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EDITORIAL

The Mandalorian (2019–present) is a space western TV series that is part of the Star Wars universe. Mandalorians are a 'nomadic group of clan-based people consisting of members from multiple species, all bound by a common culture' (Anon. n.d.: n.pag.). In *The Mandalorian*, the eponymous – and morally ambivalent – main character is played almost entirely behind a helmet by Pedro Pascal. He is tasked with looking after a baby-sized Yoda-like character known affectionately by fans as Baby Yoda. In Episode 3 of the first series, titled 'The Sin' (2019), the Mandalorian is involved in a fight with another member of his alien race when they are both reminded by a third party that, '[t]his is the way'. The phrase is repeated often throughout Seasons 1 and 2 and refers obliquely to a moral code that, in this instance of potentially lethal aggression, defuses the situation. The audience in *The Mandalorian* is not privy to what this *way* is, yet we also understand its unambiguous power to clarify how Mandalorians are guided or expected to behave. *The way* indicates 'the unity of their purpose despite personal differences' (Didymus 2019: n.pag.).

This is the way.

Choreographic Practices was started in 2010 by Jane Bacon and Vida Midgelow to foreground the choreographic thinking, practice and understanding of what Biggs and Büchler described at around the same time as a newly visible 'community of so-called practitioner-researchers' (2011: 83): 'individuals who hold practitioner values but produce research in an academic context' (2011:83).

Choreographic Practices has been, and remains, 'a platform for sharing choreographic practices, inquiry and debate' (Bacon and Midgelow 2010: n.pag.).

Academic journals – even one as interested in experimental practices and writing as *Choreographic Practices* – inevitably fall into patterns: patterns of production, editorial patterns, reviewer patterns, expectations from readers and authors about what or even who a journal represents and patterns of efficiency. These patterns are not so much a problem but rather an irresistible consequence of people working together, and often working together under difficult constraints of time and resources. That is, we slip into *a way* not because we necessarily want to, but because through processual repetition we create a groove of some kind in the earth, and that groove becomes an ever-strengthening path of least resistance – a groove more travelled. Such patterns or grooves are not dissimilar to powerful processes of synchronization in human motor control that happen spontaneously even when we attempt to stay independent:

> Human beings coordinate movements with each other: marching in step, dancing, singing and playing music in unison are synchronous ritualistic activities belonging to different cultures. In some instances, synchronization seems to develop spontaneously, to the point that when two people share visual information they immediately tend to coordinate their movements even when they are instructed to try to be intentionally uncoordinated. A tendency to synchronize is found even in monkeys, and in humans starts before birth, as evidenced by high cardiac and respiratory synchronization between mother and fetus in humans.
>
> (Codrons et al. 2014: e107538)

Codrons et al. cite Kugler et al. who describe the human capacity for self-organizing as a 'free interplay of forces and mutual influences among components tending toward equilibrium or steady states' (2014: e107538). In other words, we are pulled powerfully towards equilibrium whether we like it or not. As any dancer knows in their bones, even with practices designed to disrupt our physical movement habits in a quest for kinetic newness, we are drawn unrelentingly towards the habitual or known.

This is the way.

Yet any kind of *way* is a cloying concept, particularly for people (like artists?) who profess their liberal or open-minded tendencies. At the same time, it is more than a little seductive to want the clarity or lack of confusion that patterns provide. There is a reason orthodoxy – or dogma, doctrine or even plain old moral high ground – is so reassuring and powerful. Of course there is no single *way* in dance practice and scholarship, and there is certainly no single *way* for *Choreographic Practices*. At least, as far as we can know or remember there is no such way. Is there? What kinds of *givens* determine the things we think, the way we act, the reviews we write, the suggestions we offer, the

submissions we reject, the work we make? Or, asked in another way, what would it take to write, publish or present something that is unacceptable? Of course there is a *way* in dance practice and scholarship. It's an unspoken way that is stubbornly and both deliberately and unintentionally protected. It is protected in powerful ways by culture and indeed tribalism:

> Tribalism, [Aristotle] said, involves thinking you know what other people are like without knowing them; lacking direct experience of others, you fall back on fearful fantasies. Brought up to date, this is the idea of the stereotype.
>
> (Sennett 2012: 4)

The sociologist Richard Sennett offers here both a challenge and a possibility: that we might resist the patterns of tribalism by seeking out direct experience of others. Note here the 'might' in our previous sentence. We are not sure, we cannot be certain – something might happen one way, or it might happen in another. Sennett calls on the power of the subjunctive mood in how we humans negotiate with ideas and with each other:

> 'perhaps' and 'I would have thought' are antidotes to paralysed positions. The subjunctive mood counters Bernard Williams's fear of the fetish of assertiveness by opening up instead an indeterminate mutual space, the space in which strangers dwell with one another.
>
> (Sennett 2012: 23)

The flip side of such uncertainty is the experiences, understandings and habits that underpin how we might see the work we are involved in. The English literature scholar Alan Jacobs describes sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus as including 'the set of beliefs (doxa) that govern the structure of a culture while remaining utterly implicit' (2017: 38). In other words, how might we – as co-editors – deepen not only our understanding of the patterns or structures that underpin a publication like *Choreographic Practices*, or the practices of choreography more broadly, but also find ways to guard against such orthodoxies implicit in any publication? To be such guards is a complex and perhaps even impossible task, particularly when what is at stake is the capacity of a publication like *Choreographic Practices* to welcome change, and that includes the various people responsible for its publication. The machinations of publication – even for a relatively small publication in a relatively small field – are complex. It is indeed a big ship to turn, which is a fact (even if a metaphor) rather than an excuse.

