

Chapter 6: Being (in) a choreographic object: William Forsythe's artificial nature installation in Groningen¹

In the late 1980s, the Dutch city of Groningen was preparing to celebrate its 950th anniversary. For this occasion, several figures of the city's public life – most notably a former businessman named Frank Mohr – initiated a large-scale urban art installation project that would “mark” the city's boundaries at the same time it marked the city's anniversary. The chosen artist – architect Daniel Libeskind – prepared a “masterplan” wherein nine additional architects, thinkers, and artists proposed installations – called “markers” or “tokens” – to be erected around the city. The project was generally met positively in Groningen – a medium-sized city of around 200,000 residents – although some viewed it as a public-relations, image-building enterprise.² Funds were secured via organisations, including the municipality and Rijswijk's Ministry of Public Health and Culture.³ An advisory committee was established, composed of actors from museum-related and academic contexts. A parallel steering group was also formed, to technically support the development of the project; it included a member of Groningen's municipal town-planning department, as well as Mohr.⁴

-
- 1 Parts of this chapter are based on Leon, Anna: Between and within choreographies. An early choreographic object by William Forsythe, in: *Dance Articulated* special Issue *Choreography Now*, 6:1 (2020), pp. 64-88.
 - 2 Grassmuck, Volker: A Combinatorial Cosmology of the Contemporary City. The Books of Groningen: Marking the City, in: *Intercommunication 2* (1992), <http://waste.informatik.huberlin.de/~grassmuck/Texts/groningen.html> (August 2020). The number of residents in the city may have varied since the 1990s.
 - 3 Letter to Daniel Libeskind from the municipality of Groningen, 23 June 1989, Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – MAP 1, pp. 3–4; Hefting, Paul & Winkel, Camiel van (eds.): *Marking the City Boundaries: The Books of Groningen*, Groningen: City Planning Department 1990, unpaginated.
 - 4 The advisory committee included W.H. Crouwel, director of the Boymans van Beuningen museum, Rotterdam; M.H. Cornips, conservator in the art department of Groninger

Libeskind's "masterplan" – or, as he called it, the 'critique' of a masterplan⁵ – was titled *The Books of Groningen* and was organised around the city's name as it appears on the oldest-surviving handwritten document – CRUONINGA; each marker corresponds to one of its letters.⁶ Libeskind also associated each city marker with a Greek muse, a colour, a time of the day, a place in the city (tavern, streets...), a material, and a (liberal) art, thus creating what Ruth Wallach termed an 'urban cosmology'⁷. The masterplan was embodied by a metallic book, each page corresponding to one marker. Based on this plan, and consistent with Libeskind's insistence on the interdisciplinary and international nature of the project,⁸ a group of artists and theorists⁹ were invited to propose designs for the markers. Each installation was placed at a route entering/exiting the city (one more, by philosopher Paul Virilio, is found in the town centre); they form a belt around present-day Groningen, spelling out its ancient name.

One of the artists invited to design a city marker was choreographer William Forsythe, who was director of Ballett Frankfurt at the time. His marker, completed in 1990, is what may be called an "artificial nature" installation in a field at the fringes of Groningen. It consists of a straight, approximately-400-meters-long canal excavated in the field, parallel to which willow trees were planted. Each willow's trunk is strapped to a concrete pillar in the canal via a metallic wire; the wire pulls the trunk towards the pillar, creating an arc-like form over time [Figure 23]. An S-shaped hedge made of hip-height bushes crosses the canal [Figure 24].

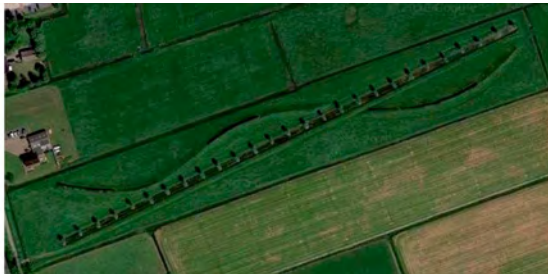
museum, Groningen; E. R. M. Taverne, Professor of History of Architecture at the State University of Groningen and P. H. Hefting, of the Dutch PTT. Cf. Hefting & Winkel: *The Books of Groningen*, unpaginated

- 5 Quoted in Grassmuck: A Combinatorial Cosmology of the Contemporary City.
- 6 Libeskind, Daniel: Presentation of the Masterplan (transcription), 1990, Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – MAP 1, p. 5.
- 7 Wallach, Ruth: Marking the City: Place-Making and the Aesthetics of Urban Spaces, in: Klusáková, Lud'a & Teulière, Laure (eds.): *Frontiers and Identities: Cities in Regions and Nations*, Pisa: Plus-Pisa University Press 2008, p. 286.
- 8 Letter from Daniel Libeskind to the advisory committee, 5 November 1989, Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – MAP 1.
- 9 The group included, apart from Libeskind himself, Kurt W. Forster, Akira Asada, Thom Puckey, Gunnar Daan, Heiner Müller, John Hejduk, Leonhard Lapin, William Forsythe, and Paul Virilio.

Figure 23: Willows along the artificial canal are bent by being pulled by a metallic wire attached to a concrete pillar. The Books of Groningen. Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe, BOOK N(7): Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato, William Forsythe. Photograph: Emma Villard. No re-use without permission.



Figure 24: Aerial view of William Forsythe's marker showing the hedge crossing the canal. The Books of Groningen. Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe, BOOK N(7): Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato, William Forsythe. Source: Google Maps, 2020, May 29. Ruischerbrug, Scale: 50m. Google Maps [online] (Retrieved 29.05.2020). No re-use without permission.



Corresponding to CRUONINGA's second "N", the marker is associated – according to Libeskind's masterplan – with mechanics, dance, the red flame, 3pm, the streets, and Erato, the muse of lyric poetry. (Terpsichore, the muse of dance, corresponds to architect Gunnar Daan's installation, consisting of two large frames in the form of open book pages, filled with small aluminium plates that subtly "dance" in the wind.)¹⁰ Forsythe himself simply names the work *The Books of Groningen* with the subtitle *Book N(7)* and characterises it – prefiguring his work on choreographic installations in the 2000s and 2010s – a "choreographic object" for which he shares authorship with Libeskind.¹¹

Related in Libeskind's mystical system to dance but not to its muse, described as "choreographic" but also as an "object", the marker raises the question of what conception of choreography is active in this non-human, largely-non-moving work of land art. This chapter draws from three types of sources to explore this question: firstly, a personal visit to the marker (and other markers around Groningen); secondly, a series of discussions with Groningen municipality employees who worked on the installation, and with Forsythe's collaborators who have experience of his more recent choreographic objects; and finally, Groningen Municipality's archives on the project. Based on these, this chapter presents the installation as a contemporary choreographic expansion that counters the anthropocentrism and kinetic necessity of choreography – historical constructions that succeeded Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro's early-Italian Renaissance¹² [Chapter 3] but continue to colour present readings of them.

