

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

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

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

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

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

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

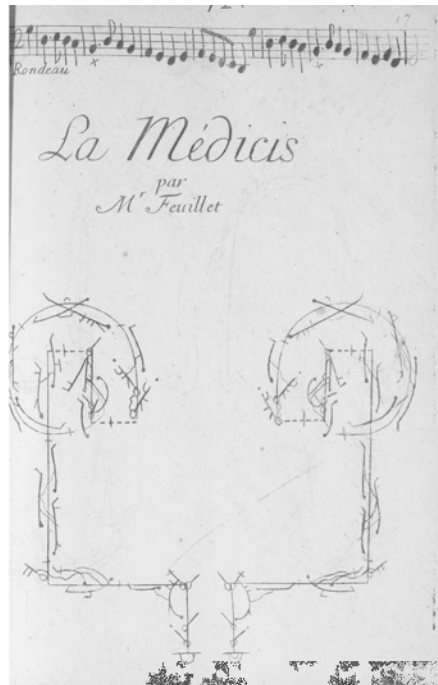
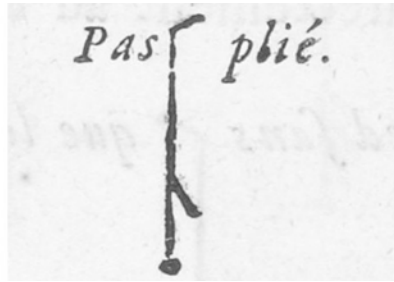


Figure 2: Representation of a step (here, a step forward in plié) in Feuillet notation.

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



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

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

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

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

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

The ambivalent place of the body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 3.

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

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

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

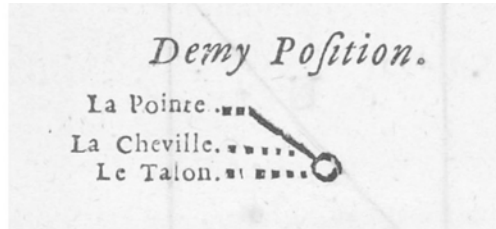
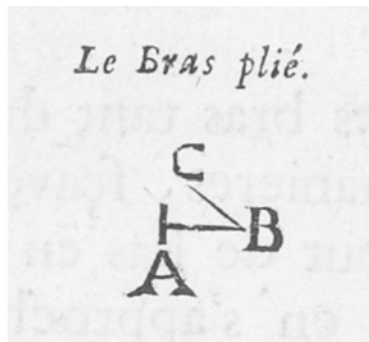


Figure 4: A bent arm, in Feuillet notation. Source: Feuillet, Raoul Auger: *Chorégraphie, ou L'Art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures et signes démonstratifs*, Paris: Brunet 1700, p. 97, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86232407/f1.image.r=feuillet%201700.langFR> (August 2020), BnF. No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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

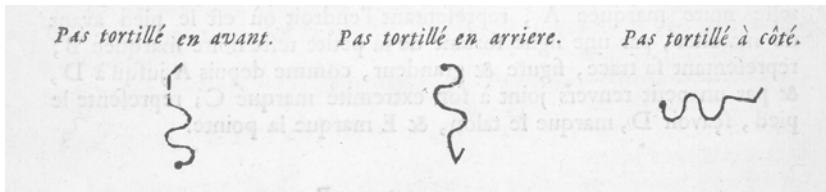
27 Lauze, François de: *Apologie de la danse et de la parfaite méthode de l'enseigner tant aux cavaliers qu'aux dames*, 1623, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1040284n> (August 2020), BnF, p. 28; Taubert: *The Compleat Dancing Master*, pp. 863–864.

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

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

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

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



Marie Glon notes:

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

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

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

30 Ibid., p. 2.

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

32 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The space of the dance

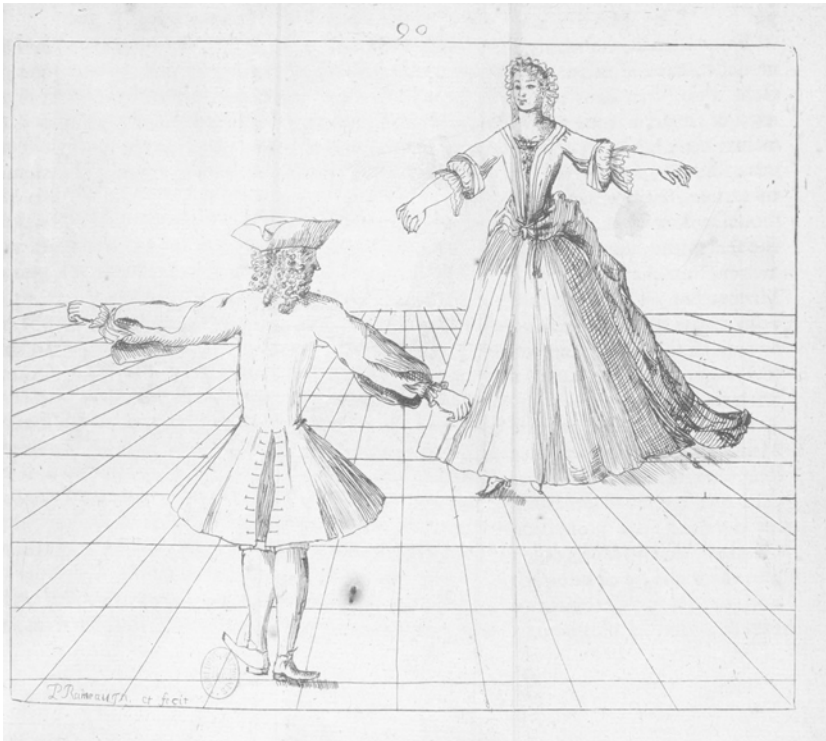
Feuillet notation privileges (over and above the writing of bodies) the representation of actions – a repertoire of not-fully-anatomically-conceived choreo(-)graphic tasks to be given *to* bodies – and their formal results in space. Indeed, further insights into the ambivalence of the body in Beauchamp-Feuillet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

