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Code-switching in Choreography

A Reflection, Based on Immersive Field Notes

In this study,¹ I will approach the concept of a dance code, defined as an alternative kind of knowledge, distinct from intellectual processes. Mastering dance codes implies somatic awareness, channeled into choreography. The choice of choreographic artworks in the study is based on the creative use of code-switching. It implies multiple interweaving options such as quick shifts in movement dynamics, which allow the coexistence of different body states. The concept of dance code is also used to link choreographic works, via comparisons and analogies, to other contemporary arts research fields such as cultural studies. The latter conceive code-switching as art phenomena.

Dance code as a communication tool can emerge or be understood as such by long-term dedicated investment of effort. In order to understand its potential, researchers in arts studies must harness observation, feeling, sensing, and reading in order to gain some specific knowledge of codes.² Some examples of researchers who have actually done this, and to whom the author is responding, are Susan Leigh Foster³ and Sondra Fraleigh.⁴ Therefore, the methods applied in this study are observation and reading together with embodied first-person research.

The study results, derived both from the practices of embodying dance and of taking academic field notes, can engage in fruitful discussions about the multiple ways embodiment, corporeality, and somatic intelligence can introduce rigorous methodologies and theories. Code-switching helps to reveal both the benefits and the dangers of the dancer's, the choreographer's, and the researcher's embodiments as artistic ambiguity. The latter occurs often, and it should be discussed as a result of creativity and deep thought.

¹ Special thanks to IRET (Institut de Recherche en Etudes Théâtrales), La Sorbonne Nouvelle – Université de Paris 3, for the invitation to the “Agir jazz: Geste créateur / Geste politique” international conference, held in Paris on 23–25 November 2017, organized by Sylvie Chalaye and Pierre Letessier.

² In that regard, some of the choreography phrases which have been studied here have also been experienced through embodiment processes by the author as a dancer. The reader will find web links to the choreography works studied below. Other research tools applied in this study are movement and dance composition analysis.

³ Susan Leigh FOSTER: *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull*, Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 2002.

⁴ Sondra Horton FRALEIGH: *Dancing Identity: Metaphysics in Motion*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.

The concept of dance code applied in this study is conceived as an embodied affect, and less as a signification. In order to achieve a deeper understanding of how it is used by the choreographers themselves, in a process of code-switching, some fundamental analysis tools in the fields of dance studies, such as movement analysis and choreography analysis, are applied. These methodology tools approach a dance gesture/posture simultaneously as a structure, sense, and meaning. For instance, the jazz songs quoted in this study are analyzed by the author via the “timbre” of the voice and the choice of particular lyrics, inducing kinesthetic images and worked-out dance gestures (*Macho Dancer*, 2013). The following examples of choreography can help us understand why and how the “traditional” notion of code-switching in linguistics, and the way in which it is adapted to dance, may rely on similar concepts, but it functions in its own specific way, as linguistics is the scientific study of language. The modern study of linguistics is called a science because it entails the comprehensive, systematic, objective, and precise analysis of all aspects of language – cognitive, social, environmental, and biological, as well as structural. According to it, code-switching is the act of changing between two or more languages, dialects (= forms of a language), or accents (= ways of pronouncing words) when you are speaking. Code-switching is common among bilinguals in many communities. Every day, minorities engage in the art of code-switching in order to assimilate into the white majority.

The first piece explored in this study is *Junkie* from *Blues for the Jungle* (1966), by the American choreographer Eleo Pomare, which stages the politics of the Afro-American dancing body.⁵ My research focuses on the aesthetic codes he creates in order to represent on stage his own “junkie” character and the code-switching he makes use of, so as to create unity with the other “street problems” personas in the piece. A similar mechanism of code-switching also appears in some dancers’ solos, “ballerinas on crack” in *The Sea Within* by the Belgian choreographer Lisbeth Gruwez (2015).⁶ These examples show how the choreographic use of code-switching expresses needs to excavate cultures of ableism, social filters, gender norms, trauma, illness, discomfort, and legal parameters of bodily expression. In regard to that, *Näss (Les Gens)*, by the French choreographer Fouad Boussouf (2018), is discussed as a relationship between cultures of migration, built on non-conventional urban styles of code-switching.⁷

The Filipino choreographer Eisa Jocson’s *Macho Dancer* (2013) is a solo work in which a woman performs *macho dance*.⁸ In the Philippines, erotic clubs and bars

⁵ Eleo POMARE: *Archive Material*, youtube.com/watch?v=QhLmhuZBshs (12/06/2023); Free to Dance Episode 3: Go for what You Know, *History and influence of African American Dance on the modern culture*, PBS Documentary, 2000.