A choreography of nature

Everything in Forsythe's marker is human-made; the field in which the installation now stands was previously just a grass-filled space surrounded by other fields and roads, transformed with a canal dug from scratch and the planting of willows and a hedge.¹³ The choreographer intervened in the natural growth process of the bushes and trees, exploiting the unusual suppleness of willow wood, as well as the presence and flow of water – ultimately creating

10 Quoted in Papadakis, Andreas C. (ed.): *Marking the City Boundaries*, London: Art and Design/ Academy Editions 1992, p. 53.

11 Forsythe, William: *The Books of Groningen*, undated, http://www.williamforsythe.com/installations.html?&no_cache=1&detail=1&uid=36 (August 2020).

12 For an analysis of Libeskind's plan in relation to the Renaissance, see Stieber, Nancy: *The Triumph of Play. Charts, Carts and Cards*, in: Papadakis: *Marking the City Boundaries*, pp. 9–15.

13 Lourens, Diana, Pestoor, Jan & Tervoort, André: Interview with the author (August 2017).

a site of artificial nature. Over time, human intervention in the installation has continued; the Groningen city maintenance department trims and cuts the tree branches to visibly retain the arched shape.¹⁴ The idea of human control over nature is prominent, both in Forsythe's marker's conception and in the discourse surrounding it. According to Dik Breunis – member of the *Books of Groningen* steering group who participated in the preparatory discussions about Forsythe's marker – the choreographer's conceptual focus was placed on two poles: firstly, the history of Groningen and, secondly, the interaction of humans with nature – and more specifically, human attempts to control and change nature to achieve their goals.¹⁵ Bringing these two interests together, the installation's three components – willows, hedge, canal – all refer to how nature has been historically modified by Groningen inhabitants to facilitate their living and work conditions. The canal points to the multiple artificial canals present throughout the city; the bending of the trees reproduces a traditional, local technique used to obtain ship-making wood; the hedge can be seen as an artificial dike, an elevated ridge used in the Netherlands to protect from rising sea levels.¹⁶ The discourse presenting the installation to visitors is also focussed on human control over nature; in the explanatory entrance sign the marker is said to 'represent the way in which mankind has made changes to the natural world for centuries in order to survive'. A similar reception is found by theorists; for Wallach the willows form 'a forced canopy over the canal',¹⁷ while for Nancy Stieber 'Forsythe's trees in bondage bow gracefully to human control, in elegant but tortured tension'.¹⁸ People control nature, and choreographers define the movement of bodies – in an expansion of choreography, the choreographer controls nature and defines the forms that it will embody.

The Groningen project is not Forsythe's only choreography of nature. His 2013 work *Aviation* also – and even-more visibly – choreographed trees in a square in central Basel, by fitting them with electronic devices that produced sound vibrations that moved their branches. There are further examples of

14 Ibid; email to the author.

15 Breunis, Dik: interview with the author (August 2017). This is consistent with Libeskind's plan, which aimed for 'a rethinking of the symbolic and imaginative role that the city plays in the lives of its inhabitants.' Libeskind, Daniel: Oral Explanation during Presentation "Masterplan" for the Advisory- and Steering Committee, 26 August 1989 (transcript), Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – RO/2126, p. 17.

16 William Forsythe's proposal also included using 'indigenous plants and vegetables, trees, bushes, etc, etc, grasses, flowers'. Note from Forsythe to Frank Mohr, 19 March 1990, Groningen Municipality Archives: -1.855.1 – RO/2118. This reading was also given in Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

17 Wallach: *Marking the City*, p. 290.

18 Stieber: *The Triumph of Play*, p. 13.

Forsythe's work transposing choreographic movement prescription beyond the body. In the 2014 work *Black Flags*, for instance, it is the title's black flags that are put into motion, via robots given choreographic instructions. Expanding the types of objects to which choreography applies, Forsythe's work forms links with the visual arts.¹⁹ It has also become part of a wider tendency – including Mette Ingvartsen's *Evaporated Landscapes* (2009) and *The Artificial Nature Project* (2012), or Jack Hauser/Lisa Hinterreithner's *The Call of Things* (2014) – of choreographically working with non-human elements and materials. This contemporary interest in the choreographic use of non-human materials cannot, however, be reduced to a simple exercise of choreographic control by humans on (natural) objects. Paralleling the development of philosophical perspectives that place increased value on things and materials,²⁰ such works stress the agency of their non-human performers.

Indeed, cracks appear in the discourse of control surrounding Forsythe's work; in an era of extreme human dominance and influence upon natural resources and phenomena, the Groningen installation has a nostalgic, almost “retro” aspect. Instead of high-tech equipment, it uses straightforward wires and pillars (the most technologically-complicated aspect of the installation – automatic LED lighting – was added by the municipality and was not part of Forsythe's artistic plan²¹); instead of complex control systems, it uses human surveillance and simple gardening; instead of up-to-date procedures and materials, it turns to traditional techniques. This low-tech, simple setup makes the installation's control over nature relative; keeping the vegetation well mowed and weeded, maintaining a completely-stable and precise form for the dike and tree arc, and keeping the canal completely clean and free of insects and plants would require an enormous amount of labour. If the installation stems from a human desire to control nature, it deliberately does not centralise the human within a clearly advantageous, fully-dominant position. The choreography in the installation is not completely human-controlled, and cannot be completely comprehended solely from an anthropocentric perspective.

One way the installation questions such a perspective is by disrupting the spatial scale habitually used by human observers. If the human subject – one partly inherited from the Enlightenment – experiences their being as a unit, the installation cannot be fully grasped at the mesoscopic scale of the plant-unit. The overall shape of the tree and dike change through cell growth (cells

19 Cf. Leon: Between and within choreographies.

20 See, for instance: Bryant, Levi: *R. The Democracy of Objects*, Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press 2011; Bennett, Jane: *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham: Duke University Press 2010.