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

37 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 33.

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

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



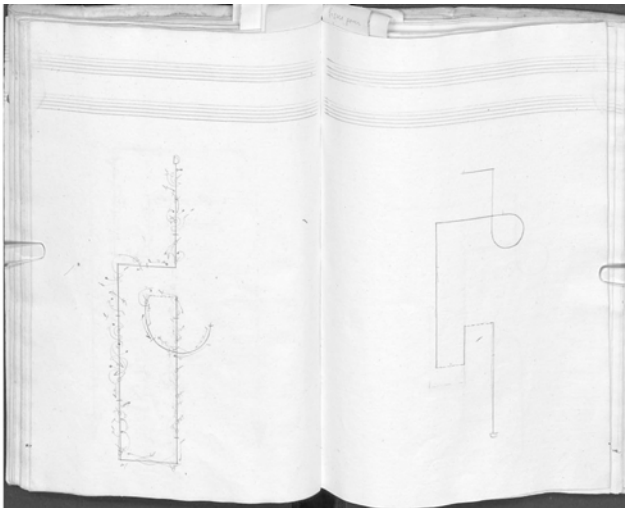
The first element to consider in this relationship is the way in which space is measured. The length of a step in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation is determined through the *belle danse* foot positions; for example, the second position requires putting a foot's distance between the feet, and a step to the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

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

40 Ibid., pp. 105–106.

be realised, steps have to be anchored in their corporeal definition, but also adjusted to the dance's overall figure in space. And, while the path can be considered the exact result of corporeal actions – actions of a body neutrally and universally construed, with no individual variations – the floor path is, in fact, the first written element of the notation (onto which steps are subsequently added⁴¹), indicating its importance as a measure of space *over* corporeal action. This precedence of path over steps is corroborated by archival material, such as an anonymous collection of Beauchamp-Feuillet notations conserved at the Derra de Moroda archive in Salzburg; certain unfinished notations show a fully-designed path without steps [Figure 7]. This suggests that step measurement was to adapt to path and not vice versa – bodily measurements introduced themselves into pre-set spatial ones.

Figure 7: Two pages from an anonymous collection of notations in the Beauchamp-Feuillet system, undated.⁴² Source: Universität Salzburg, Derra de Moroda Dance Archives, DdM 6750. No re-use without permission.



41 Ibid., p. 103.

42 The online library catalogue attributes the date of 1680 to this document. The printed catalogue indicates, however, that it is printed on 18th-century paper. Further research on the document's origins is needed to ascertain the date and explain the collection's potential appearance before Feuillet's publication.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

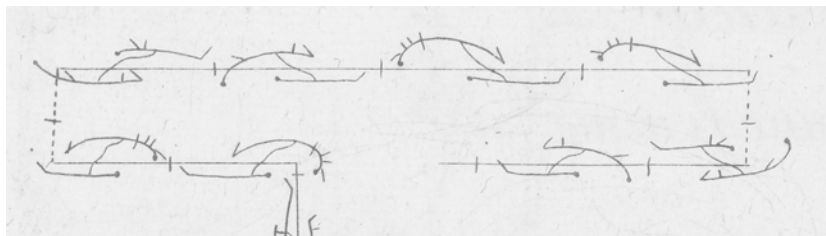
49 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, pp. 2, 4.

