, my autobiographical memories, and ethnographic reflections on our dance ensemble, my autoethnographic inquiry has challenged the insider/outsider dichotomy and questioned the interrelation of self and other, dancer and partner, researcher and researched. I aimed to legitimise but also to critically understand the dancers’ experiences, and to write a polyvocal narrative that would examine the bodily cooperation in *Duo*.

I am not the first to describe ethnography as a cyclical process of participant observation, analysis and writing—iterative and extended over time (cf. Breidenstein et al. 2013, 45-46). Here, the opportunistic spiral of my ethnographic process and the spiral of the gesture of *showerhead* come together in an intensive movement analysis. These practices are rhythmical circles that revitalise themselves. For the artists, the movement *showerhead* existed synchronically, in the co-presence of dancing together, not diachronically, changing over time, as I was able to ponder through the construction of my fieldwork. Initially, I wrote evocative prose about *showerhead* in the present tense to convey the movement’s vitality (Waterhouse

2022, 137-58). I merged different dancers' phenomenological accounts with my own experience as a novice to find common themes and concepts. The sensual and poetic tropes of ethnographic writing, I argued, would give the reader insight into the dancers' movement logic. Here, to reflect more actively on memory construction and writing dance historiography, I unwind a new narrative from my fieldwork vignettes, bridging the present time of writing to dancing *showerhead* in the past. The vitality of *showerhead* was produced through practice—connecting, differentiating, and relating times. Could I, as dancer Jill Johnson encouraged, show this multiplicity? Johnson advised:

There aren't eras in this work. Only ongoing explorations that continually connect the infinite possibilities of the ideas within it. It's so clear that these experiences are all mapped onto each other, in concentric circles and networks of shared embodied ideas across time (Johnson 2021).

In the writing that follows I illustrate how dance historiography may depart from a teleological narrative of the performance process and a linear reconstruction of chronological time (cf. Thurner 2018); instead, through an autoethnographic spiral, I account for embodied memory that is holistic and nonlinear, articulated relationally and defined by the particularity of *Duo's* choreographic labour and curvilinear movements.

Dancing Showerhead. First fieldwork encounters

Upon my request to learn more about her dance practice through my body, *Duo* dancer Allison Brown took me under her wing in a dance studio in Frankfurt, Germany. Brown had performed *Duo* frequently in the context of Ballett Frankfurt and taught it to other dancers, making her a key witness. Though I was an 'insider' from this dance community, I had no first-hand experience dancing *Duo* and was eager to learn. Traces of these dance studio encounters with *Duo* dancers are integrated into the analysis of the movement that follows.

Fieldnotes. September 20, 2016

Walking through Frankfurt to the cafe, I remember when I lived in this city. I find [dancer] Allison [Brown] waiting for me outside Café Glauberg. I feel light in my chest and smile immediately upon seeing her. She has arrived by bike. We remark the strangeness of time: that it feels like yesterday, and yet years have gone past since we last saw each other. We say that we both look young! We both also deny that we do not look young and that with age we feel old. Allison remarks that she

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

has a lot of pain, especially in her knee. Her skin and face have aged, but she is even more beautiful than I remembered. We are almost the same height, but her center is more lifted than mine. It feels good to be by her side. We talk in the cafe and agree to meet on Thursday in the dance studio where she teaches and to do a biographical interview afterward.

Fieldnotes. September 22, 2016

Allison [Brown] is in a rush and late, explaining that she was looking for her notebooks from when she learned *Duo*. Upon arriving at the dance studio, she throws off her black boots, opens the windows to let in fresh air, and dumps herself and her bag on the floor, also shedding balls and bands [objects for training]. We talk while she begins to move: circling her ankles, stretching her feet, opening her legs with bent knees, like a frog. We warm up together and I begin learning to dance *Duo*. It is my first time trying this movement with a partner. I'm out of shape and enjoying it!

In the studio session described in my fieldnotes above, Brown asked me if I knew the movement *showerhead*, the first movement of the piece. I had seen it but not learned it, so I invited her to teach me. She demonstrated how the dancers would practise the movement of *showerhead* to synchronise time and form. The dancers performed this nuanced motion with particular attention to their *right hands*. The continuous curvilinear movement lasted about two seconds, involving the dancers' whole bodies in a delicate, smooth, and virtuosic spiral (see Figure 1).

Bringing me close to her torso, she explained sometimes the dancers would practise *showerhead* nearly touching, almost hip to hip. In this close proximity, Brown showed me, they had time for comparing and contemplating the movement *showerhead*—shifting the fingers so that your and your partner's hands looked identical, “you looking at your hand and your partner's hand” (Brown 2016a). Moving closely to Brown, I perceived a kinaesthetic sense of my body moving, with visual and tactile attention to another body: a feedback loop. My sensing was fused with relation and kinaesthesia, merging bodies ('I' and 'partner'). Writing fieldnotes that evening, I was reminded of the affective capacity of the dancing body, feeling emotionally and sensually close to another person. Although *Duo* did not involve any touch-based partnering, the connection between partners was intimate and touch-like.

From further discussion with other *Duo* dancers, I learned that *showerhead* was practised mostly by new dancers, helping them master the movement coordination of the piece. As a scholar, I took this as a fortuitous way to initiate participant observation. *Showerhead* became a microcosm within my research and a common referent for asking questions.

Sharing images

Why was the motion called *showerhead*? The name, the dancers explained, referred to an image associated with learning the movement: the image of twisting a round shower dial. Each dancer used slightly different names and terminology: “showerhead,” “shower,” “head.”³ For *Duo* dancer Jill Johnson, the image helped to enact a highly precise coordination. She demonstrated for me in a studio in Boston. Johnson explained: she would imagine the surface of the shower wall in front of her body and upon that a bulbous dial. She associated this image with a gesture of twisting the water on—a twist of the right hand. This image appeared to amuse her and seemed helpful for learning the coordination (Johnson 2016b). But *showerhead* was not pantomimic. I could not recognise the dancers were imagining a shower, and it was not their aim to convey a showerhead to the audience. They were using this image as a sharable *tool* for mastering and transferring their coordination. The geometry of the dial and the fun of moving around it, became a lure for moving. The showerhead image initially served as a memory aid, although it was sometimes forgotten after the movement had been mastered.

Showerhead involved tracing the fingertips of the right hand around the imaginary shower dial—especially the medial surface of the pointer finger, the part that you can stroke with your thumb. The pointer finger curved around the shower dial clockwise, from 9:00 p.m., all the way around to 8:00 p.m. To try this, imagine your fingers tracing along the inside of a bowl so that the palm turns; now make that movement in front of your ribcage and you’ve started to *showerhead*.

While *showerheading*, the dancers’ hands were loose and alert, their fingers sensitive. Their bodies were not held stiff. Rather, more like how a clarinetist would swirl out a sound, the dancers developed the spiral potential of the circular image, the showerhead, through subtle shifts of their reverberating centres. “If it involves both sides of the body it is most effective, I would say,” explained Jill Johnson (Johnson 2016b). By including or integrating the left side of the body, the gesture of the right

³ Johnson used the term “showerhead” (Johnson 2016a; Johnson 2016b; Johnson 2018). Brown used the term during a studio session dancing in Frankfurt (Brown 2016a) and in Bern with dancer Cyril Baldy (Brown and Baldy 2017); Watts also used the term (Watts 2017; Watts 2018b) and referenced the nickname “shower” (Waterhouse, Watts and Blasing 2014). In setting the piece, Cyril Baldy used the term “head” during rehearsals with CCN – Ballet de Lorraine on April 21–22, 2015. Neither the dancers nor Forsythe remembered how this movement was invented; my research suggested antecedents (Waterhouse 2022, 233).

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

arm was consumed in an action of the whole body. Twisting the torso, the showerhead image began an interplay called *épaulement*. Jill Johnson illustrated this beautifully in our studio session, just a few months after my first meeting with Allison Brown.

Épaulement

JILL JOHNSON: Thinking of it [the showerhead image], as this surface (*she gestures, illustrating a flat horizontal surface with her left hand*) and this part of the hand (*she touches the medial surface of her fingers*) is going (*with vocal emphasis*) around the showerhead. The bulbous ones, it's not the handle one (*she shows the different gestures of working with each, and looks at the camera and laughs*) to be specific. And then, you're going along with this part of the hand around it, and then when you go to *tendu* (*she steps back*) it extends very gently, rather than it being (*she does the movement deliberately incorrectly—quickly, with no torso movement*) this way. So, you'll be standing (*she inhales and demonstrates correctly*). If it involves sides of the body [later she adds: through a series of diagonal or cantilevered alignments] it is most legible, I would say. Because it can easily (*she exaggerates to demonstrate incorrectly, by pulling her right shoulder up towards her ear and showing an isolation of her arm*) if it's just one side, so it's just this back shoulder *épaulement*. In other words, if I do it without this (*she gestures to her left*) shoulder, it can easily become a hunched-ey thing as opposed to (*she smiles and unfurls her arm*) an *épaulement* (Johnson 2016b).



Figure 1: Jill Johnson demonstrating *showerhead*. (Johnson 2016b). Screenshot by the author.

Figure 1 shows the ending of Jill Johnson’s movement lesson. Though I find this picture graceful, it does not capture the affective quality of watching Johnson move *live*, in which the coordinative spiral richly grew through and transformed her body. Live, her movement profoundly motivated me—invited me to try and move *like* her, *with* her. The interview transcript included here is marked with movement, showing how fluidly Johnson interwove communication, teaching gestures, and *showerheading*. She highlighted the principle of *épaulement*, which was a fundamental process in rehearsal.

Épaulement, from the French for shouldering, is a term describing the style of the positioning of the upper body in ballet—part of one’s carriage of the arms, or *port de bras*. Forsythe dancer Dana Caspersen has written: “In classical ballet, *épaulement* is the practice of creating specific linked patterns of complex, dynamic relationships between the eyes, head, shoulders, arms, hands, legs, feet and the exterior space, as the torso engages in rotation” (Caspersen 2008, 12). Choreographer William Forsythe has similarly described *épaulement* as a “perceptually gratifying state” that “synthesizes discrete parts of the body with multiple layers of torqued sensation that leads to the specific sense of a unified but counter-rotated whole” (Forsythe quoted in Foster 2016, 17). My interviews with *Duo* dancers echoed such statements: with accounts of complex bodily perception of twisting, spatial awareness, and feelings of pleasurable excitement.

Fluctuating in time and place, as dance scholar Geraldine Morris has emphasised about all movements of the *dance d’école*, *épaulement* has been expressed in each ballet ensemble as a style (Morris 2022). With dance expertise, styles of *épaulement* are easy to differentiate—reflecting the technical training of ballet schools and company repertoire, as well as the body ideals and ideology of the context of dancing. As a dancer in The Forsythe Company, I was told by my peers that *épaulement* originated within the performance of imperial ballets in Russia—that deferent ballerinas learned to keep their eyes positioned upon the Czar in performance, who was seated at a special place, in the centre loge of the theatre. As she moved and turned, this led to angles and shading of her movement. *Épaulement*’s history is certainly more complex than this single-origin anecdote (cf. Blasis 1820; Bournonville 2005 [1848]; Falcone 1999; Jürgensen 2006; Anderson 1992 [1977], 101). Linked to Forsythe’s choreographic experiments, in Ballet Frankfurt, *épaulement* was developed as a generative feel for coordination, enabling complex improvisation. *Épaulement* can be regarded, in this way, as an aesthetic-corporeal *habitus*. As Pierre Bourdieu (2018 [1977], 82-83) describes, *habitus* operates as “a system of lasting,

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions*” (my emphasis). *Épaulement*, as a coordinate potential of twisting the body and relating to others, rhythm, and space, was drawn upon in nearly all of Forsythe’s choreographies. Forsythe dancers experimented with sensing, enhancing, grooving, fragmenting, and inventing *épaulement* and some found the affective capacity of this sharing “ecstatic” (Caspersen 2008, 2; Forsythe 1999, 24).

William Forsythe, as a choreographer, had many strategies to catalyse movement around him. But *épaulement* would be mistakenly characterised as a top-down process—of contamination and the reproduction of only Forsythe’s bodily proclivities. Forsythe had shaped the performance of *épaulement*, as is common in Western dance and athletic training, through spoken “collective correction” (Wacquant 2006, 104). Additionally, Forsythe’s rehearsal assistants and the dancers themselves further cultivated *épaulement* in the dancers’ ballet class each morning. Most importantly, learning from one another—dancers among dancers, watching, imitating, feeling—was vital.

This illustrates how the practice of *épaulement*, a significant aspect of *Duo*, was embedded in an intricate social system and web of professional activities, producing a movement style that was communal. The dancers *shared* this practice. Yet the dancers did not view their custom as homogenization or limiting. No two dancers performed *épaulement* identically, and this in itself was significant. As a Forsythe dancer, I understood my *épaulement* was part of my signature as a dancer, as well as a sign of my membership within a specific group. Our *épaulement*, as Forsythe dancers, was more extended and shaped differently than that of other ballet companies. We expressed form differently, I venture, because of our intersubjectivity through this practice—how we sensed the potential of our bodies, in relation to others and space. The practice was *individual-collective* (cf. Wacquant 2006, 17-18).

Time and rhythm

The timing of *Duo* was another focus within the dancers’ rehearsal. The choreography required precise co-timings of synchronised movement as well as passages of related motion, with precise cues and alignments (cf. Monda 2016). The dancers all agreed that extensive practice was required to connect well enough with one’s partner to perform these timings accurately, musically, and playfully. Timing and rhythm, what some Forsythe dancers and I called *entrainment*, was a vital component of

Duo (Waterhouse 2022, 171-85). Time-based and rhythmical processes were commented upon throughout my fieldwork, some traces of which I offer below.

ALLISON BROWN: [I remember] going out on stage in the dark. Trying to find your glow-in-the-dark mark on the floor and hoping that it's good, that we're in good alignment and we're ready. And the audience taking us in and us taking the audience in and this first moment, standing naked there basically. And yeah, I remember the whole thing actually, in lots of different places, and lots of different times, and in lots of different bodies (Brown 2016b).

LIZ WATERHOUSE: When you are on stage and about to begin motion. Was there a cue for that?

JILL JOHNSON: I gave that cue. And it was to spend some real time—in other words, not choreographed time, not the two of us getting to our first places and waiting for two [musical] eights before we started. It was ... we waited for the audience: for the two of us to settle and kind of feel each other. But also, there was always a response from the audience, in part because we were so close to them, and they weren't necessarily expecting that. There was always a bit of like (*she vocalizes, similar to a sigh*) "ahm." In Frankfurt, with our home audience, they were like "oh, ok." And it settled pretty quickly. In Orange County [Los Angeles, a tour in 2003] for example, where we were (*pause*) restricted because there was quote "nudity"—it was a conservative bubble ... there was all kind of (*she vocalizes*) "flaahflahflahhh" and we had a heckler, you know? So it varied, with where we were. But a time when we could really feel that it settled. And then a borderline, not pushing the audience, but let's see how far we can (*pause*) have this moment be ... just being with each other (*she inhales, starting showerhead*) and then start. [...] You would feel the audience finally in real time settle, and then you take a really long second or five and then start (Johnson 2018).

Fieldnotes. September 23, 2016

I want to understand how Allison [Brown] teaches *Duo*. She explained to me that she begins with the rhythm of the section of the dance "umpadump" or the breathing. She demonstrates "umpadump" and teaches too fast for me to follow. I ask her to go more slowly. Her voice changes to instruct me, becoming more dynamic and musical. She explains that she would warm up like this: she takes me into her right side, holding my hip to her hip with her arm. She begins a fast walk, hitting her heels on the floor with each step. She says Regina [van Berkel, the woman who taught her *Duo*] would sing a song, very loud. Then Allison starts singing. I am a bit shy and ask her if I should sing too. "Yes!" We sing and make the rhythm together with our legs. She remembers that in Ballett Frankfurt, Bill [Forsythe] would often stop rehearsals when things were getting too dispersed and ask the dancers to make a rhythm like this, to listen to the music with their bodies.