21 Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

increasing in size) and cell division (the multiplication of cells),²² which are only understandable at the microscopic level. (When asked about Forsythe's idea for his marker, Mohr commented that it would be a dance in close-up²³ – like under a microscope.) The trees' embodiment of an arc and the dike's embodiment of a curve happen incrementally, through a cumulative effect of a million microscopic events and cells. From this perspective, plant growth is a matter of innumerable sub-units and not directly of the tree- or bush-unit; the choreography is not performed by a unified single plant entity, but by the plant as a plural constellation. But, for choreography to be seen as a multiplicity of cellular sub-units' action, choreography must open beyond the mesoscopic scale habitually adopted by human subjects. In order to grasp such a choreography, relating to a tree – binding a loop around it, pulling it into an arc – or a bush – planted in specific formations – does not suffice; instead, it requires acceptance of the presence and role of microscopic sub-units whose being – combined with human intervention – makes the choreography possible.

From the cells and particles composing the plant-unit – and their micro-actions that make the plant take form – the installation also branches out to the macro-scale, in which the plant participates. A plant's limits are not clear-cut: its roots extend into the soil and absorb elements of it, its pores are open to the air and humidity, its hormones constantly respond to its environment, its shoots seek sunlight, its branches and leaves host insects. In Forsythe's willows, these “grey” boundaries are expanded by the wires – extensions that connect them with the canal pillars, introducing them into a network that is not reducible to its constituent elements, including other parts of the installation. The wires, as extensions of the trees – in addition to the sun, soil nutrients, rainwater, wind, animals feeding from and into the ground – make changes in the environment that influence the plants; the plants act towards, and because of, elements beyond them. Expanding beyond the plants, the installation also includes the canal, the field in which it was erected, and the complex ecosystem that has developed, largely because of the installation. Plants grow un-planned in the canal and are annually weeded before growing again, the wind adds sound and intensity, small animals cross the field, wild grasses surround the dike, and new small trees appear around the willows, which are allowed to remain so long as they do not drastically interfere with the installation's design.²⁴ As with its components, the limits of the installation as a whole are not clear. Its borders are marked by two short fences at either end of the field and by a

22 Lloyd, Clive: *Plant Cell Biology*, in: Plopper, George, Sharp, David & Sikorski, Eric (eds.): *Lewin's Cells* (3rd edition), Massachusetts: Jones & Bartlett 2015, pp. 947–950.

23 Breunis: Interview.

24 Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

difference in the height (and, at times, colour) of surrounding grass. But, the sounds and movements from nearby streets – cars passing, voices – blend into its environment, as do houses and (unbent) trees in the background. Similarly, while the project aimed to mark Groningen's *boundaries*, the contemporary city is difficult to contain; highways and train lines connect to suburbs and countryside, and the installation is on a boundary that is (possibly only) administratively defined. The municipality's letter to Libeskind regarding his contract suggested that '[t]he tokens are to be placed [...] in such a way that the in- and outgoing traffic (road, water, rail and air) will clearly notice that it is entering or leaving the city, as in former days the gates of the city of Groningen marked the entrance to and the exit out of the city'.²⁵ But, the city, like the plants and the installation itself, branches out beyond itself, in a macroscopic expansion beyond the scale and perspective of the individual human observer.

If the marker – microscopic or macroscopic constellation – questions the scale of a unitary, coherent human subject, it also casts doubt upon this subject's conception-of-being as autonomous. Indeed, in the macroscopic scale, Forsythe's choreography can be seen as an ecology, a complex macro-system made of heterogeneous, but interrelated, elements: trees, wires, water, soil, wind, insects, light... While Forsythe only partly made a site-specific work (the installation is conceptually associated with Groningen's history, but Forsythe did not choose the particular location²⁶), he has, perhaps inadvertently, created an environment of which the installation is part – and which presumably exceeds the choreographer's design. The notion of ecology – introduced in scientific discourse as early as 1866²⁷ – is encountered in descriptions of contemporary choreography²⁸ and, particularly, in analyses of Forsythe's installations.²⁹ In Groningen, the choreographic ecology is, moreover, largely self-regulating: the installation has not suffered from pests, is only mowed at six-month intervals and trimmed once a year, while soil nutrients and abundant rain replace human-driven watering and fertilising. Maintenance largely focusses on damage due to human intervention and repairs of non-essential parts of the installation

25 Letter to Daniel Libeskind from the municipality of Groningen, p. 2.

26 Breunis: Interview.

27 Stalpaert, Christel & Byttebier, Karolien: Art and Ecology: Scenes from a Tumultuous Affair, in: Cools, Guy & Gielen, Pascal (eds.): *The Ethics of Art: Ecological Turns in the Performing Arts*, Amsterdam: Valiz 2014, p. 60.

28 See, for instance, Klien, Michael: *Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, PhD thesis, Edinburgh: Edinburgh College of Art 2008, p. 2.

29 See, for instance, Manning, Erin: Propositions for the Verge. William Forsythe's Choreographic Objects, in: *Inflexions 2* (2009), http://www.inflexions.org/n2_manninghtml.html (August 2020).

– such as lighting and accompanying electricity circuits.³⁰ Therefore, it is not only human (choreographic) activity that makes the installation possible; it is also the ecology's capacity for self-regulation and maintenance.

Additionally, Forsythe's marker for Groningen affirms its own way of being against an anthropocentric perspective because of its inscription in time. The installation has a durational aspect that is intimately connected with the monumental, historically-rooted, and future-oriented nature of the municipality and Libeskind's "masterplan" project. In the architect's words, 'the overall Book of the City Marking Project is the letter which has been sent out through the present to those awaiting a reply of the future to what happened in the past'.³¹ Libeskind wanted his project to be inscribed in the humanly-experienced time cycle of the 24-hour day, but also in the beyond-individual-lifetime timespan: 'millennial time, based on a 1000 year measure'.³² The project's installations provide long-lasting traces that have become ingrained in the fabric of the city, as parts of its landscape.³³ (The municipality will maintain the installations for a minimum of fifty years, likely longer.³⁴) Forsythe's installation fully enters this lengthened timescale. The work changes throughout the year, cyclically going through phases of bare winter branches and leafy green springs. Over a number of years, the size, form, and thickness of the plants also change; their being is thus introduced within the historical time-scale of the city, evolving with it. The contradictions of a purportedly-unchanging monument are thus avoided. In its extreme durational existence, the piece evolves in a high intensity of slowness, its actions imperceptible to human observers. Like changes to urban landscape that go unnoticed, "before" and "after" pictures are necessary to see change in the installation. The slowness of Forsythe's marker thus provides a response to an age of extreme speed, in the form of an aesthetics of patience. The choreographer was fully aware of the durational aspect of his proposition; according to Breunis, Forsythe was the only artist to really engage with the long-term existence and evolution of his installation – he gave instructions about the need for the wires to follow the trees' growth, changing the strap position to maintain the wire's resistance, and trimming branches to avoid the

30 Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

31 Libeskind: Presentation of the Masterplan, p. 5.

32 Libeskind: Oral Explanation, p. 15.

33 Engaging with the longevity of the project, a school group buried small boxes with drawings and stories about the future next to certain markers – Forsythe's included – to be opened by the students still present several decades later. Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview. Cf. also Grassmuck: A Combinatorial Cosmology of the Contemporary City.