⁶ Lisbeth GRUWEZ / VOETVOLK: *The Sea Within*, ImPulsTanz,youtu.be/T8-T1sIDbFk (12/06/2023).

⁷ Fouad BOUSSOUF: *Näss (Les Gens)*, *Festival Paris l’Eté*, youtube.com/watch?v=RQzbOow6zew (12/06/2023).

⁸ Eisa JOCSO: *Macho Dancer*, Centre National de la Danse / Numerodanse.fr, numeridanse.tv/video-theque-danse/macho-dancer (12/06/2023).

have their own form of dance: that of *macho dancers*, who perform for both men and women. Their performances are based on a specific movement vocabulary and physicality, which can also be perceived as aesthetic codes. In *Macho Dancer*, Eisa Jocson explores this economically motivated language of seduction, using notions of masculinity as body capital, and proposes a version that transgresses gender codes. Alone on stage, she recreates the muscular tension and compact undulations of this dance to a nostalgic musical repertoire from the 1980s and 1990s. Embodying a macho dancer via a process of code-switching, she challenges our perception of sexuality and questions gender as a tool for social mobility.

Code-switching in choreography requires a clear distinction between the *soma* and the body of the dancers. Somatics is the field of research of the soma: in particular, the body as it is perceived from the inside, a perception in the first person. When a human being is observed from the outside, i.e. from the point of view of the third person, it is the manifestation of the human body that is perceived. But when that same human being is observed from the first-person perspective, from their own proprioceptive sensations, a completely different manifestation is perceived: the human soma.⁹

The motion of codeswitching in these pieces is based entirely on primal somatic exploration, which blends with the most elaborate art concepts – abstraction, experimental music. It makes use of the open body forces such as screams, touch and animalistic tunings. Thus, the choreography calls on the openness of interpretation. The works discussed in this study remind us also that code-switching, the practice of alternating between different languages, ways of speaking, conduct, and presentation of self, is often the reality for marginalized groups. Other studies on multilingualism and marginalized groups in 21st century, such as Blommaert, Pennycook and Otsuji, Rosa and Flores, Zhu Hua, offer a deeper contextualization in research fields other than choreography and dance environments/phenomenon.

Code-switching via Gender Fluidity and Feminism Complexity

Performing gender in dance has often been a practice of reversibility, which in some cultures is even a tradition: many contemporary dance companies hold repertoires both of gendered and non-gendered distribution of roles. The concepts of gender and sexuality are modern Western constructs. Sexuality is considered and studied as a specific erotic aspect of human life from the 19th century on. The term “gender” appeared in late 60s in order to differentiate socio-cultural masculine and feminine identities from biological sex. We can refer to many feminist thinkers who discussed this idea such as Judith Butler, Barbara Kruger (quoted below), and others. Many feminist thinkers have popularized the idea of “gender trouble,” Judith Butler

⁹ Thomas HANNA: “Qu’est-ce que la somatique?” Traduction de Agnès Benoit-Nader. *Recherches en danse [En ligne]*, 16 juin 2017, 1–10. journals.openedition.org/danse/1232 (12/06/2023).

to begin with.¹⁰ A closer look at what can be considered as “gendered” or “non-gendered” shows the possible reversibility of codes: for instance, the male and the female version of the song “I put a spell on you”. In Garou’s version of the song, the harsh voice is tough but often cracks and admits weakness, while in Joss Stone’s interpretation, even though based on feminine vulnerability, the voice carries on with a considerable amount of power. As mentioned above, the jazz songs quoted in this study are analyzed by the author of the study via the “timbre” of the voice and the choice of particular lyrics, inducing images.