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

Learning and performing *Duo* involved cooperated timings and remembered rhythms, dancing without an external musical pulse, or beat. This affective process tuned the dancers into one another, and also the audience’s attention, making them attentive to the subtle sounds of their bodies. They perceived fine connections and suspensions in time, through joint attention. The musical accompaniment by composer Thom Willems, for piano and electronics, created different sonic atmospheres and often took cues from the dancers—rather than giving them the rhythm. Their listening bonded them in their shared project of dancing *Duo* well—for themselves, Forsythe as well as for spectators.

Cultivating sensation

Enacting *showerhead*, the dancers did not look at their right hands as if contemplating their own gestures. Nor did they look into each other’s faces or eyes. *Duo* foregrounded peripheral attention. Dancer Riley Watts explained that while dancing *showerhead*, he wished to catch a glimpse of his partner in his peripheral vision. Given the absence of scenery in *Duo*, the black background provided little for the dancers to focus on. Sometimes the audience members near the stage were visible to the performers, but they were predominantly heard and felt, with other senses than the eyes. Watts explained that he knew a performance was going well when he watched a video afterward and saw that he and his partner’s heads were turning to watch one another. They do this, he said, to stay in sync (Watts 2017; Waterhouse, Watts, and Bläsing 2014). For Brown the use of the eyes in *Duo* was an unusual type of vision: “this seeing each other with other senses and other body parts than the eyes” (Brown 2016b). Jill Johnson described vision—“hawk-eyed” on one’s partner—combined with listening for the sound of one’s partner’s breathing movement (Johnson 2018).

This testimony illustrates how the dancers’ sensorium was cultivated—in a relational manner—by performing *showerhead* and the other movements of *Duo*. Based on my embodied knowledge, I imagined what it might be like in performance: combined with breath, the dancers heard their own and their partner’s body, inhaling and exhaling. There was the heat of the stage lights, the texture of one’s costume, and the temperature of the air. The dancers recounted feeling and hearing the audience. But predominantly they remembered focusing on their partners and kinaesthetically feeling the movement. They remembered their energy: from adrenalin to exhaustion. This panoply of sensation moved beyond the Western five-sense model by intermixing temperature, balance, breath, skin, listen-

ing, attention, energy, and proprioception. Moreover, this was a sensation in stereo: doubling and grafting between two shifting bodies.

How was this learned? In 2013 when the dancers learned *Duo* in The Forsythe Company, they struggled in rehearsals. They explained that although the visual appearance of the movement was important—central to spectators and Forsythe—they also wanted to focus on their inner feelings and experience of movement. Riley Watts emphasised that for him, “the big thing was to understand, to appeal to what does this [movement] feel like, not only what does it look like” (Watts 2015a). The dancers rarely remember using the mirror in the studio, as is common for ballet dancers, to evaluate and correct their posture. Instead, the vision of how the movement should appear was reinforced through seeing one’s partner more than oneself. They dialogued about their sensations. By the dancers employing comparisons of feeling and appearing, thus began the entanglement of bodies critical to *Duo*.

Hands and skin

My experience becoming a Forsythe dancer gave me first-person insight into techniques for cultivating a dancer’s sensorium. In studio rehearsals of The Forsythe Company, we practised attuning to our hands, skin, and breath. Forsythe believed that the hand is a keystone to train the whole body, given the amount of nerve endings and dexterity. For instructing ballet dancers, who have often laid more emphasis on training their feet than their hands, a Forsythe adage was “the shape of the foot is the shape of the hand.”⁴ This instructed dancers to articulate their hands as if they had the same cultivated capacity of their highly trained feet. In rehearsal, Forsythe encouraged: “*Épaulement* is a conversation between your foot and your hands. So make a wonderful conversation” (Forsythe quoted in Ross 2007, 107).

In Forsythe’s ensembles, the hand was studied in relation to other body parts: the hand in relation to the shoulder, moved from the back, reflected in the hip, and supported in the feet and knees. This integrated quality of movement was further developed through sensual attention to the border of the body, through the feeling of the skin. Skin stretches, touches, and senses. It registers intensity and gives a sense of others (such

⁴ These are my personal memories of the rehearsals in The Forsythe Company.

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

as the sensation of feeling watched). Sensitivity to skin was nurtured in *Duo* by the dancers directing attention to all the delicate surfaces of their hands and furthermore their relation to the stretch of the skin in the arms, neck, and back. This skin sensation produced an intensity of movement that differed from daily life, where such awareness is not cultivated. *Duo* dancer Riley Watts described skin sensation as a way to register bodily form—the shape of his body (Watts 2018a). Feeling light, heat, temperature, tension, and release, the skin helped, in my view, to register movement around the body, through a sensation of moving with and for others—a quality of intensity and excitement. Watts, as a later-generation *Duo* dancer, was the dancer who most frequently used the word *sensation* in our discussions. He described *Duo* as “a process of attention to sensations that the dancers are experiencing simultaneously” (Waterhouse, Watts and Bläsing 2014, 9). Not only having sensations but considering and comparing them, *Duo* dancers built a common reserve of understanding.

Breathing-movement

Over the course of *showerhead*, the dancers inhaled and exhaled—typically they inhaled through the nose, with a light and long sniff, and exhaled through the mouth. The more tired the dancers were from prior exertion, the more this sounded like a sigh. *Duo* dancers breathed implicitly with their movement. Their breathing-movement was a *logic of practice*. For Pierre Bourdieu, a “logic of practice” is not abstract or external to practise, but a logic constituted within and through activity, “performed directly in bodily gymnastics” (Bourdieu 1990, 89). The breathing practice was a subtle layer of the choreography, helping to create the right movement quality (delicate and precise) and sustain synchronisation with one’s partner. Dancer Brigel Gjoka told me, “We synchronize breathing, not the steps” (Gjoka 2016). Forsythe concurred: “*Duo* is finally, for me, a breath score that has choreography that generates it” (Forsythe 2019).

I have chosen to name this practice *breathing-movement* to emphasise the way it is a hybrid medium of movement, sound, communication, choreography, and sensation. In *Duo*, I observed the dancers typically used inhales as upbeats and paired them with actions rising in level; comparably, they recruited exhales for lowering actions and other forms of exertions (such as the endpoints of twists or swings). For example, in *showerhead*, following inhale and exhale, respectively, the weight of the body rose and descend-

ed. Elsewhere in *Duo*, the dancers also used their breath communicatively to signal timing via cues (Waterhouse 2022, 198-202).

The breathing changed from performance to performance, rich with improvisation. *Duo* dancer Brigel Gjoka demonstrated this to me while dancing in his kitchen, vocalising “eee-ahhh” while changing pitch and tone melodically. His breath interlaced with his voice (Gjoka 2016). Similarly, performer Regina van Berkel (who originated the role that Gjoka danced) also used her sonorous voice melodically in breathing-movement, though never forcing her breath or deliberately trying to sing (Berkel 2017). Her partner, Jill Johnson, demonstrated to me over videoconference how she used her nasal passages more than her throat, but was there to whisper words as needed: such as “new beginning” and “Almost there!” (Johnson 2018). Not all dancers spoke and sniffed like Johnson. They all found their way to synchronise and cue their partners.

Late-generation *Duo* dancers—male dancers Watts and Gjoka—breathed more loudly than early-generation, female *Duo* dancers. Despite this, no *Duo* dancer viewed the breathing practice as gendered. I wondered extensively about this. What I perceived was a generational shift in practice over time. There was a greater emphasis on breath scores in the repertoire of The Forsythe Company, in parallel to Forsythe’s “exploration of the visual-sonic affordances of movement and its presentation in performance” (Vass-Rhee 2011, 1). His breathing practice, Riley Watts insisted to me, was not “ornamental” (Watts 2017). The acoustic qualities of the dancers’ breathing-movement were a sign of their relational bond, linking form, expressivity, and timing.

The dancers remarked on the difficulty of teaching the breathing of *Duo* to students or dancers in other companies. Ballet training teaches dancers to silence their breath—dancing while making as little noise as possible. Novices had to cultivate the freedom to acoustically release breathing-movement; they were also typically less experienced in using breathing-movement communicatively as a way of dancing together. All dancers reminded me of the importance of ample rehearsal: *Duo*’s breath was the result of shared experience, requiring time to attune. I ventured that after so many hours of practice, *Duo*’s breathing practice must compose the dancers’ subjectivity at a deep level, at the cusp where dancing meets music, communication, and sociality. The agency of *Duo* dancers was complexly immersed in an organisational array of activities—cooperatively constituted in movement.

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

As ballet?

In which ways does *showerhead* make visible (dis-)continuities with ballet practices and history? How did the dancers re-signify their bodies and ballet conventions through the motions of *Duo*? Between 1996 and 2018, *Duo*'s extensive touring across metropolises in the Global North brought the dancers in contact with new audiences, with differing expectations about the aesthetic conventions of contemporary ballet and duets (Waterhouse 2022, 123-30). Through my interviews, I learned that the dancers were highly conscious of the changing frames and times in which they were perceived by spectators (Waterhouse 2022, 174).

The dancers held high reverence for the balletic virtuosity of the first pair of *Duo* dancers: Regina van Berkel and Jill Johnson. Many dancers adapted their training, to better accomplish the balletic extensions and jumps of *Duo*. The male dancers pressured Forsythe to change the costumes from leotards to pants and knee-length shorts, limiting the visibility of balletic ‘line’ and ‘turn-out,’ and defying the codes of proper ballet attire. Some dancers adjusted the steps to less balletic movements. Additionally, the gendered norms of ballet performances influenced performers of both genders. Some women dieted, to achieve the norms of thinness for female ballet dancers, concerned about their appearance in the *Duo* leotards; in contrast, other female dancers appreciated subverting these norms by having their muscular legs and rumps visible and also expressing acceptance of their bodies through dancing confidently in sheer costumes revealing their breasts. William Forsythe brought to my attention that the male dancers were also crossing the norms of male performance, by avoiding aggressive motions and instead sustaining “masculine delicacy” (Forsythe 2019). The emancipation that *Duo* generated over two decades happened through rupture and renewal: merging feminine and masculine bodies, differently inscribed by ballet histories, and re-inscribing these possibilities on stage and in rehearsal.

Consider the balletic aspects of *showerhead*. Using the affordances of balletic training, the dancers’ hips opened flexibly, rotating the dancers’ legs from parallel into a turned-out ending position. Rolling through the feet and ankles, the footwork in *showerhead* was quiet, and the weight transition was smooth—also aspects of ballet practice. Moving through a soft bend in the knees, or *plié*, the *showerhead* movement was flowing and continuous. The artists’ right ankles and toes extended into a balletic stretch, or *tendu*. The hamstrings lengthened to hinge the body: the torso inclined forward, while the hips moved back. Contralaterally, one

leg provided support, while the other gestured. Bringing it all together: *épaulement* brought into play the spirals, linking perception of tensions and counter-tensions. Though I have seen students without ballet training learning to perform *showerhead*, extensive ballet training is helpful.

But how was ballet practice adapted, through dancing *Duo*? And how was *Duo* changed, through the dancers' reflection on balletic heritage? In *showerhead*, the movement mechanics and style also deviate from ballet and these divergences were explicitly practised. Allison Brown reminded me in particular of the "ass" (Brown 2016a). The ass is rarely called upon in classical ballet technique, which focuses more demurely on the hips and the facility of turning out. As dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild has shown, the buttocks have been tucked under in ballet, to achieve the ideal European alignment of the controlled and poised vertical subject (Dixon Gottschild 2005, 144-145). Instead, within the movement style of Ballett Frankfurt, dancers were encouraged to move their rumps down and back. Brown remembered that coming to Ballett Frankfurt after extensive labour in ballet companies, she was very surprised to have a dancer tell her in rehearsal to move her hips back *more*, like sitting on the toilet. By the 90s, the rebellious Ballett Frankfurt dancers (like Brown) knew the power and sex appeal of the 'butt' codes in popular culture. This appropriation of moves from black dance and popular culture was part of Ballett Frankfurt's larger resistance and re-inscription of the white ballet body. Forsythe publicly embraced the influence of rock 'n' roll and hip hop on his work, grateful also for the black dancers' contribution to the Ballett Frankfurt (Waterhouse 2022, 95-97; Driver 1990, 94). Non-white dancers also contributed to *Duo*: African American dancers Francesca Harper and Bahiyah Sayyed Gaines learned *Duo* together in the 1996–1997 season of Ballett Frankfurt, and Iranian German dancer Parvaneh Scharafali was part of the reconstruction in The Forsythe Company. Although these dancers did not perform *Duo* often, for reasons such as injury and changing programs, they were important within its history (Waterhouse 2022, 82; 125-27; 275-80).

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

Conclusion



Figure 2: The bodies of dancers Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka, superposed.
Photo © Riley Watts.

How did dancing *Duo* shape the dancers’ bodies and, vice versa, how did their bodies produce *Duo*? Certainly, these are processual and entangled bodies, defined dynamically through enactment. One of the central notions within this article is the way dancing together emerges through bodies *individual-collective*: through singular bodies with individual histories and proclivities, who collectively fabricated and negotiated their shared choreographic project of *Duo*. Dancer Riley Watts shared an image in which he had digitally superimposed his body onto an image of his partner’s (see Figure 2). He explained that this feeling of togetherness, of becoming one body, was central to *Duo*. From Watts and through my fieldwork, I learned how intimately dancers defined themselves by the knowledge and sensations of *their* bodies and *their partners’* bodies. I saw how this is begotten by one’s particular body aptitude, while also changing in accordance with lineages of roles and dyads in *Duo* partnership. In this, bodies are individual and collective: developing what they can do, with potential for extensive transformation.

When examined longitudinally, *showerhead*, like most of the movements in *Duo*, went cooperatively beyond one person—or even a couple—rehearsing and practising the piece. In other words, the dancers’ logic of *showerheading* relied heavily on individual coordination and sensorimotor skills, amassed through histories of relational interaction. This connected the dancers, as remarked by dancer Jill Johnson, not linearly in time, but rather in “concentric circles and networks of shared embodied ideas across time” (Johnson 2021). Though each dancer’s body has a unique history, through moving together, they fused. They negotiated differences, discerning and discussing what was aesthetically and socially appropriate. The shifting choreography of *Duo*, like their bodies, was a becoming-with—choreography, identity, and bodies merging. My autoethnographic spiral with the dancers, helped me to explore both the history of a movement and a movement itself, as an embodied history.

Works cited

- Blasis, Carlo de. 1820. *Traité élémentaire théorique et pratique de l'art de la danse*. Milano: Beati e Tenenti. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6546277m> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Bournonville, August. 2005 [1848]. *Études Chorégraphiques (1848, 1855, 1861)* edited by Knud Arne Jürgensen and Francesca Falcone. Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana.
- Anderson, Jack. 1992 [1977] 2nd ed. *Ballet & Modern Dance. A Concise History*. Princeton: Princeton Book Company.
- Berkel, Regina van. 2017. Interview by Elizabeth Waterhouse, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- _____. 2018 [1977]. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Breidenstein, Georg, Stefan Hirschauer, Herbert Kalthoff, and Boris Nieswand. 2013. *Ethnografie: die Praxis der Feldforschung*. Munich: UVK Verlag.
- Brown, Allison. 2016a. Studio session, dancing interviews by Elizabeth Waterhouse, Frankfurt, September 20 and 23, 2016.
- _____. 2016b. Interview by Elizabeth Waterhouse, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.
- Brown, Allison, and Cyril Baldy. 2017. Studio session, dancing interview by Elizabeth Waterhouse, Bern, January 24, 2017.
- Caspersen, Dana. 2004. Program note. Ballett Frankfurt tour to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Washington, June 17-19.