34 Lourens, Pestoor & Tervoort: Interview.

trees growing vertically upward.³⁵ Nevertheless, contrary to other contributions – whose existence or decay depend on municipality intervention – Forsythe's marker can, presumably, continue its existence indefinitely. By the same token, when its vegetation is destroyed, replacement needs to respect the plants' temporality, by waiting for the new plants to grow to the desired size and shape. The timescale of the installation cannot be determined by the human figure, who must adapt to the plants' timescale.

Despite the intentions and discourse that make *Book N(7)* a project of artificial-nature creation, the installation develops beyond human projections because of design choices made by the choreographer and because of its components' plural and durational kind of being – plant but also multiplicity of cells and member of an ecology – affirmed in their growth process. Furthermore, a non-anthropocentric reading of the piece can also muddle possible dichotomies between the human and the non-human. Indeed microscopic, macroscopic, and durational choreography can also apply to the human body. Deborah Hay's conception of the body as a collection of 53 trillion cells³⁶ is an example of how human bodies can also be seen as agglomerations of microscopic units. From conceptions of humans as ecologies encompassing media-extensions to Forsythe's own transposition of the dancer's centre outside of the body,³⁷ the macroscopic scale can also be used to understand the actions of humans. In works like Eszter Salamon's *nvsbl* (2006) and Ivana Müller's *Playing Ensemble Again and Again* (2008), dancers evolve in states of intense slowness, at times increasing the duration of action to the point that movements become undetectable. In other words, if Forsythe's marker is a non-anthropocentric choreography, it also acts as a reminder that anthropocentrism may be linked to a specific – autonomous, unitary, mesoscopic – conception of *anthropos*, and

35 Breunis: Interview.

36 Hay, Deborah: *My Body, the Buddhist*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2000, p. 1.

37 Theories of distributed cognition or "active externalism" consider that the environment surrounding a person, as well as the media they use, hold an active role in cognitive processes. Since cognition can be distributed to agents outside the person; the mind itself becomes extended and distributed. Cognition does not happen *in* the person but in the *ecology* of the person. Malafouris, Lambros: *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement*, Cambridge/London: MIT Press 2013; Clark, Andy & Chalmers, David: The Extended Mind, in: *Analysis* 58/1 (1998), pp. 7–19. Bojana Cvejić notes: 'Forsythe [...] multiplied the centres within the body, but also transposed them into the space surrounding the body, using not only points but also lines or entire planes on or in which to issue or lodge movement'. Cvejić, Bojana: *Choreographing Problems: Expressive Concepts in European Contemporary Dance and Performance*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2015, p. 138.

that the human being may be seen as a constellation branching out beyond its boundaries as well.

In addition to other figures of choreographic history who operated before the ideological shifts of the Enlightenment, Domenico and Guglielmo [Chapter 3] worked before this anthropocentric, autonomous conception of *anthropos* became entrenched and dominant. If Forsythe's choreographic object in Groningen decentralises such a view of the human and counters its dominance, this allows one to recognise the non-anthropocentric aspects of Domenico and Guglielmo's choreography as well – itself developing parallels between human practitioners and their surrounding world, inscribing dance into a realm not-fully designed by them, and calling into question the very dichotomy between human and non-human.

A choreography of non-moving movement

Forsythe's marker was completed in 1990, one year after Peter Sloterdijk published *Eurotaoismus* and its critique of modernity as a project of ever-increasing, self-perpetuating hyper-mobility. The philosopher – in an argument that highly influenced Dance Studies through André Lepecki's reference to it in his book *Exhausting Dance*³⁸ – describes the constant striving towards movement as a staple of Western modernity:

*Fortschritt ist Bewegung zur Bewegung, Bewegung zur Mehrbewegung, Bewegung zur gesteigerten Bewegungsfähigkeit [...] Die Modernität ist ontologisch reines Sein-zur-Bewegung [Progress is movement towards movement, movement towards more movement, movement towards heightened aptitude to move [...] ontologically, modernity is a pure being-towards movement].*³⁹

In the decades that followed – while Forsythe was elaborating his work on choreographic objects – movement increasingly came into the theoretical foreground, as illustrated by the social sciences' "turn" towards the notion of mobility.⁴⁰ Choreography has accompanied – or, at least, paralleled – this movement-focus, by expanding its application to multiple, non-dance- and non-art-related movement phenomena – from gendered gesture to the circulation of trolleys

38 Lepecki, André: *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2006, pp. 12–13.

39 Sloterdijk, Peter: *Eurotaoismus: Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1989, pp. 36–37.

40 Cf. Wilkie, Fiona: *Performance, Transport and Mobility: Making Passage*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2015; Urry, John: *Mobilities*, Cambridge: Polity Press 2007.

in supermarkets. If movement is everywhere, choreography gains relevance as a movement-related discipline that can expand beyond dance.

The work that Forsythe proposed for Libeskind's masterplan stands in an ambivalent relationship with this kinetic and choreographic omnipresence. On the one hand, the installation partially corresponds to the idea that Forsythe's choreographic objects are proposals for bodily, kinetic participation. In multiple examples, visitors must engage with Forsythe's installations through movement to achieve a task and to realise the work's *raison d'être*: they enter and move within the inflatable *White Bouncy Castle* (1997, with Dana Caspersen and Joel Ryan), they navigate among oscillating pendulums through *Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time* (2005-), they cross from one hanging gymnastic ring to the next without touching the floor in *The Fact of Matter* (2009).⁴¹ Similarly, since the Groningen marker is in a 400-metre-long field, and since there is no high vantage point from which the installation's three components – canal, trees, dike – can be appreciated, the best way for the visitors to experience the work is to enter the field and walk within it; the installation provokes movement as a response to its design and placement in space. On the other hand, the marker itself performs no evident movement; apart from an occasional wind in the trees and the slight motion of the dike, viewers see a largely-immobile landscape of artificial nature. (According to Breunis, when he and Mohr asked Forsythe whether – as a choreographer – he wanted his installation to move, the answer was no.⁴²) In this sense, the Groningen marker is comparable to choreographic objects – such as *A Volume within which it is not Possible for Certain Classes of Action to Arise* (2015), an empty cube whose small dimensions impose limits on users' movements – which allow an exploration of motion while remaining still.