The gendered ensembles and solos in *Blues for the Jungle*, *The Sea Within*, *Näss* and *Macho Dancer* stage men holding feminine qualities or vice versa – women who are capable of having a sharp snap into a masculine vocabulary of dance codes. The phenomenon of code-switching is linked to aesthetic, social, cultural, and even political loss of conventional categories, and therefore to the trouble in the ongoing art/life relationship that it can bring. For instance, the movement training of somatic dissolution in *The Sea Within* provokes altered states of consciousness and shifting values: the choreographer’s discourse about feminine/masculine forces put into play presents dance as an art form beyond a simple gender definition.

We may ask: are the performance requirements in virtuosity such as mastering the dance codes so high that they transfer the body/mind beyond gender? Or is it all about an inclusiveness, a disbelief about “fixed gendering”? This kind of expanded dance culture introduces the idea of ambiguity developed by Barbara Kruger’s vision of “your body is a battleground”¹¹ in the 1989 March on Washington in support of women’s rights. The proliferation of contemporary dance performances dealing with the shifts of gender and of gender codes criticizes mainstream culture. The interplay with these kinds of codes is “at least as important in conveying a generalized imagination of modernity and wealth as they are in stimulating erotic feeling.”¹²

Arts code-switching, approached through choreography practice, stems from the idea of fluid gender to that of feminist complexity. The feminist approach to jazz in the twentieth century aligns, for instance, with Lucille Bogan’s intention of “I’m gonna split my oil with you” in the popular song *Oklahoma Man Blues*, where oil stands both for real petroleum and for libido charge. The singer switches the meanings of “oil” and uses them as “undercover” codes in order to explore sexuality as both blurry and precise places.

Dancing female bodies are also capable of ironic interplay of code, which can function as fiasco: what does an audience expect? What does an audience get? A leading female shaman-like figure, dressed in red, from *The Sea Within*, wakes up the female ensemble consciousness and triggers a desire for a revolution, a rebellion from

¹⁰ Judith BUTLER: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York, Routledge, 2006.

¹¹ Barbara KRUGER: “YOUR BODY IS A BATTLEGROUND”. POSTER IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS, MARCH ON WASHINGTON, 1989.

¹² Judith FARQUHAR – Qicheng ZHANG: *Ten Thousand Things: Nurturing Life in Contemporary Beijing*, New York Zone Press, 2012, 45.

the monopoly of the male gaze. Instances of code-switching in the choreographies quoted in this study can be considered as criticism, for they try to disturb social conventions by staging what is deranging. Often a dancer breaks out from the chorus line for a short ecstatic solo, then almost immediately gets absorbed again in the ensemble. It reminds us of the summer visions of a wave detaching itself for a few seconds from the sea, then vanishing back into it. In regard to that, the female solos from *The Sea Within* are built up on counterpoint flexible postures depicting orgasmic climaxes, backed up by a chorus line.¹³

Arts code-switching may produce vital fuel for reversing social order and laughing at it at the same time. Applied to dance as an art form, it can be an efficient criticism of what may be considered as common taste. Each choreographer develops this potential in his/her own way: Lizbeth Gruwez works on a critical satire of behavior, from contradictory wishes to shooting and destroying unwanted reality; Fouad Boussouf questions the use of, and the mixing of, cultural artefacts such as oriental dance, hip hop, slam, by mixing them all together and thus creating a specific new aesthetics for the crooked male characters in *Näss*; Eleo Pomare takes the audience on his “junkie” trip, beyond the habits of choreographic representation in *Blues for the Jungle*; struck by the harsh life in the city for Afro-Americans, in *Blues for the Jungle*, he stages a cast of Black-identity characters previously unseen on the stage.

Eisa Jocson represents a male Filipino style stripper in a most detailed and realistic way in *Macho Dancer*. During an intensive workshop by Eisa Jocson at the annual dance festival Camping 2022, organized by CND – the National Center of Dance in Paris, France, the choreographer has explained to us (the author of this study took part in the workshop) the many codes composing this kind of performance and its particular “style” – such as slow and heavy motion, strategies of seduction, addressed to the audience.