An autoethnographic spiral: dancing “showerhead”

- _____. 2008. “What Épaulement Also Is.” (Unpublished manuscript), 1-24.
- Davida, Dena ed. 2012. *Fields in Motion: Ethnography in the Worlds of Dance*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Dixon Gottschild, Brenda. 2005. *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Driver, Senta. 1990. “A Conversation with William Forsythe.” *Ballet Review* 18(1): 86-97.
- Falcone, Francesca. 1999. “The Evolution of the Arabesque in Dance,” *Dance Chronicle* 22(1): 71-117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01472529908569336> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Foster, Susan L. 2016. “Why is There Always Energy for Dancing?” *Dance Research Journal* 48(3): 11-26.
- Forsythe, William. 1999. “Observing Motion: An Interview with William Forsythe.” Interview conducted by Nik Haffner. In *Improvisation Technologies. A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*, (booklet), ZKM/ Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe. 16-26. Ostfildern: Hatja Cantz.
- _____. 2019. Phone interview by Elizabeth Waterhouse, January 30, 2019.
- Gjoka, Brigel. 2016. Interview by Elizabeth Waterhouse, Dresden, March 6, 2016.
- Hilari, Johanna, Nadja Rothenburger, Elizabeth Waterhouse, and Julia Wehren. 2024 (forthcoming). “Auto_Bio_Graphical Urgencies. Vier Tanzwissenschaftliche Perspektiven,” in *Matters of Urgency. 15. Kongress Der Gesellschaft Für Theaterwissenschaft*. Berlin: Berlin Universities Publishing.
- Johnson, Jill. 2016a. Interview by Elizabeth Waterhouse, October 21, 2016.
- _____. 2016b. Studio session, dancing interview by Elizabeth Waterhouse, December 6, 2016.
- _____. 2018. Videoconference interview by Elizabeth Waterhouse, June 28, 2018.
- _____. 2021. Email to Elizabeth Waterhouse, September 12, 2021.
- Jürgensen, Knud Arne. 2006. “August Bournonville: *Études Chorégraphiques (1848, 1855, 1861)*,” *Dance Chronicle* 29(3): 485-88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01472520600966257> (last accessed 5 May 2024)
- Monda, Letizia. 2016. *Choreographic Bodies. L'esperienza della Motion Bank nel progetto multidisciplinare di Forsythe*. Roma: Audino.
- Morris, Geraldine. 2022. “Historical Schooling: Ballet Style and Technique.” *Research in Dance Education*. 25(1):73–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14647893.2022.2064843> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Müller, Sophie Merit. 2016. “Becoming the Phenomenon? An Alternative Approach to Reflexivity in Ethnography,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 22 (9): 750-717. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004166660580> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Okely, Judith. 2012. *Anthropological Practice: Fieldwork and the Ethnographic Method*. London: Berg.
- Reed-Danahay, Deborah. 2017. “Bourdieu and Critical Autoethnography:

- Implications for Research, Writing, and Teaching,” *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 19 (1): 144–54, <https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v19i1.1368> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- _____. ed. 1997. *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social, Explorations in Anthropology*. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Ross, Janet. 2007. *San Francisco Ballet at Seventy-Five*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Thurner, Christina 2018. “Time Layers, Time Leaps, Time Loss: Methodologies of Dance Historiography,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, edited by Mark Franko. 525–532. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199314201.013.45> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Vass-Rhee, Freya. 2011. “Audio-Visual Stress: Cognitive Approaches to the Perceptual Performativity of William Forsythe and Ensemble.” PhD diss., University of California, Riverside.
- Wacquant, Loïc. 2006. *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Waterhouse, Elizabeth. 2022. *Processing Choreography: Thinking with William Forsythe’s “Duo”*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-5588-9/processing-choreography/> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- _____. 2023. “Ethnografische Ansätze,” in *Theater und Tanz: Handbuch für Wissenschaft und Studium*, edited by Beate Hochholdingger-Reiterer, Christina Thurner, and Julia Wehren. 243–50. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Waterhouse, Elizabeth, Riley Watts, and Bettina Bläsing. 2014. “Doing *Duo*. A Case Study of Entrainment in William Forsythe’s Choreography *Duo*.” *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 8(812): 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00812> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Watts, Riley. 2015a. Email correspondence with Elizabeth Waterhouse, February 25, 2015.
- _____. 2015b. Interview with Elizabeth Waterhouse, April 16, 2015.
- _____. 2017. Studio dancing sessions and interviews by Elizabeth Waterhouse, Bern, January 11-15, 2017.
- _____. 2018a. Email to Elizabeth Waterhouse, March 3, 2018.
- _____. 2018b. Email to Elizabeth Waterhouse, May 22, 2018.

Dancing with and for others in the field and postcolonial encounters

Franca Tamisari

In the early 1990s, I arrived in Milingimbi, an Australian Indigenous community in Northeast Arnhem Land, to study ceremonial and everyday dancing, a key element in the very complex political and land tenure system expressed and negotiated in a religious and aesthetic idiom¹. As a young naïve and rather arrogant fieldworker, I thought it would be easier to learn the dances rather than one of the local languages, and thus since the beginning of my fieldwork, I started participating in the dancing with assiduity and enthusiasm. Like toddlers who are learning to dance, I was always encouraged to observe (*nha:ma*) the dance movements of older people and later to imitate them (*yakarrman*). However, unlike local toddlers who participate alongside their parents and relatives, I started practicing the basic foot and arm movements in the seclusion of my house and, while sitting with the women, I limited myself to asking for the meaning of particular arm gestures. “This is sea water” (*gapu dhuwal*), the women would say with great patience cupping their hands and moving them up and down in front of their stern; “this is rain” (*waltjan dhuwal*), their fingers together just above their faces bending at the knuckles; and for seagull fishing in flight they would reach for a stick, a leaf or blade of grass and, by holding at its extremities, would move it up and down perpendicular to the ground. Given the apparent simplicity of Yolngu stepping and arm movements, I quickly felt confident enough to perform in public. Yet, despite my practice and confidence, the first time I stood up to join the women dancers, the mechanical competence that my body achieved in isolation completely dissolved. In my solitary practice, I had rehearsed the movements without music and, more importantly, apart from the surrounding performers and

¹ Established as a Methodist Mission in 1923 and located around 500 km East of Darwin, Milingimbi is one of the five Yolngu communities in the Northeast Arnhem Land region, Northern Territory Australia, that extends from Cape Stewart in the West, near Maningrida, and the Koolatong River in the Southeast, near Yirrkala. According to the 2016 census, residents in the Milingimbi community numbered 1.225, and those in Northeast Arnhem Land region 14.020 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

away from the eyes of attentive and vociferous observers. Overwhelmed by the rhythm beaten out by the moving bodies around me and by the shouting encouragement of the seated participants, my knees started trembling uncontrollably, and I was almost unable to move my arms. This made me realize that I had to practice and learn by performing with others and for others; and endure the laughter and shouting my underdeveloped arm movement and rhythmically insecure steps provoked. Despite my initial awkwardness and embarrassment, I was often invited to participate and instructed how to correct my posture, stress my arm gestures, beat time correctly, and come to a standstill on the last beat. My teachers were particularly insistent about the need to improve my double shuffling step which characterizes women's "hopping along" style (*wap'waphum*). Shuffling becomes good dancing when each forward-moving foot also "throws sand" (*munatha djalkthun*) over the other and through displacement imprints a trail of marks on the ground.

After several months of public practice and mistakes, I finally felt I had learned to dance with others and for others when having stopped to concentrate on my movements, my body became a "knowing force of action" (Ness 1992, 5) which, propelled by the music, started guiding my motor projects. As I was to find out and understand later, it was not by chance that my achievement was noticed, and in the late afternoon, I was summoned by a local leader and mentor that I called my mother's brother in the kinship network in which I had been adopted². During a short conversation, he told me how much he had appreciated my dancing at his younger brother's mortuary ceremony and emphatically encouraged me to keep on dancing "not only for close kin but for everybody". As I understood much later, he could detect my proficiency by observing how I danced or, more precisely, how I moved my 'knees'. During all ceremonies, the watchful eyes of the elders look at the young performers' knees to judge their learning before revealing further knowledge to them and thus entrusting them with subsequent ritual responsibility. The dancer's knees moving up and down in the stepping are said to "be talking" (*bonwanga*). This absorption and transmission of knowledge through the body brings about potential psychophysical changes to the dancer, exposing him or her to a certain degree of danger. Prior to the physical exposure of a

² The complex land tenure system is negotiated through the nurturing and mentoring role of the mother's brother's with his sister's children (MB-ZC) at individual as well as at group levels (see Keen 1994).

Dancing with and for others in the field

young person to further knowledge to be literally in-corporated through dancing, elders often rub their underarm sweat onto the youths' knees to protect them from the potentially dangerous consequences of such bodily transformation.

Following my mother's brother's suggestion was easy as I enjoyed dancing, although at the time I could not understand nor appreciate the significance that Yolngu people attach to participation in dance performances. It was indeed my participation in dancing that activated a "somatic mode of attention (Csordas 1993) that thanks to "proprioception: the reception of stimuli produced within one's body, especially movement ... is to apprehend, as felt experience, the kinetic dynamics inherent in movements, images, and sounds" (Sklar 2000, 72). A "somatic mode of attention" in dance as a process of knowing could also be understood as a pathic moment in perception, which Straus (1966, 12) defines as "the immediate communication we have with things based on their changing mode of sensory givenness" and as "the immediately present, sensually vivid, still preconceptual communication" which is consequently "so difficult to understand conceptually".³ The pathic moment is central in the formation of "immediate experience" (ibid., 19), a "vital doing" (ibid, 22), a "lived movement ... that inhabits the space created by the music uniting us with the world, an "opening wide of body space [that] can be experienced as enrichment or as jeopardy" (ibid. 28). In other words, we can say that performance in general, and dance in particular, reconfigures meaning and directs experience (Kapferer 1986).

It was, indeed, my assiduous dancing practice, dancing with and for others, that allowed me to go over and above the symbolism of the movements and their semantic relationships to the song narratives and understand Yolngu dancing as "a body technique" which forms a bridge to an "empathic understanding" (Jackson 1989, 135). With this expression, I do not mean a form of affectivity with others—one's participation in the other's feelings, but rather a modality of knowing in its widest sense, a 'technique of participation which demands total involvement' (Turnbull 1990, 51). A knowing that requires an embodied, cognitive, and affective engagement rather than being simply a stage or a step towards an interpretation of the cognitive and discursive type (Jackson 1989, 135). Empathy is rather a modality of co-presence and co-presencing, a way of

³ See Straus' (1966) contraposition between the "pathic" to a "gnostic moment" that is a modality of knowing mediated by language used to decodify meanings.

knowing, an initial contact which, by changing the dimensions of perception, opens a way to get acquainted with the unexplored depth of another person or more-than-person (De Monticelli 1998, 134ff; Dufrenne 1973, 398-407; Stein 1989) both in the context of Yolngu dancing and in fieldwork (Tamisari 2000). The general point I make here is that, far from interpreting the significance of Yolngu dancing from the recess of my idiosyncratic experiences, my participation in dancing—indeed making and negotiating political and emotional statements about my increasing involvement with others—brought to light aspects of Yolngu performances, epistemology, and ontology which would have otherwise been beyond my grasp, both at the level of experience and analysis. This performative perspective inscribed in my body, as “bodynotes”, has not only allowed me an analytical, but also an empathic understanding of how Yolngu knowledge associated with country is embodied by re-enacting the past in the present, how it is negotiated and transferred to the next generations, how its efficacy is reckoned by its capacity of affecting others and being affected by others, and why it is deployed to create a diplomatic space where non-indigenous people are invited to enter observing Indigenous values and principles (Tamisari 2024). I also started to understand how, through dancing and especially virtuoso dancing, one can demand respect and impose one’s authority yet, by attracting attention, become vulnerable. If by dancing in general and virtuoso dancing in particular a person can affect others, she is in turn open to being affected by others. More generally, through dancing a person enters the intimate sphere of intercorporeal relationships at a different level of intensity, in which one is emotionally involved and socially accountable. From this perspective, it is perhaps easier to understand why dance performance is often used in encountering and confronting non-indigenous people and institutions. Dancing, as Yolngu people would say, is knowing one own’s country, holding and teaching the Law, helping and working for other people, and, in mortuary ceremonies, it is showing love for the deceased and his/her family. If in the local contexts dancing can be a way of knowing and relating with people and the environment, a way of helping and expressing love for others, it is also a “performative tactic” (Tamisari 2016) deployed to create a space in which non-indigenous people are challenged to learn and recognize Indigenous ways of being and are required to participate and respond.

Dancing with and for others in the field

Dance as law work, help, love and competition

Principally, ritual dancing, together with songs, is a way of reproducing ancestral cosmogonic action that shaped and named the country and assigned the ownership of specific territories to each group constituting Yolngu society. As ancestral beings transformed themselves into the land as it is today, Yolngu dance performance (*bunggul*, from *bon*, knee), in circumcision, mortuary and regional ceremonies, is a modality of re-enacting forms that come to presence, a doing through shaping, a form of manifestation through movement and naming (Tamisari 2002). Often Yolngu people talk about dancing not so much in terms of following the tracks left by the ancestral beings, but rather in terms of a way of summoning, re-embodiment, and re-enacting the ancestors in the present and concrete bodies of the dancers. Embodying and reproducing cosmogonic actions through ritual dancing affirms ownership of one's country and allows the negotiation of authority over it at individual and group levels. More importantly, dance performance not only allows the transfer of this knowledge to the younger generation but also, most importantly, allows the elders to teach the younger generations a way of looking after the land so that the land can keep on looking after people in a reciprocal life-giving relationship interlinking all human and more-than-human beings.

As all country has a song and a dance recounting its origin, story, and personality that brought it into being, so “singing up”, and “dancing up” the country in ceremonies or, indeed, in pop/rock performances (Tamisari 2021), is a modality to celebrate and reactivate the meshwork of relations linking all being to one another (Tamisari 2022).

As Yolngu would often say, dancing is not only a way of holding Yolngu Law (*Yolngu Rom ngayatham*), that is possessing and observing the right way of doing things as the human and more-than-human ancestral being taught to the living, bringing the past knowledge into the present, claim and negotiate land ownership, and looking after country, but also articulates key Yolngu moral principles and values. Holding the law should thus be understood as “holding dear”, “worrying”, namely to experience the Law through participation in a logic of feeling (*ma:rr*), openness and attention towards others founded on mutual care and responsibility pertaining to the singularity and depth of each intra-action⁴.

