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CHOREOGRAPHIES OF 21ST CENTURY WARS

EDITED BY GAY MORRIS &
JENS RICHARD GIERSDORF

Choreographies of 21st Century Wars

Oxford Studies in Dance Theory

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PREFACE

GAY

This book began to take shape in the latter days of the American invasion of Iraq. At the time, the nightly news was dominated by what seemed endless images of advancing tanks, house-to-house searches, distraught civilians, and, finally, photos of every American soldier who had died the previous week. Altogether, it was a heartbreaking sight of pain and destruction.

As I watched the news broadcasts, I began to consider this war in light of research I had done earlier on the Second World War and Cold War (*A Game for Dancers: Performing Modernism in the Postwar Years, 1945–1960*, 2006). To my mind, this conflict was very different. Instead of nearly equal forces vying with each other on a worldwide stage, this war pitted the most powerful military in the world against what could only seem a puny enemy. And since I had previously argued that dance played a role in 20th-century wars, I wondered what kind of relationship it might have to contemporary warfare. To come to grips with this question, I at first thought of developing an anthology of comparative essays, half the book dealing with the 20th century, the other with the 21st. I invited Jens to act as a coeditor, since he had also done extensive research on the Cold War (*The Body of the People: East German Dance since 1945*, 2013) and had lived through it in East Germany, where he also served in the military.

JENS

Shadows of war were omnipresent while I was growing up in East Germany in the 1970s. There was our missing grandfather, who hadn't returned home from war to my mother and grandmother, and the unacknowledged fact that all members of my father's family were refugees, displaced from what is now Poland. All around us, cities had integrated the traces of war—empty areas

where houses once stood, ruined buildings that hadn't been rebuilt even decades after the war, facades that still showed signs of the heavy artillery fights of the last days of World War II. It was normal that my parents never threw away food; my siblings and I knew they had nearly starved for years at the end and after the war.

The school year always started with the annual celebrations of the liberation by the Red Army, our comrades in arms. It was the Cold War—and we learned to hide behind our desks in the event of a nuclear attack, probably the same way a child in Pittsburgh was instructed to do. We built gas masks out of discarded plastic shopping bags and trained to use them as protective gear, heads covered in bags printed with miscellaneous logos, a ridiculous sight even to ourselves.

Eventually, in 1982, like every man in East Germany, I was drafted into the army, serving at the border between the two Germanies. The border was the symbol of Cold War divisions, and it was at that point armed with over a million land and splatter mines. Border guards were stationed there not only to prevent fellow citizens from escaping to the West; we were also trained as the first defense against the capitalist aggressors. I trained to kill a person with the bayonet on my Kalashnikov, to dig trenches that protected me from tanks driving over me during joint military exercises of the Warsaw Pact countries, and to assemble and shoot antitank defense missiles. It was the time of the Polish Solidarity movement (*Solidarność*), and we were dispatched repeatedly, never knowing if we would participate in the suppression of the movement in the way the Soviet army did during the Prague Spring.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification in 1989, the remnants of these different wars were slowly cleaned up and erased. When I thought about war again, it was mostly about the Cold War for my work on the politics of dance in East Germany. When Gay approached me with her idea of a project on dance and war, I assumed it would deal mainly with the Cold War, since she had worked on that era from the other side.

GAY AND JENS

We soon realized that the 21st century warranted study on its own, and so focused solely on contemporary warfare. We also shifted our gaze from what is traditionally called dance to choreography, which, in many forms, has been closely associated with war, and which is theoretically complex and compelling. Yet we also understood that we needed to rethink what choreography does in relationship to war, and we had to find contributors that were doing this kind of rethinking from very different areas and in relation to distinct parts of omnipresent contemporary wars. This was uncharted territory in

many ways. What would choreographic evidence suggest about contemporary war, if anything? That is what we had to wait to learn from our contributors. We were greatly impressed by the diversity and power of the essays that came back to us. And they did indeed point in quite a different direction from the Cold War choreography we had analyzed earlier. That evidence comprises the content of this book, and our analysis of it appears in the introduction.

We would like to thank our authors not only for their commitment to their individual essays but also for their contributions to new thinking in dance studies and politics. We would also like to thank our editor at Oxford, Norman Hirschy, our series editor, Mark Franko, production editor, Stacey Victor, and our copyeditor, Ben Sadock.

Introduction

GAY MORRIS AND JENS RICHARD GIERSDORF

It is now widely accepted that 21st-century wars differ to varying degrees from the major conflicts of the 20th century. No longer are wars dominated by the “great powers,” the sovereign states that took the world into two devastating wars in the first half of the 20th century and then into the forty-year Cold War. The major conflicts today are more amorphous and shifting than in the last century, the boundaries and enemies less clear, the difference between war and peace less distinct. Although these conflicts are often marked by an asymmetry of forces, the mightier do not necessarily prevail. These wars go by a variety of names, including fourth generation wars (4GW) (Hammes 2006), small wars (Daase 2005), low-intensity wars (Kinross 2004), postmodern wars (Duffield 1998), privatized or informal wars (Keen 1995), degenerate wars (Shaw 1999), new wars (Kaldor 2006; Münkler 2003, 2005), and asymmetrical wars (Münkler 2003, 2005). They may include state and nonstate combatants in conflicts that include interstate wars, civil wars, insurgencies, counterinsurgencies, and revolutions.¹

Choreographies of 21st Century Wars is the first book to examine the complex relationship between choreography and war in this century. War and choreography have long been connected through war rituals and dances, military training and drills, parades, and formal processions. While the essays here are concerned with such uses of choreography as components of war, as well

as war as a subject matter of dance, they are more broadly concerned with the complex structural relationship between choreography, war, and politics. We ask: What work does choreography do in a world dominated by war, a world in which war appears to be less a tool of politics than a driving force?

Viewing war through the concept of choreography is significant because it shifts the focus of study away from the abstractions of political and military theory to corporeal agency. At the same time, rethinking choreography through a comprehension of the complexity of contemporary wars requires a reconceptualization of what choreography does and is, while building on past definitions of choreography as an organizational and meaning-making system.

In light of the shifting character of 21st-century wars, we ask how choreography relates not just to wars themselves but to the politics of today's wars. If the 20th century was marked by the power of the nation-state, where the state held a monopoly of power to make war, and if dance, and by extension choreography, was governed in the 20th century by its relationship to the state as a source of identity (Manning 1993, 1996; Franko 2012; Morris 2006; Kant 2007; Kowal 2010; Giersdorf 2013),² what does choreography do in the face of war when the state loses its grip on the monopoly of power, or when the state fails altogether—that is, in what Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt call the new “global state of war”?³ Further, will the old models of choreographic analysis, created to account for the power of the sovereign state, still hold?

