

# Nordic Journal of Dance

– practice, education and research



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[www.dansiskolen.no](http://www.dansiskolen.no), [dis@dansiskolen.no](mailto:dis@dansiskolen.no)

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# Editorial

The common denominator in the texts that we present in this volume of *Nordic Journal of Dance* may be health and the dancing body: norms and ideals, challenges and potential.

The article by Sara Holmes *Bodily Text and Written Word of Pilates* critically examines the influence of the ballerina's body on the development of the Pilates method. The article informedly examines the early development of the method and questions the body and health ideals it adheres to through a feminist lens. In so doing, it points out and discusses the aesthetic and gendered norms that the method as a global fitness form continuous to be based on and to promote.

Hanna Pohjola's article *Ruumiillinen erilaisuus: tanssi ammattina* explores the issue of bodily difference with a focus on disabled dancers. The article is informed by dance sociology and specifically considers the opportunities and restrictions prevalent dance education, the dance field and the spectators offer to the path of professionalization for dancers with disabilities. While there has been a shift in the Western theatrical dance that has opened opportunities for differently bodied performers to engage in dancing, the article shows that there are issues that have not been addressed sufficiently. Especially the experiences of disabled dancers themselves need highlighting. Likewise, instead of focusing on the social aspects of disability, further consideration of the nature of the dance art that disabled dancers generate is needed.

In her article entitled *Dancing with the Turquoise Waters of Mexico—Embodied Experiences and Observations for Environmental Justice* Susanna Hannus writes about her experiences regarding the healing potential of water. She also discusses how these experiences led towards searching for ways to protect water ecosystems against climate

change and pollution. Her autoethnographic research process includes methods of visual ethnography and visual arts. The article concludes with suggestions on how artists can be active in protecting water ecosystems and nature.

In OBJECT.MIRROR.TEMPO Danish dance artist and facilitator Marie Lykkemark explores how she can collaborate with differently abled persons on compositional work. The explorations manifested three different practices, referred to as the object practice, the mirror practice and the tempo practice. The article includes video excerpts and the reader is encouraged to see these as closely attached to the text for a full understanding of the topic and the process.

The last text we have included is in this volume is a report from a debate in Oslo on the topic Public Health and Life Skills—one of three interdisciplinary themes that are currently being introduced in the Norwegian school system, and one where the organisation Dans i Skolen amongst others believe that dance might have a key role.

The editorial board hopes that the readers will enjoy this issue of *Nordic Journal of Dance*, and that they spread the word about the possibility to publish both practice oriented and research articles among their colleagues and communities.

*The editorial board.*

## **Bodily Text and the Written Word of Pilates:**

### **A Theoretical Approach to How the Ballerina's Body Concealed and Revealed Problematic Ideologies in an Exercise Practice**

Sarah Holmes

## **ABSTRACT**

Pilates instructors, educators, and students while well intentioned, may not understand the troubling rhetoric they unintentionally perpetuate when working with clients. This article suggests that the myth of the ideal body, and the stereotypical gender norms therein, is perpetuated by the Pilates due in part because of its close relationship to the culture of ballet. Pilates contributes to the pursuit and inevitable failure of an unobtainable body. Pilates «(re)produces» the myth of the ideal body through the universal aspect of its “healthy” rhetoric. As a consequence, this article suggests, the exercise practice perpetuates a culture of inadequacy; since many times, abled and differently-abled women who practice Pilates are healthy. This article reveals that the seemingly benign practice of Pilates simultaneously promotes rhetoric of privilege and coercion. It concludes that the teaching practice inadvertently values and perpetuates stereotypical, unrealistic, and unobtainable ideologies of health and well-being.

*Keywords:* body issues, exercise, gender, sociocultural perspectives, physical fitness

# Bodily Text and the Written Word of Pilates: A Theoretical Approach to How the Ballerina's Body Concealed and Revealed Problematic Ideologies in an Exercise Practice

Sarah Holmes

Much of physical health and well-being is a culture of perception. While seemingly benign, of the commercial images of physical bodies are fabricated, airbrushed, and retouched to resemble the socially and culturally acceptable ideal body. This is not a new practice. The *perception* of physical bodies, in large part, is what inspires many people to begin an exercise routine yet physical bodies approaching the «ideal» require hours (if not years) of physical training, vigilance, and specific financial choices. Practices of self-care are fraught with their own cultural, social, and gendered biases.

This article critically examines the influence of the ballerina's participation in Pilates, revealing through this process the gender and behavioral norms that commonly escape attention.<sup>1</sup> While broad in scope, this article traces how the balletic body shifted Pilates from its origins as a masculine practice into the characteristically «feminized» exercise we know today. The tracing of the ballerina's involvement in Pilates aids in understanding the powerful repercussions of this embodied intersection. The visual appeal of the ballerina's body, and her embodiment of normative white female behaviors, facilitated its public «consumption» in early twentieth-century fitness.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, the teaching practices or processes through which Pilates is learned, perpetuated, and transformed become critical. Since the 1940s, the ballerina's bodily knowledge has dominated the processes of kinetic and cultural transference in Pilates. This theorization draws attention to how ostensibly heterotrophic Pilates continuously overlooks and normalizes timeworn stereotypes of gender, power, white femininity, able-

bodiedness, and racial superiority. These critical perspectives guide how the seemingly «American-born» fitness trend of Pilates is normalized and cultivated through the marketing of an absorbed balletic body, which continues to «haunt» the practice.

## Methodology

Documenting the integration of the ballerina's physicality into the Pilates lineage is complicated; there are no instructional education manuals from the 1930s. Analytical evidence is limited to archival videos, Joseph Pilates' texts, educational manuals, and oral history. Sources providing insight into period-specific movement behaviors, as well as those that shed light on the ballerina's involvement in Pilates, include a notated copy of *Return to Life*, historically relevant trends in ballet pedagogy, and archival footage of Joseph Pilates teaching in his New York studio and at the Jacob's Pillow dance festival. Understood collectively, they inform the historical development of Pilates exercises.

The kinesthetic and social influences of the ballet dancer surface throughout Pilates.<sup>3</sup> What can be evaluated more concretely are photos of the commercialized «Pilates body,» which surfaced in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and their consequent appearance in mainstream American fitness culture.<sup>4</sup> This article deliberately surveys «at-home how-to» Pilates books, internet images, and images from contemporary fitness magazines. Traces of the balletic body are frequently found in these commercialized Pilates photos. While this type of analysis has been undertaken in sociology and leisure

and fitness studies, dance studies has yet to explore the project of the dancer's kinesthetic presence in Pilates.<sup>5</sup>

To understand the theoretical influence of the ballet dancer in Pilates practice, this work is framed within the academic disciplines of dance studies and «white» feminist theory. While understanding Pilates through fitness and leisure studies is productive, especially with respect to health norms and the adoption of the fitness body, this article undertakes a theoretical analysis through dance studies.<sup>6</sup> The article develops in multiple sections and relies heavily on the work of Sandra Lee Bartky and Susan Bordo in echoing the sentiment of Rosemary Garland-Thomas that appearance and health norms share similar disciplinary goals.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, it highlights areas of scholarship that are relevant in contextualizing the images and physical goals of Pilates and concludes by noting the extent to which the industry has continued these practices.

Because the pedagogy of Pilates influences the way in which we understand and consume it, this article bears in mind the multiple ways Pilates is taught and practiced today and reveals how ballet found a foothold in these methodologies. The author's participation as a master instructor in both «classical» and «evolved» Pilates teaching approaches informs this research.<sup>8</sup> Pilates stands in the shadow of many somatic practices that share similar and somewhat problematic «universal» values of ethical and bodily harmony. This article does not consider or compare itself to the field of somatic practices; rather, it moves forward by localizing its focus to Pilates.<sup>10</sup>

## The Original Practice of Pilates

The exercise practice of «Contrology» (as Pilates was once known) emigrated to the United States around 1926 and, at the time, was practiced predominately by men. The practice grew from the bedrock of German physical culture, was honed by a pugilist, and privileged the male form. It emphasized exercises

that developed the upper back, shoulders, chest, neck, arms, and abdominal muscles. Contrology broadened a man's shoulders, strengthened his chest and back, and built the militaristic posture.<sup>11</sup> Archival photos and videos of Joseph Pilates working with clients illustrate how the exercises strengthen stereotypically «masculine» areas of the body.<sup>12</sup> His infatuation with male perfection bordered on the absurd. Inspired by representations of the ideal Greek and Roman god-like male body, a series of still photographs captured Joseph Pilates and his brother sword-fighting in gladiator-like costumes.<sup>13</sup>

Emphasizing the ideals of the male body is most readily visible in Joseph Pilates' publications *Your Health* (1934) and *Return to Life through Contrology* (1945), the latter of which—littered with his moral perspective—represents the culmination of his life's work. In it, he states that «a perfect balance of body and mind is that quality in civilized man which not only gives him superiority over the savage and animal kingdom but furnishes him with the physical and mental powers that are indispensable for attaining his ultimate goal—health and happiness.»<sup>14</sup> Contextualized, the Pilates idea of the «civilized man» was a white male body, rendering insight into how ideal male bodies behaved as well as the underlying moral and behavioral values of that time.<sup>15</sup> While contemporary analysis considers Pilates to be open and accessible to all bodies, such evaluation is not without fault. The consideration of his writing as merely a product of his historical environment is concerning for its normalization of such problematic values. Yet as time passed, Pilates practice adopted a new socially acceptable, feminine veneer due, in large part, to ballet dancers' kinesthetic involvement. The physical aesthetics of the ballerina and the cultural sharing of spinal verticality, apparent ease, and efficiency of movement deeply affected the performance of Pilates and altered its gendered and physical history.

## Tracing and Integrating the Balletic Body in American Physical Culture

The socio-physical norms inherent in the culture of ballet clouded the ahistorical background of Pilates and increased its appeal to women.<sup>16</sup> Peter Fiasca states, «As time passed, certain movement qualities associated with dancers and conventional femininity began to supersede movement qualities associated with non-dancers and conventional masculinity.»<sup>17</sup> In connection with Fiasca's point, similar cultural codes of «proper» behavior of American upper-class white women can be located in the once-popular, late eighteenth- and early twentieth-century American Delsartism.<sup>18</sup> The ballet dancer's presence in the Pilates studio shifted the performance quality of the practice, and by doing so legitimized it for the otherwise «docile» upper-class population. While originally developed to strengthen the musculature of the shoulders, back, chest, and abdominals, its use by the ballerina switched the emphasis of the exercises to the hips and torso and to the overall «elongation» of the torso and body.

Ballet altered the «original» more masculine cultural coding of Contrology. Fiasca asks, «Why has there been a complete reversal in the gender ratio of those who train in [Pilates]? One reason is that during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, increasing numbers of professional dancers, most of them women, began studying with Joseph and Clara Pilates.»<sup>19</sup> In essence, dancers emasculated the practice. By doing so, they created an allowable space for leisure-class women to embrace a traditionally white masculine exercise practice. The emotive comportment and docile behavior of the ballerina was a «safe» identity for white women, both physically and emotionally. Leisure-class women repositioned their Venus-like contrapuntal, sloping shoulders; «elongated» their bodies (thereby squaring off their shoulders); and all the while did not «bulk» or excessively tax their bodies (since this is what health

professionals dictated as the limits of women's bodies at the time).<sup>20</sup> Early female practitioners of Pilates masculinized themselves through the practice, while simultaneously gendering its perception.

The sheer number of dancers who influenced Pilates is remarkable. Dancers who sought out Joseph Pilates did so because of injuries that prevented them from dancing. Notable dancers and movement practitioners such as Hanya Holm, Eve Gentry, Maria Tallchief, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Kathy Grant, Irmgard Bartenieff, Alexandra Danilova, Carola Trier, Jerome Robbins, Helen Tamaris, Yvonne Chouteau, Natalia Makarova, and Romana Kryzanowska worked with Pilates.<sup>21</sup> Deborah Lesson states, «lesser-known dancers studied with [Pilates] and [choreographers] sent injured dancers to 'Uncle Joe,' to be 'fixed.'»<sup>22</sup> This is a critically important distinction. In many cases, dancers *had* to attend Pilates and had little money to pay. Oral histories suggest that dancers traded studio

*Life Magazine Cover, December 1936. Gathered from <https://www.OLDLifemagazines.com/december-28-1936-life-magazine.html>*



work for exercise sessions.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, his leisure-class clientele in the 1930s and 1940s *chose* to see him. The overlapping of these bodies coming and going from his studio proved significant over time. Toward the end of the chronological *Archival Collection* (2000), photographs of women practicing Contrology became more prevalent. Photographs of Hanya Holm and Natalia Makarova, as well as of Joseph Pilates teaching female dancers at Jacob's Pillow, indicate the growing inclusion of female dancers in the practice. Aside from *The Biography* (2013), written proof of his clientele is sparse. However, once the American dance community recognized Joseph Pilates' system of exercise, its popularity in New York City widened.

As more and more dancers visited the studio, Pilates evolved the work to fit their needs.<sup>24</sup> These dancers used Pilates for rehabilitation, and their dutiful attendance and public visibility impacted the work to such a degree that it actually changed.<sup>25</sup> Fiasca somewhat problematically echoes this sentiment, stating, «his method became increasingly misinterpreted by the dancers who sought out his instruction.»<sup>26</sup> Again, this blending cannot be easily traced. There are no educational manuals from this era (aside from Joseph Pilates' publications) that can assist in making these «misinterpretations» visible.<sup>27</sup> However, we can employ what is known about the ballet technique and what we know about Joseph Pilates' emphasis on the male body to theorize these changes and their wider implications.

## Visibilizing the Ballerina in Pilates

Ballet's culture of perfectionism, the slim body, delicacy, and docile comportment is revealed through images and physical goals of Pilates. The ballerina, who trains her body through silent sacrifice and pain, performs this hidden cost—deceptively displayed as control and effortlessness. The photogenic models appearing in the Pilates images carry traces of the balletic physique.



*Fanny Elssler in La Cachicha, 1836 Le Diable Bouiteux (Public domain).*

These kinesthetic traces underscore how the images and goals of Pilates reinforce the silent pain of bodily perfectionism through ease, grace, and effortlessness. The obsession with this type of body seems timeworn. Susan Foster's *Choreography and Narrative* (1998) discusses Théophile Gautier's obsession with the ballerina's form. Gautier described ballerina Fanny Elssler as «tall, supple, and well-formed; she has delicate wrists and slim ankles; her legs, elegant and well-turned, recall the slender but muscular legs of Diana, the virgin huntress.»<sup>28</sup> Although Elssler's body (Fig. 2) was arguably rotund compared to today's standards, Gautier's attention to the female form is historically illustrative of the aesthetics of femininity in ballet, to which Pilates subscribes. The photogenic models illustrating the Pilates materials carry traces of the delicate balletic physique. These kinesthetic traces underscore how the images and goals of Pilates reinforce bodily perfectionism to its readers.



The traces of the ballerina's body operate on a more disturbing subconscious level in the Pilates images. Most of the time, ballerinas are seen and not heard, and the lack of voice is a distressing characteristic. This seen-but-not-heard idea has been layered into ideal qualities of femininity in the Pilates images. Elizabeth Dempster (1995) discusses how dance, especially ballet, has been perceived as the feminine art form and examines the absence of «voice.» Ballet, through its technique and bodily discipline, posits an ideal to both dancer and audience and governs the presentation and definition of «perfected bodies.»<sup>29</sup> If ballet is a movement practice that inscribes patriarchal ideology, then women physicalizing the patriarchal rhetoric of ballet diminish their power.<sup>30</sup> This same type of theorizing can be applied to Pilates. According to Dempster, a ballerina's power is perceived rather than real because she has no rights of authorship over ballet's «text.»<sup>31</sup> She commands her refined body but is powerless to speak. The onlooker or the at-home «how-to» reader is doomed to perpetuate a patriarchal notion of femininity. Contrology was created by a man and was intended for men so that they could exhibit power and control. While the patriarchal exercises of Pilates were commandeered, altered, and reborn through the female ballet dancer's body, its outcome backfired. Pilates continues to exhibit its masculine dominance, ironically and more aggressively through its feminization.

Her emotional command, exhibited in controlled comportment and artistic expression (both traits of the well-behaved woman), is made evident by her artistic communication of ballet's narrative.<sup>32</sup> To onlookers, the ballerina's body became the representation of ideal white femininity. Her body, under scrutiny from both the male and female gaze, negotiates between these gazes, challenging them. Sally Banes (1998) states, «the sylph, often characterized simply as an angelic 'ideal woman,' is, as dance historian Erik Aschengreen has pointed out, a complex mixture of fragility, naiveté,

and sexual provocation.»<sup>33</sup> Perrault's seventeenth-century perspective on women maintains that «she should be beautiful, polite, graceful, industrious, properly groomed, and [know] how to control herself at all times... She must be passive until the right man comes along to recognize her virtues and marry her.»<sup>34</sup> The stereotypical emotional demeanor of the ballerina shared similarities with socially accepted movement practices like nineteenth-century American Delsartism.<sup>35</sup> While twentieth- and twenty-first-century ballets showcase the highly evolved virtuosic skill of ballerinas (i.e., Édouard Lock, *Amélia*), they continue to reproduce the same gendered stereotypes.

George Balanchine, choreographer for the New York City Ballet, famously and problematically stated that «ballet is woman.»<sup>36</sup> This idea follows the images of the models in Pilates at-home manuals, furthering a complicated narrative between physicality, desirability, and virtue. Foster (1996) has examined the ballerina's body and its relationship with gender identity and sexual desire. She directs readers' attention to the ballerina's *legs*, one of the predominant areas of the body that Pilates attempts to «lengthen» muscularly. According to her, the legs represent the phallic identity of the ballerina, the heightened *attention* to developing, strengthening, hardening, and slimming.<sup>37</sup> This is visible in the Pilates images and is largely due to the aesthetic of the ballerina's legs. Foster states that «their astonishing straightness, length, and the flexibility of hip and thigh muscles that permits their extreme separation from one another contrast with the supple, softly flowing arms and arching torso.»<sup>38</sup> These ideas are illustrated by Pilates models: their «long-lean,» well-toned legs reveal the alluring ideal—desirable, silent, and untouchable.

For many, the bodily shaping of ballet begins at a young age. Perfection is professionally demanded, revered by its audiences, and desired by its students. Yet compared to «normal» standards, the balletic body encourages a highly distorted sense of perfection.

In ballet, as inferred earlier, dancers must have the “. . . ideal ‘Balanchine’ body type for women, with the jobs going to tall, slender women with long necks, long legs, and short torsos.”<sup>39</sup> Yet achieving this type of ideal balletic body, as many in the dance community understand, encourages *unhealthy*, restrictive eating behaviors.<sup>40</sup> The damaging behaviors a dancer must practice to achieve the ballerina’s body are disfiguring.<sup>41</sup> Even in the early to mid-twentieth century, the culture surrounding ballet «had produced ballet’s deformed bodies.»<sup>42</sup> Images of Pilates have pushed this idea of the «deformed ideal,» relabeling it as «healthy.»