In Yolngu dance performance, matrilineal relatives, and in particular a

⁴ Drawing from Barad (2003, 815), I use the term “intra-action” rather than “inter-action”, to refer to “reconfigurings/entanglements/relationalities/(re)articulations of the world” (Barad

man's sister's child have the strongest rights in the execution of his group's dances. The sister's son has the strongest rights to the knowledge of his mother's group and he is said to be the "manager" (*jungaya*) and "carer" of (*dja:gamirr*, literally "care-having") and holder of his mother's clan's knowledge (*ngandi watangu*). The lead dancer not only dances in front of the other dancers, and is thereby close to the singers, but is also responsible for emitting the dance calls and, through these, for directing the singers. The leader always dances with energy and passion and his performance often outshines that of the other dancers. The jumping is higher, the movements more dramatic, the interpretation theatrical and emotional. Being a virtuoso is his right and duty, a way in which he displays his legitimate authority over the knowledge of his mother's group and the fulfilment of his rights and responsibilities. It is significant that such claims, together with their implicit affirmation of knowledge and rights, are made through dancing, as these are brought and displayed into the public arena, usually in front of a large audience. Dancing as a means of legitimising one's knowledge and consequent authority is also a duty, a notion that is conveyed by speaking of dancing, singing, and painting as "work" (*dja:ma*). As in other parts of Indigenous Australia, a man's sister's children are the workers (*dja:mamirr*, literally "work-having") for their mother's group(s) and, as such, they are expected to take the responsibility for organising their ceremonies as well as for leading their dances. In this sense, dance as "work" fulfills duties to one's kin, the responsibility of carrying out a successful and efficacious performance, a labour that produces and reproduces the knowledge associated with the country of one's maternal relatives.

Yolgnu dancing looks effortless but the backward posture with bent knees with the weight on the heels (as in skiing) requires, in fact, constant tension in the leg muscles. In addition, dancing as work is considered a form of help and a way of showing love to all close relatives of the deceased who participate in a mortuary ceremony. When people are not "helpful" (*gungayunamirr*, literally "help-having") or they do not show their love by dancing in a ceremony, they are usually expected to contribute in several other ways, for instance, by offering lengths of cloth, sheets, food, money or carrying out particular tasks. However, dancing is not only another way of helping to carry out a successful ceremony but also expresses love rather than sadness, grief, or generosity. As I was repeatedly told: "Through

2007, 141) among all beings and things, including song and dances, in order to understand the significance of Yolgnu relational ontology and epistemology (Tamisari 2024).

Dancing with and for others in the field

dancing, you show your love. When we cry we share our sadness, when we dance we are not sad, we share love”⁵.

Finally, contrary to singing, which is a much more specialised practice that young people are permitted to access after long-term training and testing, dancing is open to everybody’s participation and, as such, it is the arena that most people enter to affirm their knowledge and claim authority over a specific territory. However, dramatic and spectacular interpretations in dancing expose the virtuoso to “compliments” which at once offer appreciation as well as exacting a request. In the ceremonial context, if an individual is particularly and somewhat unexpectedly gifted in playing music or dancing, he/she is complimented by being told *wamarrkanhe*, an expression that is usually followed by a request for material goods. A tentative translation of this expression would be “power/sentiment [have] you”. Once again, I learnt about this practice through participating in the dances and it was only then that I started understanding how flattering, yet dangerous, compliments may be if they are not repaid appropriately.

Dance as co-presencing: The curse of compliments

My ability to learn Yolngu dances and my assiduous participation surprised and pleased most people. Often I was told *wama:rrkane Wuluku*, and in the same breath, the speaker would ask me for something in return: an item of clothing, packs of cigarettes, or a few dollars, and, at times, substantial amounts of money⁶. Little did I know at the time that if I had not given them what they had asked for I would fall ill and I would even risk dying. On one occasion, one of my sons asked me for my vehicle, a request that like the others I did not satisfy. The fact that a few days later I contracted hepatitis A and had to go to Darwin to recover was explained to me as the consequence of my not having repaid the compliment. Initially, from this and similar episodes, I concluded that such compliments carried out a warning which, if not repaid in kind, could act as a curse.⁷ From this understanding, I described this practice as the “curse of compliment”, a means by which virtuosos, who could misuse their dancing

⁵ On care and affection in women songs see Magowan 2007 and in Christian devotional dancing (Magowan 2016; Tamisari 2019).

⁶ *Wuluku*, the proper name for a particular species of green sea turtle, is the term of address with which are called all women of the Birrkili-Gupapuyngu group into which I was adopted.

⁷ On the notion of *cursing* in the context of names and naming and the process of “morphopoiesis”, speaking forms into place, the making of place through names see Tamisari 2002.

skills to humiliate or overcome others, are prevented from imposing their supremacy in an unjustified and exaggerated manner. The practice of “cursing with appreciation” in the context of performance, I concluded, is central to understanding the two meanings of power (von Sturmer 1987). On the one hand, virtuosity in performance is recognised as an expression of knowledge whereby performers, embodying their own ancestral beings through dance, claim and legitimise their closeness to their power. On the other hand, virtuosity is also recognised as the means through which people can impose their will on others for their ends. Cursing the virtuosos who are aspiring to, or legitimising, their leadership seems to be a way of controlling or preventing their possible abuse of power. If warnings of this type are repeated and they are not paid back, the pressure increases and the virtuoso usually “gives up dancing” altogether (*gul'yun bunggulngur*) or “buries his clapping sticks” (*bilma galkan munath'ilil*) to avoid illness and death. However, if this interpretation well illustrates how virtuosity can be understood as the manifestation of ancestral presence and an expression of control and authority by individuals, the notion of “*ma:rr*” in the expression “*wam:rrkanhe*”, points towards a far more subtle and ambiguous dimension of the relationship between who pays and who repays such a compliment. This notion not only connotes, as it has been mainly translated in the literature, ancestral power, which is manifested in the cosmogonic shaping of landscape features, names, animals, plants, objects, designs, songs, and dances. As Thomson (1975, 2) noted, this is not only “spiritual power from the totemic ancestor”, but also a “feeling of affection” (ibid., 4) as well as a “desiring a yearning”. In most cases, *ma:rr* provides special prowess and courage to whoever possesses it, or it may connote danger from which one should protect oneself. More specifically, this term is equivalent to and often analogous with *ngayanggu*, the seat of emotions that is located in the stomach, and refers to a person’s inner feelings, moods, and desires⁸. More specifically, “*ma:rr*” refers to people’s innermost feelings of love, care, and compassion for relatives including country and everything constituting it, as well as referring to concealed desires which are not expressed but are felt and met, silent wishes which, as I was told, “make things happen”.⁹

The hidden feelings and desires of a person can be “seen”, and as Yolngu would say, to “see someone’s *ma:rr*” (*ma:rr nha:ma*) is to recognize the other

⁸ *Ngayanggu* is cognate with *ngoy*, which can be translated as “the living, pulsating part of man” (Thomson 1975, 8 note 16). *Ngoy* also means “inside” and “underneath” in the expression *ngoyngur*, thus private, and not readily visible and accessible by others.

⁹ On the term *ma:rr* and phrasal expressions, see Tamisari 2024, 186-188.

Dancing with and for others in the field

person's desires, a recognition which is however effected not by asking but by fulfilling their wishes. Through the displaying of unusual skills, the dancer is said to have reached the "inner feelings" (*ma:rr*) of the viewer, when the latter declares his or her appreciation. Virtuosity and appreciation, I propose, are not limited to the intent to impress and a willingness to recognize. The practice of *wama:rrkanhe* seems to lock two persons in an intimate relationship in which, by crossing each other's physical boundaries and reaching each other's inner feelings and desires, gives life to and, simultaneously, jeopardises each other's embodied consciousness. As the virtuoso dares, through his dancing, to reach the viewer's *ma:rr*, to see beyond appearances "the living, vital, pulsating part of man" (Thomson 1975, 8 n.16), the viewer responds to this invasion by proffering a compliment which, in turn, can affect the dancer by challenging her/his or her wellbeing. The practice of *wama:rrkanhe* thus epitomises how the act of dancing is also, and most importantly, a modality of co-presencing, an encounter at a novel level of intensity that, changing the dancers and the spectator, opens a way to a different dimension of being with others. In addition to deterring virtuosos imposing their authority in an exaggerated manner merely through their dancing skills, it also reveals the most obvious, yet neglected, empathic aspect of intersubjective relations. Bringing this empathic dimension of intercorporeality to the fore points to the necessity to go over and above the referential meaning of performance and analyse how "meanings ... are created during performance, ... in the negotiation between the principal performers and the participants who share its action and intensity" (Schieffelin 1985, 722).

This practice is not only an excellent illustration of how Yolngu dancing interweaves political and aesthetic aspects, dance as an affirmation and claiming of knowledge that is rendered effective by a particular virtuoso interpretation that affects others, but also, by shifting attention to the efficacy of performance, and seeking its significance over and above the referential meanings of dance movements and discursive elements of ritual, requires consideration of dance as a modality of knowledge that is not separate from experience and its affective dimensions.

As the practice of "the curse of compliments" well illustrates, what performance expresses, goes beyond representation, presence, and the body, and establishes a "secret commerce" or even a "mutual possession" between the performer and the spectator in the lived, here and now experience of performance (Dufrenne 1987, 119). In Yolngu terms, it is an encounter between the inner feelings (*ma:rr*) of the dancer and of the person who pays the compliment. The efficacy of dancing does not merely reside in

the skillful and technically flawless execution that meets the aesthetic criteria of Yolngu dancing, such as the rhythm and energy of the steps, the inclination of the body, and the marks a dancer leaves on the ground. As Dufrenne (1973, 387) notes for art, aesthetic criteria and overall technique are general qualities, and although they are indispensable, it is how technique is surpassed and used in a singular way by an artist or performer that “surprises and possesses us”. I argue that in Yolngu dancing, it is not a question of excelling in dance technique as such, but it is rather a matter of how technique “serves expression”, how a dancer displays his own interiority and demands total attention through technique (Dufrenne 1973, 478ff). This leads me back to the nature of participation and how this participation is an integral part, if not indeed the very actualisation, of all Yolngu dance performances. I draw from Dufrenne’s notion of “feeling” and I also refer to the Yolngu notion of *ma:rr* in the expression *wama:rrkanhe* discussed above. In performance, *ma:rr* is a somatic mode of attention and not a mere sentiment; it is a form of transformation and constitution of self and other, a sort of “testing of the self through the other person and the other person through the self” (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 120). In Dufrenne’s (1973, 377) words: “I must make myself conform to what feeling reveals to me and thus match its depth with my own. That is why, through feeling, I myself am put into question”. Although all dance events, from mortuary ceremonies to impromptu performances, are highly charged with strong emotions, the success of a ceremony does not depend on the intensity of the emotions staged in this way. Emotion is a means and not an end of the ceremony. The ritualisation of these emotions offers a field, or a setting, which allows performers to reach an uplifting and uplifted state of consciousness; that is, a way in which these performances affect the performer, as well as others, through feeling. Feeling (*ma:rr*) is the participation, the “secret commerce” established between performer and spectator through dance and song. Feeling establishes an inner communication, a mutual resonance, between the depths of the dancer and the inner being of the spectator. Thus, feeling opens up the self and makes one receptive, not only to emotions but also to knowledge. In Yolngu terms, *ma:rr* has to do with one’s change in attitude, a real sub/jection of the self, both to ancestral presence and to the other participants with all the socio-physical transformations and consequences this submission implies. This feeling is also intelligent and intellectual, a way of learning, transferring, and negotiating authority through perception and experience. The learning, and teaching of Yolngu knowledge is an intellectual process that must be, nevertheless, literally absorbed through one’s body. Indeed, as Dufrenne

writes, while the knowledge (*savoir*) of the work of art (e.g., the categories that inform and educate us on its constitutive elements, its composition, and history) is part of a deep self, we would not fully understand an artwork in its totality without feeling. Dufrenne (1973, 471) thus concludes that “feeling revives this knowledge, which in turn renders feeling intelligent”. In Yolngu terms, we can say that feeling (*ma:rr*) activates knowledge, and knowledge, in turn, is grounded in the experience, engagement, and commitment of the self through the other. The notion of *ma:rr* and the practice of *wama:rrkanhe* in Yolngu performance stress that feeling, a somatic mode of attention, is at the basis of intersubjectivity, in which the other does not exist simply in terms of one’s aims or intentions, but also in terms of the transformation of one’s self in participation with others (Dufrenne 1973, 394 n.1). In art and dance performance, intentionality is not merely being conscious of something, but being subjected to, not an intention towards but a participation and association with “being alongside with” a becoming constituted in relating (Haraway 2008, 136), an intimacy which strengthens as well as makes one vulnerable (Dufrenne 1987b, 3-11; cf. von Sturmer 2001, 104; de Monticelli 1998, 181–182; Jackson 1998, 1). It is feeling and, in particular, its capacity to affect and to be affected, that in dance renders political claims effective. However, these political assertions could not be made without having previously acquired a high and sophisticated degree of knowledge of the country and everything composing it in its multidimensionality, a knowledge that is gradually accumulated through a myriad of relations with human and more-than-human beings throughout one’s life (Tamisari 2022). Beyond the *here and now* of execution, dance is neither limited to embodying ancestral cosmogonic events by recomposing their linguistic, visual, musical, and kinetic dimensions, nor does it simply serve to represent one’s country history to claim or affirm one’s distinctive rights over it. Dance allows the possibility of bringing ancestral actions to presence in a unique socio-political synthesis. Performance, however, demands attention and it is this attention that gives form and life to that presence. “On the level of presence everything is given but nothing is known” (Dufrenne 1973, 338) and for this reason, the meaning of the dance event cannot limit itself to the body nor to the notion of “embodiment” no matter how immediate and potent presence is. Beyond the symbolism of the gestures, and the limits of the body, a higher meaning is produced. It is an expression that determines the success of the ritual in its totality. The symbolic is crucial yet it neither exhausts nor precludes the expressive. The attention demanded by a dance does not primarily reside in what it represents but in how it is performed. It is atten-

tion that brings presence to its apotheosis and activates the singularity and the truth of the knowledge conveyed through expression.

If, as Best (1978, 137) insists, human movement (and I would add performance in general) “does not symbolise reality, but it is reality”, the reality of Yolngu dance is another way in which people collapses time and space linking ancestral events to the present context, the dancers to the public, language to movement, and music to place. Dance unconceals, brings into presence, and makes visible ancestral beings’ creative, as well as destructive, powers so that they can be literally absorbed by the body in order to be tapped and transferred. Through dance, people transmit moral orientations, reproduce correct practices and a way of life, as well as share and renew key social values such as mutual care and interdependence. From this perspective, I propose that the meaning of dance is between the steps: in the relation with another person or more-than-persons in the intercorporeal space of care, compassion, love, and competition into which one enters through dancing. Considering Yolngu dance as a body technique with the capacity to collapse past and present and transform one’s consciousness through the embodiment of knowledge and the relation with humans and more-than-humans, it is possible to understand how it celebrates being-in-the-world and being-with-others. Furthermore, as the “curse of compliments” demonstrates, to-be-with-others means to venture into a relationship that can enliven or consume us, recreate and at the same time suffocate us. If the songs and dances re-enact socio-embodied knowledge linking ancestral events and all beings constituting the country, the intercorporeal world one enters through dancing constitutes the space of mutual attention, care, and responsibility. As the land is not a product or an objectification of ancestral actions, but rather a lived country, dances do not only represent ancestral events but are a modality of participation with others that, going beyond the sense of perception, bring people to the threshold of one another’s vital yet unexplored depths.

I learnt how to dance not only when I started stepping and moving with confidence, but when, dancing with others and for others, I entered the empathic sphere of care, work, help, compassion, competition, love, and attraction, a space in which my emotional and moral commitment and responsibility towards others was recognised by my adoptive mother’s brother, Charles Manydjarri, with his words of appreciation for my participation in dancing. In dancing with and for others, I not only participated in the ‘unfamiliar kinesthetic experience’ (Sklar 1991, 9) of learning new steps, arm movements, and posture, but also learnt to move in synchrony with bodies beating the tempo all around me and, with them, I entered a

Dancing with and for others in the field

‘shared body space’ that, at once, belonged to me although it was completely unknown. It was both welcoming and threatening, both inviting and challenging. To this day, my body literally *re-members* this tension that continues to stimulate my reflections and interpretation on Yolngu dance, and my further ethnographic fieldwork from a performative perspective. I now can say that, by dancing, I learnt to “hold the Law” (*rom ngayatham*), understanding this expression not only in terms of having, possessing, and observing the Yolngu ways of behaving and being but also with the meaning of “holding dear”, “worrying”. Over the years, I have cultivated and deepened my participation in a logic of feeling (*ma:rr*), openness, and attention towards others founded on mutual care and responsibility in the singularity and depth of all relations with humans and more-than-humans.