These choreographies contain, address and reply to a series of multiple crises – those of womanhood, madness, power and identity loss, transmission. These crises are situated in the time when the choreographers were working, and they explicitly refer to such crises. We may quote a few interviews: Eleo Pomare on Afro-American community struggles,¹⁴ Eisa Jocson on Philippine migrant bodies,¹⁵ Lizbeth Gruwez on ultraconservatism¹⁶ and, finally, Fouad Boussouf on the multiculturalism of dance in the Middle East.¹⁷ Often the crises somehow get resolved, even without a rational answer, by the groovy responses to the music by the dancers.

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¹³ GRUWEZ: *The Sea Within*.

¹⁴ POMARE: *Archive Material*.

¹⁵ EISA JOCSON: *Corponomy*, eisajocson.wordpress.com/2019-corponomy-installation/ (17/07/2023).

¹⁶ LIZBETH GRUWEZ: *It's Going to Get Worse and Worse and Worse, My Friend*, numeridanse.tv/en/dance-videotheque/its-going-get-worse-and-worse-and-worse-my-friend (17/07/2023).

¹⁷ FOUAD BOUSSOUF: *Dossier pédagogique de Näss*, ac-lyon.fr/dossier-pedagogique-du-spectacle-nass-de-fouad-boussouf-124646 (17/07/2023).

The mechanics of code-switching in dance are often based on groove. Two examples of how this process functions show the use of multiple tempos which coexist inside the same song. Groove also helps to achieve altered states of consciousness that facilitate the dancers' performance. This phenomenon brings a variety of interpretations of code-switching itself in a lively, flowful way. An interesting question about code-switching-inspired principles of choreography-making is how to negotiate improvisational tasks within the frame of very precise instructions, or how to construct the progression of a solo in an enlarged context, such as the circulation of roles in *Blues for the Jungle* and *Näss*, the collective buildup for the spectacular solos in *The Sea Within*, or the choreographic choices made to compose the structure of *Macho Dancer*.

Code-switching as a Process of Shuffling

The analysis of blending moves and specific phrasings in *Blues for the Jungle*, *Näss*, and *The Sea Within* discloses a "cloud" of proximity evolving between the dancers. There is no "lead" role: the ensemble shuffles all the time. In comparison to code-switching in jazz structures through gestures which can be "ambiguous," conceived in order to allow modification, to be played with, the ensembles of *Blues for the Jungle*, *Näss*, and *The Sea Within* can shuffle in numerous ways, while meticulously performing the pre-established choreographic structure. Each dancer simultaneously holds an individual and collective role and therefore a unique function within an ensemble which is constantly rearranging itself, while keeping a clear identity of each of its elements.

Dance codes emerge within the group in order to embody the mechanical labor, or the daily routine, or the biological tuning between precisely gendered bodies. In order to establish more clearly how the different types of gestures and postures can function as "codes," let's have a deeper look at Lizbeth Gruwez's choreographic aesthetics. In *The Sea Within*, she creates her own contemporary dance hybrid style. The ten female dancers represent a multicultural ensemble and each of them is free to perform the gestures and postures set by the choreographer's score according to a different dance background. Some move the pelvis in a particular way, by mixing softness, swaying, ballet postures, belly dance elements, Asian body techniques, but all of them are pointing out the constant multiplicity of roles and skills women are supposed to hold. The gestures as expressions of femininity vary from "shimmy" trembling to "decorating" delicately the face and the air around whenever they depict the water movements. The grounding in deep "pliés," the value of "snap into the moment," the delicacy of small gestures, the narration by shifts all assemble many mysterious codes, established often in a nonverbal way, during the long co-working process of the creation of the choreography. The dancers use the code-switching process as an in-dance conversation to draw somatic attention zooms inwards and outwards of the female body.