In order to explore these questions we will first lay out some of the major issues surrounding 21st-century wars, then move on to an investigation of choreography as an organizational and meaning-making system in an environment of constant war, and finally discuss how the individual chapters relate to both 21st-century wars and critical choreographic analysis. The sixteen chapters included in *Choreographies of 21st Century Wars* are geographically diverse, ranging across the Middle East and Africa, Europe and the Americas. They deal with violent conflict through the means of field notes, case studies, participant observations, and photographs, as well as in essays reflecting on war issues and their relationship to choreographic practices. Thus, the approach is interdisciplinary; contributors come from the fields of dance and theater, performance and media studies, anthropology, sociology, and history. Such broad geographical perspectives and viewpoints from a variety of disciplines move readers across localities and place them in relationship to bodies that are engaged in or responding to warfare.

WAR

Much English-language commentary on contemporary war was written in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Here

Islamic-fundamentalist terrorism was sometimes transformed into a general theory of 21st-century war. So, for example, Philip Bobbitt in *Terror and Consent: The Wars for the Twenty-First Century* (2008) defines contemporary war in terms of terrorism and primarily as Islamic jihad. Like Walter Laqueur, Bobbitt places special emphasis on the dangers of terrorists obtaining weapons of mass destruction (Bobbitt 2008; Laqueur 2002, 2006). We sought a broader, more nuanced theory of contemporary war than Bobbitt and Laqueur offer, one that could account for a range of conflicts, and in which terrorism might become a part of the picture rather than its totality. Political theorists such as Mary Kaldor and Herfried Münkler offer such a view, as well as accounting for how contemporary wars differ from those of the 20th century. Kaldor characterizes the evolution of what she calls the “old wars” as being closely linked to the development of nation-states beginning in the 15th century, eventually evolving into the total wars of the 20th century and the “imagined” Cold War, which were wars of alliances and blocs (2006, 16–17).⁴ Although these wars differed over time, they generally were linked to the development of rationalized, centralized, hierarchically structured modern states with territorial interests. They conformed to Clausewitz’s famous dictum of war being politics by other means. While such wars have become an anachronism, according to Kaldor they still have a firm grip on perceptions. She argues that violent conflict has changed, blurring the distinctions between war, organized crime, and large-scale violations of human rights (2006, 2). New wars, rather than being between nation-states, are often private and conducted for private gain, and they are frequently aimed at civilians rather than soldiers.

Kaldor uses the general term “globalization” to help explain the worldwide interconnectedness she finds in contemporary conflicts (2006, 3–5, 95–118). These links are made possible by the development of cell phones and computers that can instantly relay images and messages throughout the world, but they also describe technological developments that allow for methods like drone attacks. In the new wars there is a global presence in the form of mercenaries, military advisors, private security businesses, diasporic volunteers, international press, NGOs, and peacekeeping troops (2006, 5).⁵ Funding may come from global sources as well, ranging from outside states to diasporic organizations and individuals. Kaldor speaks of a privatization of war in which weak states cannot retain a monopoly of power, encouraging autonomous factions to create and maintain conflicts (2006, 96–102). Privatization is aided by the ability to make war with inexpensive weapons and transport (the pickup truck loaded with men carrying light arms). She argues that there has also been an increasing privatization of violence as states lose their ability to enforce laws and as regular armed forces disintegrate.

Münkler, like Kaldor, emphasizes the privatization of war, but he also stresses the increasing asymmetry of conflicts (2003, 7–9; 2005, 25–30). These wars contrast with those of the 20th century, which tended to be symmetrical in the sense that power was more or less equal between adversaries. Now the level of force is more unequal, whether it be the United States fighting against Saddam Hussein's forces in Iraq or Libyans fighting against the army of Muammar el-Qaddafi.

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt deepen the discussion of 21st-century wars through the linked concept of imperialism and empire. The old imperial model that dominated the modern period was based on sovereign nation-states that extended over foreign territory. This has given way to Empire, a new order of networked power consisting of states, corporations, and institutions that must cooperate to insure world order. However, the network is rife with hierarchies and divisions that cause continual war, diminishing the difference between war and peace. War has “flooded the whole social field” (Hardt and Negri 2004, 7), eroding the old idea of war being an exception, when constitutional rights are temporarily suspended, between periods of peace. Drawing on Foucault's concept of biopolitics, Negri and Hardt assert that war now dominates all social relations, becoming a means of social control. Wars are thus rendered indeterminate in time and space. Since they are a means of social control, they cannot be won, and thus war and policing merge. Biopower not only involves the ability to destroy on a massive scale, for example, through nuclear weapons, but can be individualized. In its extreme individualized form biopower becomes torture (19).

Roberto Esposito similarly references Foucault for a concept of biopower that stresses immunization and autoimmunity as hallmarks of past and present social conditions (2013). Modern nations have long attempted to immunize themselves from danger outside their borders through various defensive means, including war. This was successful enough during the 20th century, but with globalization and the breakdown of boundaries through communication and economics it becomes impossible for nations to isolate themselves. The border between outside and inside is now porous. Although the old immunization processes no longer work, nation-states do not seek new solutions. Instead, they increase attempts at immunization, particularly through “security” measures such as sending armies and machinery, including drones, to fight conflicts outside the nation's boundaries and instilling anti-immigration laws and walls aimed at keeping out intruders. Eventually this results in what Esposito refers to as “autoimmunity,” when the body turns on itself. As we saw in the American suspension of habeas corpus and the Geneva conventions for enemy combatants during the Iraq War, as well as the invasions of privacy by the US National Security Agency revealed by the Snowden papers,

increasing attempts at immunization become threats to democracy. Political analyst Christopher Coker, agrees: “Governments today have had to go into the deterrence business no longer against states, but against their own population. The Patriot Act, Guantanamo Bay, and the whole apparatus of the Department of Homeland Security, is about holding the citizen at bay, as well as some external enemy. The battlefield used to be outside a country, in theatres of operation beyond one’s shore. ‘Theatres of external operations’ they used to be called. Today, they are to be found in the metropolitan concentrations at home” (2010, 120). Coker goes on to speak about the breakdown of the civic contract between citizen and state. As individuals are increasingly expected to look after themselves, society divides between those few who have the means to do so and the majority who do not. Now, he says, insecurity is an existential state (2010, 121–122).

Another vital aspect of current war is its mediatization. General Rupert Smith calls today’s conflicts “war among the people,” in which “the people in the streets and houses and fields—all the people, anywhere—are the battlefield” (2008, 6). As such we exist in “a global theater of war, with audience participation.” By this he means that “the people of the audience have come to influence the decisions of the political leaders who send in force as much as—in some cases more than—the events on the ground” (2008, 291). Smith is primarily concerned with the global impact of the professional press, but in today’s wars, every faction, from combatants, to the audiences across the globe, to the civilians directly affected by the conflicts, is using media to tell stories that support their views. The choreographies described in this book (a large number of which can be seen on YouTube) are no exception to the global profusion, nor are the chapters themselves, in an age when books are routinely produced or reproduced in digital form, making them instantly available worldwide.