## Identifying the Ballerina: A New Reading of the Pilates Text

Before the widespread commercialization of Pilates, the exercise practice seemed sanctioned only for the economically privileged. However, due to its mainstream popularity, Pilates at-home manuals, DVDs, and on-line videos now provide cost-effective alternatives for the self-motivated. Self-learners look to these products to stay driven. Those new to Pilates find sanctuary in their homes rather than in the gym. Greeting the newly inspired, these manuals are littered with images of ideal white bodies and a veiled effort to motivate a longer-term commitment. A burgeoning life of health and well-being rewards their dedication. While intended to inspire, these Pilates images promote as «healthy» an unrealistic «ideal body.» For most, however, without surgical procedures or dangerous self-deprivation, this ideal is unachievable and unrealistic. This too is part of the power of Pilates.

*The Pilates Method of Physical and Mental Conditioning* (2005), first published in 1980 by Philip Friedman and Gail Eisen, is regarded as one of the «original» mainstream Pilates books.<sup>43</sup> While a dated publication, it continues to impact self-learners and Pilates instructors. This at-home exercise book was the first of its kind, making Pilates more accessible

to the general population. Further, the decade of its publication suggests the period of time in which the ballerina’s kinesthetic presence came into the mainstream marketing of Pilates. Like most self-help books, the opening inspires the reader: «Wouldn’t it be wonderful to be fit and supple, stronger without big, bulky muscles; to have good body tone and a firmer, flatter belly? And wouldn’t it be wonderful to sit and stand and move gracefully, without having to think about it or work at it?»<sup>44</sup> Walking and sitting straighter, moving more gracefully, and obtaining firmer, sleeker muscles are the «riches» to be reaped by the committed student. If diligently practiced over time, the physical and mental goals of Pilates are unconsciously registered in the body. Yet within the book’s pages, the ballerina’s kinesthetic presence continues to influence the aesthetic of Pilates practice.

In a repetitive manner, Friedman and Eisen profess that Pilates “[firms] and [strengthens] your center while keeping it stretched and supple. . . [and] is the prime physical result of practicing the method. . . what a glorious result it is! It means a trimmer waist and flatter belly; it means better posture and regal carriage. A properly developed center can mean less fatigue and a lowered incidence of back pain and injury.”<sup>45</sup> The benefits of «better» posture equate to a noble carriage, justified through musculoskeletal protection. These goals and directives, imbued with cultural assumptions of bodily appearance and behavior, clearly value one type of bodily comportment over others. The authors’ words clearly echo Joseph Pilates’ earlier publications.

Nearly 20 years later, Brooke Siler’s *The Pilates Body* (2000) reiterates similar goals and results from doing Pilates. Siler implies that onerous tasks of daily life, mental stresses, and physical chores impede one’s ability to feel good. Appealing primarily to «female» stresses, she clarifies, inspires, and cautions the reader. An antidote for readers: Pilates «is not an arduous technique that leaves you tired and sore. Think about

all the hours you have spent exercising and letting your mind drift away from what you are doing.»<sup>46</sup> Her problematic leaning toward the female population is undeniable.

Siler draws attention to specific areas of the body and the processes by which students learn how to change them. She affirms that «you will begin to understand how the movements are merely tools to understanding your body. Structured around the stomach, hips, lower back, and buttocks—the center of the body, or its ‘powerhouse’—the movements of the Pilates Method are instrumental in maintaining good posture and alignment.»<sup>47</sup> The areas of the body she highlights are traditionally «feminized» areas. More concerning is the insinuation that woman need these exercises to understand their bodies.

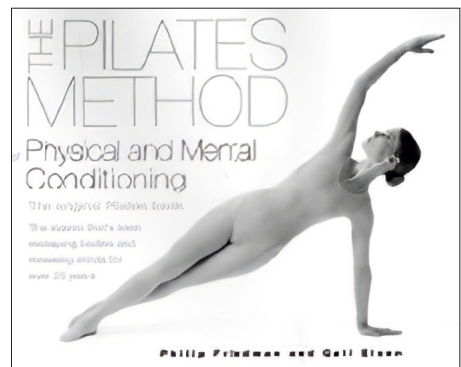
Pilates markets the overall achievement of these physical goals wholly on the will and determination of the student. This same sentiment is echoed in Helena Wulff’s (2008) observations on the cultural disciplining to which participants in the ballet community subscribe. The ballerina’s body, together with her ability to physically and emotionally control herself, her willpower, and her commitment, impact what she calls the «politics of performance.» Attention to the politics of performance is significant because Wulff’s consideration of willpower, morality, bodily disciplining, and body type shapes the ballet body and constitutes the personality of the ballerina. As Siler (2000) assures, «There is nothing we cannot achieve if we put our minds to it, and this is especially true when we are speaking about our bodies.»<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the path to achieving these goals is often difficult. Siler leans on an individual’s tenacity as the quintessential motivator. She inspires the uneasy and self-conscious reader, who may be dissuaded by the complexity of the exercises, by reaffirming that a «subconscious rhythm is inherent in us all.»<sup>49</sup> Learning these movements is achievable. Playing to vanity and social norms, Siler sells a student’s commitment to the practice through

bodily goals: «uniformly developed muscles are the key to good posture, suppleness, and natural grace.»<sup>50</sup> Students learn and integrate Pilates into their everyday life as if it were a social mandate.

## Questioning Health, Embracing Vanity: Ballet in the «Pilates Body»

The images of the balletic body (real and inferred) in promotional Pilates materials affect the audiences they purportedly serve. The insidiousness of these images extends deep into and beyond aesthetics. The ballerina’s physicality merges with socially acceptable female emotional behaviors. The ballet dancer’s appearance emphasizes her renowned kinesthetic ability, lean physicality, and emotional comportment. These qualities embody a more troubling appeal. The balletic body, due to the dancer’s ability to physically excel in the practice, makes Pilates *look* «beautiful» to consumer culture, while at the same time promoting her social character. Images of Pilates reflect the ballerina’s emotional character of self-discipline, control, self-denial, and emotional restraint. The ballet dancer’s image contributes to a new perception of social and emotional codes surrounding the ideal and «healthy» body in Pilates.

*Front cover of Pilates 1980s «how-to» book (Friedman and Eisen, 2005).*



The cover image of the 1980 edition of *The Pilates Method* illustrates a white, youthful-looking woman wearing what appear to be a ballet leotard, tights, and slippers, with slender hips, smaller breasts, lean legs, smooth skin, and long hair pulled neatly back (Fig. 3). The position of her hand and arm could be interpreted as a ballet dancer's fifth position.

*The Pilates Body* (Siler, 2000) introduces the reader to three demonstrative bodies: «Caitlin,» «Dana,» and «Julianna.» These women reflect images of the ideal Pilates body type: long-limbed, muscularly lean, white, youthful, and «attractive.» They are not disfigured, disabled, or ugly. This type of female body is common in Pilates manuals, at-home guides, educational publications, commercial publications, and online images. Siler's identifying the women by name also highlights an imagined intimacy between the Pilates teacher and student. This pseudo-intimacy reinforces the impact of the commoditization of the Pilates body and heightens the subject/object relationship between reader and bodily text and the normalizing judgment encompassed within this relationship.<sup>51</sup> The at-home practitioner finds solace looking up to the bodies in front of her; she imagines her own success as the ideal body on the page. The pseudo-intimacy between students and

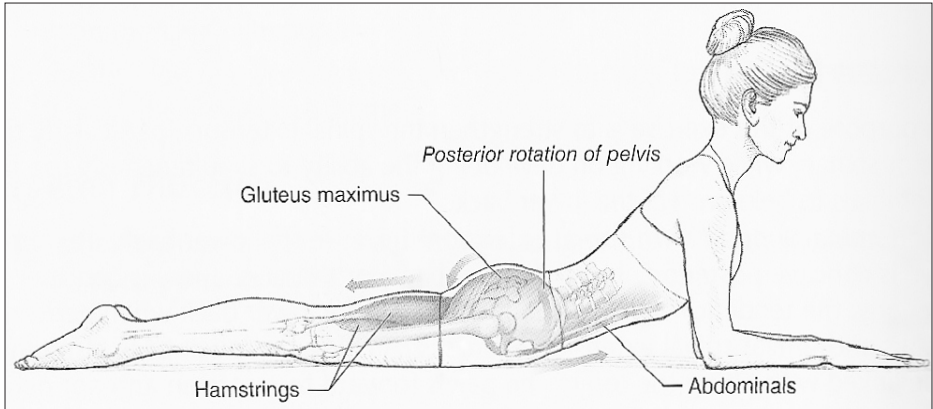
the text of Pilates at-home manuals functions in a similar manner as the fantasy between the female audience member and the ballerina on stage. The female audience member, while watching ballet, vicariously experiences a moment when her own body is subsumed to the perfected body of the ballet dancer.<sup>52</sup> The same can be said about the relationship between the textual «teacher» and student in Pilates.

Consider the image of Julianna demonstrating the «Leg Pull-Up» exercise (Fig. 4). Julianna's body is slender and well-toned; her hair is neatly pulled back away from her face; and she is wearing a two-piece exercise outfit, accentuating her torso, buttocks, and thighs. She appears to be white, small-chested, and her feet have well-developed arches, akin to the normalized physicality of a ballet dancer. Common to Pilates at-home and other marketing materials, these images personify the visual discourses in marketing practice.

In 2013, these same themes were repeated in Pilates at-home texts. According to Siler (2013), «Health and fitness go hand in hand with happiness. Nothing quite lifts your spirits like feeling fit and healthy—inside and out.»<sup>53</sup> While encouraging

«Julianna» demonstrating the «Leg Pull-Up» exercise (Siler 2000).





*Illustration of woman demonstrating proper Pilates abdominal support (Isacowitz and Clippinger, 2011).*

for the at-home practitioner, the insinuation is still alarming. Happy bodies are healthy bodies, whereas apparently «unhealthy» bodies are unhappy, derelict, and otherwise in need of rehabilitation.

Further, in today's consumer culture, many women's attention to the self-regulation of their bodies, and the duplicity of modern advertisements, perfectly position Pilates as a remedy toward an unattainable ideal. The «aesthetic of femininity» (for those who can obtain it):

*mandates fragility and lack of muscular strength... women are forbidden to become large or massive; they must take up as little space as possible. The very contours a woman's body takes on as she matures—the fuller breasts and rounded hips—have become distasteful. The body which by rigorous discipline she must try to assume is the body of early adolescence, slight and unformed, a body lacking flesh or substance, a body in whose very contours the image of immaturity has been inscribed.<sup>54</sup>*

These portrayals are troubling; the socially acceptable ideal for a woman is to look like a young boy (Fig. 6). Not only do women participate in rigorous physical disciplining; in a disconcerting realization,

Naomi Wolf (2002) reports that as women advance in their professional careers, «the diet and skin care industries become the new cultural censors of women's intellectual space, and because of their pressure, the gaunt, youthful model supplanted the happy housewife as the arbiter of successful womanhood.»<sup>55</sup> Successful womanhood and the bodily identity associated with Pilates reaffirm this type of patriarchal ideology.

The images and goals of Pilates reinforce what Dwight Conquergood (1991) calls «patriarchal constructions that align women with the body, and men with mental faculties, [keeping] the mind-body, reason-emotion, objective-subjective, as well as masculine-feminine hierarchies stable.»<sup>56</sup> A woman's body and beauty, and in some cases her inferiority, become the templates on which her morality and social acceptability are projected. As is the case in Figure 5, the woman is an *illustration*, and while this is a benign reference for some, it further emphasizes her inferiority. The images and goals of Pilates perpetuate these discourses as well as this inferiority. Sandra Bartky (2006) argues that its disciplinary practices (exercises) insist that women endure taxing practices to become beautiful, which actually heightens their inferior status; «the process by which the ideal body of

femininity—and hence the feminine body-subject—is constructed ... produce[s] a ‘practiced and subjected’ body, i.e. a body on which an inferior status has been inscribed.»<sup>57</sup> Pilates can be situated as one of the processes whereby women subject themselves in order to become «beautiful,» thus re-inscribing their inferior status.

The ideal body is an imagined body (literally in Fig. 6). Foster (1997) suggests that a dancer’s training, which shares physiological similarities to Pilates, produces the aesthetically ideal body and the *perceived* body.<sup>58</sup> The perceived body is one that the dancer lives *in*, while the aesthetically ideal body eludes most. In Pilates, according to Judith Hamera (2007), there are «two inter-animating bodies created by [Pilates], ‘one, perceived and tangible; the other, aesthetically ideal’.»<sup>59</sup> The demonstrative body represents ideal technique in bodily form. In «best-case» scenarios, the demonstrative body is portrayed in Pilates images. The interplay between the act of learning or embodying Pilates *through* the model body (in at-home text or in studios) is significant. As Hamera (2007) states, «the [Pilates] student as object-body of technique re-conceives her own corporeal geography through the mediation of another who is, simultaneously, an ideal and another body, an interlocutor, a friend. Pilates training births and stabilizes a shared history between its interlocutors: a repertoire of movements and of stories.»<sup>60</sup> While not contesting Hamera’s argument, those «stories,» replayed through the instructor’s body and from which students learn, stabilize gender norms and stereotypes about women’s beauty.

## Final Thoughts: Contemporary Pilates and Health?

The pendulum of fanaticism between «healthy practices» and fear of disability swings powerfully in both directions. The Pilates images might be far removed from the «health» it purports or from its «protective» benefits. «Healthy» bodies are often defined to be so

and justified through medical science. The ideals of «fitness,» «health,» and «beauty» portrayed through the Pilates images are narrow. They underscore the idea that to be «healthy» is the best possible outcome for the body, since it is the only way that happiness can be achieved. Privileging happiness, in itself, is somewhat of an American obsession. Ironically, Segal (2004) concluded that weekly Pilates training, over a six-month period, did *not* result in any significant changes to the participants’ overall health.<sup>61</sup> They stated that «the high initial assessment of health status may show that the Pilates class attracts a relatively healthy population.»<sup>62</sup> If those who participated in Pilates were already healthy, then their desire to participate in the practice stemmed from another impetus. Medical science, socioeconomic status, and the *physical* displays of privilege often overlap and take different forms over time. Years ago, Lois Banner (1983) stated, «changes in the standards of beauty is a complex issue in the interaction of class, women’s changing expectations, social modernization, medical points of view and other factors.»<sup>63</sup> The fantastic displays of women practicing Pilates are often confused with the marketing of happiness through perfect health.

Pilates complicates this veneer of «health» by using science to legitimize the need for the practice. Women who want to become «healthy» only so that they can «feel better» are, in reality, succumbing to deeply ingrained moralistic beliefs. As Alex Evans (2010) states, «worrying about weight and being held accountable for one’s girth, then became part of a wider moralistic and ideological process, firmly stitching together medicine and ‘hygiene,’ with socioeconomic self-production.»<sup>64</sup> Understandably, not all women «buy into» the mainstream constructions of health. However, most women participate, to some degree, in the culture of beauty either unknowingly or knowingly, since it is unavoidable and inescapable.

The «systems of power» influencing the creation and construction of white female identity do this



July 2011 issue of Pilates Style Magazine. Gathered from: <http://www.pilatesstyle.com/2011/pilates-blog/coming-next-month-our-summer-issue>



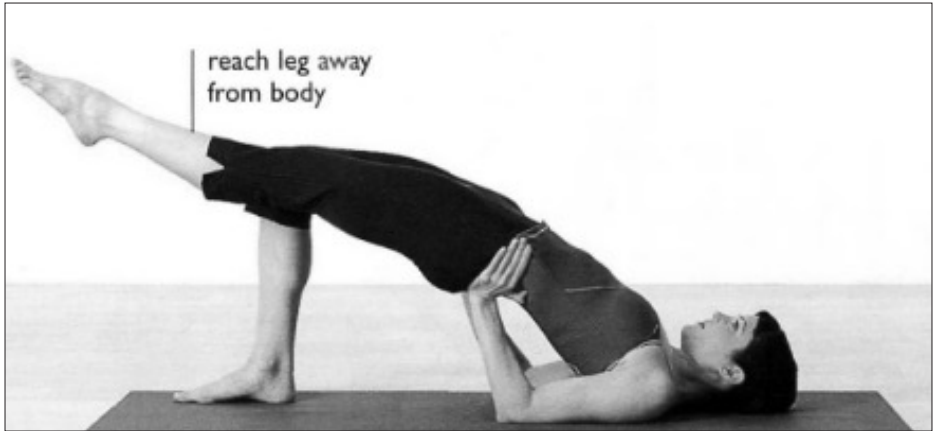
Another «ideal» Pilates boy-body? Retrieved from: <http://www.pilatesstyle.com>

through the mythical portrayal of the white female body.<sup>65</sup> These systems can be defined as «the network of practices, institutions, and technologies that sustain positions of dominance and subordination in a particular domain.»<sup>66</sup> The body is shaped and molded so that women have been led to believe that achieving *any type of body* is possible—and this is something in which Pilates clearly participates.<sup>67</sup> In the examples of at-home Pilates books, the ideal body can be «earned» through hard work, strong will, and dedication, perpetuating the fantasy of obtaining an ideal. Women who attempt to obtain the health and beauty standards of the feminine ideal find that it «requires such radical and extensive measures of bodily transformation that virtually every woman who gives herself to it is destined in some degree to fail.»<sup>68</sup>

If the reader of *The Pilates Body* (2000) or the more recent *The «Women's Health» Big Book of Pilates* (2013) undertakes the project of Pilates

and fails to reach an unrealistic bodily goal, then «a measure of shame is added to a woman's sense that the body she inhabits is deficient: she ought to take better care of herself; she might after all have jogged that last mile.»<sup>69</sup> More alarmingly, since the standards of social acceptance of the white female body are completely unrealistic, trying to achieve those standards manifests in the «tighter control over the body,» which subsequently “[gains] a new kind of hold over the mind.”<sup>70</sup> Mental discipline, through the concentrated focus demanded of Pilates, coupled with an unyielding sense of bodily control, compounds the negative consequences of self-reprimand if a student fails in Pilates.

The more distressing question is, how far have we moved from these historical practices and ideologies? These commercialized images further the embodied physical ideals of Pilates and promote dated notions of white female beauty and gender norms.<sup>71</sup> They



rely inexorably on contemporary perceptions of white beauty and the female bodily ideal (Fig. 6). The images of the ideal Pilates body, though slightly modified, continue to shape how participants should perceive themselves and what is desirable.<sup>72</sup> The fear of the disabled and non-perfect body pushes many women into unrealistic and unhealthy bodily practices so that they may «successfully» construct their identities in a twenty-first century hetero-patriarchic system. In 2018, these discourses continue to evolve through Pilates' rhetoric and images.

This bodily and mental control is instantiated in its most aggressive form by Taranis and Meyer (2010), who concluded that compulsive exercising among females correlates to self-criticism and dysfunctional perfectionism.<sup>73</sup> Most women taking Pilates are already healthy and beautiful. As Siler (2013) states, «We all struggle with our bodies. As a Pilates teacher, I feel extra pressure to look 'perfect.' In fact, I don't know one model, dancer, or instructor who isn't hard on herself or hasn't had some form of body dysmorphia.»<sup>74</sup> This deep-seated idea frames the perception of female perfection in Pilates. Different socially constructed issues, such as unrealistic bodily expectations, are prevalent in the Pilates images.