If, however, one adopts a non-anthropocentric perspective on the work, *Book N(7)* cannot be solely grasped as an object whose immobility invites motion by the user. Drawing the focus away from the mesoscopic scale adopted by the average human visitor, the movement in the Groningen marker also happens at micro- and macro-levels which may not include the human observer/user; it

41 In a 2012 interview, Forsythe explicitly associated the pendulum installation with scores. Forsythe, William, van Imschoot, Myriam & Engels, Tom: Interview, 2012, http://olga.o.oral site.be/oralsite/pages/William_Forsythe_on_Scores/index.html (August 2020). In this interview, Forsythe used the term "choreographic object" to refer to means of communicating information about the body or other choreographic structures – something that is close to the function of his *Synchronous Objects*, discussed earlier. The usage of the term has since shifted to also refer to installations as well; see for example Gaensheimer, Susanne & Kramer, Mario: Foreword, in: Gaensheimer, Susanne & Kramer, Mario (eds.): *William Forsythe: The Fact of Matter*, Bielefeld: Kerber 2016, p. 6.

42 Breunis: Interview.

is detectable in cellular activity⁴³ that gradually gives form to the choreography, or in members of its moving ecology – the trees pulled towards the pillars, the branches reaching towards the sun, the animals moving among the bushes, the hydrophilic plants growing in the canal. The marker's apparent immobility is due to its motion being too small, too big, or too slow to be perceived by the human observer; but, within this immobility, a different conception of movement, and choreography, may be found as well. This is particularly illustrated by the willows – the installation's sub-part that has received the most attention and is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

In their microscopic and macroscopic scales, the trees respond to a choreographic intervention in the form of wires that influence their growth patterns. As the discourse of control surrounding the installation argues, this intervention is a constraint for the trees. But the wires, beyond imposing a specific form to be embodied, may also be an opportunity; by inviting the trees into an ecology that includes wires and pillars, they allow the willows to embody a curve that is not attainable by their non-choreographed counterparts. Just as a tool allows actions that are impossible for human corporeality without this body extension, choreographic objects render different types of movements possible through the relation of their physical form and the – in this case, leafy and wooden – bodies of their users. The willows are thus invited to explore growth options that they would otherwise not have; what if one grew in arched form?⁴⁴

Even if the choreographic intervention was the same for all of the willows, they have not uniformly responded to that question. Some willows are less curved than others [Figure 25] – in some cases, a second wire has been added to confront the tree's perceived resistance [Figure 26]. Other trees have fully curved towards the wires, but have shifted this curve sideways [Figure 27], introducing an unexpected direction to the work. Such discrepancies counter the discourse of control surrounding the installation; moreover, they highlight that choreographic objects do not fully determine the resulting motions, but open a range of options for users actively engaging with them.

43 This "micro-movement" can only be construed collectively, as individual plant cells display very small changes of position. Lloyd: *Plant Cell Biology*, p. 947.

44 This analysis is also inspired by Forsythe's rhetorical universe – see Spier, Steven: *Dancing and Drawing, Choreography and Architecture*, in: *The Journal of Architecture* 10/4 (2005), p. 354.

Figure 25: Trees with different curves. Compare the first willow's closed angle with the second willow's open one, as well as the first willow's strong curve with the fourth willow's much lighter bend. The Books of Groningen. Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe, BOOK N(7): Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato, William Forsythe. Photograph: Emma Villard. No re-use without permission.



Figure 26: Tree pulled by a double wire. The Books of Groningen. Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe, BOOK N(7): Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato, William Forsythe. Photograph: Emma Villard. No re-use without permission.



Figure 27: *Tree curving sideways*. The Books of Groningen. Project by Daniel Libeskind with William Forsythe, BOOK N(7): *Dance/Mechanics/3pm/Streets/Red Flame/Erato*, William Forsythe. Photograph: Emma Villard. No re-use without permission.



According to Christopher Roman⁴⁵ – who collaborated with Forsythe as a dancer for multiple years and has experience of his installations – at times the choreographer refers to the objects as “propositions” towards participants, to be responded to in multiple ways. Thus, the object is not a physical translation of a prescriptive choreographic idea, but a framework for investigation. Steven Spier describes *White Bouncy Castle* in a similar way: ‘[a]t the time of the piece Forsythe was particularly interested in processes that would produce movement that was in accordance with the principles of a work, but not determined by him in detail’.⁴⁶ Forsythe has noted that in choreographic objects ‘physical engagement is the means to understanding *the class of actions* to which each choreographic

45 Roman, Christopher: Interview with the author (September 2017).

46 Spier, Steven: *Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies*, in: Spier, Steven (ed.): *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography: It Starts from any Point*, Oxon/New York: Routledge 2011, p. 142.

system refers⁴⁷ – the object may therefore be a territory in which its user can choose from the kinetic potentials offered by the environment.

Forsythe's choreographic action is, then, less a definition of movement than the creation of an environment in which different movements can arise; it is the generation of movement potentials. But this does not mean that all potentials afforded by the wires *will* be explored; certain tree forms and actions will never become visible, just like users of other choreographic objects may not actually perform all possible actions. Nevertheless, the objects still include the potential for unrealised actions; the potential movements a choreographic object affords – even if no one has performed them – and all the potential states and forms of the object itself – even if it has not exemplified, or will not exemplify, them – are parts of the object. Forsythe's choreography may therefore be more fully understood if not reduced to a dichotomy of movement realised or not realised. It is not limited to the selection of one option from among a number of defined possibilities – in this case, that the tree performs this specific curve instead of any other potential movement – thus favouring actually performed movements over non-realised ones; rather, it includes multiple, potential, virtual options. The choreography is not composed of the exclusion of unrealised forms, but of the co-presence of virtual forms alongside its actual one;⁴⁸ its apparent lack of activity coexists with the potential motion contained within the installation.

Thus, the tree ecologies – their form, flexibility, spatial disposition – are a choreography in a state of immobility too. Similarly, when asked about the choreographic interest that Forsythe's installations may display in their “inactive”, immobile state, Roman responded that several choreographic traits can be identified even when they are not used; for him, the height of each ring in *The Fact of Matter*, the distances between them, and the size of the room in which they are found are all visible aspects of choreographic design.⁴⁹ Caspersen, another of Forsythe's long-time collaborators, concurs:

These are situations where, unlike in traditional performance, the choreographic principles are visible and persist over time. The public enters into the choreo-

47 Quoted in Millqvist, Elisabeth: *Sculpturemotion*, 2017, <http://www.wanaskonst.se/en-us/Art/Art-2017/SculptureMotion/SculptureMotion> (August 2020), emphasis added.