CHOREOGRAPHY

An extensive body of literature and visual records exist demonstrating how choreography has aided in the training for war, in encouraging fighters and warning enemies, and in celebrating victory in battle.⁶ Anthropologists have recorded war and warrior dances among the Ndende of Zambia and other sub-Saharan African peoples (Evans-Pritchard 1937; Turner 1957, 1967; Ranger 1975; Hanna 1977; Spencer 1985). In a Western context, the pyrrhike, possibly originating in Crete and later adopted by the Athenians, formed an element of training for war among Spartan youths (Borthwick 1970; Sachs 1937, 239–240), while in Rome processional triumphs marked conquests of new territory (Brilliant 2000; Bergmann and Kondoleon 2000). Dances, pageants,

and processions celebrating military victories were part of Renaissance and baroque court life, as well as of the French Revolution (McGowan 1984; Chazin-Bennahum 1981).

In the 20th century, dances that were once tribal transformed themselves in urban environments: during the South African apartheid era, the traditional toyi-toyi war dance was performed in black funeral processions, unsettling whites seeing it on the evening news (Seidman 2001, Twala and Koetaan 2006), while the kongonya dance that served Zimbabwean independence fighters in the bush became a weapon President Mugabe has continued to use to reinforce his dictatorship (Gonye 2013). As for 20th-century Western theatrical performance, although surprisingly little research has been done on Futurist dance, with its ecstatic embrace of war,⁷ there are numerous studies of Ausdrucksstanz and its relationship first to the antiwar Dada artists during World War I and then to the Nazi regime (Richter 1965; Manning 1993; Karina and Kant 2003). The turn to antifascist and patriotic subject matter in allied countries leading up to and during World War II also has been studied (Warren 1998; N. M. Jackson 2000; Foulkes 2002; Franko 1995, 2012). Choreography in relationship to the Cold War years has begun to be examined (Prevots 1998; Morris 2006; Kowal 2010; Ezrahi; 2012; Giersdorf 2013). Sally Banes discussed anti-Vietnam War choreography by Steve Paxton (*Collaboration with Wintersoldier*) and Yvonne Rainer (*WAR*) (Banes 1977, 15, 63–64), while artist Chris Burden has commented on his own antiwar performances, the most famous of which was *Shoot* (1971), in which he had himself shot with a .22 rifle.

Choreographies of 21st Century Wars adds to this literature through a focus on contemporary war. At the same time, we move beyond what is traditionally defined as dance to take a broader view of choreography. Since the 1960s, Western artists, often working across media and boundaries of different performance disciplines, have explored and expanded the definitions of dance and choreography.⁸ More recently, performance studies scholars, in conversation with cultural studies, have called for the questioning of disciplinary boundaries to analyze performances across all disciplines and outside theatrical institutions (Schechner 1985). Dance studies has expanded dance by highlighting choreography as a structuring system for any kind of movement with inherent political potentiality and by rethinking it as a methodological tool (Foster 1986, 1995; Franko 1993, 1995; Martin 1998).

While incorporating these broader concepts that move choreography beyond the often narrowly confined definitions of dance, we try to avoid universalizing these strategies by centering attention on localized and culturally specific uses of choreography within the context of warfare and politics. Thus, choreography can include soldiers participating in a mock battle on the Indian/Pakistani border, as a reminder of state rivalries; arranging hostage

videos in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian Territories to demonstrate to audiences through comportment and movement the vulnerability of prisoners and the might of captors; or videogames that develop embodied skills in players in the United States that prepare them for real war under the guise of virtual entertainment (while also promoting a romanticized idea of a painless war).

As these examples illustrate, for our conceptualization of the relationship between contemporary war and choreographed movement we recognize choreography as an organizational, decision-making, and analytical system that is always social and political. This incorporates established definitions of choreography as purposeful stagings of structured, embodied movements that aim to communicate an idea or create meaning for an actual, conceptual, or purposefully absent audience for aesthetic and social reasons. Important for this definition is the acknowledgement of training, technique, rehearsal, performance, and reception as intrinsic parts of choreography, not only to reveal labor and agency but also to examine discipline and resistance to it (Foster 1986). For this reason, choreography is situated outside any specific technique and thus is not necessarily tied to dance. In other words, we see choreography as an operational concept in addition to a spatial and temporal one.

Equally important is the understanding of choreography as a knowledge system. With such an understanding, both term and practice become an explicit methodology and a theorization in dance studies (Foster 2010, 5). Here, choreography allows scholars to structure both historical and social traces of dance and the scholars' contemporary position to this material in relation to each other. Such a comprehension of choreography attempts to emancipate both dance and choreography from a Cartesian grip that establishes a clear binary between, and hierarchy for, disembodied thinking and embodied practice. Without erasing the distinctions between the written, the theorized, and the choreographed, the understanding of choreography as a knowledge system establishes both dance and choreography as thought and theory, and thus broadens the permanent realm of writing and other textual and artistic products toward it. Choreography as a knowledge system no longer focuses exclusively on performance and thereby addresses the issues of ephemerality and disappearance, which have haunted dance and choreography in both theory and practice (Schneider 2011).

Choreography as a knowledge system does not eliminate the problem of its practice and theory as universalizing instruments, which do not always acknowledge their ties to a specific cultural materiality. We are aware of this problem and the seeming neutrality of choreography. There is no such systematic neutrality, as Michel Foucault demonstrated, and it is important to recognize the possibility that such a concept of choreography can enable, or at least be complicit with, colonial, postcolonial, and economically globalizing

projects, as much as it can resist such projects (Foster 2010; Giersdorf 2009; Savigliano 2009).

All these reconceptualizations of choreography need to be applied to the use of choreography in relation to contemporary warfare. The rethinking of permanence, continuity, and social ordering and organization, as well as the political potential of choreography, is thus at the center of the investigations performed by the essays in this anthology, and we want to reassess the relation among these issues in the following considerations.

Dance scholarship historically has recognized choreography as an organizing principle related to social order. The Renaissance has been established as the period where dance and warfare literally crossed paths in the training and performance of both pursuits. Gerald Siegmund and Stefan Hölscher emphasize the ordering capacity of dance and warfare, stating that “warfare, dance’s notorious partner in the eternal duet of order and chaos, was to defend and to safeguard the order of the state towards its external enemies, dancing was designed to establish and keep an inner order by forging alliances and safeguarding the order by its playful work towards reproduction” (2013, 9). Rudolf zur Lippe highlights the complex reordering and controlling of society, self, and embodiment through dance and choreography in his socioeconomic analysis of early Italian merchantry and absolutism in French noble society (1981). Similarly, Mark Franko sees choreography and dance technique at that time as constitutive practices that affected political and social structures directly (1993). All these scholars share an understanding of the extension of the productive potential of choreography into social and contemporary practices.