The choreographic codes become a creative vocabulary, mixing Western (ballet, modern dance elements, etc.) and Eastern aesthetics as opposed to mainstream dance styles, easy to recognize. Code-switching induced by these multinational ensembles is also an advocacy for the cultural diversity of dancing bodies. Different body types all keep up the required precision for the performed vocabulary. Thus, the choreographic use of codes belonging to various dance styles explores a multiplicity of identities and aesthetic choices. Code-switching applies the idea of “sensorial corruption,” which is to say a constant rediscovery and deepening of a range of sensations, rather than mastering a number of predefined shapes and other fixed aesthetic, social and cultural categories. This phenomenon appears in the co-working between different ethnic cultures in *Näss*, or in the subversive aesthetics of *Blues for the Jungle*, depicting characters from the streets of Harlem, unseen on stage so far.

A musician needs to hear unknown sounds to compose something new. A choreographer’s quest can be quite similar when working with movement impulses, to find an individual place for a dancer within the group, such as cited above. The constant shuffling of the *Näss* group of male performers, or the so-far-unseen-on-stage characters in *Blues for the Jungle* imply both code-creating and code-switching. Accordingly, it is the gradual re-configurations of the ensemble of *The Sea Within* which allow the emergence of the few minutes’ solos of different dancers.

The Poetics of Shifting

The solos from *The Sea Within* are based on fast shifts of images, each offering a clear representation of an original kinesthetic experience. During dance quotes of sophisticated ballet forms, the dancers ride on a series of abrupt improvisations, occasionally re-constructed into a short choreographic phrase which ironically refers to a gorilla, to male monsters, to crawling animals. The same kind of character appears in *Blues for the Jungle*. Eleo Pomare describes his *Junkie* as “he’s kind of a . . . on the nervous side”, challenging an audience that is expecting to see the cliché of “the beauty of the negro”: “I was very conscious of not wanting to appeal to an audience who was there just to see the beauty of the negro. And what a choreographer should do is to investigate or to be a forecaster for things to come.”¹⁸ New choreographic codes thus blend features of what is human and what is animalistic by blurring popular and elite arts references and by shattering the possibility of identifying cultural sources of inspiration. The organic kinesthetic experience of code-switching engenders the question: whose fantasy does all this belong to?

There is a rich literature on the sexualization of black bodies and we may refer to one of the latest studies in the field of dance, *(Re:)Claiming Ballet*,¹⁹ which compiles

¹⁸ POMARE: Archive Material.

¹⁹ Adesola AKINLEYE (ed.): *(Re:)Claiming Ballet*, Bristol, Intellect, 2021, 328.

some testimonies of Afro-American dancers nowadays. There is a double-edged strategy of interplay between a black identity and the necessity of acquiring all the professional codes of Western ballet, which is described by a few Afro-American ballerinas. They follow a thought process similar to that of Eleo Pomare: one needs to be fully aware and master both sets of codes and the switching in between them in order to survive in a very tricky and competitive environment.

The topic of competition, and the code-switching it may apply, is also approached by Lizbeth Gruwez in the *The Sea Within*. By the end of the piece, she stages each dancer turning for a while into an aggressive gorilla-like figure claiming the central spot of the stage, by overpowering the others with jumps and body-building-inspired postures. Here the animal behavior is used as an ironic metaphor of male abusive rudeness. The latter can be perceived as a symbol of overpowering gender in the West. Yet, in Asia, some traditional dance forms, such as the graceful Bali monkey, are considered both as a representation of, and a sophisticated reference for, non-Western eroticism.²⁰ Code-switching is simultaneously the result of the dancer's choices to "travel" through images, taken from improvisation sessions,²¹ and the result of the choreographer's "writing" done by decision making.

A fundamental question concerning code-switching in a state of dizziness is how to transform control into freedom. This question is being put into play when there is a need to get away from too much serious determination of delivering a meaningful message.