Unsurprisingly, there are few overweight, «ugly,» large-hipped, large-breasted, differently-abled, or non-

*Image of an ideal body in Pilates at-home manual (Ungaro, 2013).*

white people in the Pilates instructional photos. Pilates markets its embodied goals and the kind of body (mythical or real) that is reinforced and consumed in these popular publications. Its images and embodied goals neglect and refute ugliness and disability, while visually re-inscribing healthiness and «ideal» femininity. The images in this article reflect only a minute portion of this plethora. They perpetuate and naturalize the dominant twenty-first-century ideology of white femininity: a well-toned, slender, perfectly balanced, well-groomed body. The new reference book of female moral character was fundamentally shaped by the balletic body and contributes to the culture of beauty and bodily perfection (or culture of inadequacy) in Pilates.

In conclusion, as Joseph Pilates' work garnered attention within the U.S. dance community, it materialized as a practice for dancers and women. In this process, it became «feminized,» compounding the stereotypical heteronormative ideas of twentieth-century American white womanhood. As history suggests, the image of a «socially acceptable» and «morally pure» female body, once with fuller curves, transitioned into a thinner body with sloping shoulders, a more «beautiful» painted face, and





leaner arms and legs. Although the women in the Pilates images might be more «sexy» now (Figs. 6 and 7), with hips cocked to one side, or a stomach exposed, many are noticeably thinner, less muscular, and physically immature-looking. Many of the models in Pilates at-home manuals and educational material continue to be balletic in nature. These women are not reflections of American icons such as Rosie the Riveter or Marilyn Monroe, or even the streamlined Rockettes. Instead, they are the ideal representations of what the Pilates industry is marketing as a «healthy» Pilates body and continually pushing as the inscription of American white femininity. Traces of the balletic body have impacted the images, perception, and social acceptance of Pilates today, replacing its controversial racist and masculine past with an even more troubling expression of silent femininity.

*The proliferation of Pilates performed on concrete at a «Pilates Day» celebration. Gathered from <http://www.pilatesstyle.com/category/pilates-style-news>*

## Notes

- 1 This article was excerpted from my doctoral dissertation, *A Critical Dance Studies Examination of the Teaching Methodologies, Exercises, and Principles of Pilates* (2013).
- 2 Roberta Sassatelli, *Fitness Culture: Gyms and the Commercialisation of Discipline and Fun* (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- 3 See Patricia Vertinsky “Building the Body Beautiful’ in The Women’s League of Health and Beauty: Yoga and Female Agency in 1930s Britain.” *Rethinking History* 16, no. 4 (2012), 517–542.
- 4 Jennifer Smith Maguire’s work in *Fit for Consumption: Sociology and the Business of Fitness* (2007) examines the complicated relationship between the media of fitness and the acquisition of physical capital and bodily control.

- 5 See Maguire, 2008; Sassatelli, 2010; Dworkin and Wachs, 2009; Frew and McGillivray, 2005.
- 6 See Crissada Heyes, *Self-Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). While Heyes examines somatic practices as a way to regain personal power, I suggest that Pilates actually works toward Heyes' understanding of embodied power and its problematic normalization.
- 7 Rosemary Garland-Thomas, «Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory,» *Feminist Formations* 14, no. 3 (2002): 1–32.
- 8 Delineating these terms (i.e., classical, traditional, or evolved) may continue to fractionalize the industry, since they generalize the different methods of teaching. The definitions and application of each approach exist on a continuum. Classical Pilates is the execution of exercises, as originally created by Joseph Pilates. Evolved Pilates progressed (creatively or rehabilitatively) the exercises of Joseph Pilates. In an attempt to unify the industry Bambi Abernathy (2018) announced that Pilates Style Magazine will no longer use discriminating terminology like «classical,» «traditional,» or otherwise. While commendable, to homogenize the teaching approaches neglects the dynamic individualism within the practice.
- 9 While inspiration for this article grew from educational experiences with Polestar Pilates Education in 2004 and Peak Pilates Education Company in 2009, I am reluctant to draw on my personal experiences because I worry that these individual experiences overlook or escape critical and contextual evaluation.
- 10 See Isabelle Ginot, «From Shusterman's Somaesthetics to a Radical Epistemology of Somatics» (2010).
- 11 See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (2nd ed. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.)
- 12 Sean Gallagher and Romana Kryzanowska. *The Joseph H. Pilates Archive Collection: Photographs, Writings and Designs* (Philadelphia: Bainbridge Books, 2000).
- 13 Gallagher and Kryzanowska, *Archive Collection*, 2000.
- 14 Joseph Pilates. *A Pilates' Primer: The Millennium Edition: «Return to Life Through Controllogy» and «Your Health»* (Ashland, OR: Presentation Dynamics, Inc., 1998–2007), 132.
- 15 See Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture 1910–1935* (1997); Laura Bossi, «The 'New Man': Degeneracy and Regeneration»; Philip Comar, «Crystal and Mud: Academic Approaches to Figurative Representations of the Body.»
- 16 See Helena Wulff, «Ethereal Expression: Paradoxes of Ballet as a Global Physical Culture.» *Ethnography* 9, no. 4 (2008): 518–35.
- 17 Peter Fiasca, *Discovering Pure Classical Pilates: Theory and Practice as Joseph Pilates Intended, the Traditional Method vs. the Lies for Sale* (Peter Fiasca, PhD), 147.
- 18 See Nancy Lee Ruyter, «The Genteel Transition: American Delsartism.» *Reformers and Visionaries: The Americanization of the Art of Dance* (Dance Horizons: New York, 1979), 17–30.
- 19 Fiasca, *Discovering Pure Classical Pilates*, 146.
- 20 Yet women pushed against these ideological norms. Images of female bodybuilders during this time, as well as Rosie the Riveter and others, suggest that not all women were like the leisure-class women discussed thus far.
- 21 Javier Pont and Esperanza Romero. *Joseph Hubertus Pilates—The Biography* (Barcelona: HakaBooks, 2013), 332.
- 22 Deborah Lessen, ed. *The PMA Pilates Certification Exam Study Guide* (Miami: Pilates Method Alliance, 2005), 16.
- 23 Much of Pilates history, as from the *Biography* (2012), has been reproduced through oral history from generation to generation.
- 24 Fiasca, *Discovering Pure Classical Pilates*, 146.
- 25 This idea, common in my discussions with Pilates instructors, had hitherto escaped critical evaluation.
- 26 Fiasca, *Discovering Pure Classical Pilates*, 147.
- 27 What visibilizes this change are the legacies of the Pilates elders, many of whom were former dancers.
- 28 Susan Foster, *Choreography & Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 227.
- 29 Elizabeth Dempster, «Women Writing the Body: Let's Watch a Little How She Dances.» In *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*, eds. E. W. Goellner and J. Shea Murphy,

- 21–38 (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 26.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid., 27.
- 32 Gerald Jonas, *Dancing: The Pleasure, Power, and Art of Movement* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1992), 134.
- 33 Sally Banes, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 4.
- 34 Ibid., 46.
- 35 See Genevieve Stebbins, *Delsarte System of Expression*, 6th ed. (New York: Dance Horizons, 1977).
- 36 Arlene Croce, «Balanchine Said: What was the Source of the Choreographer's Celebrated Utterances?» *The New Yorker*, 26 January 2009, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/01/26/balanchine-said>
- 37 Susan Foster, «The Ballerina's Phallic Point,» In *Corporealities* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1–24.
- 38 Ibid., 13.
- 39 Jennifer Dunning, «Eating Disorders Haunt Ballerinas,» *The New York Times*, July 16, 1997, accessed April 27, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/07/16/arts/eating-disorders-haunt-ballerinas.html>.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Deirdre Kelly, *Ballerina: Sex, Scandal, and Suffering Behind the Symbol of Perfection* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2014).
- 42 Foster, *Choreography and Narrative*, 261.
- 43 Pilates Anytime Production, Producer, «The Life of Eve,» 2013. Accessed November 1, 2018, <https://www.pilatesanytime.com>
- 44 Phillip Friedman and Gail Eisen, *The Pilates Method of Physical and Mental Conditioning* (New York: Warner Books, 2005), 1.
- 45 Ibid., 15.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid., 10.
- 48 Ibid., 12.
- 49 Ibid., 9.
- 50 Ibid., 18.
- 51 See Cressida Heyes, «Two Kinds of Awareness: Foucault, the Will, and Freedom in Somatic Practice.» *Human Studies* 41, no. 2 (2018).
- 52 Dempster, «Women Writing the Body,» 33.
- 53 Brooke Siler, *The «Women's Health» Big Book of Pilates: The Essential Guide to Total-Body Fitness* (New York: Rodale, 2013), 374.
- 54 Sandra Lee Bartky, «Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power.» *Theorizing Feminisms*. Edited by Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger (Oxford University Press: New York, 2006), 277–92, 284.
- 55 Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (Reprint. New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 16.
- 56 Dwight Conquergood, «Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics,» *Communications Monographs* 58, no. 2 (1991): 179–94, 180.
- 57 Sandra Bartky, «Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power.» In *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*. Edited by E. Hackett and S. Haslanger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 283.
- 58 Susan Foster, «Dancing Bodies,» in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Edited by J. Desmond (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 237.
- 59 Judith Hamera, *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 20.
- 60 Ibid., 31.
- 61 Neil Segal, Jane Hein, and Jeffery R. Basford. «The Effects of Pilates Training on Flexibility and Body Composition: An Observational Study,» *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* 85 (2004): 1977–1981.
- 62 Segal, «The Effects of Pilates Training on Flexibility and Body Composition,» 1980.
- 63 Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 5.
- 64 Alex Evans, «Greedy Bastards: Fat Kids, Class War, and the Ideology of Classlessness,» In *Historicizing Fat in Anglo-American Culture*, eds. E. Levy-Navarro (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010), 155.
- 65 Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Cul-*

ture and the Body. Tenth Anniversary Edition (Reprint. Berkley: University of California Press, 2003), 167.

66 Ibid.

67 Bartky, «Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power», 277.

68 Ibid., 283.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., 289.

71 See Amy Taylor Alpers, Rachel Taylor Segel, and Lorna Gentry, *The Everything Pilates Book: The Ultimate Guide to Making Your Body Stronger, Leaner, and Healthier* (2002). A startling photo of a very young, cute, white child with a blonde pony-tail, performs the «Open Leg Rocker» exercise. This youthful indoctrination is troubling.

72 See Isacowitz, 2011; Siler, 2013; Ungaro, 2013.

73 Lorin Taranis and Caroline Meyer, «Perfectionism and Compulsive Exercise Among Female Exercisers: High Personal Standards or Self-Criticism?» *Personality and Individual Differences*, 49 (2010), 3–7.

74 Siler, *The «Women's Health» Book*, 72.

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**Sarah Holmes** teaches modern dance, dance history, dance kinesiology and somatic practice as an Assistant Professor of Dance at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia. This article grew from her life experiences and out of her doctoral research completed in March of 2013, at the University of California, Riverside. For the past three years she recovered and preserved the stories of the “elder” teachers of Pilates, in a forthcoming publication, *The Pilates Effect. Pilates’*

*intersection with dancers’ socio-cultural and kinesthetic histories ultimately changed how the work was perceived, understood, taught, and demonstrated. Her future research examines the kinesthetic embodiment of race in movement forms like Pilates and somatic practices. She holds an M.A. Dance, Mills College, and a B.A. Economics, Scripps College.*

*sholme39@kennesaw.edu*

# Ruumiillinen erilaisuus: tanssi ammattina?

Hanna Pohjola

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Viimeisten kolmen vuosikymmenen ajan länsimainen taidetanssi on elänyt murroksen, kehittymisen ja ontologisen muutoksen aikaa. Osana tätä paradigman muutosta on ruumiillisesti erilaisten ammattitanssijoiden astuminen näyttämöille, tanssinopetukseen ja -tutkimukseen. Inklusiivisen ja integroidun tanssitaiteen tutkimus on tyypillisesti keskittynyt esteettömyyteen ja osallistumiseen. Sen sijaan tutkimus ruumiillisesti erilaisista ammattitanssijoista on toistaiseksi vähäistä. Tutkimuksen painopisteenä on ollut siis tanssijan vamma sosiaalinen merkitys sen sijaan, että pyrittäisiin ymmärtämään, kuinka tanssija liikkuu ja esiintyy.

Tämä artikkeli tarkastelee ruumiillista erilaisuutta tanssin ammattilaisuuden ja sosialisointinäkökulmassa. Näkökulmassani korostuvat erityisesti tanssiammatin mahdollistajat ja estäjät tanssiontologian muutoksessa, koulutus- ja työllisyysmahdollisuuksissa sekä tanssiesityksen katsojan katseessa. Tiivistetysti voidaan todeta, että muutos ruumiillisesti erilaiselle tanssin ammattilaiselle on ollut asteittaista, ja se on edelleen osin esteellistä: muutosta on siis edelleen tärkeää edistää. Yhtenä mahdollisuutena on esimerkiksi tuoda esiin (vammais)ammattitanssijoiden tietoa ja kokemuksia sekä nostaa itse tanssitaide keskiöön ruumiillisen vamma sijaan: arvostaa tanssia taiteen muotona sen kaikissa muodoissa.

## ABSTRACT

Over the past three decades Western theatrical dance has been experiencing time of growth, development and change in its ontology. As a part of this shift of paradigm, dancers with bodily differences have made an entrance and initiatives across various contexts in dance: on stage, education and research. Most commonly, inclusive and integrated discourse of dance and disability research has been focusing on access and participation in dance. Dance artists with disabilities, and their experiences on bodily difference has been under-researched. Hence, emphasis on bodily difference has been on social meaning, instead of dancer's movement.

This article focuses on professional dancers with disability within the context of socialization. Thus, factors such as dance ontology and its normative expectations, education, employment and spectators' gaze that may facilitate or hinder dancer with disability are discussed. In short, the change for disabled dancer has been gradual, and obstacles partly still remain. Thus, it is essential to ensure that this progression continues. One possibility could be in utilising knowledge and experience existing in disabled dance artists as well as acknowledging the art behind the hypervisibility of bodily difference. Therefore, dance as an art form would be valued in its all existence.



# Ruumiillinen erilaisuus: tanssi ammattina?

Hanna Pohjola

## Johdanto

Viimeisten kolmen vuosikymmenen ajan länsimainen taidetanssi on elänyt murroksen, muutoksen ja voimakkaan kehittymisen aikaa. Tanssi on laaja-alaisesti ja luonut yhä uusia tanssityylejä, ja totunnaiset esiintymiskonventiot on haastettu. Myös tanssin sosiaalisen aseman voidaan tulkita laajentuneen erityisesti 2000-luvulla, kun tanssin soveltava käyttö ja kulttuurivienti ovat lisääntyneet, tanssin yleinen näkyvyys on parantunut ja harrastajien ja ammattilaisten määrä on kasvanut (Pohjola 2012, 85). Yhtenä merkittävänä osana liikkuvaa ja muuttuvaa tanssin kenttää on ruumiillisen erilaisuuden astuminen näyttämöille, tanssinopetukseen ja -tutkimukseen.

Tämän artikkelin tavoitteena on lähestyä ruumiillista erilaisuutta tanssin ammattilaisuuden näkökulmasta tanssisosiologisesti. Näkökulmassani korostuvat sosialisatio (ks. esim. Berger ja Luckmann 1995) ja erityisesti tanssiammatin mahdollistajat ja estäjät: koulutusmahdollisuudet, tanssienttä ja tanssiesityksen katsojat. Tarkastelen kokoavasti aiemman tutkimuksen pohjalta, millaisia koulutusrakenteita ja työllistymismahdollisuuksia ruumiillisesti erilaisella tanssijalla on sekä kuinka tanssijan ruumis eksplikoituu tanssin katsomisessa. Artikkelin aineisto haettiin joulukuussa 2017—helmikuussa 2018 Google Scholar- ja UEF-Finna-tietokannoista hakusanoilla *dance and disability*. Valittu aineisto rajattiin tiivistelmien lukemisen perusteella teoreettisesta viitekehystä käsin sekä artikkelien saatavuuden perusteella (so. open access -julkaisut, tietokantojen kautta avautuvat artikkelit). Lisäksi aineistoa täydennettiin myös muulla tanssialan ja vammaistutkimuksen kirjallisuudella

sekä internetpohjaisilla kotisivuilla. Kirjallisuus on rajattu suomen- ja englanninkieliseen. Aineiston analyysi koostuu abduktiivisesti (eli teoriaohjaavasti) jäsennetystä sisällön analyysistä. Aluksi redusoin eli pelkistin aineiston, minkä jälkeen ryhmittelin sen rakenteellisten sosialisatioagenttien avulla erillisiksi kappaleiksi ja abstrahoin. Näin muodostui kokonaiskuva tutkittavasta ilmiöstä: ruumiillisesta erilaisuudesta tanssiammatillisuuden näkökulmasta.

Etenen artikkelissa kronologisesti: aloitan vammaisuuteen liittyvistä käsitteistä ja aiemmasta ruumiilliseen erilaisuuteen liittyvästä tanssintutkimuksesta. Jatkan tanssiontologian muutoksella ja tanssin kentän rakenteellisilla tekijöillä ja etenen tästä koulutukseen ja tanssin katsomiseen. Päätän artikkelin kokoavaan pohdintaan. Artikkelissa käytän johdonmukaisesti jo käytössä olevan jaottelun mukaisesti inklusiivisen ja integroidun tanssin käsitteitä niiden alkuperäisjulkaisun mukaisesti.

## Taustaa

Vammaisuus on professori ja vammaistutkija Simo Vehmaksen (2014, 85) mukaan ilmiönä sosiaalinen konstruktio, johon liittyy usein yleisiä sosiaalisia rakenteita ja mekanismeja, jotka eivät ole selitettävissä pelkästään fysiologisilla tai biologisilla tekijöillä. Tällä Vehmas viittaa vammaisuuden sosiaaliseen malliin (Oliver 1996), joka korostaa vammaisuuden sosiaalisesta ympäristöstä johtuvaa luonnetta ja ulkoapäin asetettuja rajoituksia (ks. myös Vehmas 2005). Sosiaalisen mallin voidaan tulkita syntyneen vastareaktion vammaisuuden lääketieteelliselle mallille, jossa vammaisuus on yksilön medikalisoitu ominaisuus,

kuten esimerkiksi patologia tai rajoitus (ks. esim. Oliver 1996, 32–34). Käytännössä sekä sosiaalinen että lääketieteellinen malli ja uusi ICF-luokittelu (WHO 2018) elävät kuitenkin usein rinnakkain. Tämä näkyy esimerkiksi käytössä olevassa moninaisessa käsitteidiakossa, jossa elää useita rinnakkaisia käsitteitä vammaisuudelle ja ruumiilliselle erilaisuudelle (ks. lisää esim. Benjamin 2002, 13; Whatley ja Marsh 2018, 6), kuten esimerkiksi *disability* (vammainen), *impairment* (toiminnan rajoite, vika, vamma), *integrated* (integroitu), *inclusive* (inklusiivinen) ja *handicapped* (vajaakykyinen) muutaman mainitakseni. Tanssissa rinnalle on uutena käsitteenä tulleet erilaisesti kykyinen tanssija eli *differently abled dancer* (Whatley ja Marsh 2018, 6). Suomeksi on käytetty esimerkiksi käsitteitä soveltava tanssi, erityistanssi (vrt. erityisliikunta), vammaistanssi (vrt. vammaisurheilu), inklusiivinen tanssi, integroitu tanssi ja yhteisötanssi muutamia mainitakseni. Usein vammaistutkimuksessa ja alaan liittyvässä tanssikirjallisuudessa käytetään käsitteitä inklusiivinen tai integroitu. Näistä inklusiivisen voidaan katsoa tanssissa liittyvän ensisijaisesti pedagogiseen keskusteluun ja osallistamiseen sekä esteettömyyteen, kun integroitu viittaa usein tanssiryhmiin.

