

## Conclusion to Part 1

---

In 15<sup>th</sup>-century Italy, Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro made dances for the nobility and developed dance technique to be embodied by human movers; in 17<sup>th</sup>-century France, Saint-Hubert wrote about ballets with dances performed by human beings embodying steps and gestures; a little over half a century later, Raoul Auger Feuillet's *Chorégraphie* notated (and possibly composed) dances, referring to certain body parts and motions in its graphic signs. Domenico, Guglielmo, Saint-Hubert, and Feuillet are thus relevant to choreography as dance-making and to choreography as a practice of the human body in motion. But, choreography's association with dance diverts attention away from Saint-Hubert's multimedia, heterogeneous view of ballet; his non-identification of dance and ballet; and the role of practitioners – such as the “master of order” – who were creative forces without being “choreographers”. Further, choreography's association with human corporeality diverts attention away from Feuillet's imagining of a dance residing on paper, and the *Chorégraphie*'s logic of space representation, not conceived from the perspective of the embodied subject. And, finally, this vision of choreography diverts attention away from Guglielmo and Domenico's *misura* as a fundamental dance-making principle which is not, however, essentially kinetic; Domenico's notion of *fantasmata* and the containment of movement as part of dance; as well as Saint-Hubert's *sujet*, a non-physical and non-kinetic basis for ballet-making. While the texts analysed here do not negate a dance-, movement-, and/or human body-based conception of choreography, they are not fully describable by it either.

To use the same examples as Part 1's introduction, the claim that 16<sup>th</sup>-century pavaues or early-17<sup>th</sup>-century court ballets were choreographed is not historiographically problematic because it is an anachronism; rather, it is historiographically problematic if it is a dominant anachronism that obscures the complexity of historical practices. Proposing an expanded-choreographic

framework for reading such practices preposterously (in Mieke Bal's terms<sup>1</sup>) activates contemporary ideas as tools to decentralise that dominance. To be sure, Domenico, Guglielmo, Saint-Hubert, and Feuillet are part of choreographic history because – even if they did not use the word “choreography”, or its later meaning(s) – their work was related to bodily, kinetic, dance practices. At the same time, contemporary expanded choreography widens what choreography may be, and what “counts” as choreography, thus suggesting that the sources studied here are also part of choreographic history because this history is *not* limited to such practices. It therefore points to Saint-Hubert's intermedia spectacle, Feuillet's figured abstraction, and Domenico's performance of stillness as choreographic in themselves, rather than as peripheral aspects of a primarily-dancerly, -physical, or -kinetic choreography.

Beyond drawing attention to these sources' multiple inscriptions in choreographic history, an expanded choreographic perspective illustrates their relevance for contemporary (expanded) choreography. In his book *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* – which greatly contributes to an awareness of the relevance of pre-18<sup>th</sup>-century dance practices in contemporaneity – Mark Franko notes: “[t]he historicist tendency to see the old in the new is characteristic of reconstruction. Its master conceit is to evoke what no longer is, with the means of what is present. [...] Seeing the new in the old, on the other hand, is a pinpointing of radical historicity in former production.”<sup>2</sup> The possible links between Domenico, Guglielmo, Saint-Hubert, Feuillet, and expanded choreography are not meant to imply that there is “still” a trace of the Renaissance or the baroque in contemporary choreographic expansions; dance practices from several centuries ago do not necessarily transmit a fragment of their authenticity to the present. Rather, such links suggest that certain pre-18<sup>th</sup>-century dance practices were as radical as (certain) contemporary ones – and that contemporary choreographic expansions, without necessarily bearing traces of the past, can branch out and find their place in relation to it. The historiographic and artistic importance of this fact is non-negligible; it implies that expanded choreography should be placed in a macro-historical framework, and that its practice can inscribe itself in vertical, transhistorical networks beyond horizontal and synchronous ones.<sup>3</sup>

---

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

2 Franko, Mark: *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*, New York: Oxford University Press 2015 [1993], p. 133.

3 On the interaction of these axes see Foster, Hal: *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1996, p. xii.

Placing contemporary expanded choreography in such macro-historical frames of reference highlights common problematics in historically- and contextually-distant sources, and in so doing constructively feeds contemporary debates. In the context of a contemporary choreographic field affirming – in practice and performance, but also in funding applications and institutional requests – its desire for interdisciplinarity, one must remember that modernist discipline classifications in the arts are – recent – historical constructs; that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Saint-Hubert and his fellows did not doubt the intermedia nature of performance and the interdisciplinary work of its creators. In the context of a contemporary choreographic practice and theory grappling with the subversive, yet relieving, effects of staged stillness, one might consider the quantity of ink dedicated to understanding Domenico's inclusion of danced pose and pause as a symptom of later ideological changes that equated dance with motion.<sup>4</sup> In the context of contemporary choreography being transferred to non-corporeal media – for example, William Forsythe's *Synchronous Objects* (2009), which responded to an all-too-physical view of dance – one is reminded of Feuillet's choreographic figures, conceivable without the body. In the context of a contemporary expansion of choreography pushing against the prevalence of human bodies or physicalised dances, an expanded choreographic perspective on pre-18<sup>th</sup>-century sources indicates that this oppositional dialectic is the result of essentialised and entrenched, but *contingent*, dichotomies; it is an undoing of what had not yet been done, and that, as such, can become the making of something else.

A corollary to questioning these contingencies is the variability of the terms with which “choreography” has been co-defined in the sources considered here and the dance cultures surrounding them. If a dancerly, physical, or kinetic conception of choreography is not fully applicable to these texts, this is because this specific conception of choreography's entanglement with dance and/or bodily motion is only partly adequate, but also because the terms that define this conception vary in their context. Saint-Hubert's conception of dance as a non-autonomous part of a multimedia whole is as symptomatic of his context's pre-modernist approach to performance as a modernist “autonomous” dance is symptomatic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Feuillet's dualist body is as much a marker of his peri-Cartesian French framework as current organic and sensorial conceptions of the body are markers of a response to such a framework. Guglielmo's human being reflects a pre-industrialised rapport with nature, just as pushbacks to this rapport are relevant in today's world facing ecological urgency.

---

4 Cf. Lepecki, André: *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2006.

Beyond recognising the plurality of choreographic history and feeding into contemporary interrogations, the decentralisation of a prominent choreographic conception – through an expanded choreography perspective – in the reading of these sources points to future directions within the historical study of choreography. These necessitate undoing the expectations imposed by subsequent, entrenched choreographic mentalities (i.e. a physicalised nature of dance, an organic nature of the body, the necessity of visible displacement in dance, or the medium specificity of both choreography and dance). This undoing need not imply a focus on the absence that meets such expectations, but, rather, a push towards the development or reactivation of terms that name and describe what is present. Rather than looking for motion or its absence, look for *fantasmata*; rather than looking for embodiment or disembodiment, look for a choreographic *figure*. Such a shift reconsiders the study of choreography, so as to examine composite performances where intermedia relations are prioritised over medium-specific creation, or transfer and translation processes across artistic formats, as choreographic material. It re-evaluates who the agents practicing that choreography may be, incorporating mediators of interdisciplinary work like the *maître d'ordre* and creators of non-corporeal formats like choreographers. Additionally, it rethinks choreography's frame of inscription, broadening it to encompass performance and aesthetics but also politics and ethics. It is such choreographic histories that an expanded-choreographic perspective on these sources develops; and it is in such histories – rather than in a break from them – that the contemporary works examined in Part 2 are inscribed as well.