Choreography is a Western concept whose name combines the Greek words for dance and writing. Raoul Auger Feuillet created the term for his scoring of dances around 1700. His dance notation depicted the structure and layout of dance in relation to social standards and techniques of upper-class conduct, but the term later came to connote the original creation of dances. It is important to stress that the terminology and practice of choreography functioned as a textual organization that works primarily to reinforce a particular kind of order in society. Bodies were literally trained and arranged in space and in relation to each other to move in a harmonious way to reflect and instill order, manifested through notation of geometrical horizontal patterns and an expected emphasis on vertical posture. The choreographer ostensibly created such choreographies through artistic musing and divine inspiration. With the institutionalization of choreography and specifically dance as a theatrical practice, the arrangements of steps and gestures in a staged space and to a musical or seemingly natural rhythm served primarily as a mirroring device for an emerging bourgeois society. The material for these choreographies was drawn from an established academic vocabulary and technique, which the

choreographer manipulated into varied arrangements. With the development and eventual dominance of ballet as an institution, choreographers became concerned with narrative and expressivity, which, it was assumed, permitted a direct and universal communication with an audience present in the theater. To accomplish all of this for spectators, the executing dancer had to be competently trained and able to follow choreographic instructions in the rehearsal process (Foster 1998).

With dance conceived as a mastery of technique in the middle of the 19th century, Western choreography in ballet, and later in modern dance, engaged with movement derived from nature and the vernacular, something folk forms had always done (Garafola 1989; Daly 2002). In concert dance, choreography expanded its capacity to influence society by incorporating female choreographers and by engaging with the newly defined psychological sphere (Tomko 1999; Daly 2002). The conscious, if unacknowledged, incorporation of non-Western or indigenous dance techniques and structures as primitive or exotic Other was still considered a product of the choreographer's genius rather than of skillful borrowing. It was not until the middle of the 20th century that practitioners and historians began to acknowledge the incorporation of non-Western and indigenous forms and structures into the movement pool and process of choreography. This acknowledgment of multiple influences, as well as a focus on improvisation and process, allowed for a departure from the idea that it was the individual choreographer's genius that propelled dance forward (Savigliano 2009; O'Shea 2007; Novack 1990). With this shift, choreography of the so-called postmodern era became a varied decision-making process concerning all aspects of performances and social structures rather than a safeguarding and structuring of steps or gestures for a performance. However, even though the process could involve group or individual decisions, reconstruction or revisiting of traditional material, or rearrangement of existing structures, it still acknowledged choreography as an organizational principle, though often a critical and resistive one.⁹

It is also significant how in its changing incarnations choreography has always been a social endeavor—albeit with shifting objectives—at the intersection of the aesthetic and the political, and did not emerge only with the rise of the bourgeois public sphere as has been argued (Hewitt 2005, 17). To understand that necessary social element means to acknowledge choreography as text and metaphor, yet most importantly as embodied, and thus the need to analyze it first and foremost from that perspective. All the authors in this anthology share this conviction, even though they come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and engage in a variety of methodologies. A significant aspect of this understanding of choreography as above all embodied is a critical stance toward the above-mentioned preoccupation with an ephemerality

and disappearance of dance and performance (Schechner 1985; Blau 1982; Phelan 1993; Lepecki 2006). Both Rebecca Schneider and Shannon Jackson have revealed the institutional and disciplinary politics of these discourses (Schneider 2011, 94–99; S. Jackson 2004, 2011). Building on Schneider and Jackson’s questioning of the value of the discourse of ephemerality and intersecting it with a rethinking of the critical and organizational capacity of choreography in 21st-century warfare, we want to identify how both ephemerality and a focus on resistance in choreography might limit an understanding of the politics of aesthetics.

In considering the issue of the ephemerality of dance and performance in relation to politics, André Lepecki differentiates between Giorgio Agamben, who sees every artistic practice as inherently political, and Jacques Rancière, who postulates the need—albeit confined to modernism—of a moment of dissensus for art to become political (Lepecki 2013). To use Rancière’s terminology, for art to become political it must include a moment that “disconnects sensory experience away ‘from the normal forms of sensory experience’” (Lepecki 2013, 22). Such politics “has no proper place nor any natural subject” (Rancière 2010, 39). In other words, art is political and productively disruptive only when it establishes a discourse that undermines the norm or at least demonstrates a difference outside the normative. Even though such demonstrations of difference or dissensus can occur anywhere and can be performed by anyone, and Rancière understands the political as corporeally constructive, he also defines it as temporally ephemeral because dissent is always on the verge of sinking back into the norm and thus is made invisible as dissent: “A political demonstration is therefore always of the moment and its subjects are always precarious. A political difference is always on the shore of its own disappearance” (Rancière 2010, 39). Thus, the politics of the aesthetic is reduced to a dissenting and resistive moment. Rancière emphasizes this reduction even further by pointing out that a consensus on the nature of the relationship between the political and the aesthetic might undermine precisely the potential of such fleeting resistive moments because they re-establish them as the norm (Lepecki 2013, 24). In simpler terms, if we all agree on the potentially creative politics of aesthetic moments that undermine the status quo, then these moments simply don’t undermine anything, because they themselves become the norm. For those who argue for the ephemerality of dance, that very ephemerality allows dance to be resistive and thus political.

We take issue with two aspects of the politics of aesthetics outlined above, if we are to adequately investigate how choreography and 21st-century war not only share important structural and operative principles but inform each other. The first is that the political can only appear as dissent or resistance, and only in an ephemeral moment; the second is the emphasis on a (re)ordering of

society through aesthetics exclusively in terms of organizing principles.¹⁰ We want to outline how the chapters in this anthology complicate such assumptions by highlighting what Shannon Jackson calls “places where questions of social contingency meet those of aesthetic contingency” (2011, 39). In other words, we theorize the necessary framework for an understanding of how the predominantly social structure of war impacts choreographies’ aesthetic structures and when choreography executes a social and political agenda.

Even though Rancière has outlined a radically equalizing vision that dismantles polarities in his work on spectatorship (1991, 2011), in his more general investigations of politics and aesthetics he distinguishes between politics and police (2010). While politics occurs in the resistive moment discussed above, the police ensure the dominance of normative structures. Rancière gives an example of police action when he says that police intervene in public spaces not by asking questions of demonstrators but by breaking up demonstrations (2010, 37). Even though adherence to the police is not necessarily passive, it isn’t constructive or transformative either. Only the interruption of the police by truly dissident politics initiates change. Being troubled by this neoliberal or romanticized reduction of the connection between politics and aesthetics to momentary resistances to the normative, we want to imagine choreography as ontologically political and thus question the antagonistic binary of normative versus resistive. This doesn’t mean that all choreography is political in the same way, but all choreography is political, albeit in very specific ways and through different mechanisms. So, for example, when rebel fighters used the war dance, *kongonya*, in the 1970s to gain support for Zimbabwean independence, it was political and productive (Gonye 2013). But so is Robert Mugabe’s use of the same dance to threaten his enemies and solidify his power as president of Zimbabwe. Mugabe’s use of *kongonya* may be abusive, but it serves a political purpose and is productive in that sense.