Viimeaikainen tutkimus tanssista ja ruumiillisesta erilaisuudesta ja erityistä tukea tarvitsevien henkilöiden tanssista on usein keskittynyt esteettömyyteen (tai esteellisyyteen), osallistamiseen, kuntoutukseen, hyvinvointiin, vapaa-ajan virkistystoimintaan, tanssiterapiaan ja -pedagogiikkaan (ks. esim. Whatley 2007; Cone ja Cone 2011; Aujla ja Redding 2013; Cone 2015; Zitomer 2016; Lehtikoinen ja Vanhanen 2017; Burridge ja Svendler Nielsen 2018). Esteellisyyden ja esteettömyyden teemat ovat usein liittyneet keskustelun tasa-arvoisuudesta sekä vammaisten oikeuksista, kun taas soveltavan tanssin lisääntynyt käyttö on korostanut yksilön taidekokemusta ja sen merkitystä. Esimerkiksi yhteisöllisellä taidetoiminnalla on todettu olevan monia ulottuvuuksia, jotka vaikuttavat

positiivisesti vammaisten henkilöiden ja erityistä tukea tarvitsevien hyvinvointiin, itsetuntoon, sosiaalisiin suhteisiin ja vuorovaikutustaitoihin (Sutela 2017, 77). Lisääntyneen ruumiillisen erilaisuuden ilmenemisen voidaan siis tulkita juontavan juurensa osin sosiaalishistoriallisesta käännteestä ja muutoksesta tanssissa, mutta myös osaksi vammaiskulttuurin (engl. *disability culture*) liikkeestä, joka tunnistaa ja arvostaa subjektin kokemusta vammasta (engl. *the first-person experience of disability*). Näin ollen se on osa vammaisuuden sosiaalista mallia.

Tanssia taidemuotona ruumiillisesta erilaisuudesta käsin ovat lähestyneet myös koreografisesti ja liikkeen tutkimisen kautta esimerkiksi Ann Cooper Albright, Petra Kuppers ja Tone Pernille Østern sekä useat eri tanssiryhmät (ks. esim. Albright 1997; Kuppers 2001; Østern 2009; Østern 2015). Erilainen ruumiillisuus voi olla myös lähtökohta koreografiselle työskentelylle (ks. esim. Uhlich 2018). Erityisesti ruumiillisen erilaisuuden tanssintutkimuksen on todettu olevan vielä marginaalissa, ja sisällöllisesti tutkimuksessa on korostunut nimenomaisesti vammaisuus sen sijaan, että olisi tarkasteltu ensisijaisesti itse taidemuotoa (Marsh 2016). Tällöin tanssitaiteen ammattina on tulkittu näyttäytyvän osin hegemonisesti normatiivisina kehoina ja käytänteinä, jolloin vammaisuus harvoin viittaa tanssiin ammattina (Marsh 2016, 67). Tutkimuksen painopisteenä on ollut tanssijan vamman sosiaalinen merkitys sen sijaan, että pyritäisiin ymmärtämään, kuinka tanssija liikkuu ja esiintyy (Quinlan ja Bates 2008, 66). Tanssijuuden kannalta tämä on keskeistä, sillä tanssi on ruumiillista kokemista, toimintaa ja tulkintaa. Se on siis luonteeltaan myös somaattista, ruumiin fyysisyydestä kumpuavaa (ks. esim. Albright 1997). Brittiläinen tanssitaiteilija ja tanssintutkija Adam Benjamin (2002, 6) nostaa esiin juuri ruumiillisen erilaisuuden ymmärtämisen merkityksen: sen, kuinka kehot toimivat ja kuinka viihtyä mahdollisissa eroavuuksissa sekä löytää jokaisesta tanssijasta

inhimillinen ilmaisu täyteläisimmillään. Ruumiillisesta erilaisuudesta on siis yhä enemmän kirjallisuutta, kokemusperäistä tietoa ja taiteellista työtä, mutta tutkimusta ruumiillisesti erilaisen ammattitanssijan sosialisatioprosessista on löydettävissä toistaiseksi vielä vähän.

## Tanssikäsityksen muuttuminen ruumiillisen erilaisuuden mahdollistajana

Tanssintutkija ja tanssitaiteilija Kirsi Monnin (2004) mukaan tanssikäsitys on pikkuhiljaa muuttunut esteetiikan tradition murroksen, postmodernin ajan sekä tanssin uuden ontologian ja uuden tanssiparadigman myötä. Niiden mukana käsitkset tanssiteknikan funktiosta, opettajan ja opiskelijan työskentelyn luonteesta ja tavoitteista ovat muuttuneet. Monni toteaa, että tanssija voitiin nyt nähdä oman liikkuvan subjektiutensa määrittelijänä, mutta yhtä hyvin historiallisesti annettun tanssijaposition kuin oman kehollisen subjektiutensa jatkuvana dekonstruoijana tai kehontietoisuutta tutkivana taiteilijana. (Monni 2004, 217.) Lisäksi ns. perinteisen tanssiteknisen tanssijakuvan rinnalle kehittyi uutena kehon muotona ns. «vuokratun kehon» käsite (engl. *hired body*), joka muotoutui koreografisten kokeiluiden, eklektisen terminologian ja performanssitaitteen kautta (ks. lisää Foster 1997, 238–253). Tanssiteknikan käsitteen muuttumisessa voidaan puhua osin päällekkäisistä ja dikotomisistakin tekniikan määrittelytavoista, jotka tanssintutkija Irene Velten Rothmund (2015) jakaa viiteen: 1) systeemiksi (engl. *system*), 2) tiedoksi tai käytännön taidoksi (engl. *knowledge or practical skills*), 3) joksikin ennalta asetetuksi (engl. *something set*), 4) tavoitteelliseksi työskentelyksi (engl. *goal-oriented work*) ja 5) vain tekniikaksi (engl. *only technique*).

Länsimaisen taidetanssin voi katsoa rikkoneen kahleet myös traditionaalista esitysmuodoistaan ja perinteisistä teatteritiloista sekä siirtyneen ihmisten ja

yleisemmän sosiaalisen lähettyville: kaduille, toreille ja virtuaaliseen maailmaan. Se on samalla väistämättä vaikuttanut myös näkemykseen koreografiasta ja koreografisesta prosessista. Koreografia ei näyttäydä siis enää valmiina askelina ja ennalta asetettuina käsitteinä, vaan pikemmin tutkimusmatkana ja mahdollisesti tutkimuksen muotona. (Pohjola 2012, 95.) Sen ohella katsojan ja esiintyjän välistä suhdetta sekä näkökulmaa esitykseen ja esittämiseen uudennetaan. Keskiössä on taide, esiintyisyys ja teoksen sisäinen maailma, koherenssi, kuten (ruumiillisesti erilainen) tanssija ja tanssitaitteen verkkolehti Liikekieli.com-julkaisun päätoimittaja Maija Karhunen toteaa:

*Jokainen (tanssi)taideteos luo omanlaisensa universumin ja vaikka tanssijana en pysty kävelemään, se ei ole tärkeää kokonaisuudessaan (Reijonen 2017).*

Vaikka tanssiparadigman muutos on ollut nähtävissä jo usean vuosikymmenen, heijastelee taustalla usein edelleen traditionaalinen käsitys tanssijasta ja tanssista (ks. Marsh 2016; Ahlroos 2017): tämä tulee erityisen näkyväksi juuri ruumiillista erilaisuutta tarkasteltaessa. Eri tanssitaitteen muodot (kuten esimerkiksi klassinen baletti, moderni tanssi, jazz- ja nykytanssi) ovat kehittyneet vuosien saatossa kehittäen omanlaisensa erikoistekniikan ja tunnistettavan tyylin. Ne ovat samalla myös luoneet tyyliilleen lajinomaisen ja yksilöllisen esteetiikan olemuksen, johon sisältyy kuva, ideaali, oikeanlaisesta tanssijasta sekä kehon muodosta ja toiminnasta, jota harjoitetaan juuri ns. tanssiteknikan avulla. (Pohjola 2012, 88.) Tanssilajit siis osin edellyttävät tanssijaltaan mahdollisesti tietynlaista ontologiaa: perusteita, joihin tämä nimenomainen tanssityyli nojaa. Esimerkiksi tanssintutkija ja performanssitaitelija Petra Kuppers (2000) tulkitsee eri tanssilajeja ja niissä ilmeneviä tanssijaidealeja vammaistutkimuksessa käytetyn sosiaalisen mallin avulla. Tässä mallissa ruumiillinen vamma (engl.

*impairment*) näyttäytyy siis sosiaalisen ympäristön esteiden kautta. Koppers (2000) vertaa esimerkiksi klassista balettia ja tanssiteatteria toisiinsa. Hän tiivistää baletin estetiikan ja koreografoiden ontologisesti kietoutuvan painovoiman vastustamiseen, geometriaan, hierarkiaan, korostuneeseen fyysiseen tekniseen taitoon, immateriaalisuuteen ja täydellisyyteen. Tämä baletin ideaali luo kontrastin fyysisesti erilaiselle ruumiille ja myös monelle muulle ei-baletin ideaalin mukaiselle ruumiille. Tätä Koppers (2000, 124) kutsuu korostuneeksi näkyvyydeksi (engl. *hypervisibility*). Tanssiteatterissa estetiikka puolestaan ilmenee esiintyjän ja katsojan välillä ja tuo esiin vamman sosiaalisen rakentumisen. Tutkija kiteyttää, että balettitanssijan keho tanssiestetiikan normatiivisena ideaalina voi marginalisoida ruumiillisesti erilaista kehoa, kun taas tanssiteatterissa on mahdollisuus haastaa vamman kulttuurisia ja sosiaalisia merkityksiä. Koppers muistuttaa osuvasti myös, että tanssilajien kulttuuriset stereotypit ja ontologiat rasittavat edelleen implisiittisesti myös ruumiillisesti normatiivisia tanssijoita, näkymättömämmin kuin esimerkiksi ruumiillisesti erilaisia tanssijoita. Esimerkiksi monet balettitanssijat kamppailevat yhä lajin vaatimusten, dieettien ja vammojen kanssa, piilotettuina. (Koppers 2000, 125–126.)

Vaikka tanssiontologinen muutos on hidas prosessi ja tradition konventiot ovat edelleen löydettävissä kuten Koppers (2000) esittää, tanssin ammattikenttä uudentuu askel kerrallaan. Uutena tanssin muotona, elintärkeänä osana uusiutuvaa tanssikenttää, ovat integroituneet tanssiryhmät, joita alkoi muodostumaan erityisesti 1980-luvulta lähtien (Whatley 2007; Morris, Baldeon ja Scheuneman 2015). Nykyään ulkomailla on useita tunnettuja integroituneita tanssiryhmiä, joissa normatiiviset ja ruumiillisesti erilaiset tanssijat esiintyvät yhteisissä produktioissa: esimerkiksi Amici, DV8, CandoCo, Stopgap, Frontline, Corali ja Blue eyed soul Isossa-Britanniassa, AXIS ja Dancing Wheels (ent. Cleveland Dancing Wheels) Yhdysvalloissa sekä

Restless Australiassa muutamia mainitakseni (ks. lisää Benjamin 2016). Suomessa vammaistanssijat työskentelevät enimmäkseen integroituneissa teoskohtaisissa työryhmissä. Koppersin (2000) sosiaalisen mallin ja korostuneen ruumiillisen erilaisuuden näkyvyyden kannalta on merkittävää havaita, että integroituneiden tanssiryhmien toiminnassa sekä aihealueen kirjallisuudessa ja tanssipedagogiikassa korostuvat nykytanssi, improvisaatio, tanssiteatteri ja kontakti-improvisaatio (ks. Koppers 2000; Benjamin 2002). Esimerkiksi erityistä tukea tarvitsevien tanssijoiden ammatillisen tanssikoulutuksen johtaja tanssija-tanssiopettaja Jari Karttunen kertoo, että tanssinopiskelu (ja näin ammattiin suuntautuminen) painottuu nimenomaan nykytanssiin, jossa erilaiset kehot ja erilaisuus ovat rikkaus. Karttunen toteaa, että nykytanssi on ratkaisukeskeistä. Jos tanssija ei pysty jotain liikettä suorittamaan, nykytanssin keinoin voidaan ratkaista, miten se ilmaistaan. (Laitinen 2014; Hentunen 2016.) Näin ollen voidaan tulkita, että nykytanssi ei ole sidoksissa kehoideaaliin, joka määrittäisi, kuka ja mikä suorittaa tai tanssii, vaan miten. Benjamin (2002, 7) tiivistää puolestaan improvisaation mahdollistavan erilaisen ruumiin «asuttamisen» liikkeessä ja tuovan vapauden ennalta määritellyistä askeleista. Periaatteessa voidaan siis olettaa, että esimerkiksi nykytanssin ja tanssiteatterin sekä performansitaiteen kentässä on ontologisesti mahdollisesti enemmän tilaa ruumiilliselle erilaisuudelle. Sen sijaan baletin tradition voidaan katsoa edelleen ohjaavan implisiittisesti työ- ja esiintymiskonventioita, kuten Koppers (2000) ehdottaa. Baletin ontologia kuitenkin haastaa ja muuntaa. Esimerkiksi tanssiryhmät Dancing Wheels ja Freefall (ks. lisää Dancing Wheels 2018; Mead 2018) keskittyvät myös balettiin (ks. myös <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFUMEaXYwcs>). Muutos on siis mahdollinen, ja baletinkin osalta traditio uudentuu ja päivittyy.



ammattitanssijoiden johtajuudesta puuttuvat niin tanssintutkimuksesta kuin itse praktisesta arjestaan (Marsh 2016, 64–65). Jotta ruumiillistunut identiteetti ja kokemus ruumiillisesta erilaisuudesta voivat tulla eksplisiittisesti esiin, tulee tanssin sosiaalisia rakenteita ja sen sisältämiä sekä välittäviä arvoja ja arvostuksia tarkastella (ks. esim. Koppers 2000; Aujla ja Redding 2013; Marsh 2016), käydä avointa dialogia sekä mahdollistaa moniäänisyys tanssikentällä.

## **Ammatillisen tanssikoulutuksen puutteellisuus**

Integroitujen tanssiryhmien lisääntymisen myötä avautui kysymys kouluttautumiskanteista, lähinnä niiden puutteellisuudesta. Koulutuksen puutteiden vuoksi ruumiillisesti erilaiset ammattitanssijat ovatkin usein «opiskelleet» ammattiinsa työssään (ks. Benjamin 2002, xvii). Koska tanssijoiden ammatillisessa koulutuksessa ilmeni puutteita jo varhain, alkoivat ryhmät luoda itse harjoittelumahdollisuuksia järjestäen intensiivi- ja yhteisötanssikursseja (Morris, Baldeon ja Scheuneman 2015). Esimerkiksi Dancing Wheels on tuottanut oman käsikirjan ja DVD:n fyysisesti integroituun pyörätuolitanssiin (ks. Dancing Wheels Company 2018). Ensimmäisen inklusiiviseen ja integroituneeseen tanssiin suuntautuneen opettajakoulutuksen järjesti vuonna 2008 Alito Alessi Dance Ability International (ks. Danceability 2018; Morris, Baldeon ja Scheuneman 2015).

Brittiläiset tanssintutkijat Sarah Whatley ja Kate Marsh huomauttavat (2018), että monet tanssikoulutuksen opetussuunnitelmista eivät sinänsä ole syrjiviä, mutta ne eivät välttämättä ole täysin sopivia tai esteettömiä. Kyse voi olla esimerkiksi tanssitekniikan sitoutumisesta korostuneesti virtuoosimaiseen normatiiviseen tai tekniikan edellyttämään kehoidealiin. Kyse voi olla myös tanssinopiskelijoiden homogeneisyydestä ja yleisestä näkymättömyydestä: tällöin ruumiillisesti erilainen tulee korostuneen näkyväksi. Lisäksi kokemattomuus inklusiivisista opetusryhmistä

voi olla taustalla. Inklusiivisen tanssipedagogiikan tulisikin siis edellyttää tanssiontologian ja -epistemologian, erityisesti tanssitekniikan sisällön ja merkityksen, uudelleen sanoittamista. (Whatley ja Marsh 2018, 4–5.) Brittiläiset tanssintutkijat Imogen Aujla ja Emma Redding (2013) puolestaan jakavat pääasialliset ammatillisen opiskelun esteet neljään: 1) esteettisiin (engl. *aesthetic barriers*), 2) asenteellisiin (engl. *attitudinal barrier*) ja 3) opiskelu- ja harjoitteluun liittyviin esteisiin (engl. *training barriers*) sekä 4) esteettömyyteen (engl. *logistic barriers*). Esteettisillä esteillä voidaan viitata esimerkiksi taiteellisiin ja liikkeen laatuun liittyviin tekijöihin (ks. lisää esim. Koppers 2000; Whatley 2007). Asenteellisten esteiden voidaan tulkita ulottuvan niin itse vammaisiin nuoriin tanssijoihin ja vertaisiin kuin vanhempiin, opettajiin, tanssiryhmiin, yleisöön ja kritikoihinkin (Aujla ja Redding 2013, 81). Opiskelu- ja harjoitteluesteet tutkijat jakavat erityisesti kahteen: liiketekniikan opettamisen puutteeseen ja opettajan puutteelliseen tietoon siitä, kuinka kouluttaa ei-normatiivista tanssijaa. Koulutusongelman taustana nähdään siis tietyn tyyppinen ideaalikeho ja sen tuottama liikemateriaali ja se, mihin liiketekniikkaan se suostuu. Esteettömyydellä taas viitataan ympäristöön, kuljettamiseen ja tukeen. (Aujla ja Redding 2013, 81–82.)