Dance as a diplomatic arena

This has led me to understand why performance in general and dance in particular is a privileged modality among Indigenous people for encounters and negotiations with non-indigenous people and institutions at local but also at national levels¹⁰. As my participation in dancing with Yolngu people required my increasing emotional engagement with and social accountability towards the members of my adoptive family, and the local Yolngu community at large, in a similar way, Yolngu people deploy performance to invite non-indigenous people and institutions to enter a dialogue in their own terms. In this contexts, performance introduces Yolngu symbols into European political discourse and thus asserts Yolngu autonomy and independence (Langton 1993, Magowan 2000, Morphy 1983).

These diplomatic intercultural spaces “of colonialism, primitivism and globalisation” (Myers 2002, 6), opened up by what we can refer to as “performative politics” (Magowan 2000, 309) or “performative tactic” (Tamisari 2010) that deals with “a series of irresolved and perhaps irresolvable problems” (Morphy 1983, 111), are more than attempts to educate, more than mere performative means toward political ends. Nor are they simply strategies of communication or translation of culture (Myers 2002, 273). Rather, performance in intercultural contexts should be approached as a *doing* where meaning is generated and understanding reached through the possibility of affecting and being affected. I propose that the

¹⁰ On the deployment of performance in diplomatic encounters, see Berndt 2004; De Largy Healy 2011; Henry 2011, Magowan 2000; Merlan 2014; Mundine 1997; Murray 2004; McIntosh 2000.

effectiveness of diplomatic encounters through performance should be appreciated in terms of our sensual participation and social engagement in, or refusal of, the possibilities, risks, and immediacy of knowledge that the here and now of aesthetic experience opens up to the participants.

Thus, I propose that the significance and effectiveness of dance performance in diplomatic encounters resides in the relationship it consolidates or crystallises in the single act of its actualisation, including production and reception. Performances in these contexts “aren’t simply about a symbolic exchange of culture at the level of representation” but should be understood in terms of “a politics of presencing” which, by bringing together concerns about “depletion and appropriation, showing and seeing, giving and receiving”, produce and mediate a reciprocal relationship of respect and recognition “derived from the experience of being touched and transformed ...” (Deger 2006, 111-113). I propose that the efficacy of performance stems from the participation of performer and viewer, a participation that constitutes the unfolding of performance in a particular space and time and produces a truth of its own. It is the actualizing of performance: the “special kind of behaving, thinking, relating and doing” of drama (Schechner 1973, 8), which allows the pathetic (Straus 1966) or drastic (Jankélévitch 2003) way of knowing in aesthetic experience. In postcolonial contexts, such as the diplomatic arenas of confrontation and recognition between Indigenous and non-indigenous people in Australia, we should seek the significance of Indigenous performance in the immediacy and intimacy of this knowledge gained in participation. More specifically, beyond political motivations, expectations, and assertions of Indigenous actors in realigning their cultural values to particular historical circumstances, and beyond the politics of (self) representation, it is in the here and now of its singularity, that performance creates the condition of possibility for the social to realise itself in a concrete, although fleeting, manner. The social is to be understood here in terms of engagement, commitment, and accountability (von Sturmer 1995). Wherever, whenever, and however performance is employed, it does not establish a relationship, nor does it simply mediate it in cultural terms. Rather, performance takes the relationship between Indigenous performers and non-indigenous viewers to a moment of consolidation or, even better, of activation where, if it is to progress at all, it needs to be grounded in an openness to participate. In this participation, it becomes possible to find the responsibility of our reciprocal historical and moral position. It is a participation in which questioning the other depends on being questioned; and affecting demands an openness to being affected, in a mechanism

Dancing with and for others in the field

that allows us to recognize our history and act on it. At all levels—between individuals or groups, personal and public, formal and informal modes, anthropologist and politician, from exhibitions of Australian Indigenous art to the courtroom—performance should also be understood as a reminder that respect and recognition run deeper than the legal and political sanctions of Indigenous property of land and human rights, and involve complex negotiations which oscillate between the generosity and risk, the acceptance and refusal, and the enthusiasm and indifference of social relatedness.

Works cited

- Barad, Karen. 2003. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 (3): 802-831.
- _____. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Berndt, Ronald. 2004 [1962]. *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory Australia. Oceania Monograph* 54. Sydney: The University of Sydney.
- Best, David. 1978. *Philosophy and Human Movement*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Csordas, Thomas J. 1993. "Somatic Modes of Attention." *Cultural Anthropology* 8 (2):135-56.
- Deger, Jennifer. 2006. *Shimmering Screens. Making Media in an Aboriginal Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- De Lary Healy, Jessica. 2011. "'Murayana Va Á Garma Cette Année!' Cérémonies Publiques Et Rituels Contemporains Du Nord-est De La Terre D'Arnhem (Australie)." *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 1: 123-34.
- De Monticelli, Roberta. 1998, *La conoscenza personale. Introduzione alla fenomenologia*. Milano: Guerrini Studio.
- Dufrenne, Mikel. 1973 [1953], *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, translated by Edward L. Casey. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- _____. 1987. *In the Presence of the Sensuous: Essays in Aesthetics*, translated by Mark S. Roberts and Dennis Gallagher. Atlantic Highlands (New Jersey): Humanities Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Henry, Rosita. 2011. "Dancing Diplomacy: Performance and the Politics of Protocol in Australia." In *Made in Oceania: Social Movements, Cultural Heritage and the State in the Pacific*, edited by Edvard Hviding and Knut Rio, 179-193. Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing.

- Jackson, Michael. 1989. *Paths Towards a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- _____. 1998. *Minima Ethnographica. Intersubjectivity and the Ethnographic Project*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jankélévitch, Vladimir. 2003. *Music and the Ineffable*, translated by Carolyn Abbate. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kapferer Bruce. 1986. "Performance and the Structuring of Meaning and Experience." In *The Anthropology of Experience*, edited by Victor. W. Turner and Edward. D. Bruner, 188-203. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Keen Ian. 1994. *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion*. Clarendon Press: Oxford.
- Langton, Marcia. 1993. "Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television": *An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and the Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and About Aboriginal People and Things*. North Sydney, NSW: Australian Film Commission.
- Magowan, Fiona. 2000. "Dancing With a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11(3): 308-321.
- _____. 2007. *Melodies of Mourning: Music and Emotions in Northern Australia*. Crawley: University of Western Australia.
- _____. 2016. "Valuing Spiritual Intimacy: Convergences and Counterpoints of Christianity in an Economy of Yolngu Performance." In *Christianity, Conflict, and Renewal in Australia and the Pacific*, edited by Fiona Magowan and Carolyn Schwarz, 102-25. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Merlan, Francesca. 2014. "Recent Rituals of Indigenous Recognition in Australia: Welcome to Country." *American Anthropologist* 116(2): 296-309.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss." In *Signs*, edited by John Wild and James M. Edie, 114-25. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Morphy, Howard. 1983. "'Now You Understand'. An Analysis of the Way Yolngu Have Used Sacred Knowledge to Retain Their Autonomy." In *Aborigines, Land and Land Rights* edited by Nicola Peterson and Marcia Langton, 110-33. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
- Mundine, Djon. 1997. Knowing When to Say Ole'. *Periphery Magazine*, March.
- Murray, Tom. 2004. *Dhakiyarr vs the King*. Videorecording, Sydney: ABC.
- Myers, Fred. 2002. *Painting Culture. The Making of an Aboriginal High Art*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- McIntosh, Ian. 2000. *Aboriginal Reconciliation and the Dreaming. Warramiri Yolngu and the Quest for Equality*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Ness, Sally Ann. 1992, *Body, Movement and Culture. Kinaesthetic and Visual Symbolism in a Philippine Community*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Dancing with and for others in the field

- Schechner, Richard. 1973. *Essays on Performance Theory 1970-1976*. New York: Drama Book Specialists.
- Schieffelin, Edward. 1985. "Performance and the Cultural Construction of Reality." *American Ethnologist* 12 (4): 707-24.
- Sklar, Diedre. 1991. "On Dance Ethnography." *Dance Research Journal* 23 (1): 6-10.
- _____. 2000. "Reprise: On Dance Ethnography." *Research Journal* 32 (1): 70-77.
- Stein, Edith. 1989 [1917] *On the Problem of Empathy*, Washington, DC: ICS Publications.
- Straus, Erwin W. 1966. *Phenomenological Psychology*, translated by Erling Eng. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Tamisari, Franca. 2000 "The Meaning of the Steps is in Between, Dancing and the Curse of Compliments," in Special Issue *The Politics of Dance*, edited by Rosita Henry, Fiona Magowan and David Murray, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology (TAJA)* 11 (3): 36-48.
- _____. 2002. "Names and Naming: Speaking Forms into Place." In *The Land is a Map: Placenames of Aboriginal Origin*, edited by Luise Hercus, Flavia Hodges, and Jane Simpson, 87-102. Canberra: Pandanus Books.
- _____. 2010. "Dancing for Strangers. Zorba the Greek Yolngu Style. A Giullarata by the Chooky Dancers of Elcho Island." Special Issue *Indigenous Tourism, Performance, and Cross-cultural Understanding in the Pacific, La Ricerca Folklorica* 61: 61-72.
- _____. 2016. "A Space and Time for a Generation to React: the Gattjirrk Cultural Festival in Milingimbi." *Oceania* 86 (1): 92-109.
- _____. 2019. "Il dolore del lutto e il potere della danza. Continuità e innovazioni culturali nei riti indigeni australiani." In *Le religioni tra frustrazione e gioia*, edited by Silvano Petrosino, 145-63. Milano: Jaca Book.
- _____. 2021. "Creating your Vision and Understanding. The Musical Legacy of Wirrinyga Band Within and Beyond Northeast Arnhem Land." in Special issue *Musical Awakenings. Between Cultural Regeneration and Political Claims in Oceania*, edited by Matteo Gallo and Matteo Aria, *L'Uomo Società Tradizione Sviluppo* 11 (1): 113-48.
- _____. 2022. Yolngu Country as a Multidimensional Tangle of Relations. How 'Everything is Linked to One Another', Special issue: Humanities, Ecocriticism and Multispecies Relations. Proceedings (part II), *Lagoonscapes - The Venice Journal of Environmental Humanities*, 93-117, <https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni4/riviste/the-venice-journal-of-environmental-humanities/2022/1/yolngu-country-as-a-multidimensional-tangle-of-rel/>. (last accessed 5 May 2024)
- _____. 2024. *Enacted Relations. Performing Knowledge in an Australian Indigenous Community*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books.
- Thomson, Donald. 1975. "The Concept of 'Marr' in Arnhem Land." *Mankind* 10 (1): 1-10.

- Turnbull, Colin. 1990, "Liminality: A Synthesis of Subjective and Objective Experience." In *By Means of Performance. Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, edited by Rebecca Schechner and Willa Appel, 50-81. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- von Sturmer, John 1987. "Aboriginal Singing and Notions of Power." *Oceania Monographs*, 32: 63-76.
- _____. 1995 "R Stands For... An Extract from a Mabo Diary. Theme issue, "Mabo and Australia. On Recognising Native Title After Two Hundred Years." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1- 2): 101-15.
- _____. 2001. "Hot Diggidy Dog or Stomaching the Truth or One Way Passage." *UTS Review* 7 (1): 96-105.

Performing Salome in the Pacific. Three works by Yuki Kihara

Susanne Franco

The Japanese-Sāmoan interdisciplinary artist, researcher, and curator Yuki Kihara who is a dual citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand and Sāmoa, was the first non-Indigenous Pacific Islander to represent Aotearoa New Zealand at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (2022).¹ Born in 1975 in Sāmoa to a Japanese father and Sāmoan mother, Kihara is a member of the minority community of Fa’afafine, a term meaning “in the manner of a woman” and identifying people who are assigned male at birth and who express their gender in a feminine way. The term Fa’atama means “in the manner of a man” and refers to people who are assigned female at birth and express their gender in a masculine way. Fa’afafine also describes those identifying with a third gender or a non-binary identity, and therefore neither Fafine, the term used to describe cisgender women, nor Tane, are terms to describe cisgender men. Today the term Fa’afafine encompasses (but not entirely coincides with) the LGBTIQ+ community (Alexeyeff and Kihara 2018; Taulapapa and Kihara 2018; Schmidt, online, n.d.).

After studying in Sāmoa, Japan, and Aotearoa New Zealand, today Kihara lives in Sāmoa, and positions her work at the intersections of gender, indigeneity, history, diaspora, decolonisation, and the environment. Her work seeks to challenge dominant and singular historical narratives and inquire about Sāmoan culture and history through a research-based approach. In Venice, Kihara presented *Paradise Camp* curated by Natalie King. The exhibition included a dozen tableau photographs and a five-part episodic talk show series. In the series, a group of Fa’afafine discusses a selection of Paul Gauguin’s paintings created during his stays in Tahiti and Marquesas Islands between the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, which portray an idealised version of these islands as a paradise (King 2022). *Paradise Camp* also featured footage of Fa’afafine pageants, posters, books, performances, and other documents to unravel colonial and violent

¹ For more information on Yuki Kihara see: <http://www.shigeyukikihara.com>, (last accessed 5 May 2024).

histories about the Pacific behind its stereotyped colonial representation. The research process leading up to the exhibition has also proved evidence that Fa'afafine were central to the Sāmoan social fabric from the beginning and that the existence of queer identities was perceived as problematic and, therefore, morally, and legally pursued only after the settlement of the colonisers.

The Biennale event marked the culmination of a long process that brought Kihara closer to a queer past deeply rooted in Pacific history. Inspired by the idea that archives must be continually re-experienced through processes of embodiment, she begins all her art projects with extensive archival research. Searching for objects, images, and photographs from the colonial past, she explores their performative potential. Ethnographic photography had a decisive cross-cultural function in disseminating anthropological knowledge in the 19th and early 20th centuries through the instruments of mass communication of the time. It contributed massively to creating a visual memory of peoples and cultures at risk of disappearing and radically transformed by colonisation and modernisation. Today, these photographs serve as a valuable source for artists like Kihara, who use them as tools to investigate how this past has been represented. Specifically, Kihara transforms these images from being prisoners of time into devices that re-trace the portrayed subjects, aiming to culturally and historically legitimise an entire community of people, who aspire to exist in continuity with their past and projected into a possible future. Through her dance performances, and photographic and video works, she invites visitors to critically rethink culturally constructed binary categories such as male and female, European (Western) and Oceanic, and material and immaterial culture.

