Introduction to Part 1

In dance-historiographic discourse, any practice of dance-making may be referred to as choreography; one can say that 16th-century pavanes or early 17th-century court ballets were choreographed. At the same time, 16th-century pavanes and early 17th-century court ballets were produced in a context where the term "choreography" was not in effective usage – as a signifier of dance-making or at all. Indeed, dance history scholars[1] concur that the term "choreography" was put into common use around the turn of the 18th century. The 1700 text that is considered to have coined it (in French) – Raoul Auger Feuillet's *Chorégraphie* – introduced it as a referent not for dance-making but dance notation: a literal manifestation of the etymology of "*choros*" – Greek for dance (also related to the dancing and singing chorus of ancient theatre[2]) – and "*grafein*", or writing. Certain researchers also refer to the 16th century and Thoinot Arbeau's associated term "orchesography", still linking this to a practice of notation.[3] Until at least the mid-18th century, then, dance-making and engaging with the human body in movement were practiced without being described as "choreography";

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1   This refers to dance-historical sources in English, French, and German. Precise chronological positionings vary slightly: Gabriele Brandstetter refers to the late-17th century, while Philipe LeMoal to the context of Feuillet's *Chorégraphie* (1700). Foster, Susan Leigh: *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2011, p. 16; Moal, Philippe Le: Chorégraphe, in: Moal, Philippe Le (ed.): *Dictionnaire de la danse*, Paris: Larousse 1999, p. 543; Brandstetter, Gabriele : Choreographie, in : Fischer-Lichte, Erika, Kolesch, Doris & Warstat, Matthias (eds.) : *Metzler Lexikon Theatertheorie*, Stuttgart/Weimar : J.B. Metzler 2014, p. 54.

2   Foster adds the meanings of rhythm and vocal harmony to translate the Greek *choreia*. Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 16.

3   Claudia Jeschke quoted in CORPUS: Survey What does "choreography" mean today?, 2007, http://www.corpusweb.net/introduction-to-the-survey.html (Archive copy from October 2015); Foster: *Choreographing Empathy*, p 17. Gabriele Klein sees the history of choreography as a writing of movement, encompassing the Renaissance : Klein, Gabriele: Essay, in: Klein, Gabriele (ed.) *Choreografischer Baukasten. Das Buch*, Bielefeld: transcript 2015, pp. 21–22.

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

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

While early modern dance-historical sources make us question the extent to which currently-dominant notions of choreography, corporeality, motion, or dance are applicable trans-historically, it also so happens that contemporary expanded choreographic practice, theory, and discourse have developed a crucial body of ideas that multiply choreography beyond a physicalised and kinetic dance-making. Based on this observation, the following three chapters operate a – preposterous[6] – shift: they adopt an expanded choreographic perspective in the analysis of pre-18th-century dance, thus approaching sources from a period when the modern usage of "choreography" was absent through a contemporary viewpoint that also questions that usage. The point in operating this shift is not to describe an essential similarity between these sources and contemporary expanded practices – substituting one anachronism for another. Rather, it is to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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