Sutela (2017, 77) toteaa, että vammaiset ja erityistä tukea tarvitsevat taiteilijat ovat harvoin yhdenvertaisia muiden taiteilijoiden kanssa. Hän esittää esimerkiksi, että taide- ja kulttuurialojen koulutusohjelmien tulisi huomioida heitä pääsykoejärjestelyissä. Esimerkiksi Isossa-Britanniassa RAD (*The Royal Academy of Dance*) mahdollistaa jo tuen erityistä tukea tarvitseville pääsykoejärjestelyissä, mutta toistaiseksi hakijoita koulutukseen on ollut vähän, alle prosentin (Aujla ja Redding 2013, 81–82). On myös pohdittu sitä, millaisin kriteerein voi erityistä tukea tarvitsevan valita oppilaitokseen tai esiintyvään ammattiryhmään. Aujla ja Redding (2014) korostavat, että ammattiopintoihin hakeutuessa tulisi etsiä en-

sisijaisesti liikkumisen lahjakkuutta: liikkeen laatuja teknisen tanssityylin sijaan. Lahjakkuuden kriteeristön voi jakaa tutkijoiden mukaan kolmeen: fyysisiin taitoihin, luovuuteen sekä psykologisiin tekijöihin, kuten intohimoon ja sitoutumiseen. Edellisten ohella tulisi huomioida myös yksilölliset lähestymistavat työssä (kuten keskittymiskyky ja vuorovaikutustaidot) sekä tukiverkostot. (Aujla ja Redding 2014.) Benjamin (2002, 75) puolestaan esittää ammatillisen toiminnan kriteereiksi mm. seuraavia tekijöitä: läsnäolo näyttämöllä, kyky oppia uusia liikesarjoja, kestävyys, monipuolisuus, soveltuvuus ko. tanssiteokseen tai tanssiryhmään, muu kokemus esittämissä taiteissa ja esiintymistaidot. Kyse on siis tulkintani mukaan pitkälti tekniikan ja esiintymisen taitojen mahdollisesta dikotomiasta sekä moninaisista tulkinnoista siitä, mikä on «hyvää» ja ammattimaista tanssia. Usein ne kuitenkin ovat symbioottisesti yhteydessä toisiinsa: esiintymisen taidot vaativat myös tiettyjä tekniikoita.

Suomessa erityistä tukea vaativien opiskelijoiden ammatillista tanssijakoulutusta on tarjonnut vuodesta 2004 Keskuspuiston ammattiopisto. Sisäänotto on joka kolmas vuosi. Koulutus kestää yleensä kolme vuotta, ja tutkinnossa tärkeitä teemoja ovat nykytanssi, kehonhallinta ja esiintymistaidot. Opiskelijavalinnassa arvioidaan hakijan soveltuvuutta tanssialan koulutukseen ja ammattiin. Soveltuvuuden arviointi perustuu sekä tanssitehtäviin että haastatteluun. Opetuksessa kunkin opiskelijan yksilölliset edellytykset otetaan huomioon, ja opiskelija voi kehittää näin persoonallista tanssi-ilmaisuaan. Myös lisääntynyt tanssin moniammatillisuus, työskentely tanssia soveltavilla aloilla ja tanssiryhtäisyys otetaan huomioon koulutuksessa (Laitinen 2014). Karttunen toteaa, että sekä koulutus että valmistuneiden työllistyminen on onnistunut hyvin: esimerkiksi hän tuo edellisen valmistuneen vuosikurssin, josta lähes kolmannes on työelämässä tanssialalla tai sitä sivuavalla alalla ja loput ovat opiskelemassa.

## **Erilaisuuden katsomisesta, näkymättömyydestä ja näkymisen merkityksestä**

Niin koulutus kuin ammattiryhmienkin toiminta tähtäävät esittävään taiteeseen. Tällöin katseena olemisesta ja katseeksi asettautumisesta tulee merkityksellistä. Tanssissa fyysinen vamma ruumiillistuneena tuo ruumiillisen erilaisuuden eksplikoituneena esiin, näkyväksi. Tällöin ruumiillinen erilaisuus paikantuu usein esiintyjiin, mutta ei tanssin katsojiin (Marsh 2016, 61). Taidetanssia tarkasteltaessa on kuitenkin tärkeää havaita, että vammalla ja esiintymisellä sekä näkymättömyydellä ja näkyväksi tulemisella on yhteys, joka voi lamaanuttaa, voimaannuttaa sekä lisätä toiseutta tai yhteenkuuluvuutta.

Katsomisen kokemus on keskeistä: kuka ja miten tanssia katsoo sekä millaisia ennakkokäsityksiä ja subjektiivisia representaatioita esiintymistilanteeseen tuodaan. Esimerkiksi Marsh (2016, 64) tuo esiin katsojan ja esiintyjän välisen suhteen tapahtumana, jossa (vammais)tanssija positoidaan joko voimaantumisen tai rajoittamisen kautta. Whatley (2007, 18–22) laajentaa esteettömyyden ja osallistumisen teemat katsomisen kokemukseen ja korostaa ennakkokäsityksien merkitystä vammaisesta kehosta tuoden esiin viisi erilaista katsomisen tapaa. Niistä kolme (engl. *oppressive*, *conservative*, *post-passive*) painottaa katsojan passiivista roolia ja kaksi (engl. *witness*, *immersion*) aktiivisuutta. Katsoja voi tulkita tanssijaa siis eri lähtökohdista käsin: alistaa katseellaan tanssijaa, etäännyttää itsensä tanssijasta esteettiseen konservatiiviseen konventioon nojaten, ylittää tai ohittaa vammaan, antaa sen avata uusia näkemisen tapoja tai osallistua tanssijan kokemukseen. Koppers (2000, 128) nostaa esiin myös sen, millä tavoin yleisö on sijoitettu ja miten sen kanssa kommunikoidaan esityksessä. Kyse on siis vuorovaikutuksesta, intersubjektiivisesti muotoutuvasta katsomisen ja katsottuna olemisen kohtaamisesta. Benjamin (2002, 43) tuo esiin myös katsomisen ja tanssilajien sekä tanssiestetiikan välisen

yhteyden. Esimerkissään hän korostaa improvisaation vaativan katsojaltaan enemmän kuin koreografioitu teos: improvisaation katsominen edellyttää avoimuutta, kärsivällisyyttä ja suurpiirteisyyttä ja aikaa. Tällöin liikkeen tutkiminen on hyväksytyy osa tanssia.

Katsomisen ja katsomisen kokemus on siis monikerroksinen, mutta myös sosiokulttuurinen konstruktio. Esimerkiksi Quinlan ja Bates (2008) tarkastelevat sitä, kuinka media ja bloggaajat kirjoittivat Yhdysvaltojen televisiossa *Dancing with Stars* -tanssikilpailuun proteesijalalla osallistuneesta kilpailijasta. Tutkijat havaitsivat kolme teemaa: julkisuudesta tuttu tanssikilpailija Heather Mills nähtiin supervammaisena tai esittämästään sairaan roolistaan hyötyvän tai seksuaalisoituna kehona. Implisiitisti näiden teemojen voidaan tulkita kertovan esteellisyydestä, sankarimyytistä, vammaisuudelle asetetuista rooleista tai väheksytystä oikeudesta seksuaalisuuteen. Katsojan tulkinta tuo siis hyvin erilaisia representaatioita esiintymislanteeseen ja siihen, kuinka ruumiillisesti erilainen tanssija tulkitaan, koetaan ja hyväksytään. Maija Karhunen tiivistää omakohtaisen kokemuksensa näin:

Joskus tuntuu, että olen joillekin katsojille projisointipinta, johon heijastetaan sellaista, mitä halutaan nähdä, milloin vapautumista, milloin diversiteetin politiikkaa, milloin mitään (Reijonen 2017).

Tanssijalle esiintyminen on luontainen osa tanssijuutta, tanssin näkyväksi saattamista. Se voi olla myös tapa tutkia sitä, kuinka tulla näkyväksi sosiaalisessa ympäristössä. Näkymisen merkityksellisyys voi olla tapa jäsentää identiteettiä, saada hyväksyntää ja legitimisoida tanssijuutta. Esimerkiksi yhdysvaltalainen tanssintutkija Sally Banes huomauttaa naistanssijan ruumiillisuutta tarkastellessaan, että on keskeistä havainnoida koreografiaa ja esitystä toisistaan erillisinä. Banes toteaa, että esimerkiksi koreografiassa naistanssijan rooli voi olla passiivinen, mutta tanssijan läsnäolo ja tulkinta voivat olla aktiivisia. (Banes 1998, 8–11.) Nähdyksi tuleminen voi myös olla voimaannuttavaa ja luoda positiivista itsetuntoa sekä

identiteettiä. Karhunen toteaa yhä uudelleen näyttämölle astumisen tuoneen itseluottamusta:

Mitä enemmän olen tehnyt, sen myötä oma arvostukseni ruumistani ja liikettäni kohtaan kasvaa. Alkaa tuntua, että sillä mitä osaan on arvoa ja huomaan että vapaudun ja vahvistun myös muissa esiintyjän töissä. (Lainattuna artikkelissa Ahlroos 2017.)

## Pohdinta

Tanssi on sosiaalista ja vuorovaikutteista toimintaa sekä toimijuutta. Ammattitanssijan identiteetti ja tanssijuus näyttäytyvät sekä sosiaalisesti muotoiltavana että sosiaalista muotoavana. Niitä muovaavat niin tanssin traditio, tanssin sosioekonominen asema yhteiskunnassa, tanssitarjonta käytännöt ja tanssiteokset, mutta myös tanssijan henkilökohtaiset tavoitteet ja henkilökohtainen identiteetti; ne näyttäytyvät siis sosiaalisesti neuvoteltuina. (Pohjola 2012.) Tässä artikkelissa olen erityisesti tarkastellut ruumiillisesti erilaisen tanssijan polkua ammattiin sosialisointiin näkökulmasta: miten koulutuksen, ammatillisen kentän ja katsomisen kokemuksen kautta mahdollistetaan ja mahdollisesti rajoitetaan tanssijuutta. Näkökulmassani painottuu siis sosiaalinen.

Olen tuonut artikkelissa esiin taidetanssin murroksen ja muuttuneen ruumiillisesti erilaisen tanssijan position. Tulkiten, että tanssionologian asteittain tapahtunut muutos on mahdollistanut ja mahdollistaa yhä useammin fyysisesti omanlaisensa tanssijan. Silti edessä on vielä useita haasteita. Marsh toteaa, että yleisesti fokus vammaistanssijoiden osalta on siirtymässä aiemmasta taiteen (tanssin) terapeutisesta ja inklusiivisesta soveltamisesta teoriaan ja käytäntöön, joka lokalisoii vammaistaitelijan oikeuden tasa-arvoisuuteen ja esteettömyyteen sekä tuo esille ruumiillisesti erilaisen tanssijan yksilöllisen äänen (Marsh 2016, 57). Tämä tulee eksplisiitisti esiin tanssin lisääntyvässä soveltavassa käytössä. Tanssin ammatillisessa kentässä muutos on ollut hitaampaa ja on osin vielä esteellistä. Esteellisyys tulee esiin



niin ammattiin opiskelun mahdollisuuksissa, tanssin kentän puutteellisissa resursseissa kuin normatiivisina odotuksina tanssijan ruumiista ja ruumiillisuudesta. Esimerkiksi ammattiin opiskelemisen kannalta tekniikan merkitys on korostunut. Lopulta herääkin kysymys: mitä tekniikalla tarkoitetaan, mikä sen tarkoitus on ja miten se palvelee itse taidemuotoa? Ja mikä on tekniikan ja ruumiin suhde? Esimerkiksi tanssintutkija David Mead (2018, 168) toteaa, että tanssitekniikan tulisi kompensoida jokaisen omia fyysisiä rajoituksia ja haasteita. Tällöin se toimisi metaforanomaisesti «työkaluna»: olisi osa toimintaa, tanssia, mutta ei itse tanssi. Tällöin voitaisiin ymmärtää, tunnistaa ja tunnustaa erilaiset fyysiset lähtökohdat, joista liike syntyy ja joita voidaan tutkia yhdessä. Tanssi on vuorovaikutteista ja läsnä luontaisen jaetun liikkeen kautta.

Ammatillisen työskentelyn esteenä on usein myös kaksoismarginaalisuus: erityisesti tanssin kentän rakenteelliset tekijät. Ne voidaan nähdä myös kaikkia tanssitaiteilijoita yhdistävänä tekijänä. Ehkä seuraavana askeleena onkin tanssin ammattikentän pyrkimys rakenteiden yhdentymiseen ja avautumiseen kaikentilaiselle ruumiillisuudelle: keskiöön nousee se, mitä nähdään ja kuinka tanssi koetaan, ei se, miltä tanssija näyttää, vaan mitä hän välittää ja tulkitsee. Tällöin ruumiillisesti erilaisella keholla on mahdollisuus haastaa positiivisella tavalla perinteistä tanssionologiaa tanssin kentässä ja kumota vammaistanssijan mahdollista toiseutta ja mahdollistaa yhdenvertaista tanssijuuttia sekä rikastaa tanssin teoriaa ja käytäntöjä. Haasteellisudessa on myös mahdollisuus löytää uusia tekemisen tapoja, kuten Karhunen toteaa:

Liikuntarajoitteisuus on pakottanut olemaan rohkea ja itsetunnonlaan vahva. Se, että ei ole standardin mukainen eikä aina pysty vastaamaan odotukseen siitä mikä on tyypillistä, voi johdattaa tekemään asioita toisin ja muita reittejä pitkin. (Reijonen 2017.)

Ontologiasta on kuitenkin myös muistettava, että tanssitaide ja -estetiikka ovat harvoin kokonaan täysin vapaita traditioista, muotivirtauksista tai teoksen sis-

äisestä estetiikasta. Esimerkiksi teoksen maailma tai valittu tapa tehdä koreografiaa ja tanssia voi määrätä, miten ja milloin ruumiillinen erilaisuus mahdollistuu. Tanssintutkija Hanna Väättäinen (2003) huomauttaakin, että myös vammaistanssijoille asetetaan kriteerejä. Pyöräkilpatanssia tutkiessaan hän totesi, että vaikka jokaisella on oikeus tanssia, pyörätuolikipatanssijoiksi kelpaavat viime kädessä vain ne, jotka ovat juuri sopivalla tavalla vammaisia. Esimerkiksi kilpa(tanssi)urheilijan vammojen on oltava sellaisia, että ne sallivat suuren määrän harjoittelua, räsitusta ja keskittymistä. (Väättäinen 2003, 12.) Analogisesti taidetanssia tarkasteltaessa voidaan pohtia, millaista ruumiillista erilaisuutta integroiduissa tanssiryhmissä suositaan. Esimerkiksi CandoCon ja Stopgapin tanssijakunta edustaa varsin nuorta ja fyysisesti hyväkuntoista ja sporttista tanssijakuvaa (ks. esim. CandoCo 2018; Stopgap 2018), kun taas Dancing Wheels nimensä mukaisesti on suunnattu pyörätuolitanssiin. Kyse voi olla myös liikekielestä ja sen vaatimasta fyysisestä taidosta. Ehkäpä siis raja on sinänsä jo ryhmän tai teoksen maailman muotoamista?

Taidetanssi esittävänä taiteen muotona tuo esiin myös katsojan kokemuksen, intersubjektivisesti. Tulkinta on siis aina myös katsojan: katsoja kuljettaa itsessään niin kulttuurista yleistä kuin yksityistäkin kokemusta ruumiillisuudesta ja ruumiin hauraudesta. Katseen kohteelle, tanssijalle, ruumiillisuus voi tällöin näyttäytyä voimaannuttavana tai lannistavana: tanssija tulee joko näkymättömäksi tai nähdyksi ja tanssi joko vaiennetuksi tai jaetuksi. Tanssin avulla voi sanattomasti jakaa, tulkita ja välittää. Se on se, mikä yhdistää. Se on se, mikä vaatii uskallusta ja rehellisyyttä asettautua paljaaksi: niin katsojana kuin katsottuna. Vaikka ruumiillisesti erilaisen ammattitanssijan tie on vielä haastava, on muutoksen mahdollisuus nupussaan. Innoittavat kokemukset, esikuvat ja taitteen asettaminen etusijalle tuovat tanssin keskiöön. Tällöin ei ole määriteltyä toiseutta, vaan läsnä olevaa erilaisuutta. Meille jokaiselle.

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## KIRJOITTAJA

**Hanna Pohjola** (tanssitaiteen tohtori) on tanssitaiteilija, opettaja ja koreografi. Hänen väitöstyönsä julkaistiin vuonna 2012, ja se käsitteli uransa loukkaantumiseen päättäneen nykytanssijan identiteettiä. Tanssiopintojen ohella Pohjola on terveystieteiden maisteri (liikuntalääketiede) sekä fysioterapeutti. Parhailaan Pohjola toimii tutkijatohtorina Itä-Suomen yliopistossa «Ruumiillisen erilaisuuden tarinat» -hankkeessa (Suomen Akatemia, päätösno 299172) ja opettaa tuntiopettajana Teatterikorkeakoulussa.

*Hanna Pohjola, hanna.pohjola@uef.fi*

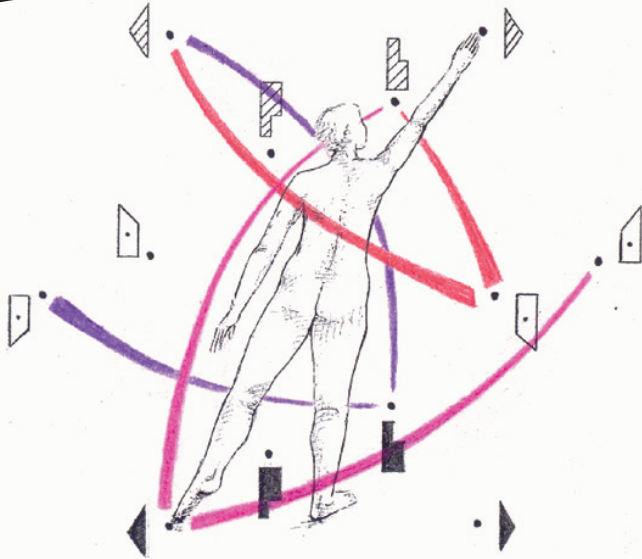
## BIOGRAPHY

**Hanna Pohjola** (Doctor of Arts in Dance) is a Finnish dance artist, teacher and choreographer. Her doctoral dissertation that addressed the identity of the injured former contemporary dancer was published in 2012. In addition to her MA and doctoral degree in dance, Pohjola has a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Health Sciences (Exercise Medicine). She has also graduated as a physiotherapist. Currently, Pohjola acts as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Eastern Finland in the research project «Narratives of bodily difference» funded by Academy of Finland (number 299172), and teaches part time at the Theatre Academy in Helsinki, Finland.

*Hanna Pohjola, hanna.pohjola@uef.fi*

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# Dancing with the Turquoise Waters of Mexico—Embodied Experiences and Observations for Environmental Justice

Susanna Hannus

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the author's embodied experiences in and with the turquoise waters of Mexico. This journey started with an exploration of the healing potential of water through water therapy and dance. It led towards a search for ways to protect these precious water ecosystems against climate change, deforestation of waterfront ecosystems and pollution. The autoethnographic research process thus developed into a dialogue about environmental justice. Employing visual ethnography and visual arts, the author utilises photography of her dance in and with the turquoise waters of Mexico. She hopes that this article will inspire new thoughts about these precious water ecosystems and actions to protect them so they can remain pure and vivid for future generations.