Such ontological significance of politics for choreography engages with the historical definition of the concept of politics, but also expands it into other structures of social community. In other words, our investigation of choreographies of 21st-century wars requires the traditional application of politics as relating to citizenry and its governance through the state. However, as we established above, states and national entities are no longer the exclusive protagonists in contemporary warfare. This omnipresence of 21st-century war forces us to expand even Foucault’s famous inversion of Clausewitz’s dictum in which he states that “politics is the continuation of war by other means” (2003, 15) by seeing politics itself as determined by the structure of contemporary war. For the purpose of our analysis, politics is still attached to state sovereignty, yet at the same time it can define reallocations of power and value not necessarily determined by state governmental structures but rather by

alternative communal entities. Recent revelations regarding the private security companies Blackwater and G4S are examples, illustrating the need for an expansion of the concept of politics. Both companies operate worldwide and offer security services for private businesses and governments.¹¹ Yet even when such companies seem to operate in a civilian or corporate capacity, their conduct for the allocation of power is defined by warfare.

Based on this new understanding of politics detached from state power, we also need to reconsider the ontology of choreography. We postulate possible new ways of comprehending what choreography institutes in the 21st century, which differ from concepts of choreography solely as a structuring device. As established in the first part of this introduction, at the end of the last century, warfare morphed from a temporary conflict between sovereignties for the reorganization of social structures in the interest of these sovereign entities into an amorphous and semipermanent state of engagement between numerous fluid entities, including media, that no longer permit an assumption of organizing goals. Given this change in the character and objective of warfare and the close association of choreography and warfare, the questions are now: Has choreography also changed in character and objective? Does choreography necessarily empower mobilization, ordering, and resistance (Martin 1998; Franko 1995; Foster 2010)? Or is there perhaps a need to adjust our understanding of choreography to also incorporate a temporally, spatially, and conceptually metamorphous disorganization that might include disorder not simply as an obstacle leading toward an end result or enlightening a process but as an ontological state? Such choreography might evade the consensus-resistance binary, or, in Rancière's terminology, police and politics.

As the authors in *Choreographies of 21st Century Wars* work through the complex engagement of choreography and contemporary warfare, they all negotiate the shifting balance between the historical function of choreography as an organizing principle and its inability to always make organization coherently visible, or even to work within that paradigm. Although there have always been aspects of choreography that functioned against established organizing structures, the chapters in this book speak to a lack of confidence in the state that translates choreographically into disorder. Not only do the contributors suggest that states no longer protect citizens as they may have done in the past; they often show a loosening of the ties that bind citizens to state, as Christopher Coker asserts (2010), as well as states that fail citizens altogether. As such, these essays offer a critique of present conditions. Equally important, in demonstrating that choreography makes visible the disorder of the current moment, they call into question analytic models that pose resistance as the ultimate element of critique or, even more extreme, the single moment when

art becomes political. We argue that choreography critiques present conditions not through disturbing the norm, since the norm is a global state of war, but by engaging with the disorder of the present moment, in which states fail to act on behalf of their citizens.

As Gerald Siegmund vividly explains in his multifaceted analysis of William Forsythe's *Three Atmospheric Studies*, the choreography is not so much what is visible onstage as what is left open and unintelligible by the space and gaps that are created between the bodies, images, texts, translation process, and audience reception of the events onstage, which all refuse to converge into a coherent product or story. As Siegmund points out, even though in *Three Atmospheric Studies* choreography is present in the traditional sense as a structuring of movements and bodies onstage for the duration of the piece, that is no longer its ontological purpose. Rather, choreography purposefully shows a loss of control over bodies, notation, language, translation, imagery, and perception, because only through this determined loss of organization can choreography have meaning within the context of 21st-century perpetual war.

All the essays in the anthology speak to different aspects of the urgent need to rethink choreography in relation to warfare. Alessandra Nicifero, in her essay on Rachid Ouramdane's *Ordinary Witnesses*, demonstrates how the choreographer comes to grips with the subject of torture, not by attempting to impose order on it but by engaging with its very confusion and incomprehensibility. Like Forsythe, Ouramdane employs movement to disrupt both the organizing narrativity of language and the structuring function of choreography. He uses the empty stage and darkness to counter audience expectations of comprehension and of what dance is in a theatrical setting, then goes on to create movement that becomes ever more indefinable through its simultaneity of radically different modes of embodiment. Evoking the complex shared spaces of dance performance, spectatorship, witnessing, dance analysis, and criticism, Nicifero makes the point that critics and audiences need to rethink their own strategies and functions, as choreography does when it begins to critically address a world ruled by war.

Ruth Hellier-Tinoco echoes a complex understanding of contemporary choreography in relation to warfare by highlighting the narrative jumble, fragmentation, in-betweenness, bordering, overlap, and incongruities of the global war on drugs and the ongoing border conflicts between nation-states. Rather than reducing dichotomy and contradiction in the Mexican/American coproduction *Timboctou* to fit within a coherent analytical frame, Hellier-Tinoco takes the multiplicities created by the discrepancies between bodily gestures, spoken words, and staged imagery as a formal instigator for her fragmented vignettes. Thus, in her chapter the form purposefully evades organizational

coherence and highlights the disorder so important for choreography's engagement with 21st-century war.

Sarah Davies Cordova examines disorder in her discussion of the South African work *Every Year, Every Day I Am Walking*, which concerns the displacement of refugees in central and southern Africa. She reveals how the work conveys chaos or disarray through both narrative and movement structures that are broken apart and confused, with fragments of those structures, like shrapnel, often reappearing at a later time and in new locations. Choreography's ability to make events or ideas comprehensible through organized movement patterns is refused. What is shown are the shattered remains of the refugees' lives and their experience of what Achille Mbembe calls the "necropolitics" of failed states.

Both Nicifero and Cordova also deal with memory in relationship to disorder, a recurring theme in the book. They each elucidate how the past never entirely dies, nor simply influences the present, but keeps violently interacting with it. For Ouramdane, the purpose of *Ordinary Witnesses* is not to expunge the past but to convey its psychological and emotional effects on those who experienced it. In the Magnet Theatre's *Every Year, Every Day I Am Walking*, the past recurs most delicately but persistently in embodied traces—the way a woman wraps a pagne, how she lifts food to her mouth. For the mother and daughter protagonists, those traces are, with their memories, what endures of their stable lives. In other instances, the past is ossified in the physicality of objects, which once had a clear meaning and function but are now strewn over space and resist repurposing or even recognition.

Janet O'Shea takes up the failure of choreography to reorder society in the midst of conflict in her study of bharata natyam in the Sri Lankan civil war. Tamils, particularly in the diaspora, used bharata natyam to mark cultural difference and support the ongoing conflict with the Sinhalese majority. At the same time, however, the dance has brought Tamil and Sinhalese rivals closer together through its performance on both sides of the divide. Bharata natyam acts as a reminder of cultural affinities and provides an opening for dialogue. However, O'Shea notes that although tenuous strands of reconciliation have been created through bharata natyam, they exist in an arena where war continues to smolder and erupt, and where choreography can be used by forces of either side to enflame and perpetuate violence as well as to encourage peace. Choreography participates at distinct and often conflicting areas in contemporary warfare in Sri Lanka, and its impact resides not so much in its structuring of social space as in the many contradictory intersections it generates within war. This contradictory element of choreography permits O'Shea to remain hopeful about choreography's power to intervene, a stance she shares with several other authors in the anthology.