48 This draws from Gilles Deleuze's treatment of virtuality, developed in his work on Henri Bergson: “[f]rom a certain point of view, in fact, the possible is the opposite of the real, it is opposed to the real; but, in quite a different opposition, the virtual is opposed to the actual [...] The possible has no reality (although it may have an actuality); conversely, the virtual is not actual but *as such possesses a reality*. [...] the possible is that which is “realised” (or is not realised) [...] The virtual, on the other hand, does not have to be realised, but rather actualised [...]”. Deleuze, Gilles: *Bergsonism*, New York: Zone Books 1991 [1966, trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam], pp. 96–97.

49 Roman: Interview.

graphic environment, and their bodies, trained or untrained, and the decisions that each person makes, become a perfect expression of the environment. However, the choreographic principles exist and are visible independent of those bodies and decisions.⁵⁰

In Groningen, the willows display, in their apparent immobility, choreographic properties – a play of force and resistance, gravity and flexibility, curving and asymmetry – that may never be used in performance, but which still illustrate choreographic decisions and options. *Book N(7)* is choreographic because it sets its users in motion and because it itself moves, micro- and macroscopically; but, it is also choreographic in its very immobility – like a fantasmatic interval [see Chapter 3 on *fantasmata*] – not *despite*, but precisely *in*, its lack of displacement.

If Forsythe's *Book* expands choreography, then, this may not be simply because it transposes a conception of choreography associated with movement in spacetime to the micro- or macroscopic level. It is also because it marks a shift in choreography's very relationship with movement; the marker's immobility, its lack of displacement, is more than an illusion due to the human observer's incapacity to see that it "really" is in motion. Rather, a different kind of choreographic motion emerges – one which is not performed, not actual, but nonetheless present. In a context of omnipresent motion, such a view of choreography does not avoid or exclude movement; it is neither passive immobility nor a refusal of movement, but a reconsideration of movement – and choreography's relationship with it.

While this view of choreography is developed on the apparent immobility of non-human entities – trees – it can apply to the human (dancer) as well. For example, in improvisational strategies investigating not the movement that *will* happen but the explosion of possibilities that *could* happen, potential, non-realised movement can also exist in, and be experienced by, human subjects.⁵¹ Indeed, Forsythe's work in Groningen is part of a wider framework in which choreographic theory displays an interest in "non-moving" movement that is also applicable to human bodies. For instance, theorist Petra Sabisch has argued for a choreography that does not exclude movement, but that 'refutes a representational image of movement, according to which only the physical display of locomotion and displacement and the application of a dance code is validated as danced or choreographed movement'.⁵² Rudi Laermans introduces the notion of non-movement – of virtual, but not actually performed, movement – in his very definition of dance's medium, when he notes that it

50 Quoted in Spier: *Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies*, p.140.

51 Cf. Erin Manning on "preacceleration", in Manning: *Propositions for the Verge*.

52 Sabisch, Petra: *Choreographing Relations: Practical Philosophy and Contemporary Choreography*, Munich: epodium 2011, p. 92.

'is a merely virtual potential consisting of all possible movements and non-movements'.⁵³ This shift in contemporary choreographic mentality is concurrent with multiple experiences of "non-moving movement" – contemporary subjects are exposed to immaterial digital transactions and exchanges within seconds without any actual displacement, to information "circulating" online, to motion felt through virtual reality equipment.⁵⁴

A dichotomy between movement and stillness and between the human and the non-human reinforce each other all too often. In contrast, Groninger's willows enter – and thus widen – the class of performers situated on the "movement" side of the movement/stillness dichotomy. But more than that, what these non-human performers contribute to choreography is their capacity to expand it from an art prescribing (non-)human performers' displacement to an art occupied with an expanded conception of movement, actual or not. In this way, they make visible the shortcomings of a movement/stillness dichotomy – one that, as Lepecki and Sloterdijk, quoted above, remind us, is a result of the process of modernity. To refuse such a dichotomy's relevance is to recognise historical practices' – like that of Domenico [Chapter 3] – own fantasmatic imbrications of motion and stillness as non-oppositional aspects of choreography.

To look at a tree happening

By augmenting trees' motion potential and – purposefully or not – inviting them to provide diverse answers to a choreographic problem, Forsythe's Groninger marker fosters their active participation in the choreographic process. This active participation reflects plants' general mode of function, which is much less passive than conventionally thought:

The intentionality of the plant is not unidirectional, given that the roots, too, seek nutrients, navigating a veritable environmental maze, sensing humidity

53 Laermans, Rudi: *Moving Together: Making and Theorizing Contemporary Dance*, Amsterdam: Valiz 2015, p. 53 (italics in original).

54 In a comparable string of reasoning, Maaïke Bleeker introduces Gilles Deleuze's reflection on cinema and the moving image in her analysis of – intensely slow, or, at times, completely immobile – works by Ivana Müller, arguing that if film does not only represent movement happening in front of the camera but also uses movement as a way of showing its objects – the camera moves, perspectives shift and are multiplied, editing adds a layer of motion – this kinetic medium has so deeply ingrained its movement-thinking in contemporary audiences that it has become possible for them to also perceive non-cinematographic objects in this way. Bleeker, Maaïke: *Media Dramaturgies of the Mind: Ivana Müller's Cinematic Choreographies*, in: *Performance Research* 17/5 (2012), p. 69.

gradients of the soil, and avoiding movement in the direction of other nearby roots. A combination of passive growth and what appears to be an active “foraging” for resources positions this intentionality on the hither side of the distinction between passivity and activity.⁵⁵

How to cross a room full of rings? How to avoid the pendulums? How to arch your trunk? The answers to these choreographic “questions” are not infinite; they are limited by the object’s form and, therefore, the choreographer’s choices – but they are more than a mere collection of possibilities pre-defined by the choreographer, as some of these emerge through the trees’/users’ engagement. In other words, a choreographic intervention that creates a set of potentials a tree can explore does not necessarily mean that the choreographer can grasp the whole range of resulting movements; it is in the willow-users’ active exploration that the potentials appear.