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## ABSTRAKTI

Tämä artikkeli tutkii kirjoittajan kehollisia kokemuksia Meksikon turkooseissa vesissä ja vesien kanssa. Tutkimusmatka alkoi veden parantavien potentiaalien tutkimisesta vesiterapian ja vesitanssin avulla. Matka johti uusien tapojen etsimiseen, joiden avulla suojella näitä arvokkaita vesiekosysteemejä ilmastomuutokselta, vedenrantaekosysteemien hakuilta ja saastumiselta. Tämä autoetnografinen tutkimusprosessi kehittyi suhteessa ympäristöllisen oikeudenmukaisuuden käsitteeseen (environmental justice). Linjassa visuaalisen etnografian ja kuvataiteen kanssa, kirjoittaja on liittännyt artikkeliin kuvia tanssistaan Meksikon turkooseissa vesissä. Hän toivoo, että artikkeli inspiroisi uusiin ajatuksiin ja tekoihin näiden arvokkaiden vesiekosysteemien suojelemiseksi, jotta ne säilyisivät yhtä puhtaina ja elävinä myös tuleville sukupolville.

# Dancing with the Turquoise Waters of Mexico—Embodied Experiences and Observations for Environmental Justice

Susanna Hannus



## Introduction

*All over the world, among people living close to nature, water is considered sacred. Mothers carry their babies in water. Water is a space for a new life to be gently born. Water can ease the pain of an exhausted body. It protects, nurtures and sustains all life. Water is always in motion. Water can help to transform an emotion. There are always small dances occurring in the water.*

The brief poetic text above is intended to trigger some thoughts considering water and healing, water therapy and water and dance. Water therapy includes various physical and somatic practices performed

*Dancing in the Sian Kaan Natural Reserve in Mexico.  
Photo: Mexico Wildlife Photography*

in and with water. Some are based on traditional Western medicine and physiotherapeutic practices. Water therapy has been researched in connection with, for example, fibromyalgia medical treatment (Carbonell-Beaca et al. 2012) and muscle damage (Biezen, Beakley, and Costello 2013). Swimming and exercising in water have been reported to be profound and efficient methods of recuperation and relaxation for professional dancers (see, for example, Wozny 2013). More holistic forms of water therapy, such as *WasserTanzen* (WaterDance), proposed by Peter A. Schröter and Arjana C. Brunschwiler; *Aguabara*, proposed by Alexander Siebenstein; and *Watsu*,

proposed by Harold Dull, involve dance-like movement. Holistic water therapies have not been researched and discussed in academic contexts. The forms I have studied, Aguahara and Watsu incorporate floating, relaxing, breathing, stretching and mobilising muscles in the water, with soft movement in and with the water.<sup>1</sup>

In this article, I will focus on my embodied experiences in and with the water. Although I studied water therapy in Mexico in 2016, I do not consider myself to be a therapist. Rather, I am an artist–researcher, and this article is a continuum of my doctoral research on education (Hannus 2018) and is connected with my practice in dance and visual arts. My research was conducted from August 2016 to December 2016. I danced in and with the waters of the Mexican Caribbean ocean close to precious warm-water coral reefs in the Sian Kaan Natural Reserve in the Riviera Maya and the unique fresh water sink holes, called cenotes, in the Peninsula of Yucatan. I explored the healing potential of water via dance and movement and observed the tropical water ecosystems, how climate change affects them and the threat of pollution.

The water ecosystems in the Mexican Caribbean and Yucatan Peninsula are especially interesting since the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC 2018), a group of almost 100 researchers from 40 different countries, published their meta-analyses of climate change. The panel argues that Nordic arctic zones, warm tropical areas and coral reefs are the most vulnerable ecosystems in the world. In this article, I explore tropical freshwater sink holes (cenotes), mangrove ecosystems and warm-water coral reefs and my experiences sharing their environment while moving and exploring through dance in and with the water. I also present some research findings that highlight the significance of conserving and maintaining these ecosystems for their intrinsic value for the planet and their part in overcoming climate

change.

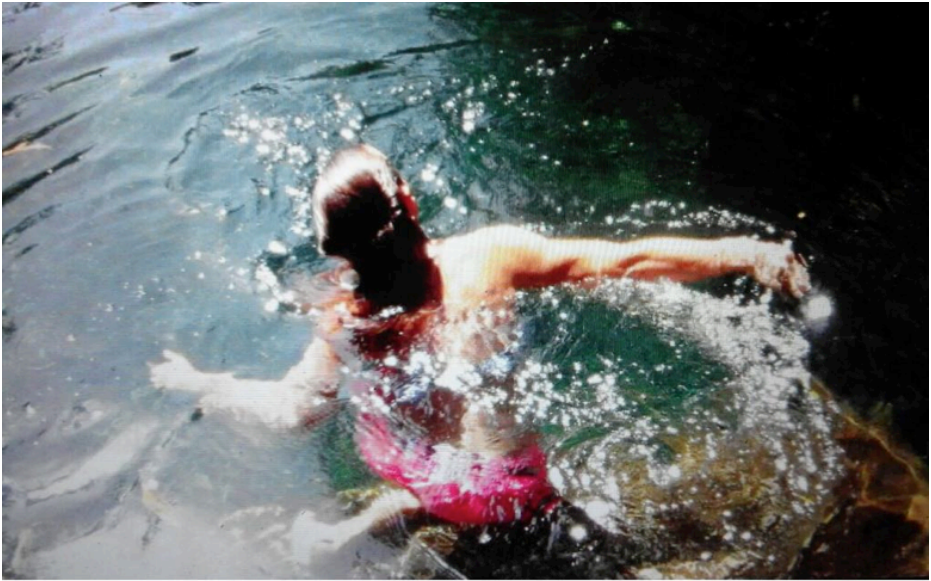
With my explorations, observations and ideas, I want to bring a new perspective to the conversation about environmental justice. I will focus on Anja Nygren's (2013) research and conceptualisations of environmental ethics and justice, since she has focused on Mexico. According to Nygren (2013), environmental justice has become an important framework for scholars, activists and everyday actors who aspire to take part in dialogue about climate change, the deterioration of ecosystems, local environmental knowledge and rights concerning natural resources. In 2005, Baxter referred to environmental justice as the «socio-spatial distribution and recognition of environmental benefits and burdens within human populations» (as cited in Nygren 2013, 2). I use environmental justice as a broader frame for ethical notions and observations connected to climate change, deforestation of topical ecosystems, pollution and people's equal/unequal possibility to interact with precious water ecosystems. My embodied experiences and explorations in and with the water offer one perspective on environmental justice in the specific context of the Mexican Caribbean and Yucatan Peninsula.

## **Autoethnography in and with the water and artistic expression**

In my research process, I used an autoethnographic approach to embodied experiences (e.g. Anttila 2003; Guttorm 2014, 2018; Pelias 2004). Water therapy, dance and movement in and with the water, which employ embodied methods developed within Finnish dance research community (see, e.g., Anttila 2003; Valkeemäki 2017; Mäkinen 2018), have been the context for my research.

During my time by the waters of Mexico in the Yucatan Peninsula, I journaled every day, in line with my training as an ethnographic researcher (e.g.





*Dance in a fresh water cenote. Photo: Susanna Hannus*

Emerson et al. 1995; Gordon et al. 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Hannus 2018). When journaling, I focused on my embodied experiences dancing and moving in and with the water, on my emotions and bodily sensations and my observations and relation to the water and nature. Pelias (2004, 1) writes that a researcher's body is part of autoethnographic research; it is a «body that is but on behalf of others, a body that invites identification and empathic connection.» I write from the standpoint of love for the land, nature and precious waters.

In addition to my journal and field notes, I produced visual material. According to Amy Stich (2011), the dense description that is essential for ethnography is missing in many ethnographic studies. Stich (2011) asks what happens to everyday life, which is full of colour and cultural meanings, in academic writing. Employing visual ethnography (Pink 2007; Ruby 1996; Turner and Turner 2004) and visual arts, I recorded visual material in the form of video of the water and my dance every time I visited the location. In the spirit of participatory research, I often asked guides, local people or tourists that could dive to film

my dance. I told them that I may use them in my project. Afterwards, I obtained images from the videos to obtain photography capturing my dance.<sup>2</sup>

The notes in my diary, most of which are poetic in form, photography and video serve as research data for this article. The photography also has an artistic intention. I want to create an aesthetic image that even slightly captures the mesmerising water-world in which this research journey took place. I utilise other kinds of references, such as policy documents about climate change and ecological research published in magazines, to tap into literature on the topic and relate it to my observations and scientific publications (for more on this justification, see Hannula, Suoranta, and Vaden 2013).

### **Small dances in and with freshwater cenotes**

In 2016, I travelled to the Riviera Maya in Mexico in order to continue the studies on water therapy that I started in Finland and Latin America. I studied water

therapy for almost three weeks near a village called Bacalaar in a large freshwater lake in Mexico. This lake is called *Laguna de siete colores*, or the Lake of Seven Colours, and it has a unique turquoise appearance. After water therapy studies I found freshwater sink holes—cenotes—which had crystal-clear waters with energising minerals.

In the Yucatan Peninsula, there are over 6,000 freshwater cenote fountains connected by an underwater cave system. This network of cenotes is unique in the world. The local Mayan people believe that the special combination of minerals and characteristics of fresh fountain water allows the cenotes to help heal some physical injuries and remove pain. Thus, swimming in freshwater cenotes is important for the local people for healing purposes as well as overcoming the tropical heat. At all the cenotes I visited, I met both local people and tourists enjoying and swimming in the water.

My method of dancing in the cenotes was adapted from the Aguahara course but was distinctly my own. I

explored by moving and dancing in and with the water, investigating the types of movement that made me feel relaxed and refreshed. I identified three such types of movement. The first was a therapeutic movement. I floated for long time and relaxed my breathing. I tried moving softly, allowing every vertebra to move slightly. Finally, I gently rotated my spine in order to make my energy move and my spine get soft. The second type of movement I call «small underwater dance.» I was inside the water with my eyes closed, feeling my interior, how good it felt under the water and the soft movement that followed my breathing in other parts of my body. Sometimes I somersaulted, and my hands moved in accordance with my interior feelings.

A similar practice called «small dance» was developed by the American dance artist Steve Paxton. In his practice, the dancer is in a vertical position. However, my position in the water in relation to the ground varied. Small dance is intended to relax all

*Dance inside the water of a cenote.*  
*Photo: Susanna Hannus*





muscular tension by bending the knees, which alters the dancer's balance. The dancer focuses on sensing this alteration in balance and allows him- or herself to move freely. Balancing creates small, subtle bodily movements, and when the mind is focused on this movement, it can become fluid and continue in new ways (Mäkinen 2018). In a similar way, I was floating in the water, balancing and trying to relax all my muscles. This created subtle movements inside my body, which led to fluid movements of other parts of my body in the water and in relation to the movement of the water. Meditative focus and sensitivity were associated with these subtle bodily movements. As Mäkinen (2018) and Klemola (2013) describe, this a mindful practice in which one focuses on small sensations and flow inside the body.

Third, inspired by the life inside the water—the vivid turquoise and blue colours, underwater plants, small fish and mangrove roots—I improvised a dance. The following is a quote from my autoethnographic diary on August 28th, 2016. With this quote, I want to demonstrate the positive corporal feelings of joy that

*A cenote in which my body was strengthened.  
Photo: Susanna Hannus*

arose in the water and strengthened my body.

*I go to a cenote. The cenote is again so beautiful it is hard to understand, and the water is endlessly blue and crystal clear. I perform somersaults under the water. It makes me feel empowered, strengthened. I feel myself being me and almost overwhelming joy. It starts to rain. Downpour and thunder. The whole world is just magic, and I dance in the rain. The water purifies, renews and makes me feel so alive, softly.*

According to bell hooks (2003), in order to be a complete person, feel peace and feel whole, we need to transcend hierarchies of mind over heart and body and acknowledge the unity of our heart, body and mind. We need a pedagogy that creates this unity instead of creating the hierarchies that are typical in society, including schools (see Hannus 2018, 248). When I was in the cenotes, there were moments in which I felt



unison of my whole being. It was like I was one with this world; I felt healing, unconditional love and unity with nature. This sharpened my observation of how water was treated by people. The water has so much potential to relieve stress and pain, symptoms that so many people suffer from in the contemporary world. I thought about how people who have pain or stress would benefit from access to this kind of water.

In a cenote that was surrounded by mangroves, some of the first plants that arose on our precious earth, I felt in unison with the waters and the mangrove ecosystem, as I recorded in my diary on September 18th, 2016:

*I am in a mangrove cenote. Here, I feel as though I am at the beginning of life. Sparkling green water, singing birds, mangroves, small fishes. I feel unconditional, healing love.*

When I went to the freshwater cenotes, I took time to observe their conditions—how the surroundings were taken care of and how the visitors acted around

*Dancing at Sian Kaan.*

*Photo: Mexico Wildlife Photography*

and treated nature. If I found garbage around the cenote, I picked it up. In my heart and mind, I gave thanks for my ability to move, dance and spend time around these cenotes. The cenotes that are most visited by tourists have an entrance fee, some of which are quite high. The fee is used to support the guides and clean the areas around the cenotes and the water. Thus, they bring resources to local people who have cenotes on their property and serve as an important source of income. However, ownership of the land is not equally distributed because not all local people can afford to go to the priciest cenotes. Thus, there has been discussion about social inequality in this context. This issue is related to Nygren's (2013, 2016) notion of environmental justice and the rights of people with less resources to visit natural wonders.

## **Water dances, tropical water ecosystems and climate change**

The IPCC (2018) report claims that Northern arctic

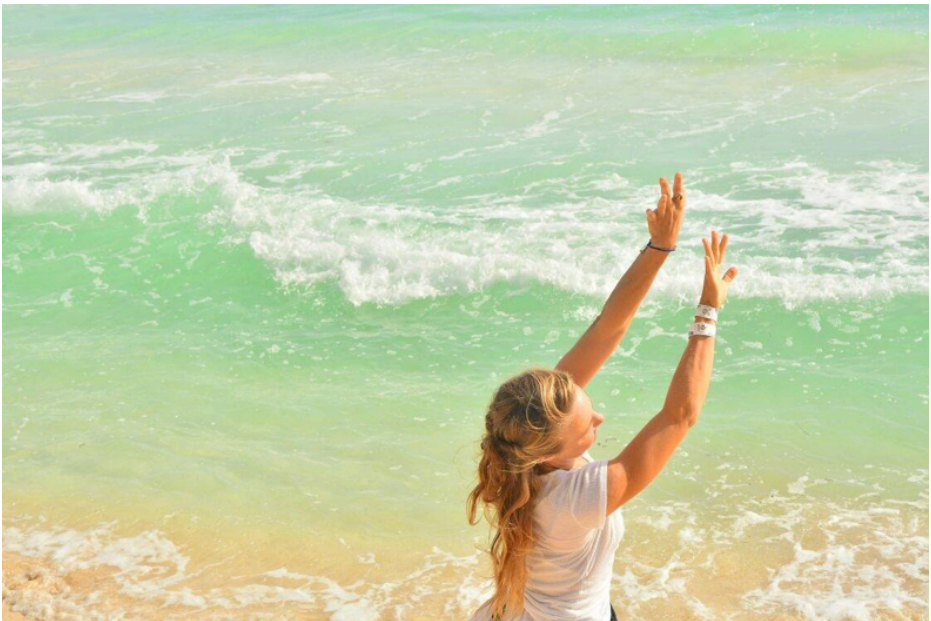
zones and warm-water coral reefs seem to be especially sensitive to climate change. The Riviera Maya and Sian Kaan Natural Reserve in the Mexican Caribbean are exquisite coral reef and marine life zones that are endangered by climate change. According to Smith (2018), on the Mexican Caribbean coast, 80 percent of the living coral has been lost or degraded since 1980 due to pollution, disease, overfishing and storms. This phenomenon can be observed around the world. Coral reefs, especially those near uncontrolled land development and the pollution it causes, are in great danger. But there is hope; coral reefs can be surprisingly resilient, especially with human help. Smith (2018) claims that they can be repaired and even strengthened after damage.

Sian Kaan (in Spanish, *La Puerta de Cielo en Donde Naci el Cielo*) means the gate of heaven, or the place where heaven was born. Sian Kaan is open for people to visit, but it is difficult to access because visitors must follow a long road that is difficult to drive down. One day, I decided to go there with a group of people,

two guides and a photographer. Sian Kaan lies within the Mesoamerican coral reef area, one of the largest and most diverse coral reefs still in existence. The wildlife is very special as well, as I mention in the next note in my diary from December 1st, 2016 (the version below is slightly abridged). The note also describes a powerful moment of connection in and with the water.

*We are driving a beautiful road towards Punta Allen. We arrive at a mesmerising beach. Dance. Dolphins. Turtles. We stop for the first time before Punta Allen at a natural, hidden beach. I dance in the wind and with the ocean. It really feels like I am in a place where heaven was born. We arrive at a lagoon. There, we see mesmerising, free dolphins. They come very close to us. Then, I see a big turtle with a white back. We are allowed to snorkel and free dive in the coral reef. Sweet, glorious, violet corals stay forever*

*Dancing with the wind and the Caribbean Ocean at the Sian Kaan Natural Reserve.  
Photo: Mexico Wildlife Photography*





*in my mind and heart. Blue fish and big rays fly in the water. The boat trip takes us close to the mangroves, one the first living creatures, in the turquoise water, in the arms of the open sky. This is a journey into my heart, and it is a gift to me. Euphoria, miracle, beauty unforeseen. ... At Sian Kaan, I was where the oceanic wildlife live free and one can feel reborn in the water.*

The biggest threat to this kind of peaceful experience with the wildlife in tropical waters and coral reefs seems to be climate change. The warming of water affects marine life in many ways. The IPCC (2018) report argues that limiting global warming to 1.5 °C is projected to reduce the risks to marine biodiversity, fisheries and ecosystems. However, coral reefs are projected to shrink by 70–90% even if climate change stops at 1.5 °C, and more if the global temperature rises further.

Although reports about climate change provide a picture of the world that may seem completely hopeless, I remain hopeful. Everything can make a

*Dancing in the Caribbean Ocean.*  
*Photo: Susanna Hannus*

difference. One small act can have a positive butterfly effect (see Hannus 2018); in other words, when many people in different parts of the world act at the same time, unexpected positive chain reactions can happen. In the photograph above, I am dancing in the Mexican Caribbean close to the coral reefs near the town of Tulum. I am floating and softly dancing inside the transparent water. Below me is sea grass. I respect it, giving it space. Sea grasses are important inhabitants of the oceans. They feed sea turtles and effectively capture carbon (see Taillardat 2018). This means that plants such as sea grass, and maybe others that are currently unknown, can help to work as carbon sinks, like forests, and in this way work against climate change.

In Sian Kaan on December 1st, 2016 the special quality of the pure and clean water and magical wildlife allowed me to feel much joy. I was energised by the beautiful mangrove jungles in and around the water. In the cenotes and the Sian Kaan Natural Reserve, there are places where mangrove jungles

are conserved. However, local people told me that in Puerto Morelos and Tulum, mangrove jungles are cut in order to make more space for hotels. Mumby et al. (2004) claim that mangrove jungles are one of the world's most threatened tropical ecosystems; the global loss of these jungles has exceeded 35%. Deforestation of mangroves has a strong effect on the wildlife in coral reefs near these ecosystems (Mumby et al. 2004).