If Tamils in the diaspora used *bharata natyam* as a propaganda device to garner support for war, several other essays in the volume take up the use of choreography for propaganda purposes. Yehuda Sharim demonstrates how choreography can be used as propaganda through technology that reaches global audiences. Hamas, in a video of the captive Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, crafted Shalit's comportment and movement to increase Israeli sympathy for the prisoner in order to push the Israeli government to make an advantageous hostage exchange. Yet, as Sharim argues, the exchange was also carefully choreographed by the State of Israel to reflect ideas of a national masculinized identity, embodied through military training, exercises, and drills. Israel's shifting approaches to training and participation in war thus determine changing corporealities for its citizen body.

Derek Burrill deals with propaganda and the military, here with the US Army's variety of training forums aimed at instilling an enthusiasm for war and a desire to join the military in (primarily) boys and young men. Embodied movement is basic to these methods, which center on digitized games but include other forms of "militainment" where participants can engage in training-as-play through simulations of war. Yet these games can lead to participation in actual warfare and, as Burrill shows, create a catastrophic disjuncture between the alienation from embodiment while gaming and the destructive physicality of war. Here it is not the choreography of the games or of organized warfare per se that is of crucial importance. Rather, it is the obscuration and incomprehension of the relationship between these choreographies that define its impact on contemporary war.

Like Burrill, Harmony Bench addresses themes of technology and militainment. However, she does not do this through choreography directly pertaining to war. Rather, she argues her case through television dance shows and video-games, demonstrating how they conform to wartime-all-the-time, instilling insecurity as an existential state of contemporary life. As Bench demonstrates, contemporary war, civil technology, and entertainment media structure each other and create distinct physicalized temporalities for contemporary society that rely on the anticipation of threat as an important *modus operandi*. That war invades all aspects of life in the 21st century resonates with Sharim's essay, in which Israeli anticipation of war becomes embodied in citizens through physical choreographies of training and drill.

Maaike Bleeker and choreographer Janez Janša investigate the interface between entertainment and warfare in a different way, focusing on two interventionist theater works that address UN peacekeeping and contemporary dance. *P.E.A.C.E.* is both satirical and serious, consisting of a proposal, actually made to military and dance organizations, to provide contemporary dance as entertainment for UN peacekeepers. The conceptual work argues for

a relationship in the lives of peacekeepers and dancers in that both are what Susan Foster calls “hired bodies” who are asked to do jobs that do not accord with their training: peacekeepers are trained to fight, but are not allowed to do so, while dancers are asked to be creative, yet their instrumentalized training encourages homogenization. *WE ARE ALL MARLENE DIETRICH FOR: Performance for Peacekeeping Soldiers Handbook* is at once a serious consideration of the kind of entertainment provided for soldiers, a comment on the theory that UN peacekeepers exist in part as entertainers (since they are forbidden to fight), and, in its purposeful vulgarity, a dance performance that riffs on the tension between the desire to create peace and the desire for excitement that soldiering represents. Here again it is not the choreographic structure or its context that create meaning, but rather the inability to do so coherently in the context of the contemporary oxymoron of the “peacekeeping soldier.”

Neelima Jeychandran’s essay on the Lowering the Flags ceremony at the Indian/Pakistani border crossings of Wagah and Hussainiwala resonates with others in the collection in several ways. While the ceremony acts as a colorful form of entertainment for audiences, at the same time, the past inhabits the present, where conflicted memories are embodied in movement. The ritualized drill of the border guards plays out the intractability of the conflict that has gone on since partition, vying with a recognition, evoked in those same movements, that the two rivals were once one. However, while spectators may participate in a nostalgic remembrance of unity, they also witness an embodiment of past wars and, even more importantly, a ritual that acts as a surrogate for actual warfare, keeping alive the prospect of continuing conflict. That the specter of war, as Jeychandran calls it, hovers over the borders is demonstrated by ongoing eruptions of violence, including a 2014 suicide attack at Wagah, which reinforces the idea that contemporary war never ends.

A recurrent theme throughout the collection is a marked lack of confidence in the state and its relationship to its citizens, which can be seen whether the state is failed or long established and stable. This speaks to the fluid, amorphous, and often contradictory dispersal of power in a globalized world, which choreography transmits but cannot reorganize and make coherent. The African refugees in *Every Year, Every Day I Am Walking* leave behind the devastation of a country in collapse, but the democracy they flee to and discover at the end of their harrowing journey is hardly reassuring. At the same time, the violence and corruption of the US-Mexico border wars, which is the focus of *Timboctou*, implicate both democratically elected governments and drug cartels that operate worldwide.

Nicholas Rowe calls the state into question in his chapter, which centers on *Access Denied*, a dance work he facilitated as choreographer in the West Bank

during the Second Intifada. Here the state is viewed on the one hand as occupier and on the other as altogether absent, in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian Territories. *Access Denied* was created for a local audience to make visible the chaos and routinely encountered hardships during the Intifada period. At the same time, the work did not flinch from addressing tensions within Palestinian society itself. This complex relationship of choreography to occupation and the state makes it a valuable case study of the intersection of dance and contemporary war. Rowe demonstrates how art and politics are inextricably entwined in a society under siege, and examines his own role as a privileged outsider negotiating local and global distributions of power in relation to asymmetrical war.

Rosemary Martin deliberates on citizens' relationship to the state through an investigation of different strategies used in the face of civil unrest and censorship in the years surrounding the Arab Spring uprisings in Cairo in 2011. Her chapter centers on how dancers participated in and were affected by the revolution that ostensibly brought democracy to the country. However, as Martin relates, only a few short years after the uprising that swept Hosni Mubarak from power, Egypt finds itself again under the sway of a military strongman, bringing new violence to the country and leaving choreographers and dancers to wonder what will happen to the freedoms they were just beginning to enjoy.

In their chapter, Dee Reynolds and choreographer Rosie Kay explore the intersection between art and politics, looking at the Iraq War through Kay's *5 SOLDIERS: The Body Is the Frontline*. They discuss the dance work's focus on the body of the soldier, and audience reaction to it, within the context of the political disaffection of the British public in the face of the war. Kay and Reynolds argue that choreography can embody a critique of war that engages audiences who are otherwise politically apathetic. At the same time, the work made an impact on soldiers who saw it, encouraging them to reflect on the costs of war and the infliction of pain that war brings. This chapter, like many others in the book, indirectly addresses the issue of the state's inability to rally support any longer on the basis of nationalism and patriotism. The soldiers discussed by Kay and Reynolds did not mention fighting for country, in this sense disconnecting themselves from the state. Rather, they emphasized loyalty to those small "bands of brothers" who fight together and whose lives are in each other's hands, something that *5 SOLDIERS* stresses both in its title and in the work itself; thus the choreography not only allows a liberal audience to see its antiwar stance reaffirmed, but additionally provides a platform for soldiers who might have a contrary attitude toward warfare. The chapter supports the idea that as confidence in the state falls away or is entirely absent, individuals turn to nonstate sources for identity and support—family, friends, colleagues, like-minded individuals and groups—or dance.