But the trees are not only active because the installation invites them to explore generative motion potentials; they are not *rendered* active by the installation. The choreographic act augments *and* taps into the trees’ already-existing capacity to be active; the installation is possible *because* the willows can embody diverse forms, *because* they are dynamic, malleable beings. In other words, although the wires guide the willow trunks to curve, the wires would not have an effect without the trunks’ pre-existing flexibility and mobility. The marker choreographically embodies a specific form (an arc), potential for variation of this form (the sideways- and differently-curved bends resulting from Forsythe’s intervention), and the trees’ unrealised potentials for further form shifts – the willows could, with adequate support, perform a large number of movements, in different directions, bending to the left or right, forward or back. Looking at the willows, then, what one sees is not just the simple addition of all potential movements performed and not performed, but also the very capacity of the object to generate new forms.⁵⁶ From this perspective, a tree is active not only in its diverse choices of arching, but also in its state of being.

55 Marder, Michael: What is Plant-Thinking?, in: *Klesis – Revue philosophique* 25 (2013), p. 129.

56 It is useful to refer to the way in which Deleuze explains his vision of virtuality: ‘for the real is supposed to be in the image of the possible that it realizes. [...] The virtual, on the other hand, does not have to be realised, but rather actualised; and the rules of actualisation are not those of resemblance and limitation, but those of difference or divergence and of creation. [...] For, in order to be actualised, the virtual cannot proceed by elimination or limitation, but must create its own lines of actualisation in positive acts. [...] It is difference that is primary in the process of actualisation [...]’. Deleuze: *Bergsonism*, p. 97, emphases added.

In this respect, Erin Manning introduces a useful theoretical tool by referring to the notion of objectile to analyse Forsythe's choreographic installations.⁵⁷ In his reference to this notion in *The Fold*, Gilles Deleuze writes:

L'objet ne se définit plus par une forme essentielle, mais atteint à une fonctionnalité pure [...] Le nouveau statut de l'objet ne rapporte plus celui-ci à un moule spatial, c'est-à-dire à un rapport forme-matière, mais à une modulation temporelle qui implique une mise en variation continue de la matière autant qu'un développement continu de la forme. [...] C'est un objet maniériste, et non plus essentialiste: il devient événement [the object is not defined by an essential form anymore, but achieves a pure functionality [...]] The new status of the object does not anymore link it to a spatial mould, that is to a relationship between form and matter, but to a temporal modulation which implies a continuous variation of matter as much as a continuous development of form [...] It is a mannerist, and not an essentialist object: it becomes event].⁵⁸

This suggests that the object is not matter with unvarying form; in its inactivated state, a choreographic object is not a sculpture. Rather, the object is dynamic; it is defined by what it can do, how it can unfold, how its form happens.⁵⁹ In this perspective, beyond providing movement potentials for its users, a choreographic object is dynamic because it contains margins of variation. In the case of Groningen, it is possible to see the trees as natural objectiles, with the capacity to re-arrange themselves. Thus, looking at choreography here means not looking at/for displacement, but at/for the dynamic capacity for change, rearrangement, and unexpected unfoldings.⁶⁰

Therefore, Forsythe's choreography in Groningen is possible through the combination of choreographic intervention and the trees' own, active being.

57 Manning: Propositions for the Verge. Manning introduces the notion of the objectile while describing choreographic objects as dynamic entities that invite participation within their 'relational environment'.

58 Deleuze, Gilles: *Le Pli. Leibniz et le baroque*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit 1988, pp. 26–27, emphasis added.

59 For a consideration of 'any object as an unfolding event' see also Lepecki, André: thing:dance:daring:(proximal aesthetics), in: Copeland, Mathieu (ed.): *Chorégrapheur l'exposition*, Dijon: Les Presses du réel 2013, p. 97.

60 In a similar vein, dance theorist Bojana Cvejić considers movement as qualitative change over time, rather than relative repositioning or displacement: 'a movement which cannot be seen from the empirical point of view of extension (shape, size, trajectory) – as the displacement of a mobile – but can only be sensed as a transformation of the body in time, as change in duration. [...] To move is not to go through a trajectory which can be decomposed and reconstructed in quantitative terms; to move is to undergo the transformation of the body in the Bergsonian sense that makes movement a qualitative change'. Cvejić: *Choreographing Problems*, pp. 38, 86.

This reading implicates identifying choreographically-relevant action in both the artist's choices, and in the trees themselves. In this way, the installation expands choreographic authorship from a singular human creator towards a non-anthropocentric collection of agencies that, combined, give rise to the work's form. This form is not the stable result of a centralised choreographic prescription, but the constantly- and perpetually-reinstated result of its performers' dynamic existence.

To practice choreography is therefore not-fully coextensive with a productive-creative act; it includes identifying choreographic potential in an expanded realm of non-human, possibly non-intentional agents' being. If Mathilde Chénin's works envisage a multiplication of choreographic ontology [Chapter 4] and Olga Mesa's *Solo* proposed a passage from ontology to praxis [Chapter 5], Forsythe's installation in Groningen invites a passage from choreography-as-praxis to choreography-as-a-tool for identifying, understanding, and relating with material ontology as an active, unfolding process. Indeed, Forsythe's work has the striking ability to make one think of *any* tree, *any* organism, in their stillness, through – and as – choreography. A view of (expanded) choreography as a tool for the perception and conception of one's surroundings is encountered in the words of various choreographic artists. As an echo of Renaissance's cosmic dance of the heavenly spheres, Michael Klien, Steve Valk, and Jeffrey Gormly argue that '[c]horeography is everywhere, always, in everything. I no longer see in pictures. I see movement and interrelation, exchange and communication between bodies and ideas'; choreography is 'a way of seeing the world'.⁶¹ For Chase Granoff, choreography almost becomes an ideology; '[i]t is a weird thing, choreography. I can start to view everything from that perspective [...] What if choreography was a political party or a religion?'⁶² For Mårten Spångberg, choreography is 'a complex means of approaching the world. No, the universe'.⁶³ Choreography is argued to be a mental act, an intellectual activity; skills associated with choreography are likened to a tool both of action and of thought.

The idea of an expanded choreography as a perspective or mode-of-thought is, once again, not only applicable to the apparent stillness of non-human agents, such as a series of willow trees. The very choice of plant life within *Book*

61 Klien, Michael, Valk, Steve & Gormly, Jeffrey: *Book of Recommendations: Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, Limerick: Daghdha Dance Company 2008, p. 24 and unpaginated introduction.

62 Granoff, Chase & Joy, Jenn: Transparency and Process: A Conversation with Chase Granoff and Jenn Joy, in: Granoff, Chase & Joy, Jenn (eds.): *The Art of Making Dances* [No edition information] 2011, pp. 22–23.