Mangroves can work to mitigate the harmful effects of fossil fuel emissions. Researchers suggest that countries with a large amount of coastal mangrove ecosystems should conserve these ecosystems and pay attention to how they can work as carbon sinks (Taillardat 2018), absorbing carbon and helping slow down climate change. In addition, mangroves play an important role in cleaning and maintaining the crystal-clear turquoise waters around them. This makes me wonder how artists, researchers, educators and protectors of nature could make the ecological value of these kinds of tropical ecosystems more visible and help ensure their conservation.

### **Pollution and turquoise waters**

At the end of December 2016, I visited Bacalaar and the Lake of the Seven Colours, where I studied water therapy again. I participated in a ferry tour to a place where layers of crystal-clear water flowed from rapids. When we arrived there, the water was low and there were several tourist boats. I dove into the water as I had before, and as the others did as well. This time, however, I did not feel joy or unconditional love in the water. I felt gasoline enter my body through my nose and a pain in my head. The water was not well; it was polluted. The next day, I got a respiratory infection. Since I was connected with the water, when the water was affected, I became affected.

I had gone there on a boat that used gasoline, and therefore I was part of the problem. Being able to live close by nature and refresh ourselves in it without harming it is our birth right. Furthermore, tourism

is not bad as such; it brings important income to the local people. However, I thought about how different ecosystems can adapt to tourism, especially areas with shallow water, where the water does not constantly move. Could there be diverse ways of accessing these kinds of places and more ecologically friendly energy sources that would cause less pollution?

The Riviera Maya and its precious ecosystem has changed a lot during last 15 years. The local Mayan people told me that towns such as Tulum and Playa del Carmen used to be jungles and bare beaches full of marine life. During the last 15 years, cities called Cancun and Playa del Carmen have been established. Big hotels and lots of restaurants and bars have been built, while the jungle has been cut. There has been a lot of discussion about how these hotels are processing their waste water and whether this is affecting the water ecosystem of the Mexican coasts. According to the local people, there are some challenges related to water recycling in the local infrastructure as well. The Mexican Caribbean used to be guided and protected by the local people, who lived in strong connection with nature. Now, the land is divided among different shareholders, hotel owners and private people with different economic interests. In these circumstances, how can the land and water in this special ecosystem be holistically cared for? These problems exist in other countries in the Tropical South as well (see Nygren 2013). This raises questions about the ethical and ecological responsibility of hotel owners, new inhabitants, travellers and local people, about how more ecologically sustainable tourism can be developed and about how we can live in stronger harmony with nature and overcome the negative effects of our impact that are visible in some parts of the planet.

### **Embodied inquiry and environmental justice**

Nygren (2013) analysed how the concept of

environmental justice has been used as a framework to describe social and political movements as well as indigenous mobilisation in different parts of the world. She states, 'In regard to environmental justice, both academic and public attention has focused often on those movements that have achieved media exposure or that have been successful in confronting the environmental threats affecting them' (Nygren 2013, 12–13). In this article, I have not intended to use the notion of environmental justice to refer to or create a social or political movement limited to a certain group of people. Instead, I have used it as a broad framework that is connected with phenomena related to the environment and nature that affect us all, such as climate change, deforestation and water pollution. I am interested in ensuring environmental justice regarding phenomena that will affect future generations and their connection with nature.

I think that every traveller and local person can perform little acts to help nature recuperate and maintain its balance. For example, we can pick up trash on a beach, support local people in taking care of their environment, pay attention to the kinds of energy sources that water tourism companies utilise, ask hotels how they process their waste water and where it will go and pay attention to how animals are treated near tourist areas. In addition, volunteer groups could be created to help places affected by storms or flooding. There are plenty of small ways to work towards the balance of nature and the planet. In Finland, there has been a lot of discussion about how forests function as important carbon sinks and how we should limit cutting in forests. In this article, I have paid attention to the potential of oceans and tropical ecosystems to slow down climate change in addition to their ecological value.

The IPCC (2018) reports that natural crises such as hurricanes, floods and fires may become more common if the global temperature continues to rise. When I worked in New York in 2012, Hurricane

Sandy destroyed houses close to Long Beach and Manhattan. The people who lived in the affected area needed concrete help to recover their homes and lives, but some artists also wanted to process this natural crisis with people through art. In Mexico, after the earthquake in 2017, I worked as a volunteer to organise painting workshops and dances for children and their families in affected villages. Many parents told me that it was important for their children to feel joy. This was a meaningful moment of co-creation in which local people could engage in creative activities.

I am inspired to contemplate how dancers, teachers and researchers from diverse fields could work together to organise respectful projects that create new understandings, tools and shared ways to help the world and its ecosystems regain balance. To conclude my exploration, I will present ideas based on my embodied artistic research on environmental justice. I believe embodied research and art could bring together researchers, artists, pedagogues, children and local people living in diverse conditions and ecosystems. In addition, possibilities to use water for therapeutic purposes could be important to investigate more and combine with embodied research on environmental justice. Below, I present three ideas for projects that could complement each other:

1) Site- or ecosystem-specific embodied inquiry in an ecologically valuable location: This kind of embodied inquiry could investigate, for example, the effects of small dances in and with water on wellbeing and health. The findings could be shared through visual art and dance. Embodied inquiry could be performed in other pristine areas of nature as well. Artist–researchers could explore the value of nature and safe and ethical ways that nature can recuperate and stay in balance. If an area has been affected by a natural crisis, artist–researchers could organise creative activities with the local community as well.

2) Bridging the Arctic North and Tropical South by encouraging collaboration via embodied inquiry in





*For future generations.  
Photo: Susanna Hannus*

several locations that are sensitive to or recuperating from climate change or pollution: Artist–researchers in the Arctic North and Tropical South investigating and creating in specific locations could form networks of dialogue to share their methods of embodied inquiry and creating art. They could also share their findings regarding ecosystems and the possibilities of working towards balance of the earth as well as their methods of collaboration with local people. In this way, they can have a good impact on the future in different ways.

3) Children as transformation agents: Children could act as embodied investigators with the assistance of artist–researchers and educators in safe and ethical settings monitored by adults. The children could explore the state of the water and the possibilities of nature becoming balanced in the face of climate change and pollution. With adults, they could organise dances, theatre performances and perhaps visual art exhibitions of their explorations. As they grow, they could spread their findings and have a good impact on the future.

These ideas, which may be a bit utopic, need ethical planning. The projects could bring people

together from different fields, including art, pedagogy and research, and strengthen the agency of local people and children. Even small embodied inquiry projects can be meaningful and have a positive butterfly effect.

Finally, I return to my experience. When it was time to leave the water, it was almost like leaving a loved one. The waters and their natural surroundings had become my home. From the perspective of environmental justice, with all my heart I hope that, in the future, children can dive into these fountains and the turquoise ocean, dance in the water and feel the joy, connection and unconditional love I felt while in nature.

## Notes

- 1 According to Siebenstein, when practicing Aguahara, one is supposed to hold another person in the water, help her to float and relax with silence and perform soft dance-like movements on the surface of the water and in the water. Watsu was developed in the 1980s in the Harbin Hot Springs in California. It combines Zen Shiatsu and movements in warm water with deep relaxation (for more, see Brunschwiler 2018).
- 2 This is why I credit myself for the photos. In Sian Kaan, I was filmed by a professional photographer while I danced.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Susanna Hannus** finalized her PhD in educational sciences in the University of Helsinki in 2018. Her research explored possibilities to unravel hierarchies in schools through creative, artistic practices and pedagogy. In 2011 Hannus started working with visual ethnography during scholarly exchange in the Catholic University of Santiago in Chile. In 2012 she was a visiting scholar and artist in Brooklyn College, New York. She has presented her

dance-based performances and visual art exhibitions in New York and Finland. Her latest experience in the context of Mexico and embodied artistic research focused on the balance of the nature.

[hannus.susanna@gmail.com](mailto:hannus.susanna@gmail.com)

# OBJECT.MIRROR.TEMPO

Marie Lykkemark

## ABSTRACT

This article is an exploration using practice-based research in which I investigated a question: *How can I, as a dance practitioner and facilitator, collaborate with a differently abled person on compositional work?*

I explored how to be open to various ways of communicating and collaborating, not only as verbally, but also by letting disabled bodies and minds' expertise communicate in their own ways to allow for questioning and challenging normative perspectives.

This research was conducted in Denmark at the participants' group residence. The institutional context was logistically convenient and served as familiar surroundings for the participants. It also was a foundation on which to explore dance research within other institutional spaces. I collaborated with three participants with disabilities in one-on-one sessions, creating a shared physical practice. Together with each participant, I was curious about finding our common interests within the field of dance, and how we could explore them with our individualised bodily expertise. It later became:

The Object practice

The Mirror practice

The Tempo practice

By proposing a quadruple loop structure as the methodological framework, I discuss the findings while taking a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. The empirical data were collected through video documentation of the sessions, observations and interviews. The four central topics of this shared experience entailed an examination and discussion of how to comprehend education, uncovering the validity of bodily feedback, exploring Crip time as a tool to question a normative understanding of time, and acknowledging the importance of showing. To get the full experience while reading this article, the reader is asked to ensure Internet access is available so that they can shift back and forth between the text and video excerpts.

## ABSTRACT

Denne artikel er en undersøgelse baseret på en practice-based research, hvor jeg spurgte: *Hvordan kan jeg, som danser og danseformidler, samarbejde med en person med et handicap omkring koreografisk arbejde?*

Jeg undersøgte hvordan man kan være tilgængelig overfor forskellige måder at kommunikere og samarbejde på, ikke kun som en verbal udveksling, men at lade ekspertisen fra andre-evnede kroppe og sind åbne op for at stille spørgsmål og udfordre normative perspektiver.

Denne undersøgelse blev lavet i Danmark på et bosted, hvor deltagerne boede. Den institutionelle ramme var både logistisk praktisk, men fungerede også som et trygt sted for deltagerne at være i. Derudover var det en mulighed for at undersøge dansereseach i en anden institutionel rammesætning. Jeg samarbejdede med tre deltagere med forskellige handicaps i en-en-til-en situation, hvor vi sammen skabte en fælles fysisk praksis. Jeg var nysgerrig på at finde vores fælles interesse, sammen med hver deltager, inden for dansefeltet og hvordan vi kunne udforske dette emne med vores forskellige kropslige ekspertise. Det blev senere til,

The Object practice

The Mirror practice

The Tempo practice

Som metodisk rammesætning bygger jeg artiklen op gennem en spiral struktur med fire *loops*. Jeg vil diskutere de forskellige temaere på baggrund af en hermeneutisk fænomenologisk tilgang. Det empiriske data blev indsamlet via video dokumentation, observationer og interviews. De fire centrale emner fra dette projekt er en uddybelse og diskussion af: hvordan man kan forstå *uddannelse*, gøre opmærksom på vigtigheden af *kropslig feedback*, undersøge *Crip Time* som et værktøj til at udfordre den normative forståelse af tid, og anerkende det vigtige i *at præsentere for hinanden*.

For at få den fulde oplevelse af denne artikel vil læseren blive bedt om at have adgang til internettet for at kunne veksle mellem teksten og video eksempler.

# OBJECT.MIRROR.TEMPO

Marie Lykkemark

## OBJECT.MIRROR.TEMPO

Throughout my dance education and professional life, I have been confronted with highly able-bodied approaches and environments. I was introduced to an *ideal* type of body, a body celebrated as the perfect dancing body. I remember trying to fit into that category and found that for me, it was not possible to fulfil completely. We all have different bodies, and that is a quality in itself. As a dance practitioner and facilitator, I am interested in how we can share knowledge and learn from other peoples' experiences, movements and bodies. To collaborate with other bodies, I have been interested in working with dance as an art form outside of dance institutions and highly able-bodied dancing environments. I believe that by exposing myself to different learning situations, and collaborating with different bodies, we can produce new knowledge and enhance body sensitivity.

In this article, I share the experiences I had working individually with Thomas, Sara and Nanna.<sup>1</sup> They live at a group residence in Fuglebakken, Denmark, and they all have different mental and physical capacities. I worked with each of them in three one-on-one sessions over two weeks in March 2018.

I wanted to research my function as a dance facilitator and our collaborations through lived experiences. Therefore, my research question is

**How can I, as a dance practitioner and facilitator, collaborate with a differently abled person on compositional work?**

## Research Approach

The core of this research lies within the meetings and collaborations between the study participants, with different mental or physical abilities, and I. Before detailing how I approached this collaboration, I wish to clarify two overall considerations in using the term *differently abled* and the institutional context within which this research works.

I deliberately chose to use *different* to describe people with different needs, instead of the more commonly used term *disabled*. In *Disability and Contemporary Performance—Bodies on Edge*, Petra Kuppers states that labelling someone *disabled* undermines any ability to answer back, thereby depriving that person of agency (2003, p. 5). I believe that using *disabled* underestimates people's skills and abilities, conveying a connotation that they have no abilities at all. Using *different* implies that the person deviates from the norm but preserves that person's agency.

The participants live at a group residence that assists them with everyday activities. The institutionalisation of those with different needs aids these individuals with everyday tasks, while different staff members offer personalised care. Kuppers works in a mental-health setting and noted a certain connection between the physical and the representational among residents. She argues that in Western culture, specifically in Britain, people with mental-health problems are excluded from self-representation, as the clinical categories define their conditions for them. Her observations about restricted personal space led her to this conclusion: "This lack of physical and mental privacy had undermined many

people's ability to be confident in their use of space' (2003, p. 125). My short visit within the institutional context did not allow me to observe any links between the physical and the representational. Furthermore, the foundation of this research was not tied to participants' history or diagnoses, but rather on our momentary meetings and collaborations. However, it is a relevant observation worth being aware of when working in an institutional setting.

I am interested in the relationship between each participant and myself, and how I, as a dance practitioner and facilitator, can guide the working space and introduce a creative process to be developed throughout the collaborations. My research approach is based on Robin Nelson's principle of *practice as research* (PaR), in which practice is central, and this article is a medium for sharing practical knowledge. The practical work is submitted as significant evidence of the research (2013).

Among several ethical considerations that I had before beginning this practical research, one was very important to me: I did not want to investigate 'the other'. It was not my interest to dissect and evaluate the differently abled body, but rather to understand the learning experiences generated between us. I wanted to research my function as the dance facilitator, as well as our collaboration through lived experiences.

This research will be explored through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, using a human science that studies personal experience. In *Researching Lived Experience*, Max Van Manen defines *phenomenology* as the descriptive study of lived experience that, in this case, is the collaborations between myself and the participants, and my role as the facilitator. *Phenomenology* is understood as an approach to enrich and uncover the meaning of lived experience. I complemented phenomenology with a *hermeneutic* approach, which is the interpretive study of the expressions and objectifications of lived experience (1990, p. 38), i.e., a spiralling working

method that attempts to determine the meaning embodied within experience by shifting reflectively between lived experiences and theory. According to Van Manen, a real understanding of phenomenology can be achieved only through 'actively doing it' (1990, pp. 6–8). It is relevant to acknowledge my own presence as a facilitator actively taking part in these experiences. I am not interested in bracketing myself out of this context because my presence, as well as that of the people with whom I shared space, took part in creating this particular lived experience.

Nelson defines this process in *Practice as Research in the Arts* (2013) as a *praxis*, in which theory is embedded within practice in a form of *doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing* (2013, p. 32). In other words, *praxis* is an intertwining working method of theory and practice that seeks to gain a better understanding of my own role as a dance facilitator, as well as of the interactions that unfolded between the participants and myself. Incorporating notions from Crip theory is necessary for this paper to explore some aspects of resisting the norm and how to challenge facilitative and artistic practices. Certainly, the use of Crip theory<sup>2</sup> by Robert McRuer is not a way to justify the practice, as Nelson warns, but rather provides support within the process of *doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing*.

The theorists with whom I chose to work are all notable Western scholars<sup>3</sup>. In one way, this resembles the Western (Danish) context on which this article is built, in which cultural understandings fundamentally resemble those of scholars whom I examined. Therefore, the paper embraces a perspective from a very specific part of the world. Due to the criteria of this research, I restricted theoretical input, and I am aware of the consequences of taking a very specific Western approach.

Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, I strived to communicate shared experiences throughout the sessions with Thomas, Sara and

Nanna. I utilised a quadruple loop structure as the methodological framework for this paper's organisation. Each of the four loops represents an important topic that arose during the collaborative process by analysing the empirical data, guided by the research question. The findings, through the loop structure, were not a linear path, but rather a circular investigation that encouraged new topics to reach the surface.

## Research Methods in Practice

For this phenomenological research, the empirical data were collected through observations, video analysis and interviews. I had three sessions of thirty to sixty minutes each with each participant<sup>4</sup>, and on the third day, we shared our practice, as we found appropriate, with the other residents and staff.

Observation is a subject tied to the bias of the researcher's perceptions, interpretations and analysis. During the practical period, my research role was *full immersion* (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 238–240), which was a rather natural consequence of holding one-on-one meetings within a space, constantly facilitating and partaking in activities together. Being fully immersed within these situations allowed me to engage with and connect with participants. However, one risk of being fully immersed is that it prevents awareness of other processes occurring simultaneously. For that reason, I chose to film every session to facilitate analysis of interactions from another perspective.

To get the full experience of reading this article, the reader is asked to shift between the text and the video excerpts referred to in various chapters to get an inside impression of specific moments. These can be found at <https://vimeo.com/303725536>.

The required password is 'object'.

## Crip

As mentioned earlier, I integrated Crip theory quite early in the process as part of the process of

*doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing*. In this process, I found a specific theory by Robert McRuer, *compulsory able-bodiedness*, which describes a system that produces disability in some way (2006, p. 2). *Compulsory*, as I understand it in this context, is the notion of being obligated to fit into most acknowledged bodies. Focusing on able bodies potentially could elicit the effect of stigmatising difference, as bodies relate and correspond to each other. Creating a norm for the body, or as McRuer calls it, *compulsory able-bodiedness*, will produce 'other' bodies.

*Crip* arose as an empowering term, reclaiming the right to be different, similar to the term *queer*, which the majority has used to repress and stigmatise people who deviated from heterosexuality. As a stigmatised group, an efficient method to respond to stigmatising behaviour is to reclaim stigmatising words. *Reclaiming* is the practice of re-evaluating a word and using it actively as a self-reference. Crip theory could function like the term *queer* itself:

*'(...) Oppositionally and relationally, but not necessarily substantively, not as a positivity, but as a positionality, not as a thing, but as a resistance to the norm'*

*(Halperin, cited in McRuer, 2006, p. 31)*

McRuer further challenges the notion of a normative body, claiming that everyone is virtually disabled—first, by pointing out the impossibility of fulfilling able-bodied norms, and second, by considering the abled body as having an ephemeral status, i.e., everybody who lives long enough will experience being disabled (2006, p. 30). So, if we all are disabled, why are we focusing mostly on the abled-bodied? Several questions arising from the concept of *Crip* guided me in my work: How can we learn from *Crip*? How can we challenge the compulsion to avoid differences and consciously choose Crip as an applied method to function in the world?