In a deeply personal meditation, Bill T. Jones traces his journey from a public accounting of war to a more private sphere in his work. At the height of the Iraq War, Jones made *Blind Date* (2005), a major antiwar piece. It was his response to pent-up anger over the Bush presidency and the US promulgation of that war. Structurally and thematically, Jones's work has always been concerned with political and social issues, from race and gender to human rights. However, since *Blind Date*, he has increasingly turned inward, toward examining, in his words, "the nature of a life well-lived, courage, and what is worth fighting for." Echoing O'Shea's hopefulness about choreography's ability to at least search for positionings—of the artist, the dance, the citizen—inside an increasingly undetermined society, Jones turns back and toward compositional strategies.

Ariel Osterweis affirms the constructive potential of choreography grappling with contemporary warfare by broadening the term into what she calls geo-choreography. Understanding choreography as not only a reordering of vocabulary in time and space but an actual shaping of space itself, she analyzes Congolese choreographer Faustin Linyekula's choreographic work in conjunction with his conscious reordering of the chaotic spaces left by several wars in the society and landscape of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Linyekula does not attempt to make sense of past mass killings and the still violent present. Rather, he reappropriates and salvages popular yet violent dances such as the ndombolo for his choreographic work and abandoned spaces for his teaching and training. Here again, choreography does not order or make sense; its potential stems from the embracing of disorder and chaos.

Mark Franko concludes this anthology with wide-ranging comments concerning choreography and politics in the context of 21st-century war. He continues Gerald Siegmund's conversation on William Forsythe's *Three Atmospheric Studies* by centering attention on the citizen's relationship to the state in this time of war. His analysis of the Forsythe work brings into focus several arguments raised by the authors of the previous essays. Citing Cathy Caruth, Franko argues first that trauma cannot be fully perceived when it is occurring. Thus, the fog of war makes the act of translation into critical debate nearly impossible. In Franko's analysis, Forsythe addresses the problem of the powerlessness of civil society in the face of traumatic war. Certainly Siegmund's contention that *Three Atmospheric Studies* admits of no salvation would support Franko's view. The impossibility of translation is the code through which the work "depicts" trauma, yet the broader implications of translation's impossibility are also at the root of 21st-century war itself. As Franko observes, this inability to translate renders traditional choreography as a part of civil society powerless in the face of contemporary wars where armies are no longer bound by states and civilian casualties are the norm. Only choreography that "operates outside any

symbolic practice of social order or organization” can create citizens critically engaged with contemporary war.

Like the majority of the essays in *Choreographies of 21st Century Wars*, Franko’s chapter reflects a dark view of our times. We have argued that what choreography generates at this moment is disorder, the scrambling and disassembling of old orders. The old answers, it would seem, are as useless in states that rule by control as they are in states that fail to control on any level. Protest, so hoped for as a way to initiate new beginnings with the Arab Spring revolutions, the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, and the mass demonstrations in Iran, Bahrain, and Israel, has had disappointing results. If, as theorists proclaim, the answers no longer lie in appeals to the state but in the forming of global communities, we are uncertain how to create such communities or make them work. If there is any light in the assessments seen in this collection, it comes in the embodied nature of choreography. These essays suggest that connections between people are effectively made through the body in motion, where some real understanding occurs of how pain is inflicted and suffering relieved. In making these connections visible, choreography gestures toward the decisions humanity must make in the 21st century if it is not to perpetuate endless violence.

NOTES

1. Accordingly, for the purposes of this book we define war as any armed conflict involving, or having the potential to involve, a significant loss of life.
2. Mark Franko notes that 20th-century choreography was marked by themes and subject matter associated with national identity (1995, 2012), that is, choreography concerned itself with the power of the nation-state, whether it was Martha Graham, who sought a definitive American dance, or ballet companies and folk troupes throughout the world that sought to embody national styles.
3. See also Dudziak (2012).
4. Kaldor may have been the first to use the term “new wars” in *New and Old Wars* (originally written in 1998, with a second edition in 2006), although how new “new” wars are has been widely contested by historians (see for example, Strachan and Herberg-Rothe 2007, 9, Holmqvist-Jonsäter and Coker 2010, and Strachan and Scheipers 2011).
5. Although contemporary wars are sometimes compared to premodern wars that continued for long periods, such as the Thirty Years War of the 17th century, what separates today’s wars from earlier ones are the elements of globalization, privatization, and often a lack of nation-building aims. In addition to Kaldor, see Münkler (2005), 32–34, and Hardt and Negri (2004), 3–6.
6. For an overview of this subject see McNeill (1995).
7. F. T. Marinetti’s “Manifesto of Futurist Dance” (Marinetti 2009) was published in 1917. For essays on futurist dance, see Brandstetter 2015; Veroli 2000, 2009.

8. Scholars took a broader approach toward dance and choreography even earlier by incorporating anthropological and eventually ethnographic methodologies (Mauss 1934; Sachs 1937) to account for choreographies of everyday movement.
9. It should be noted that the importance of the critical capacity of choreography did not necessarily change public perceptions of choreography or overturn the domination of ballet, modern, or even folk dance, which still functioned as affirmative nation-building institutions worldwide.
10. These organizing principles of choreography can be detected throughout history, beginning with the symmetry of court dances, through a canonicity of ballet and modern dance, to the resistive motions of the so-called postmodern dances. They are of course also visible in social choreographies of all kinds.
11. A recent *New York Times* article revealed the power of Blackwater when it reported that the top Blackwater manager in Iraq threatened the life of a US-government chief investigator, who was attempting to report on the company's killing of civilians. State Department personnel in Baghdad backed Blackwater, rather than the investigator, and he left the country immediately, fearing for his life. See James Risen, "Before Shooting in Iraq, A Warning on Blackwater," *New York Times*, June 29, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/30/us/before-shooting-in-iraq-warning-on-blackwater.html?emc=eta1&r=0>. For information on the little-known, worldwide influence of G4S in private and public arenas see William Langewiesche, "The Chaos Company," *Vanity Fair*, April 2014, <http://www.vanityfair.com/business/2014/04/g4s-global-security-company>, both accessed July 12, 2014.

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Access Denied and Sumud

Making A Dance of Asymmetric Warfare

NICHOLAS ROWE

THE SECOND INTIFADA

We are standing with our faces a few inches away from the wall for about a minute when I think, “Why the hell am I doing this?” and turn around.

Maher looks at me, a short, sharp look, as I turn to face the steep, darkened valley of Ain Musbah. The soldier shines his torch back in my face and snaps a command in poor Arabic, indicating that I should turn back around.

Maher turns his face back to the wall, but I can see he is looking to me through the corner of his eyes, his lips tight and pulling down. I have not seen that expression on his face before, and I suddenly feel the gulf between our histories.

In January 2004, the aspirations of the Oslo Peace Accords were being memorialized by a towering wall that cut through and around urban spaces in the West Bank, and cities that had become autonomous under the Palestinian Authority were back under Israeli military occupation. At the same time, the growing influence of Hamas in municipal electorates in the Palestinian Authority areas was having a significant impact on the public performance of dance in Palestine, through the censorship and cancelation of dance events (Rowe 2010b).