To track back a few paragraphs, I wonder if any of you shuddered a little at the use of the term tribal? Certainly, in the writing of this editorial we found ourselves interrogating the term, but decided to land lightly on it in order that we might leap onto Sennett. In the attempt to find complexity, we run the risk of reaffirming fixity, even if (never even if!) it is only (never only) in the use of a word

freighted with a type of significance at which we might usually balk, were it not for the certainty that any structural bias had already been leached from the word through usage. Except of course, that isn't true. If there is any leaching happening, it feels likely that the bias from the word runs the risk of infecting the ideas that surround it. Sennett reaches back to Aristotle, another thinker whose value cannot be underestimated even though we know that in acknowledging him we continue to support pervasive narratives of dominant thought.

This is the way? As Sam Beckett in *Quantum Leap* might say, 'Oh boy'.

Perhaps it is the avenues down which our thinking has travelled, but the science-fictive writing of Donna J. Haraway feels like another way into the anxiety that we might feel in invoking the term. In *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, she floats the idea of sympoiesis, which she reminds her reader:

> means 'making-with'. Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing […] *Sympoiesis* is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with, in company. Sympoiesis enfolds autopoiesis and generatively unfurls and extends it.
>
> (Haraway 2016: 58, original emphasis)

As with Sennett's reminder that factions paralyse, and lead to the ossification that comes from assuming 'they' might be in tension somehow with 'us', Haraway's 'worlding-with' reminds us of the need for, and value of, constant dialogue. She offers that '[a]nother word for these sympoietic entities is *holobionts*, or, etymologically, "entire beings" or "safe and sound beings". That is decidedly not the same thing as One or Individual' (Haraway 2016: 60, original emphasis). In her shift away from the anthropocentric, to an active engagement with 'thing-ness', she is offering us a 'way' that allows us to cleave together, rather than perpetuate a cleaving apart.

Flip Chart Fairy Tales (2007–present) is an anonymous blogger who writes about the world of business and work. In a post in the northern spring of 2020, they discuss the current recession, the impact of COVID-19, the unpredictability of human behaviour and our profound difficulty in changing behaviour and culture. They call on the work of the renowned organizational specialist Edgar Schein to remind us that 'culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions and beliefs' (Anon. 2020: n.pag.). That is, changing any culture is extraordinarily difficult, and requires that we must recognize our assumptions and beliefs before even beginning to adapt or change them. We wonder if the idea of a sympoietic entity, the *holobiont*, might step in here and afford us a strategy not of resistance, but of active 'worlding-with'. The 'here' is between the readership, the authors (past, present, future), the editorial team (a group we are actively seeking to expand), the publishing house and the institutions with subscriptions.

We hope that worlding-with, positioning *Choreographic Practices* as a holobiont rather than host and symbionts, will make space for the potential to find truth emerging from multiple voices.

Wait.

Writing this at the start of 2021, opening up the idea of providing space for the heteroglossic, and the attendant invocation of multiple truths feels dangerous. Narratives of 'fake-news' and 'post-truth' have become endemic; truth and its plasticity is no longer the purview of poststructuralists. The slippery nature of truth has escaped the confines of high theory, and is loose on the streets. It refuses to wear a mask. It is storming the Capitol.

But it is precisely because of this that we want to position *Choreographic Practices* as holobiont, and pursue the emergence of truth from multiple voices. These voices will not agree; we are not looking for accord. We are hoping instead that any and all disagreements can be held. We believe that there is a discourse here worth pursuing; yes it is hard to do, yes it requires practise and it requires practice. But now, more than ever, it feels essential.

We imagine that from now on, the editorial will involve introductions, as the 'polytemporal, polyspatial knottings' (Haraway 2016: 60) that make up the team here at *Choreographic Practices* continues to grow and evolve. For now though, this is who we are:

I'm a choreographer and filmmaker. I was born in Aotearoa/New Zealand, but now live in London and work at C-DaRE. I think about the ways humans might value things that are not easily commodified, and like to imagine a world filled with people who are sensitive to our own bodies, and the bodies of others. – Simon Ellis (co-editor)

I am a Latinx choreographer and scholar at the University of New Mexico. I am committed to understanding the many ways that trauma is stored in the body and how the culture of dance-making can be more attuned to this reality, and activated towards it, as it engages students, performers and audiences. – Brianna Figueroa (assistant editor)