This essay discusses a dance performance and two video works by Kihara, in which the artist appears as Salome, her recurring and evolving alter-ego in several works since 2002 when the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum commissioned a performance, *Tauualuga: The Last Dance*, first presented the same year at the 4th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane. This time, Kihara retraced Sāmoa's colonial past from an Indigenous and environmental perspective by reenacting the traditional dance of *tauualuga*. This dance, literally translating to the “last dance,” but also known as the “dance of life,” is a solo performance accompanied by choral music and percussion, usually offered a final touch to a ritualised public social occasion (*fiafia*). The term *tauualuga* also refers to the top part of the roof of traditional Sāmoan houses (*fale*), and, on a symbolic level, in both cases, it means the gracious and beautiful conclusion of an important task or the grand finale of an enter-

Performing Salome in the Pacific

tainment or celebration such as weddings or festivities. Traditionally, this dance—featured by graceful sequence of movements and postures, as much as hand and facial gestures—was performed in full festive regalia. In the Pacific, dance is considered the expression of social roles and statuses, but also of the joy for life. *Taualuga* is transmitted body to body from generation to generation serving as a means to archive social and political history and revisit the memories of ancestors. Kihara hopes that through this enduring symbol of Sāmoan culture she “can trigger important discussions about the state of our world today” (Teaiwa 2011). In *Taualuga: The Last Dance* Kihara uses *taualuga* movement patterns and choreographic sequences, which have been shaped as a form of storytelling to reference local history and echo global and contemporary environmental issues. Whitney Tassie writes that in this performance, Kihara shows a series of dichotomies: “subjecthood and spectacle, celebration and lamentation, assimilation and rejection, memories and hopes” (Tassie 2013).

Where is Salome in the Pacific?

Salome dances in grief to pay tribute to the people of Sāmoa for their resilience.² Kihara performed *Taualuga: The Last Dance* for four years at various festivals, galleries and museums and later she developed this piece in different versions with the same title³ in which she revisits *taualuga* set to a chant sung by village elders. *Siva in Motion* (Dance in Motion)⁴ and *Galū Afi* (Waves of Fire)⁵ are the titles of two silent videos: the first was commissioned by the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2012, and the second won the Paramount Award of the 21st Wallace Art

² The character of Salome appears in several other works by Yuki Kihara in which she visits various sites in Upolu Island in Sāmoa that were impacted by natural disasters caused by earthquakes and climate change. See the photographic series entitled *Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?* (2013), <https://www.milfordgalleries.co.nz/dunedin/exhibitions/328-Yuki-Kihara-Where-do-we-come-from-What-are-we-Where-are-we-going> (last accessed 5 May 2024).

³ *Taualuga: The Last Dance* (2002), recorded in 2006, <https://vimeo.com/channels/shigeyuki/13811424> (last accessed 5 May 2024).

⁴ *Siva in Motion* (2012, 8', 14"), HD digital video, colour, silent. Concept leader, performer, director: Yuki Kihara, DOP and camera: Rebecca Swan; creative producer & editor: Kirsty MacDonald, hair and wardrobe assistance: Lindah Lepou and Louina Fifita-Fa'apo. *Making Siva in Motion*, director, camera, animations, editor: Kirsty MacDonald, with the participation of Dr. Erika Wolf, Department of History & Art History, University of Otago. See <https://vimeo.com/channels/shigeyuki/50271507> (last accessed 5 May 2024).

⁵ *Galū Afi* (2012, 4', 59"), HD digital video, colour, silent, same credits of *Siva in Motion*.

Awards. These videos are an extension of the video version of *Tauualuga: The Last Dance* and were filmed during a single session. Both videos make explicit reference to the choreographic structure of the *tauualuga* dance and to Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey, who invented the most innovative photographic techniques from the Victorian era, to retell the stories of the tsunami (“wave of fire” in Sāmoan language) that in 2009 partially destroyed Sāmoa, American Sāmoa, and Tonga killing almost 200 people.

These three works are part of a broader artistic strategy that Kihara is developing to decolonise a culture and give a voice to neglected or marginalised visual and embodied memories by grand historical narratives (Tassie 2013). To shed new light on the historical strategies implicated in the narration, preservation, and transmission of the past and cultural heritage, Kihara presents herself in the guise of Salome, a character that she projects into the identity of an anonymous Sāmoan woman portrayed in a photograph titled *Sāmoan Half-Caste* that she found in the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand collections during her preliminary archival research work. The photo was taken by the New Zealand photographer Thomas Andrew and later included in the album *Views in the Pacific Islands* (1886). In the photo, the woman sits before the camera looking steadily at the photographer, wearing a dark and tightly Victorian morning dress that restricts her physical movements and gestures. On one hand, she adheres to the dress code introduced by the colonial administration to Sāmoa in the early 19th century. On the other hand, she demonstrates a remarkable self-awareness, evading both the colonising male gaze and the structure of representation that would have pre-destined her to appear as a vulnerable and eroticised female, following the most stereotyped representations of exotic womanhood in this historical context. The Victorian dress signifies the denial of modernity as much as the problematic representation of otherness. As Kihara stresses, a detail that is often forgotten makes the role of this dress even more relevant for her project: the boning of the crinolines and corsets of British (and European) fashion standards at that time came from the whales hunted from the Pacific.⁶ In other words, she says, “The Pacific is actually in London ... it is not something that is far away”.⁷ In this sense, Mandy Treagus affirms

⁶ Yuki Kihara on *Siva in Motion*, <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/oceania-video-yuki-kihara-siva-in-motion>. (last accessed 20/3/2024).

⁷ *Ibid.*

Performing Salome in the Pacific

that “Kihara’s Salome has both Pacific and European identities and histories” (Treagus, 2017, 92). She unveils the paradisiac dimension in which the Pacific has been represented in colonial photographic imagery and, more recently, in advertising campaigns for mass tourism, bringing the focus to the complexities of the colonial structure of power and overcharging this exposure with issues concerning sexuality, gender, and race.

Genealogy of a character

The *Sāmoan Half-Caste* portrait is the principal visual source for the creation of Kihara’s Salome, a character of a story narrated in the New Testament. Salome was the daughter of Herodias and stepdaughter of King Herod, the ruler appointed by Rome in Galilee, Palestine. She asked for the head of John the Baptist in exchange for her seven veils dance. This story gained popularity in Christian art from an early period and resurfaced powerfully in Western imagery in the late 19th and early 20th century, thanks to the works by painters such as Gustave Moreau and Aubrey Beardsley, writers like Stéphane Mallarmé and Oscar Wilde, and composer Richard Strauss. During the 19th century, the myth of Salome catalysed the misogynist representations of femininity as vicious and vengeful when not murderous and generally of a castrating sisterhood. In this fantasy, both the moralising attitude of the Church and the coeval medical perspective in the neurological, psychological, and criminological sciences reemerged.

Wilde’s play *Salome* was first staged in 1896 at the Théâtre de l’Oeuvre in Paris and directed by Aurélien Lugné-Poë, who also performed the role of Herod. Initially inspired by the acting style of Sarah Bernhardt, the theatre star of the time who was meant to interpret it, the title role was performed by the dancer Lina Munte. Wilde emphasised the role of Salome as a passive object of the aesthetic gaze while paradoxically imagining the heroine’s capacity for bodily action, erotic transgression, and shocking violence. In other words, Wilde’s Salome contributed to orienting theatre practice to modernity. Mallarmé portrayed Salome as an algid and unfaithful woman, whose body conveys the idea of mortal immobility rather than movement. Strauss linked her identity to the *Dance of the Seven Veils*, never mentioned in Biblical literature, and ‘Salomania’ soon became a vast phenomenon throughout Europe and the United States, no longer entirely reducible to Symbolist and Decadent literary and cultural contexts (Jones 2013; Girdwood 2022; Bentley 2002; Caddy 2005, 37).

Salome has been reinvented via theatre, the visual arts, and cinema, acquiring the status of the emblem of the female dancer with a hypnotic

power over a violent and immoral model of masculinity but ready to embody irrational instincts that were deemed essentially feminine. This phenomenon intertwined with the Western fascination with “the Orient” that also spread through the bodies of female modern dancers and choreographers, who were able to draw spectators into a kinaesthetic experience. In those shows, created by Ruth St. Denis with Ted Shawn, Maud Allan, Martha Graham, and many others, quotations and imagery from “other” cultures converged, both when they were performed in elitist cultural contexts, vaudeville, and music hall theatres. The ‘School for Salomes’, opened in 1907 as part of the New York Theatre, to train future young dancers for this kind of popular entertaining show is a telling example (Bizot 1992).

For an audience well-versed in the history of Western theatre and concert dance and, more specifically the rise of modern dance in the first decade of the 20th century, encountering Kihara’s three works and her reenactments of Salome is inevitably filtered through the imagery produced by ethnographic photography. This confrontation is further shaped by the construction, representation, and reception of female identity in the Western world, as well as by the prevailing theatre codes, dance techniques, and choreographic styles of the period. As Olga Taxidou brilliantly remarks: “The battle between the word and the body is primarily fought through and on the body of the modernist performer.” (Taxidou 2007, 5) Modern dance not only infiltrated modernist performance and literary cultures but also became a favoured subject for silent film pioneers. Salome emerged as the character around whom to experiment with a creative subjectivity aspiring to full legitimate social emancipation, and performative authorship. Megan Girwood (2023, 23) insightfully notes that, through her dance, Salome has expressed a rejection of the manipulative dimension of masculine political power and challenged the male gaze, destabilising the patriarchal integrity of Western society.

Kihara’s artwork also contributes to the recent critique of the long-standing canonical approach to dance as limited geographically to Western high culture. New dance studies now consider modernism as a transnational spread of influences, reconceptualising it as a “transtemporal and translocal discursive construct of intertextual connections.” (Klimczyk 2022, 301; see also Manning 2019)

Many artists engaged in choreographic explorations in the early 20th century embraced the character of Salome precisely because she inherently embodies the core of modern dance. This essence entails the need to break

Performing Salome in the Pacific

free from technical apparatuses and expressive codes of the academic tradition perceived as restrictive and outdated, to embrace forms of Dionysian ecstasy and a more “natural” dynamic. Often shrouded (and thus protected) by Orientalist aesthetic references, modern dancers also staged female seduction, for which Salome represented a quintessential example.

At first glance, Salome’s *Dance of the Seven Veils* may seem to be performed by a libidinous female character fully subservient to male visual and political authority. However, her dance compels Herod to succumb to the irrational and grants her the head of the man she desires. In contrast to the 19th-century ballerinas, modern female dancers of the 20th century were no longer the sole object of the desiring male gaze, but they posed a threat to the Victorian and modern eras’ moral values. Girwood (2023, 23) also emphasises to what extent, with their presence and quality of movement, dancers brought to the surface of modernity—perceived as rational—the “primitive” and uncontrolled energies that the new choreographic aesthetics favoured over technical virtuosity. Loïe Fuller, Maud Allan, Ida Rubinstein, Tamara Karsavina, Theda Bara, Martha Graham, Gertrude Hoffmann, and many others all performed and embodied modern Salomes, prioritising the body as a site of creative if not glamorous empowerment. In some cases, they gained fame in Europe despite originating from other cultural contexts or dealing with complex gender, national, or religious identities. Consequently, Salome’s theme and implicit queerness became part of a broader iconography of movement, aligning with the instability of the modern subject. Although Salome’s *Dance of the Seven Veils* has been stigmatised as a staged striptease, it actually offered one of the most powerful ‘visual paradigms’ of choreographic modernism (Brandstetter 2015, 13). In this context, the veil in different choreographic solutions, marks the moving and porous membrane between the naked and “natural” female body and the spectator’s gaze. In this unstable and dynamic space, the modern female dancer could create a new set of movements and gestures, asserting and displaying the mastery of her own body.

Among the many modern dancers who performed as Salome, Loïe Fuller and Maud Allan, particularly shared an explicit feminist interest and explored the potential of a new female and creative individualism through their performances. They also adopted the fin-de-siècle stage actress Sarah Bernhardt as a model to oppose the early 20th century diffused anxiety about the female body, and to foster an increasing identitarian awareness.

Fuller debuted her first Salome in 1895 in a small theatre in Paris,

and again in 1907, in a new version entitled *La Tragédie de Salomé*, at the Théâtre des Arts. This made her dancing body a crossroads of technology, performativity, and gender identity. Fuller's style of movement and the stage effects she created for her own performances are the outcome of a wide-ranging research in which her fascination with technology, her reflection on representational models, and her growing awareness of how to convey non-normative dimensions of identity by the standards of the time converge (Townsend 2008). The sophisticated and intricate lighting apparatus in which she performed emphasised the reception of her famous 'serpentine' movements. This new movement aesthetic also resonated with Eastern dances and, more specifically, the Indian *nautch* dancers, as well as the key modern spatial pattern of the spiral that was suggested by her highly technological use of textiles. By enhancing the impression of a dynamic energy radiating from the core of the body, Fuller transformed herself into a metaphor for modernism itself. By obscuring her body from the spectator's gaze beneath layers of multi-metric fabric, she shielded it from the erotic dimension to which the ballerina was historically relegated. As Girwood (2023, 48) observes, she therefore orchestrated her dance precisely in the same invisibility in which the imaginary of the time located (and relegated) queer female sexuality. Simultaneously, her second interpretation of Salome has also been historicised as an example of a proto-camp and "incandescent" gender identity, deliberately and intensely ambiguous and thus decidedly modern (Sontag 1964, 2018; Cooper Albright 2007, 115-143; Veroli 2009, 220-222). Fuller also represents a woman and dancer born in a cultural context, the United States of the 19th century, where she performed in the entertainment theatre of the music hall without ever denying it, even once she landed in Europe, where she managed to integrate her practice into intellectual and artistic environments that understood her innovative scope, making her dance become iconic and even popular.

In 1908, self-taught Canadian dancer Maud Allan, a former pupil of Fuller, successfully performed her own seductive interpretation of the *Dance of the Seven Veils* at London's Palace Theatre as part of her *Vision of Salome*. Her gestures and postures were deemed obscene and soon negatively connoted as a symptom of her "sexual deviance", which was officially declared during a legal trial in which she was involved indirectly also because associated with the famous character. While claiming to reverberate classical ideals of beauty and grace with her dance, Allan, barefoot and adorned with a net and strings of pearls, more explicitly than other dancers, embraced the eroticising Orientalism traditionally associated with Salome's visual imagery in

Performing Salome in the Pacific

19th-century art. She did so, however, from a different position—simultaneously that of the performer and the choreographer of her piece (Walkowitz 2003; Koritz 1994).

Fuller and Allan radically transformed the perception of the female (dancing) body. A potent creative force, they catalysed the attention of women's claims to social independence and fuelled the aesthetic debates with issues concerning the status and visibility of women's bodies in the arts. By making the profound connection between kinaesthetic experience and gender politics visible, they also confer aesthetic and social legitimacy to the profession of dancing (Koritz 1995, 148). Moreover, they fully integrated into a queer and feminist choreographic lineage due to the quality of their spiral and serpentine movement which elicited a recurring twisting of the gaze, problematising the spectator's vision and aesthetic engagement. In other words, it was the quality of their movements that expressed a queer and feminist attitude and vision. Fuller and Allan, although in different ways, embodied what Hillel Schwartz has defined as the new kinaesthetic of the "torque" (Schwartz 1992, 73), characterised by fluid and curvilinear gestures spiralling outward from the centre through controlled rhythmic impulses. Embodied in their renditions of the *Dance of the Seven Veils*, Salome has long inhabited European stages and beyond, thanks in particular to Allan's extensive tours.

That same year, 1908, the choreographer Michel Fokine staged another famous and controversial interpretation of Wilde's Salome in St. Petersburg, casting Ida Rubinstein in the title's role, with costumes by painter Léon Bakst, and music by Alexander Glazunov. Rubinstein, who was Jewish but converted to Orthodoxy, compensated for her lack of technical mastery with her legendary androgynous beauty and mesmerising stage presence. She refrained from speaking any words from Wilde's text—it was distributed among the audience before the performance—because the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church had banned it. Consequently, Rubinstein could only interpret the dramatic content of the text and emphasise the mimic language. The performance consisted of a series of essentially static poses and gestures quoting the ancient Greek sculptural-iconic expressive trend of the time. However, her highly sensual and near-nude version, yet not obscene, of the *Dance of the Seven Veils*—accentuated by a long diaphanous tunic decorated with leaves—captivated the audience, contributing to the transformation of dance movement aesthetics and making her Salome the emblem of how the dancing body could overcome censorship (Garelick 2007). Her bisex-

uality, which did not conceal and superimposed on subsequent repertoire choices such as her legendary interpretation of Saint Sebastian, increased the retrospective curiosity for Salome with which she became acquainted with the major exponents of the renewal of choreographic language and the ballet genre in the 20th century.