63 Spångberg, Mårten: Seventeen Points for The Future of Dance, 2012, <https://spangbergianism.wordpress.com/tag/choreography/> (August 2020).

N(7) situates it in a particular, liminal position that undoes the illusory clarity of dichotomies. Plants are not human and share fewer sentient characteristics with humans than animals; at the same time, they are living, organic creatures. From this boundary-occupying position, choreography shifts towards becoming a thinking tool and mode-of-relation with a world envisaged as process. On the one hand, this view of choreography can be applied to multiple inorganic objects and materials; a bowl of liquid, a pile of sand, an elastic band, a piece of metal, a sheet of paper, a drop of paint can all be seen as dynamic choreographic entities that incorporate potential movement and change. On the other hand, it can also be applied to human subjects and how their (potential) movement can be grasped. For example, the expanded choreography of urbanism – the directives and opportunities proposed by street crossings, stairs, obstacles, traffic lights – involves dynamic situations, with unpredictable options bubbling under the surface of actual performance.

In a world where everything and everyone seems to be in motion, ethical and political questions – Who moves? Who decides who moves? What physical, financial, psychological expense is required for motional capacity?⁶⁴ – can be translated in choreographic terms. A critical engagement through, and with, movement is indeed present in writings related to (expanded) choreography. For Kai van Eikels, '[c]horeography as a craft of organising dance will [...] be an *application* [...] of the *choreographic*, which is an intelligence that enables you to redirect the cultural, social, political, economic, psychological, pedagogical, etc. forces of existing patterns and habits of moving';⁶⁵ choreography is said to be 'gaining momentum on a political level as it is placed in the middle of a society to a large degree organized around movement, subjectivity and immaterial exchange'.⁶⁶ But, if the omnipresence of motion is due to both actual, incessant displacement and the existence of potential movement, its ethics and politics need to also expand towards a non-moving, virtual, still choreography. Shifting choreography from the act of arranging (non-)motions to a tool for understanding staticity in terms of motion, stability in terms of potential, being in terms of becoming, and form in terms of aptitude to change, a choreographic ethics appears that concerns what movement potentials are available, to whom, why, and how. To practice expanded choreography by

64 Cf. Allsopp, Ric & Lepecki, André: Editorial. On Choreography, in: *Performance Research* 13/1 (2008), p. 1.

65 Eikels, Kai van: An Institution Is only as Good as the People who Work there Can be. No?, in: Brandstetter, Gabriele & Klein, Gabriele (eds.): *Dance [and] Theory*, Bielefeld: transcript 2013, p. 306.

66 Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects..., Conference presentation, MACBA 2012, <http://www.macba.cat/en/expanded-choreography-situations> (August 2020).

looking at both mobile and immobile phenomena – and understanding them in terms of active potential – may untangle the ethics and politics – power distributions and spaces of liberty – hidden within a moving stillness: to look for a tree's freedom to become, to explore posture potentials, to tend towards non-movements.

Deleuze writes: 'I have, it's true, spent a lot of time writing about this notion of event: you see, I don't believe in things'.⁶⁷ Drawing from Erin Manning and Deleuze, the current reading of *Book N(7)* similarly acknowledges its tree-components' being as happening. This acknowledgement implicates a distributed choreographic agency, beyond the conscious and/or intentional acts of a human author, that inscribes these acts in a world that is always, and already, (choreographically) active. In this perspective, choreography is not a creative intervention in the world – a *poiesis* – but a tool for recognising the world as being (in) a constant, generative process. While this view of choreography is anchored in a contemporary sensitivity, it recognises *as choreographic* historical practices – like those of Domenico and Guglielmo [Chapter 3] – that similarly did not create choreography autonomously, but entered frameworks defined by the non-human – be it nature, music, or a cosmic harmony – and attributed political and ethical importance to them.

Conclusion

In William Forsythe's installation for *The Books of Groningen*, choreography expands by widening its possible objects; instead of human dancing bodies, the work choreographs a water canal and a collection of plants. However, the marker is not the result of fully-human choreographic planning of an artificial nature; its constituents' input is equally crucial. Operating at the microscopic level – the cell or particle – and at the macroscopic level – the complex ecology, with heterogeneous elements – the work leads to a non-anthropocentric choreographic logic. By doing so, Forsythe's artificial nature and its expansion to a non-anthropocentric choreography question assumptions about the human, the human scale, and their autonomy.

Forsythe's early choreographic object in Groningen does not merely change choreography's objects but also its conception of, and relationship with, movement. From a practice arranging how human bodies move across time and space, choreography becomes more than a practice arranging non-human movements (possibly at different scales). It also becomes a field where movement is present

67 Massumi, Brian: *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*, Cambridge/London: MIT Press 2011, p. 6.

despite a lack of actual displacement, turning *potential* movement into valid choreographic material. This view of choreography is neither dichotomously juxtaposed, nor secondary, to an arrangement of perceptible motion in space; by casting doubt on the dichotomy between movement and stillness, it provides an alternative to how choreography can be conceived and practiced.

The willows in Groningen perform a non-anthropocentric choreography of microscopic, macroscopic, and intensely-slow motion; they perform, in their apparent stillness, a virtual choreography of potential motion. But, they can also be seen as active, choreographically-relevant, dynamic entities, before being rendered as such by the choreographer; the installation invites us to see the trees as choreographic agents. From the autonomous act of a human creator, authoring choreography thus becomes the collective outcome of multiple entities' being; from human poietic intervention, choreography itself becomes a tool for observing and recognising the world as always, and already, active. The aesthetics, ethics, and politics of this expanded choreography lie in identifying action potentials *inherent* in the world, rather than the putting-into-motion of this world.

Guglielmo's vision of the person – a microcosmos reflecting the macrocosmos – is mirrored in the Groningen installation's plant performers, non-dichotomously opposed to human ones, yet transforming how the latter are construed; Domenico's stillness-including, fantasmatic dance is mirrored in Forsythe's willows' non-moving choreographic relevance [Chapter 3]. The Renaissance masters' understanding of a choreography exceeding the individual human creator is mirrored in the Groningen trees' active participation in their choreography. Once again, these reflections are not deterministically causal or direct relations, but juxtapositions. As such, what they make manifest is not a transhistorical similarity; Domenico and Guglielmo's harmonious "natural" dance ideologically differs from Forsythe's allowance of unorderedly and unpredictable performance. What these examples do make manifest, in their differential singularities and macro-historical links, is the dynamic through which current expansions – that distance themselves from the anthropocentric and the kinetic – widen the contemporary gaze on historical practices that developed outside of the full grasp of anthropocentrism or the kinetic.