I am an assistant professor and head of the Dance Program at the University of New Mexico (USA). My articles are published in *Choreographic Practices*, *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, *TDR* and *Theatre Topics*. My book-in-process, *Beneath the Visual: Socio-Somatic Choreography in the Twenty-First Century*, was selected for the Dance Studies Association's First-Time Author Mentorship Program. – Amanda Hamp (she/her) (assistant editor)

I'm a UK born-based practitioner-scholar interested in the space between bodies in performance, especially in the affective gap between audience and performer. I am committed to interrogating the academic voice, and in exploring the role of collaboration in the generation of knowledge. I work at Edge Hill University. – Lee Miller (he/him) (co-editor)

I'm a dance and theatre maker based in Plymouth. I'm a full-time lecturer at the University of Plymouth and a Ph.D. student at C-DaRE. I'm interested in collaboration, processes of making and the roles we inhabit in the studio. – Josh Slater (assistant editor)

We are indeed a new team of people continuing the work started by Jane and Vida. Continuing? To some extent 'yes' is the answer to this question. We continue to be profoundly interested in supporting the work of artist-researchers who are grappling with what it means to make art in the context of the academy. Yet we also want to build difference into this work. Our motivation and goals are simple: to draw different and distinctive practitioners into conversation as part of this publication; to expand who it is that we – dance and performance scholars – talk and think about, or even just see. By doing so our scholarship as a community will be richer, deeper, more nuanced and more able to register the edges or limits of our own understanding. We understand this to be a tremendous responsibility – to resist the sheer laziness of the canon.

But we also believe that any editorial team must guard against thinking for themselves. Alan Jacobs wrote that 'when people commend someone for "thinking for herself" they usually mean "ceasing to sound like people I dislike and starting to sound more like people I approve of"' (Jacobs 2017: 37). Jacobs also describes how thinking is necessarily social – that everything we think is in relation to the words and ideas of other people. He reminds us to be clear that 'there is no connection between independence and correctness, or social thinking and wrongness'. In other words, the value, worth or truth of the things we know – regardless of whether we are right or wrong – comes from being with others.

As we continue to world-with, we hope we will find that there are many ways.

The authors who set off with us on this journey may well be glancing at their relationship to the journal; maybe they will be 'one and done', or maybe they will come to think of themselves as part of the holobiont. Perhaps they will continue to lend their voices to the messiness that will doubtless follow. For now, we are indebted to their thoughts and ideas, and to the generosity that has led to them sharing them here.

British-Palestinian artist-researcher Dani Abulhawa offers us 'Skill-less Tricks: A score for moving through walls'. Dani's practice typically explores people's connections to space and place, and her contribution to *Choreographic Practices* finds her reflecting upon her personal and embodied experience of the Palestine–Israel conflict. Her writing resists any attempt at fixing her experience, and instead she shares her reflections alongside a score, which offers subtle radicalism. The text is presented here in both Arabic and English.

Multidisciplinary artist and 'artivist' Shabnam Shabazi and *Choreographic Practices* co-editor Simon Ellis shared a conversation about Shabnam's practice in November 2020. An edited transcript of that conversation is presented here. They talk about the role of the personal archive in Shabnam's ongoing work, and Shabnam describes her influences, her story and how her work is shaped by the personal and the political.

In 'Astrochoreography', Tru Paraha draws on observations of the night sky in the Southern Hemisphere to speculate on the roles and work of audiences and performers in choreographic

thinking and practice. Her writing is experimental, poetic and playful, and in it she calls on the reader to extend choreography onto an astral plane: one much larger than is comfortable, and that dances with darkness and the unknown.

Sally Gardner's 'Procedures for moving "walls"' extends and applies her choreographic understanding to personal still image composites. These side-by-side images purposefully display dance and movement in places it doesn't usually belong. Sally critically reflects on how the images – and how her practice has been stretched to accommodate them – push poetic thinking into political terrains.

Choreographer and academic Jane Munro explores privilege, participation and border crossings in 'Crossing over: Choreographing audiences over borders – Forms and problematics'. Her writing explores her embodied experience of being with others in the making of *Rope Piece*, and seeks to explore why so many dance artists have chosen participatory practices as a means to debate borders, and border crossings.

Finally, the artist-scholar Rosa Cisneros reviews *Abriendo Fronteras: enfoques interdisciplinares de la Coreología*, edited by Celia Nocilli and Ana Maria Diaz Olaya. She describes how the book's editors have drawn together a range of perspectives on historical Spanish dances and Spanish dance history.

So here we all are then, at least those of you who haven't just skipped directly into the issue already. If only we could add some kind of text-based Easter Egg or secret sign for the completists amongst you who have read this far. Some kind of worlding-with secret handshake. Except, of course, no. That completely misses the point of worlding-with. We know that the slow and determined expansion of the editorial team will only serve to complicate things further. With more voices, there will be more opportunities to complicate and confuse editorial decision-making and to wreak havoc on the very real and, let's face it, the inevitable possibility that we – co-editors Lee Miller and Simon Ellis – will fall back on what we know, like, prefer and understand.

And herein lies the tension that we will doubtless bump against countless times in the future; the route between intention and action is fraught with potholes, mis-steps and wrong turns.

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