Negotiating with the past as history and as memory

Through the series of performances and videos reenacting *taualuga*, Kihara inspires us to consider the role of anthropology within dance studies. She delves into the intricate relationship between history and memory, exploring their dynamics through processes of re-appropriation, and re-signification of the past. These works also prompt reflection on the interplay between dance, individual experiences, and collective memories. They underscore the active and vital role of mnemonic processes and transmission strategies in engaging with the past as both history and memory. Her dance performances and video works resonate with the numerous Salomes of the early 20th century, who were pivotal in crafting memorable choreographic explorations and identity representations. As Kihara aptly remarks “I wanted people to be seduced by the dance while being conceptually challenged by it” (Kihara quoted in Were 2012).

In *Tauuluga: The Last Dance*, Kihara/Salome stands motionless in her dark robe and her hair pulled back in a bun, framed by a wide plaster arch in a museum room. A dim light that catches her from one side down casts a ghostly shadow of her body behind her throughout the performance. Following the precise gestural score of the *taualuga*, Kihara/Salome bends down and begins to move her hands, wrists, palms, and fingers, producing a rhythmic twisting of the torso to the right and to the left. She stands up and her arms amplify the gestures of her hands, which move symmetrically in relation to the torso but in the upper part of the surrounding space. Small bends of the legs alternate with light hops on the spot repeated in the two lateral directions until she ends her dance where she started it. The recorded music and chant break the silence surrounding the histories and memories of colonialism, and the dialogue between her real body and its shadow amplifies what Ananja Jahanara Kabir (2021, 52) defines as “the dialectic between spectrality and the material sumptuousness”.

Siva in Motion and *Galu Afi* were shot consecutively, the former with the camera positioned on the vertical axes and focussing on Kihara’s looking straight at the audience, and the latter shot horizontally, emphasising her hands and highlighting dance as a form of social commentary. Here,

Performing Salome in the Pacific

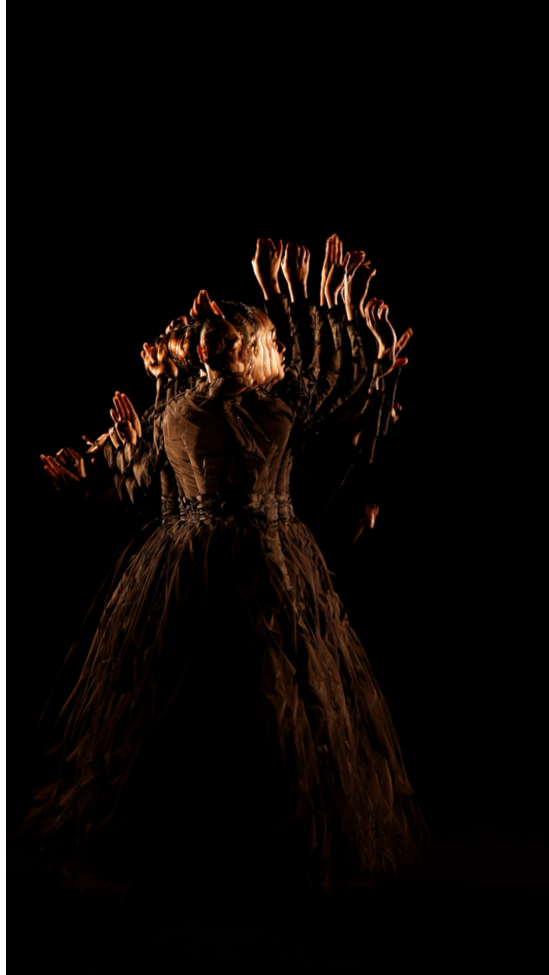
Kihara's face is out of the frame. The hand movements are the most evident trace of the *taualuga*, while at the same time evoking the destructive violence of the tsunami waves for the same duration of its devastating impact in 2009. The absence of sound shifts the attention to the visual dimension and the rhythmic and temporal articulation of the performer's gestural sculpture of movement. This approach explicitly references Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey's photographic techniques, which fracture time to analyse the dynamic motion of humans and animals.

In their photographic studies of locomotion Muybridge and Marey approached movement analysis differently. Muybridge prioritised narrative over scientific accuracy, capturing movement at different moments and often rearranging the sequence of images to create a continuous flow and to simulate chronological and logical continuity. In contrast, Marey, a trained physician who later specialised in physiology, utilised chronophotography (picture of time) to provide measurable evidence of human and animal locomotion. He employed multiple exposures on a single photographic plate to reveal a mechanical and optical truth, a perspective unattainable to the naked eye. Marey's work is regarded as emblematic of modern times because they introduced a level of naturalism previously unexplored, influencing painters and artists of Victorian times, and paving the way for new aesthetic dimensions in avant-garde movements (Braun 1992; Braun 2010).

These groundbreaking experiments in movement analysis and technological innovations significantly reshaped the contemporary experience and understanding of time and movement, which were also central concerns in dance. New methods of notation, traditionally considered useful *aide mémoire* for dance masters and a means to legitimise and archive this ephemeral art form, were also used to make the moving body a controllable (or censurable) material. At the beginning of the 20th century, these sophisticated tools allowed for the detailed analysis of dynamic motion, transforming dance into a subject for analytical study and documentation. In recent times, this approach to dance documentation and transmission merged into a vast field of study still enriching the theoretical debate about how to destabilise traditional narratives of dance history based mainly on written and institutionalised forms of documentation by emphasising the importance of memorial traces and broadening the geographical and temporal scope of its existence revaluing memorial traces of its existence (Franco and Nordera 2010).

Siva in Motion begins with Kihara/Salome shrouded in darkness, moving her arms rhythmically before slowly turning to face the camera. The hands begin to twirl ever more frantically back and forth and from bottom to

top. The acceleration doubles and triples her figure, evoking an image of a blazing fire, before the movement slows down and the fire gives way to the dancer's integrity. The gestures of the hands and arms become clearer, and Kihara/Salome turns again rhythmically to the right and left, gradually emphasising the twist of the torso, until she turns her back to the camera, repeating the same sequence of movements and returning to the front.



Yuki Kihara, *Galu Afi: Waves of Fire*, 2012, video still. Collection of the Arts House Trust. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Performing Salome in the Pacific

In *Galū Afi*, Kihara/Salome stands in front of the camera, but the frame only captures her torso, hands, and half of her face. Kihara/Salome never turns and her hands start twirling, at times seeming to touch the screen. By focusing solely on her hands and avoiding direct eye contact, viewers are encouraged to move beyond mere identification. Salome's body becomes a mere surface displaying historical and cultural discourses about gender and ethnic identities. The choreographic movements of the *taualuga* are sequentially repeated with rotations, bending, and hand movements, and the rhythm of the images fluctuates between deceleration and acceleration, creating an intensified effect reminiscent of a flame horizontally stretched before the viewer's gaze.



Yuki Kihara, *Siva in Motion*, 2012, video still. Commissioned by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Siva in Motion and *Galū Afi*, both performed without an audience, echo the rational and analytical approaches to dance movement, but also the crisis of representation caused by the abandoning of the idea of the unity of the body as bearer of identity. They reenact as well the ambivalent reaction of (dancing) bodies against the experience of living in modern times and the conditions of modernity itself when dancing bodies became the privileged sites of the construction of modern subjectivity, and movement the privileged tool to convey emotion.

The darkness in the videos, with Kihara/Salome seemingly floating, intensifies the effect created by her body enveloped in a black and modest Victorian dress. This image underscores to what extent she exists under patriarchal control over her body and identity, while also subverting the

stereotype of the exotic Pacific woman. Daniel Satele (2022, 132) observes that “the spectacle of the Indigenous body in the Victorian dress encapsulates the complexity of the intercultural encounters that occurred in the wake of the European contact with the Pacific”). Much like Fuller, Kihara/Salome conceals her body under layers of fabric, performing her ethnic and gender identity to escape both the Western and male gaze pressure. Additionally, in *Siva in Motion* and *Galū Afi*, both her dress and her physical presence evoke a sense of mourning over the destruction caused by the tsunami, reigniting grief over the loss of the independence and the identity of Sāmoans and other Pacific peoples due to colonisation and its associated model of patriarchal social organisation. Framed by the camera, Salome appears isolated and lonely, like a dancer caught in the tension between the denied movements and the constraining dress. She strives to preserve her people’s traditions while recalling the colonial past, where cultural hybridity remains insufficiently explored. She stands as a witness for all, in Europe and the Pacific, confronting what it means to navigate ongoing modernisation amid a severe environmental crisis, while negotiating embodied gendered imaginaries and practising daily resilience (Seja 2015). Like Salome, who wielded dance as a tool for political manipulation, Kihara’s Salome acts in the Pacific to further the current decolonising process.

In Sāmoan culture, for a performer to turn his/her back on the public is considered offensive, and here Kihara/Salome begins by turning her back and returns to the initial position to emphasise the idea of a temporal infinity around a highly provocative gesture. As the artist affirms ‘While the world imposed the idea of paradise on Sāmoa, it is Sāmoa that is going through hell’ (Kihara quoted in Seja 2015, np). Kihara emphasises the central metaphors of looking and veiling in the various reiterations of this myth by reversing or re-semanticising them.

The colonial photography at the origin that spurred the re-invention of this character/alter ego represents a fluid dimension to compare narratives and imaginaries from the past and the present and, thereby exploring overlapping temporalities. Temporally, Kihara’s Salome, moving at a decelerated pace and with post-production interventions that layer her gestures, stands as a figure capable of positioning herself beyond the traditional historical organisation as linear and chronological. Spatially, she is deeply rooted in Sāmoa, from where she witnesses destruction and environmental crisis amplifying an emergency on global scale, while also looking back at local history to highlight the wisdom of Indigenous belief systems as a

Performing Salome in the Pacific

resilience reference point. Addressing both the temporal accumulation in our perceived present, and the spatial overlap of local and global, Kihara's Salome embodies our collective mourning for past and potential losses, yet she persists, making sense of it all.

Re-enacting the past in "potential museums"

Like various artistic strategies defined as reenactment that make past works (be it a choreographic or dance piece, a performance, or an exhibition) meaningful in/for the present, Kihara's performances and video works create a new environment for a traditional Sāmoan dance and for a Western character (Agnew, Lamb, and Toman 2019; Franko 2018; Baldacci and Franco 2022).

As an anti-positivist approach to (art) history, reenactment undermines the notion of chronological and linear succession of historical times, presenting them instead as complex and multi-layered, to be explored through alternative forms of temporal encounters between past, present, and future. Profoundly influenced by gender, post and de-colonial, environmental, and memory issues, this approach to the past has gained a central role in redefining knowledge and historical discourses. It also scrutinises canons and genealogies by challenging institutional forms of heritage preservation and transmission. Finally, reenactment prompts viewers to question the identities transformed, disguised, and betrayed by colonialism.

Colonialism also had a profound impact on the formation and development of museums, influencing the collection, interpretation, and display of cultural artefacts and narratives. The process of decolonising museums is therefore multifaceted and complex, and requires a commitment to ongoing reflection, education, and collaboration to challenge historical narratives, rethink curatorial practices, engage with Indigenous communities, and address ethical considerations related to ownership and representation. It requires a new sensibility to contrast the lack of Indigenous voices and perspectives in curatorial decisions that can perpetuate colonial stereotypes, misinterpretations and misrepresentations of Indigenous cultures. It also involves reeducating and engaging visitors to challenge and rethink their preconceptions, expectations, and understandings of museum collections and narratives.

Kihara's artworks, primarily commissioned by art galleries, are frequently presented inside museums or international exhibitions such as

La Biennale, which altogether are facing a profound rethinking of their mission and role in our societies. The inclusion of performative and choreographic artworks and participatory practices within museums contributes to reimagining the museological apparatus and decolonising curatorial strategies, investing in the collection and transmission of heritage. The live presence of performances and choreographic works that displace and reorganise bodies along with visitors' physical and emotional responses, has become crucial. This focus also extends to time-based media and digital art that interrogates marginalised memories and underrepresented collective identities through performance.

Kihara's works respond to these contemporary needs by revisiting history, transmitting embodied memories, and introducing counter-historical discourses. Moreover, her reenactments aim to counteract the musealisation of colonialism, shifting the focus from mere display to a process of making visible through remediation (Grechi 2023, 116; Lee 2022).

The generative force derived from ethnographic photography examined through the critical lens of our present, seeks to understand the past while anticipating the future. This approach situates Kihara at the heart of today's museological discourses and practices, grappling with the intricate task of collecting and presenting the multiple overlapping temporalities involved in challenging traditional and often Eurocentric understandings of time and history. This perspective challenges the linear and teleological organisation of time (past, present, and future) and therefore of history, emphasising instead the simultaneous coexistence and interaction of different temporalities. Multiple temporalities allow for a richer understanding of collective memory, where past events continue to resonate and influence the present as they uncover and highlight alternative histories and narratives.

Creating a museum space welcoming alternative and marginalised voices and experiences means reevaluating our relationship with history and the pastness of the historical (political) past, as much as opening to a rather inclusive, dynamic, and interconnected understanding of history that acknowledges the complexity and diversity of human experiences and perspectives.

Kihara engages with history via the Sāmoan concept of *vā* (or the collapsing time in space) to comprehend both the country's present and the potential future it invites. In this regard, she affirms: "Sāmoans walk forward into the past while walking back into the future, where the present is a continuous and simultaneous journey into the ancestral realm of the future". (Kihara quoted in Seja, 2015). Furthermore, Kihara describes

Performing Salome in the Pacific

her practice as a *Vārchive* (a compound word for *vā*, meaning space, and archive) and Liang-Kai Yu and Eliza Steinbock refer to it as a “potential museum” (Yu and Steinbock, 2023).

In this conceptual space, the artist creates the possibility to spatialise and temporalise historical pasts, community (more than collective) memory, and embodied (more than material) knowledge. In this kind of museum visitors learn how artworks and artefacts, memory and people, can coexist and be mutually present rather than represented. This is the space where dance practices and their historical traces could also find their place, and Salome her home.