50 Ibid., p. 95.

51 Ibid., pp. 4, 95, 103–105.

52 Ibid., p. 42.

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



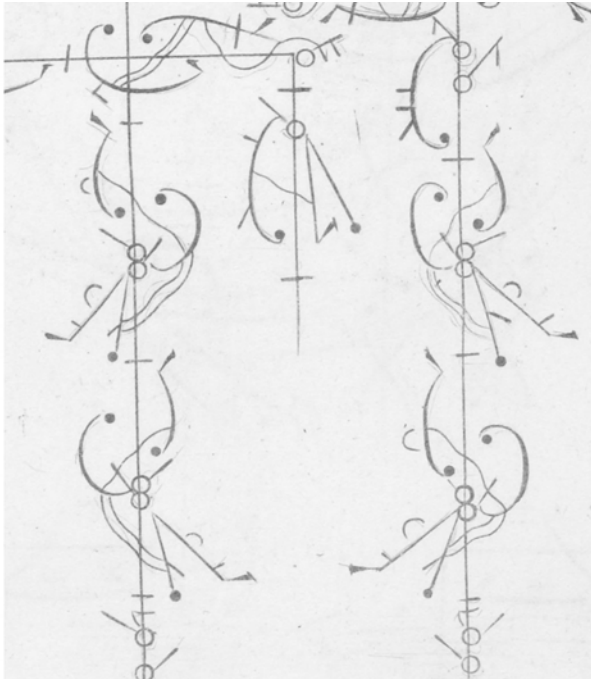
Feuillet's disconnections – between a spatial form of the dance to be mentally and imaginatively grasped and the physical position of body therein; between a universal, abstracted body and the reality of particular bodies implementing projected dance forms; between the disembodied eye of the self and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

A graphic dance on paper

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

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

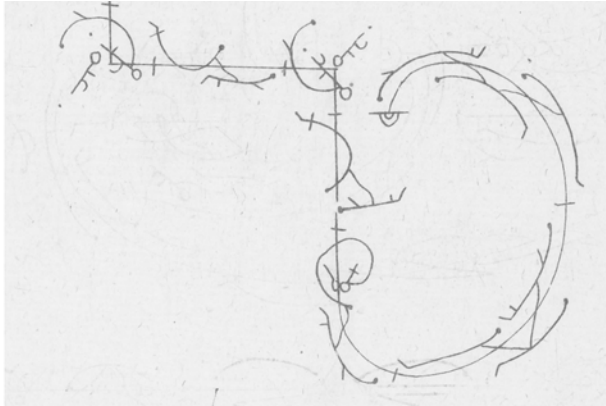
Figure 10: Detail from a choreo-graphy. Source: Gaudrau, Michel: *Nouveau recueil de Dance de Bal et celle de Ballet contenant un très grand nombres [sic] des meilleures [sic] entrées de ballet*, Paris 1715, p. 16, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8623248j> (October 2018), BnF. No re-use without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



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

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

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



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

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

55 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, unpaginated.

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

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

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

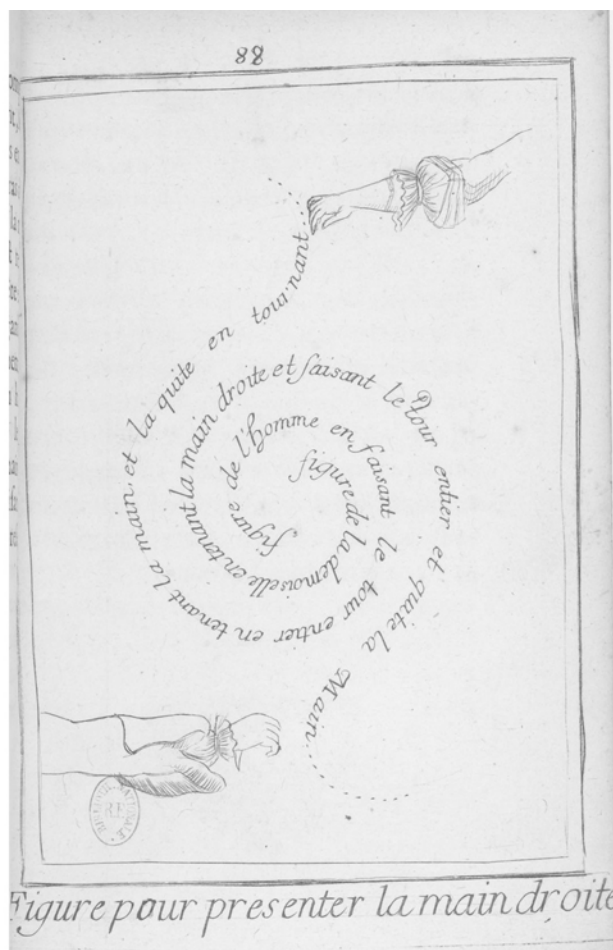
were originally designed not only for the better *Explanation & Understanding* of my Printed Book [...] but likewise to be proper *Furniture* for a *Room* or *Closet*, being of themselves an intire and independent Work, for if put in Frames with Glasses, they will not only show the various Positions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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

61 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, title page.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

66 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 105.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A choreo-graphic logic

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

78 Pemberton, Edmund: *An Essay for the Further Improvement of Dancing*, London: Walsh 1711, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=134//musdi134.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/musdibib:@field\(NUMBER+@od1\(musdi+134\)\)&linkText=0&presId=musdibib](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=134//musdi134.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/musdibib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(musdi+134))&linkText=0&presId=musdibib) (August 2020), Library of Congress, digital collection 'An American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals, ca. 1490 to 1920', unpaginated section "explanation".

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

91 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, p. 103.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

93 Ibid., p. 136.

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

95 Feuillet: *Chorégraphie*, unpaginated preface.

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

Conclusion

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

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

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