## Overview

### It takes two to tango

The first loop of the spiral focuses on shared learning experiences and what education means in this context.

### Bodily feedback

In the second loop of the spiral, the exposure and validity of bodily communication are presented.

### Crip time

In the third loop of the spiral, the understanding of time is analysed and discussed, and further developed as a tool to question the normative understanding of time.

### The art of showing

In the fourth loop of the spiral, the importance of showing is examined.

## One-on-one

Before diving into specific moments from the practical period, I quickly want to introduce the three participants and the shared practices that we developed by exploring common interests.

### Object.

Thomas and I developed this practice by exploring compositional work with objects and with our bodies.

### Mirror.

Sara and I found our common interest in mirroring each other's movements, playing with giving and receiving roles, and developing various scores<sup>5</sup> to investigate movement.

### Tempo.

Space, rhythm and relations became the keywords for the work between Nanna and I. We explored how to compose pathways in the space by creating a relational score.







## It takes two to tango

*Just as it takes two to tango, it takes (at least) two for education to happen'.*

*(Biesta, 2004)*

In developing these practices, I see myself alternating among the roles of facilitator, researcher and dance practitioner, which at times overlap each other's functions. Producing knowledge by developing a practice together made it clear that I needed to investigate the essence of education. Gert Biesta argues that education entails interaction between the (activities of the) educator and the (activities of the) one being educated. Just as in the art of dancing the tango, both dancers need to be sensitive to each other—to listen, propose and act. In the traditional tango, the man leads, and the woman follows, with the art lying in both being responsive and alert to the dance and each other. I do not necessarily applaud the hetero-normative structure, and if we look beyond the gender roles and follow Biesta's metaphor of

dance as education, it illustrates a constant, mutual give-and-take. The exciting part for me lies within the negotiation. Along this line of thought, Biesta emphasises *interaction* as the essence of education, pointing out that the word *interaction* itself conveys mutual participatory activity (2004, p. 13). The location of learning lies *in between* the individuals, in the gap, which only exists in social practice. The gap is an essential condition for communication—and, thus, necessary for education to occur.

Interaction with the *object practice*<sup>6</sup>, which Thomas and I developed, becomes a metaphor for the gap. Biesta claims that no relation exists in education without the separation that the gap creates. Neither partner can control the gap, although it is exactly where learning is situated (2004, p. 21). I argue that both parts contain a certain potential to influence the gap. An example of this can be found in the facilitative role that I took in shaping the space between Thomas and I.<sup>7</sup> The online video provides an excerpt from the first session. I want to point out a specific moment when I, as the facilitator, non-verbally introduced

an element from a previous exercise: shaping the other. I did not plan for this to be part of *the object practice*, but I sensed a certain responsiveness, focus and curiosity from Thomas that made me explore this idea. My pause just before touching his arm indicates an evaluation of the situation and a decision-making process. I then touched his arm and began to shape it. It seems like he physically remembers the exercise, and due to the rigidity in his arm, the shape I proposed is being held. I understand this as an active influence of the gap between us. By non-verbally suggesting changes to the agreements for the practice, I influenced, but did not control, the gap.

As the facilitator, I took a certain risk in not knowing how he would respond to the change. The risk is clear; the gap is, in a very fundamental and practical sense, unpredictable (Biesta, 2004, p. 22). Thomas is also taking a risk, being in this unknown situation with an unfamiliar person, and in this moment, he is faced with the uncertainty of having understood/misunderstood the score. With a staccato movement, he brings his hand close to his head. In the moment after introducing a new element, thereby breaking the rules, an exciting tension is created, and the interplay between us is negotiable. I interpret Thomas' staccato movement as uncertainty as to whether this action is part of the game because the original task did not cover any bodily compositional instructions. Certainly, I cannot know whether this was how he felt, but in watching the video, his reaction is visibly slower than it was previously throughout the task. He then chooses to introduce the task of composing one's own body, thereby expanding the rules by placing his hand near his head. In this moment, we have both influenced the gap. However, it was a momentary situation and not a continuous act of equality, since I, as the facilitator, had the professional oversight and responsibility for each session. Therefore, the gap between the participant and I needs to be acknowledged, but this is not necessarily a negative aspect if we wish to believe that we can learn from our differences.

I argue that we, at times, did create a space in which neither had total control, but both had total responsibility to interact with each other. We both had the possibility and responsibility to develop the gap and, therefore, the learning. The inputs that we offered could be conscious choices by actively introducing another element as *shaping the body*, daring to take a risk by changing the content and thereby influencing the gap. As a facilitator, this requires curiosity in the risk-taking process, which, without a doubt, at times will move the learning focus in different directions. Thus, one should be ready for this to occur.

### **Bodily Feedback**

At the end of my first session with Sara, I proposed an interview set-up, and I chose to develop and adapt the interview in relation to the person I was with, and how our relation had been established. The mirroring exercise originally was intended to 'tune in' on each other, rather than become the topic that later would lead to the *mirror practice*<sup>8</sup>. During the interview, I asked Sara what we had been doing, and she responded in a short phrase with a lowered voice, 'It was some funny exercises'. She seemed shy and hesitant, and as the interviewer, I realised that perhaps this was not the optimal set-up for her. Kafer quotes Margaret Price about her notion of Crip time: '(...) It might also mean recognising that people are processing language at various rates and adjusting the pace of a conversation' (2013, p. 27). Perhaps, it is not only a question of pace, but also the communication format that is needed for an exchange to happen.

I then shared my experience of the session and expressed how I enjoyed a specific action when we mirrored each other. I used my hands to illustrate the specific situation, and Sara responded by lifting her hands to mirror my movements. I was surprised by her engagement, as she even let her beloved teddy bear drop into her lap, which indicated that the communication between our bodies superseded the



words. As shown in the video excerpt<sup>9</sup>, one can see the bodies' postures mirror each other. A big change within postures and body language is visible, a phenomenon that I would call *bodily feedback*, in which responds to the other person. By straightening and curving our backs, it shows the effect of mirroring each other, with both making an effort to copy the other. Both are negotiating and adapting bodily expressions to correspond within the communication.

Another description about this immediate feedback could be found in the *sensibility* concept of Merleau-Ponty:

*'(...) The sensible appearance of the sensible, the silent persuasion of the sensible in Being's unique way of manifesting itself without becoming positivity, without ceasing to be ambiguous and transcendent... The sensible is that: this possibility to be evident in silence, to be understood implicitly.'*

*(cited in Van Manen, 1990, p. 36)*

This non-verbal situation arose when the words were missing. It was a moment when it took us both

back to our common experience, an immediate bodily feedback, which was understood implicitly. Both bodies were open to the sensitive work of communication. Highlighting this moment during the interview shows the relevance of integrating non-verbal communication forms. I would argue that this interaction was a mutual learning situation in which sensitive bodies were in focus. The already-shared physical and creative experiences during the session created a foundation for sensitive and non-verbal communication.

The ability to articulate verbally one's experience or sensations is acknowledged explicitly and appreciated by society, perhaps because of its more accessible character. One could argue that a system of compulsory verbalisation exists—a way to rank words higher than other communication forms, such as movement (gestures, expressions, physicality), very much like the *system of compulsory able-bodiedness*. Crip theory challenges that system and provides space and opportunities in which other bodies can exert influence (McRuer, 2006, p. 32). Likewise, I insist that the non-verbal would be considered a channel of expression and as a valid platform for

educational exchange. The interview setting, based on words, became *cripped* as we transformed it into a non-verbal interview setting. In other words, the *system of compulsory verbalisation* produced a *cripped* approach—a perhaps unconscious resistance to the normative interview's restrictions.

## Crip Time

Time: How do we perceive it? When do we get the urge to continue or pause? The perception of time can change according to situations, locations, social interactions, the place we are in our lives and the emotional states in which we find ourselves. In the sessions with Nanna, the notion of time became a very important part of the practice that we developed. Nanna's movements are spastic, and we developed a mirroring score with a focus on tempo, rather than details. It became the *tempo practice*, which comprised a basic principle that resembled the tango—one guiding the movements, and the other following. We were not in physical contact, instead moving separately from each other, and the task was to sense the proposed tempo. We created three tasks. First, she guided, and I followed, then I guided, and she followed, then finally, we each moved as we wanted, though still having an awareness of each other's bodies in the space. An important part of the practice was to rely constantly on the partner and remain alert to act upon the other's guidance.

I often found myself challenged by our different understandings of time, in which I often wanted to proceed more quickly than Nanna did. Alison Kafer explains the concept of Crip time as the following:

*'Crip time is flex time, not just expanded, but exploded; it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognising how expectations of 'how long things take' are based on very particular minds and bodies (...). Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to*

*meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds'.*

(2013, p. 27)

I found myself confronted with my own idea of time, in Kafer's words, perhaps even a normalising expectation of time. Crip time is to be understood as a flexible time—not just *extra* time, but somehow a time that can expand the notion of the norm. Being dependent on Nanna to move before I could move myself elicited visible unease with the situation. In the video excerpt<sup>10</sup>, I clearly pause, and I remember feeling uncomfortable during the pause—which my insecure smile reveals—although it might not appear to be a long pause in the video. Furthermore, I verbalise the tension created from this 'long' pause as a way to release my feelings and control the situation. By interrupting the tension, we, or rather I, lost the chance to discover what Crip time could be, i.e., how Crip time could be a method to bend the clock, and how thinking/doing in Crip time could open up new perspectives. Another example of bending the clock can be found in historical accounts on Paris during the 1840s, when it was briefly fashionable for *flâneurs* to take turtles for walks. They wanted the turtles to set the pace for moving in urban spaces to subvert the city's rhythms using the turtles' presence (Kuppers, 2003, pp. 1–2). By submitting to another time regime, one continuously challenges one's perceptions. In some sense, Nanna represents the turtles that subverted the rhythms of Paris—in this case, my body's normative perceptions of time.

Kafer's use of the concept of *compulsory able-bodiedness/compulsory able-mindedness* has a specific normative understanding of the body, and she translates it into a specific mindset that promotes a certain perception of time (2013, p. 27). Furthermore, one similarly could use the argument that *compulsory able-mindedness* produces Crip time, and moreover, perhaps even deride Crip time as not being capable

of reaching 'the standard'. What if we begin striving to learn from Crip time and understand its potential, instead of pushing it into the frame of a normative understanding of time? What would happen if we consciously submitted to another time regime?

During the sessions with Nanna, another time element was introduced. She developed our tempo practice from a non-verbal to a verbal practice. She actively would partake in the tempo practice, and both while moving and pausing, questions or statements would appear.<sup>11</sup> Her time shifting again challenged me, as I assumed this practice would be non-verbal and be in what I perceive as the 'present' time. Van Manen defines *lived time* as being one of the four existentials, which he believes are fundamental life worlds for human beings: *lived space* (spatiality), *lived body* (corporeality), *lived time* (temporality) and *lived human relations* (relationality or communality) (1990, pp. 101–106). Lived time is understood as subjective time, as opposed to clock time or objective

time. Lived time is changeable due to the environment in which we find ourselves: Time speeds up when we enjoy ourselves and slows down when we are bored. My understanding of *present time* might differ from Nanna's understanding, since she introduced thoughts about future events. Introducing this element made me realise that it was her way of transforming the practice, and I had no reason to resist it. Unfortunately, I did not manage to explore it myself during the sessions. I responded to her questions, but never posed one myself. Given more time, this would have been wonderful to explore more consciously.

Learning from this situation, I would like to develop the idea of time and apply Crip time in a continuous artistic practice, *i.e.*, *bending the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds*, as Kafer puts it. In this case, I want to think of it as a method not only *to meet*, but also to learn from and exchange with differently abled bodies and minds. Perhaps Nanna did not articulate this in words, but her body language, her



choice of actions and her immediate shared thoughts conveyed an urge to transmit her knowledge and expertise on Crip time.

## The Art of Showing

From the beginning of this research, ‘the process’ was very essential. I was not interested in producing a performance for two reasons: the limited time we would spend together and the potential for unnecessary pressure that it might elicit. However, I did introduce informal sharing, in which we would agree on a format through which to share our process with the rest of the residents and staff. When talking about process-driven and goal-oriented research processes, Robin Nelson refers to Smith and Dean,<sup>12</sup> stating that ‘the two ways of working are by no means entirely separate from each other and often interact’ (Nelson, 2013, p. 45). I went into the sessions with a strong opinion about how the ‘process’ should be at the centre of the work and very much separate from the showing, but as the sessions evolved, I realised the impact that showing had on the participants, residents, staff and myself.

The institutional context provided a specific framework for the sessions. After entering this well-established community, it was clear that the effect that I had on the participants—who were able to work individually with *somebody* who was not a staff member—was quite evident. They were able to interact with somebody with a different approach and motivation than the pedagogues, physiotherapists and ergotherapists<sup>13</sup> with whom the residents are familiar. The interest in the work that I had done in collaborating with residents impacted people. In my field journal, I described an encounter right after showing residents the video of Sara and I<sup>14</sup> as follows:

*‘After the showing, several people came up to me and also wanted to partake. One commented that he didn’t think that this was dance. Another came to me and explained why he thought it was good. By only showing*

*parts of the body, it challenged him to understand and interpret the song and the movements together. I was happy that he got that involved with the video and that he did a lot of thought about what dance is and what it does to him when he watches it’.*

I was moved by the impact that the showing had on this person, and I realised that I neglected the importance of showing. I only can speculate, but perhaps this person was more affected by the showing because he knew one of the dancers. The first persons’ feedback is very relevant and shows that, as a member of the audience, he evaluated whether it was dance or not, and one could tell that he was both provoked when I called it *dance* and was open to share and discuss his opinions. Introducing art and creative practice in institutions is not a new and innovative concept, but this feedback underlines the impact of having an artist disrupt everyday routines.

That brings me back to my initial motivation: to develop dance in environments other than within dance education or in highly able-bodied dancing environments. My exploration in developing a practice with people outside the field of dance created three new practices: object practice, mirror practice and tempo practice. All developed practices were formed by the exchange of our individualized bodily expertise and required letting learning appear within the gap.

## Notes

- 1 All participants' names and the institution have been anonymised to respect participants' privacy
- 2 Further description of Crip theory and how I wish to apply the theory will be examined later in the text.
- 3 Van Manen (Dutch), Biesta (Dutch), Merleau-Ponty (French), McRuer (American), Koppers (German) and Kafer (American).
- 4 The pedagogues selected the three participants randomly from a group who were all interested in the collaboration.
- 5 Commonly used terminology within the field of contemporary dance to describe a set of rules that frames an improvisational exploration. One could say that a *score* is a method of limiting the endless possibilities of movement, then shaping it into something more concrete.
- 6 See page 56
- 7 Please watch 'It takes two to tango': <https://vimeo.com/303725536>
- 8 See page 56
- 9 Please watch 'Bodily feedback': <https://vimeo.com/303725536>
- 10 Please watch 'Crip time': <https://vimeo.com/303725536>
- 11 Please watch the second clip on 'Crip time': <https://vimeo.com/303725536>
- 12 The authors of 'Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the creative arts' (2009)
- 13 The Danish term *Ergoterapeut* describes a person who works with a nuanced approach toward rehabilitation and introduces necessary assistance equipment, then uses them to enhance the functionality of everyday life.
- 14 Please watch 'The art of showing': <https://vimeo.com/303725536>

## BIOGRAPHY

**Marie Lykkemark** is a dance artist, facilitator and researcher based in Copenhagen, Denmark. She has been working as a freelance dance artist in Germany, mostly in Munich and Berlin, since earning her bachelor's degree in 2013. She continued her educational path with a two-year post-graduate programme,

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[marielykkemark90@gmail.com](mailto:marielykkemark90@gmail.com)

# Aesthetic Competence and Life Skills

Anette Sture Iversen

Lately the Norwegian education system has been undergoing a process of reforming the curriculum Kunnskapsløftet from 2006. The aim of this reform is to clarify what the core elements of the curriculum are and to ensure greater depth in learning. Three interdisciplinary themes have been introduced to be integrated across all subjects. These themes are: *Democracy & Citizenship*, *Sustainable Development* and *Public Health & Life Skills*.

Dans i Skolen is located in a relatively new house in the centre of Oslo called *Seilet – huset for kunst og kultur i skolen* (*the Sail – house for art and culture in school*, my translation). They work with a number of other organisations to develop and support the creative subjects in education. These organisations have worked together in the last few months to arrange a series of public debates about the three interdisciplinary themes.

Agathe Waage/Elevorganisasjonen. Photo: Lars Opstad



Anne Sælebakke. Photo: Lars Opstad

On November 6 2018, Public Health and Life Skills was on the agenda. The event was curated by Bjørg Åsta Flatby (Kunst i Skolen) and myself. We had three presenters with individual perspectives on the topic. Elevorganisasjonen (Pupil's organization) has 140,000 pupil members. They were represented by Agathe Waage. In her presentation she focused on the fact that many teenagers suffer from various emotional challenges, including issues related to self-esteem, identity, and loneliness, and that some turn to violence due to an inability to understand or express their feelings. Agathe's key point was that life skills must be included in schools to prepare pupils for the future.

The second presenter was Anne Sælebakke, a teacher, physiotherapist and author. Her presentation was called: «Life skills and public health—in a relational perspective». Her main point was that schools must have a universal approach to prepare children and young people for future challenges. She argued that this approach should include mental exercises that strengthen the pupil's relational competence: to herself, to others, and to the community. To achieve that, the teacher's relational competence must be appreciated just as much as their





*Hans Christian Arnseth. Photo: Lars Opstad*

professional expertise. Sælebakke emphasised the utility of mindfulness exercises for this approach.

The last presenter was Hans Christian Arnseth, Professor in Pedagogy and Head of Research at the Department of Education at the University of Oslo. The title of his presentation was «Life skills, creativity and engagement in school—new competences for tomorrow's challenges». Arnseth indicated that in today's world we adopt various identities in different contexts; today, more than ever before, we can choose

our own identity—regardless of who our parents are and where we grew up. He also talked about social media and that young people can choose who they want to listen to and what they want to believe. He gave one example: 'likes' from people you hardly know are not something that you should allow to have a large impact on you. Arnseth also talked about Makerspaces as a tool for creative collaboration in school subjects.

Dans i Skolen would like to continue working on this issue. We would like to promote dance in the interdisciplinary theme of Public Health and Life Skills in schools. We believe that dance can teach many life skills that address the challenges mentioned in this debate. On February 1 2019 we organised a seminar called «The Body in School—life skills through dance» to discuss this in further detail.

## Memberships

**Dans i Skolen (DiS)** is a Norwegian association that works to support the subject of dance in elementary, secondary and upper secondary schools. A membership in **DiS** offers you 1–2 issues per year of the Nordic Journal of Dance, electronic newsletters, reduction rates for courses and conferences arranged by DiS and more. For further information and membership fees see <http://www.dansiskolen.no>.



**Nordic Forum for Dance Research (NOFOD)** is a non-profit organization that promotes diverse forms of dance research and practice in the Nordic region by organizing a biannual international conference and local events. A membership in **NOFOD** offers you one yearly issue of the Nordic Journal of Dance, newsletters and reduction rates for international **NOFOD** conferences.

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# Nordic Journal of Dance

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