Works cited

- Agnew, Vanessa, Jonathan Lamb, and Juliane Tomann, eds. 2019. *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Alexeyeff, Kalissa, and Yuki Kihara. 2018. *Polyface in Paradise: Exploring the Politics of Race, Gender, and Place*,” *Repossessing Paradise*, special issue *The Contemporary Pacific* 30 (2): 329-353.
- Andrew, Thomas. (1886) *Sāmoan Half-Caste*, black and white photograph, silver print photography. In *Views in the Pacific Islands*, The Thomas Andrew Collection (Gift of Thomas & Edith Gillan, 1994), reg. num. O.037952, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Baldacci, Cristina, and Susanne Franco, eds. 2022. *On Reenactment: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools*. Torino: Academia University Press.
- Bentley, Toni. 2002. *Sisters of Salome*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Bizot, Richard. 1992. “The Turn-of-the-Century Salome Era: High- and Pop-Culture Variations on the Dance of the Seven Veils.” *Choreography and Dance*, 2 (3): 71-87.
- Brandstetter, Gabriele. 2015. *Poetics of Dance: Body, Image, and Space in the Historical Avant-Gardes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Braun, Marta. 1992. *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 2010. *Eadweard Muybridge*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Caddy, Davinia. 2005. “Variations on the Dance of the Seven Veils.” *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 17 (1): 37-58.
- Cooper Albright, Ann. 2007. *Traces of Light: Absence and Presence in the Work of Loie Fuller*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Franco, Susanne and Marina Nordera, eds. 2010. *Ricordanze. Memoria in movimento e coreografie della storia*. Torino: Utet.
- Franko, Mark, ed. 2018. *The Oxford Handbook of Dance Reenactment*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Garelick, Rhonda K. 2007. *Electric Salome: Loïe Fuller's Performance of Modernism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Grechi, Giulia. 2023. "Di monumenti al cadere e musei infestati: colonialità postuma e rimediazioni decoloniali." In *Performance + decolonialità*, edited by Anna Serlenga. 100-122. Roma: Sossella.
- Girdwood, Megan. 2022. *Modernism and the Choreographic Imagination: Salome's Dance After 1890*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Lee, Shimrit. 2022. *Decolonize Museums*. London: OR Books.
- Manning, Susan. 2019. "Dance History." In *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies*, edited by Sherril Dodds. 303-326. London: Bloomsbury.
- Kabir, Ananya Jahanara. 2021. "Creolised Dance, Museumised Space: Jeannette Ehlers and Decolonial Re-Edification." In *Moving Spaces. Enacting Dance, Performance, and the Digital in the Museum*, edited by Susanne Franco, Gabriella Giannachi. 41-55. Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari.
- King, Nathalie, ed.. 2022. *Paradise Camp*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Klimczyk, Wojciech. 2022. "Re-writing Dance Modernism: Networks." In *Re-writing Dance Modernism: Networks*, edited by Julia Hoczyk, and Wojciech Klimczyk. 297-317. Cracow-Warsaw: Jagiellonian University Press-National Institute of Music and Dance.
- Koritz, Amy. 1994. "Dancing the Orient for England: Maud Allan's 'The Vision of Salome.'" *Theatre Journal* 46 (1): 63-78.
- _____. 1995. *Gendering Bodies/Performing Art: Dance and Literature in Early-Twentieth-Century Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Jones, Susan. 2013. *Literature, Modernism and Dance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Satele, Daniel Michael. 2022. "Yuki Kihara's Salome: Is Something Terrible Happening Now?" In *Paradise Camp*, edited by Nathalie King. 129-33. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Schmidt, Johanna. Nd. "Gender Diversity – Māori and Pasifika Gender Identities." In *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/mi/gender-diversity/page-4> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Schwartz, Hillel. 1992. "Torque: The New Kinaesthetic of the Twentieth Century." In *Incorporations*, edited by Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter. 71-126. New York: Zone Books.
- Seja, Nina. 2015. "The Past is a Foreign Climate: Shigeyuki Kihara Meets the Anthropocene." *Art Monthly Australasia* 285 (November): np.
- Simonson, Mary. 2013. "Choreographing Salome: Re-creating the Female Body." In *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 27-47. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sontag, Susan. 2018. *Notes on Camp* (1964). London: Penguin Books.

Performing Salome in the Pacific

- Taulapapa McMullin Dan, and Yuki Kihara. 2018. *Sāmoan Queer Lives*, Auckland: Little Island Press.
- Taxidou, Olga. 2007. *Modernism and Performance: Jarry to Brecht*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Teaiwa, Katerina. 2011. "An Interview with Interdisciplinary Artist Shigeyuki Kihara". In *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, edited by Katerina Teaiwa, April Henderson, and Sean Mallo, no. 27, <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue27/kihara.htm> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Townsend, Julie. 2008. *Staking Salomé: The Literary Forefathers and Choreographic Daughters of Oscar Wilde's 'Hysterical and Perverted Creature'.* In *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture: The Making of a Legend*, edited by Joseph Bristow. 154–179. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Treagus, Mandy. 2017. "Looking Back at Samoa: History, Memory, and the Figure of Mourning in Yuki Kihara's 'Where Do We Come From?' What Are We? Where Are We Going?," *Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas*, 3 (1-2): 86-109 last (accessed 5 May 2024).
- Veroli, Patrizia. 2009. *Loie Fuller*. Palermo: L'Epos.
- Walkowitz, Judith R. 2003. "The 'Vision of Salome': Cosmopolitanism and Erotic Dancing in Central London 1908-1918," *American Historical Review*, 108 (2): 337–376 (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Were, Virginia. 2012. "Dance Of History And Light." *Aotearoa Art News* 158 (31 October): np. <https://artnews.co.nz/shigeyuki-kihara-summer-2012> (last accessed 5 May 2024).
- Whitney, Tassie. 2013. *Salt 8: Shigeyuki Kihara*. Catalogue. Utah Museum of Fine Arts (UMFA).
- Yu, Liang-Kai, and Eliza Steinbock. 2023. "Yuki Kihara's Paradise Camp as a Potential Fa'afafine Museum: Fabulous Cohabitation in a Shared World." *Journal of Material Culture* 28 (4): 576-603 (last accessed 5 May 2024).

Afterword

Ann R. David

These three engaging essays that have emerged out of the research project *Memory in Motion. Re-Membering Dance History* delves into anthropology's role in dance studies, examining the interplay between dance and memory through the processes of re-appropriation, re-signification, and the invention of the past. They investigate wide-ranging and cross-cultural aspects of dance, performance, and Cultural Anthropology, foregrounding many of the current concerns emerging in theoretical and methodological debates regarding the body and its place in academic conception and thinking. The three writers explore bodily understanding from a point of dance praxis, a perspective that addresses the embodied form through deep involvement in the dance itself. Their essays range between William Forsythe's contemporary choreography from the standpoint of a dancer in his company (Waterhouse), to embodied fieldwork engagement with the Yolngu Indigenous communities in Northeast Arnhem Land (Tamisari), and an analysis of the work of Sāmoan-Japanese interdisciplinary artist, researcher, curator, and activist Yuki Kihara (Franco). Here, the richness of the bodily encounters, or the "entanglement of bodies" (Waterhouse, p. X) offers new knowledge regarding performance, embodiment, and their place in human understanding. The embodied dance practice is an area of research that has occupied much of my own time and interest, having written two different chapters that investigate how the voice of the body may be heard and how that may bring a richness and complexity to ethnographic work with the moving body (David 2013, 2021). As Sally Ann Ness (2004, 138) argues, such investigations into embodied practice in movement forms provide deeper levels of understanding and have "the capacity to produce epistemological shifts and to yield very different forms of cultural insights".

Historically, dance and movement had remained on the margins of anthropological inquiry, but a new interest in the 1970s and 80s established the anthropology of dance as a sub-discipline of anthropology, led by US and UK scholars such as Brenda Farnell, Adrienne Kaeppler, Joann

Kealiinohomkou, Anya Peterson Royce and Drid Williams amongst others.¹ Ethnochoreologists working in Eastern Europe at this time contributed significantly to the growth of the field, such as the work of Anca Giurchescu and Lisbet Torp (1991) who investigated the phenomenon of folk dances in their communities.² The work of the above scholars reflected the issues of that period, focusing on nationalism, gender issues, post-structuralism, politics, feminist theories, world cultures, and colonialism as well as deep analysis of the dance structures. These academics and dance practitioners were followed by the next generation who built upon existing research, establishing dance anthropology/ethnology as a significant field of discovery setting up university courses to train academics in this field (see Andrée Grau, Georgiana Gore, Sally Ann Ness, and Susan A. Reed in particular). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, at the Dance Department of the University of California, Los Angeles, through the work of Allegra Fuller Snyder and Elsie Dunin began to establish the field of Dance Ethnology. Andrée Grau designed the first Master's programme in Dance Anthropology in the UK in 2004. Georgiana Gore, also an anthropologist of dance and movement, with Grau and Ethnochoreologist Egil Bakka and Lázsló Felföldi, created *Choreomundus* in 2012. *Choreomundus* is a new, prestigious two-year, international EU-funded Master's programme specialising in dance knowledge, practice, and heritage³. In Europe, the Université Clermont Auvergne (UCA) in Clermont-Ferrand, France established its Master's programme in the Anthropology of Dance in 2000, and in Szeged, Hungary, the Szegedi Tudományegyetem (SZTE) set up a Masters course in Dance Anthropology and Ethnochoreology in 2010. These innovative programmes are training new generations of academic/practitioners, engaging with cutting-edge technologies, current cross-cultural interests, and today's changing epistemologies that embrace issues of auto-ethnography, the realm of affect and intensity, postcolonialisms, de-gendering, de-colonising, the re-centring of marginalised voices, as well as inclusivity and diversity.

The essays in this Dossier address similar issues. Elizabeth Waterhouse's work takes the reader into the multi-layered world of a dancer's sensorium, illustrating how the "seeing" of one's partner in dancing a duet is enacted

¹ Anthropologist of dance Andrée Grau (2021, 31) notes that African Americans Katherine Dunham and Neale Hurston are considered to be forerunners to the anthropology of dance in the 1940s and 1950s.

² Embodied practice in ethnomusicology was also highly influential, as well as later developments in somatic theory and practice.

³ See <https://choreomundus.org/> (last accessed 5 May 2024).

through aspects of breath, balance, energy, fine attention, and listening rather than just being dependent on visual cues. Using an auto-ethnographic methodology, Waterhouse reveals how a finer and more detailed understanding of movement emerges from such embodied practice—an intensity and power of affect on each other and each other's bodies—through the analysis of one particular movement in William Forsythe's piece, *Duo* (1996). She carefully unpicks the movement called “showerhead” by the dancers, which embodies a twisting motion in the hands that continues into the body. The dancers remembered “focusing on their partners and kinaesthetically feeling the movement” whilst performing “showerhead”. Bodies assemble and disassemble, feeling the “ethnographic” moment, as autoethnographic practice situates “the socio-politically inscribed body as a central site of meaning-making” through “reflecting on the subjective self in context with others.” (Spry 2001, 711 & 713) Supporting such an auto-ethnographic approach, Claire Vionnet (2022, 80) writes how the “interweaving of the intimate and the collective within autoethnographic narratives highlights the way a dancing body is shaped by others”.

Franca Tamisari's contribution also touches on the sense of affect that flows through the dance of the Yolngu Indigenous people in the north-eastern tip of Australia, explaining how in dancing, people enter the “intimate sphere of inter-corporeal relationships at a different level of intensity” (p. X) where they affect others and simultaneously are themselves affected. The complex community knowledge that is transferred and understood through dancing holds a place right at the heart of the people, encompassing elders, younger relatives, and the ancestral spirits. Such intellectual understanding is conveyed through the performative body, layered, sensitive, carrying emotion, empathy, and communication on many levels. The depth of such Indigenous knowledge is conveyed similarly in Boaventura de Sousa Santos' work on the production of knowledge in the Global South (2018, 165), where he emphasises the concept of *corazonar*, (feeling-thinking) or the warming up of reason that works with emotions, affections, and feelings. Through the deep experience of the senses, such knowledge is embodied. As he states, “To take seriously the idea that knowledge is embodied implies recognizing that knowing is a corporeal activity involving the five senses, if not also the sixth sense...”. Like de Sousa Santos, Tamisari's research advocates for a type of decolonising through the recognition of ancestral ways that spell out the Yolngu relationships with humans and non-humans, with the land and with each other, their “being-in-the-world and being-with-others.” (p. X) She argues that the Yolngu deploy performance to invite “other non-indigenous people and institu-

tions ... to enter into a dialogue on their own terms, introducing Yolngu symbols into European political discourse and, thus, in part to assert Yolngu autonomy and independence.” (page X)

Susanne Franco’s discussion and analysis of three different works on *Salome* by performance activist Yuki Kihara directly links to such issues, in that she investigates Kihara’s stand on decolonisation and indigeneity intertwined with gender identities. The challenging of dominant historical colonial narratives on race and gender through *Salome*’s narrative is a performative attempt to decolonise Sāmoan culture (Kihara’s maternal legacy) from binary viewpoints of gender, and Western notions of the female (dancing) body. Kihara’s identity with the Sāmoan minority group Fa’afafine—a fluid category of males who self-define and self-identify with females—leads to a troubling and queering of *Salome*’s story and its various historical manifestations. Often commissioned by museums, Kihara’s activist performances operate in “readdressing history, transmitting embodied memories, and introducing counter-dominant historical discourses.” (Franco, X) Kihara’s *Salome* is the ultimate act of witnessing and of resistance, showing how dance can be used “as a tool for political manipulation” (Franco, X). The colonial remembered past and the apologetic, troubled present weave together to create an inclusive, empathetic, and re-mediated future.

The richness of these three essays that combine anthropological methodologies along with the layered and affective traces of anthropology’s past allows the reader to contemplate the body: bodies that hold memory, bodies that engage in meaningful dance and movement, bodies that speak of worlds past, present and future across the globe. Each essay conveys, through the use of effective movement analysis, how body and mind are part of one whole organism, producing knowledge in multivalent ways and reminding the reader of the essential nature of embodiment. Through such detailed analysis, information is gathered informing how the body, time, and space may be conceptualised in any culture, and therefore bringing understanding of socio-cultural and historical dimensions of gender and politics, and of marginalised voices. As Gore and Grau note, “one of the qualities of dance is that it mobilises a specific regime of attention which requires that the dancer be both attentive to his/her own movements whilst simultaneously being aware of his/her co-dancers, as well as being conscious of the attendant audience. Giurchescu has referred to a dance-specific “circuit of communication” (1994) and Gore (Grau, Gore 2014, 130), more recently, to a “distributed attention”. It is this special attentive quality of dance that

Afterword

perhaps allows for a shared and inclusive understanding of humanity that enables the transmission of collective knowledge and memory.

References

- David, Ann R. 2013. "Ways of Moving and Thinking: The Emplaced Body as a Tool for Ethnographic Research." In *Performance & Ethnography: Dance, Drama, Music* edited by Peter Harrop and Dunja Njaradi, 45-66. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.
- . 2021. "The 'Voice of the Body': Revisiting the Concept of Embodied Ethnography in the Anthropology of Dance." In *Music, Dance, Anthropology*, edited by Stephen Cottrell, 95-110. Royal Anthropological Institute, London: Sean Kingston Publishing.
- de Sousa Santos, Boaventura. 2018. *The End of the Cognitive Empire. The Coming of the Age of Epistemologies of the South*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Giurchescu, Anca. 1994. "The Dance Symbol as a Means of Communication." *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 39 (1-2): 95-102.
- Giurchescu, Anca, and Lisbet Torp. 1991. "Theory and Methods in Dance in Dance Research: A European Approach to the Holistic Study of Dance." *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 23: 1-10.
- Gore, Georgiana, and Andrée Grau. 2012. "Training Future 'Heritage' Managers: Critical Reflexions." paper given at the Royal Anthropological Conference, *Anthropology in the World*. London: British Museum.
- . 2014. "Dance, Cultural Heritage and the Training of Future 'Heritage' Managers: Anthropological Reflections." In *(Re)Searching the Field. Festschrift in Honour of Egil Bakka*, edited by Anne Margrete Fiskvik and Marit Stranden, 117-38. Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.
- Grau, Andrée. 2021. "The Legs that Put a Kick into Anthropology. Forerunners of the Anthropology of Dance" in *Music, Dance, Anthropology*, edited by Stephen Cottrell, 29-54. Royal Anthropological Institute, London: Sean Kingston Publishing.
- Ness, Sally Ann. 2004. "Being a Body in a Cultural Way: Understanding the Cultural in the Embodiment of Dance." in *Cultural Bodies. Ethnography and Theory* edited by Helen Thomas and Jamilah Ahmed, 123-44. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Spry, Tami. 2001. "Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis." *Qualitative Inquiry* 7: 706-32.
- Vionnet, Claire. 2022. "An Auto-Ethnography of Engagement Through Dance." *Tsantsa* 27: 78-93.