Addressing this salient juncture in Palestinian political history, Ramallah Dance Theater premiered the multimedia production *Mamnou al-Oubour* (*Access Denied*) at Al Kasaba Theater, in Ramallah, Palestine. This hour-long dance production involved a montage of scenes exploring the physicality of human relationships under military occupation. As a visceral response to the surrounding political environment, *Access Denied* inevitably presented commentary on both the asymmetric warfare of the Second Intifada (Münkler 2005, 25–26) and underlying schisms within Palestinian national culture and politics.

Almost a decade later, I am continuing to distill the blend of creative and political decision-making that underscored Ramallah Dance Theater's approach to choreography. As a foreign but long-term resident in the Occupied Palestinian Territories¹ and a choreographer and dancer within *Access Denied*, over the following pages I reflect on my experience of its choreographic process and the final production. This involves a particular consideration of how dance was used to explore the meanings of “contemporary” in local cultural identity, and how this in turn extended the Palestinian political ideal of *sumud*, or steadfast resistance (Nassar and Heacock 1991), within the uneven battleground of the Second Intifada.

CONTEMPORARY DANCE AND POLITICS

Access Denied might be the first contemporary dance production in the West Bank, in the sense that the scenes being performed were set in the current era, the costumes reflected present-day street clothing, the eclectic score was drawn from current and past music, and the movement vocabulary referenced embodied reactions to the 21st-century sociopolitical environment of the West Bank. The hour-long production described itself as

a collage of scenes from Occupied Palestine. Created during the years of the Second Intifada, it reflects the experiences of the artists involved. Some of the images are presented live onstage and others projected as pre-recorded dance videos. (Program note, Ramallah Dance Theater, 2004)

Access Denied was by no means the first political dance production made locally. Evening-length dance productions by El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe and Sareyyet Ramallah Group for Music and Dabkeh, such as *Wadi Tofah* (1982), *Mish'al* (1986), *Al-Sheiq* (1986), *Marj Ibn 'Amer* (1989), *Jbaine* (1992), *Al-Bijawi* (2000), and *Haifa, Beirut wa Baed* (2003)² all presented allegorical narratives that made direct and indirect reference to the political persecution of Palestinians by Israel (Rowe 2010b). In all except the last production (which was set in the context of the 1948 Nakba),³ these political references

were generally cloaked in folk legends. All were set in historic times and used folkloric music and costumes. The stomping movements of dabkeh, a rural folkdance, were the main source of inspiration. Similar to the development of national folkdance in other regions (see Shay 1999), these dance productions extended the politicized revival of traditional rural culture that had accompanied competing national identities in the region in the earlier part of the 20th century (Kaschl 2003; Rowe 2011).

The popular value of this folklore revival among Palestinians was subsequently enhanced by Israeli censorship policies that restricted verbal criticism of Israel in public forums (Abu Hadba 1994; Boullata 2004; Rowe 2010a, 2010b). Through danced metaphors, these productions engaged a marginalized and politically dispersed population in acts of political resistance, fostering political solidarity and constructing a collective cultural identity based on a shared cultural heritage. While many of the dance artists involved were ultimately imprisoned by Israel for these political acts, they had secured folkloric dance as a central icon within Palestinian national identity under occupation (Abu Hadba 1994).

Prior to 2004, presentations of short pieces of contemporary dance had also taken place in the West Bank. Within these, the costumes, music, movements, and concepts all referenced the contemporary sociopolitical environment. These were presented as closed studio showings for family and friends in the late 1990s, as a fringe performance in a university hall within the 1999 Palestine International Festival, and as experimental fragments held in a series of "Improvisation Nights" at al-Kasaba Theater in 2001. These short pieces included *Hob* ("Love"), a duet about a political prisoner separated from his wife, and *Hawayat* ("ID cards"), a protest dance in which the dancers faced the audience and, with a series of rhythmically punctuated gestures, showed defiance at having to continually present ID cards to soldiers (Rowe 2010b). Such performances mostly involved younger dancers from El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah, who were encouraged to explore contemporary dance by the directors of these established folkloric companies. Among these companies there was at the same time a concern that the Palestinian public would not want a full-scale production of contemporary dance—that it would be perceived as symbolic of Western hegemony, undermining the local political relevance of dance as a performed art (Rowe 2008a 2009, 2010a).

In early 2003, several dancers from the Sareyyet Ramallah and El-Funoun groups formed the collective Ramallah Dance Theater, to explore how dance might be made locally relevant through reference to the cultural present rather than the cultural past. Over the following decade, the idea of contemporary dance would become celebrated in the West Bank, through regular performances and annual festivals. Reflecting this shift, the Sareyyet Ramallah Group

for Music and Dabkeh changed its name in 2005 to the Sareyyet Ramallah Group for Music and Dance, and advanced an agenda for contemporary dance in the region. In 2003, however, Ramallah Dance Theater's creation of *Access Denied* had to navigate a militarized environment and a shifting temporal perception of Palestinian cultural identity from the collective past to the collective present.

Maher and I reached the wall fifteen minutes earlier. Or, rather, we reached the hillside corner that the garden wall shields. Laughing as we turn the corner, we see the Israeli jeep, which had pulled over another car near the crest of the hill. It is 9:00 p.m., the curfew has left the streets deserted, and our boisterous arrival at the corner disrupts the cool night. The tires on the jeep spin slightly as it lurches around in our direction, silhouetting us against the wall in its headlights before pulling up alongside us. Two soldiers spring out with their guns pointing at us, and Maher and I just stand there pensively.

DANCE BRIDGES AND BARRIERS

I made my first trip to the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 1998, to teach a ten-day contemporary dance workshop in the Popular Art Center in Al-Bireh. That workshop had focused on partnering techniques and led to the creation of nine short duets, which were performed in the studio on the last evening for families and friends of the dancers.

I returned twice over the following year to teach more workshops, before moving to Ramallah for a longer residency in April 2000, to work as a dance teacher and choreographic consultant on El-Funoun's *Haifa, Beirut wa baed* and Sareyyet Ramallah's *Al-Birjawi*. I had previously taught workshops for various Israeli dance organizations and remained curious as to the potential for cooperative relationships between Israeli and Palestinian dancers. This was at the tail end of the era that had been defined by the Oslo Peace Accords, and despite the political failure of that process, an economic boom in the West Bank had fostered a generally optimistic cultural atmosphere.

Among the dancers and dance organizations that I was working with, there was a firm commitment not to engage in any "normalization" activities with Israelis. This had stemmed from concerns that earlier collaborative artistic productions between Palestinians and Israelis had been used by the Israeli government to present a veneer of normalcy regarding Palestinian-Israeli relations in front of the international community, whitewashing ongoing injustices associated with the colonization and military occupation of Palestine by Israel (Rowe 2000, 2002a).

Maintaining a belief in intercultural dialogue and wanting to move beyond this position of refusal, I sought to understand what it would take for