Walter Benjamin has already discussed how barbarity is contained within the culture by precise analyses of the conditions allowing barbarity to exist within it. He discusses how slaves practicing art are supposed to have fun not only in order to enhance the entertainment business production, but also to create the free-of-guilt illusion of "they are actually fine."²² Walter Benjamin did not comment on choreography, but we may compare that way of functioning with specific dance environments. For instance, in a similar way, Eisa Jocson's dance solo addresses the issue of "original culture as myth" by blending the ancient heritage of dance culture such as ballet (her background) with the latest novelties such as hip hop, rap, pole dancing, striptease, and so on in her androgynous *Macho Dancer* body, entertaining a mixed-gender audience. Each gesture, such as an aesthetic code she has chosen to compose her solo, comes from a different place and time: from coordinated ballet

²⁰ Some scholarly sources on Balinese dance and the importance of choreography in Balinese culture are Sally Ann NESS: "Bali, the camera, and dance: Performance studies and the lost legacy of the Mead/Bateson collaboration". *Journal of Asian Studies*, 67/4, 2005, 1251–1276; Bethany J. COLLIER: "Looking to the future: Training a new generation for Balinese Arja". *Asian Theatre Journal*, 31/2, 2014, 457–480.

²¹ For more information about transforming and code-switching from local Balinese traditional repertory into contemporary dance improvisation, the reader can refer to the research creation project *Drifting/à la dérive*, led by the author of this study: Biliana VASSILEVA: *Drifting/à la dérive*, research creation project, bilidanse.wixsite.com/website-2 (29/01/2024).

²² Walter BENJAMIN: *Paris Capitale du XXe siècle: Le livre des passages*, Paris, Edition du Cerf, 1989, 408.

postures – back, shoulders, etc. – to freestyle hip hop and other urban-style bumps. Following Walter Benjamin’s idea of an “aura,”²³ which is to say proximity projected far into the distance, we may see the dancer’s performance as an alternative space, created for gestures to circulate. Aura is a quality integral to an artwork that cannot be communicated through mechanical reproduction techniques, such as photography. The term was used by Walter Benjamin in his influential 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Benjamin argued that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: Its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.” He referred this unique cultural context, i.e. “its presence in time and space” as its “aura.” The specific performative approach of *Macho Dancer* shows how code-switching emerges from negotiating imagination and reality between a female choreographer and male dancers as study material, in order to change the nature of the work required of a female dancer.

Code-switching for Subversion: Shadow Boxing

The dancers in *Blues for the Jungle*, *Näss*, *The Sea Within*, and *Macho Dancer* shift in between ballet, modern, folk postures, and hip hop moves, adding even some slam elements. Each new mood or gesture accumulation contains a playful choice of codes, similar to “how” a jazz jam functions: mixing blues, swing, and bebop. During these “meanderings” the dance gesture creates quick, urgent, hectic space, almost a kind of “dance tagging.” In the ensemble of *The Sea Within* each dancer detaches from the waiting row by surprise. The solos in *The Sea Within* or *Näss* reveal the jazz choreographic inquiry about the place and the role of a soloist within the ensemble, as the dancers burst out through harmonious structures as figures of rebellion. Some of the gestures function in a tension/release polarity. The composition also retains the possibility of adding something new, of integrating what may come along, of establishing a new code.

It explores the metaphor of the “madness” of the dancer, disrupting the ensemble. The idea of madness questions the ambiguity of “good health in a sick environment,” or the necessity of getting severely sick as a remedy which is another kind of getaway. The very difficult social scene of random survivals, depicted in *Blues for the Jungle*, offers subversive representations of social categories. Code-switching becomes multi-voicing: it is not about playing characters, but about embodying a polyphony of symbolic voices.

In a similar way, the choreographic structure of *Blues for the Jungle* contains sharp jumps and sounds, which reveal psychological crises, as opposed to quiet environments and controlled positions/gestures in a secure social space. The

²³ Walter BENJAMIN: “L’œuvre d’art à l’époque de sa reproduction mécanisée”. *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, V/1936, 40–68.

irregular music and the sudden screams create double-edged disturbance. In all the pieces cited in this study, the themes of madness and delirium are investigated by long lasting research. The choreographers develop new uses of code-switching for expressivity-charged performativity. They also build bridges between what can be qualified, with a lot of precaution, as global/local dances.

Challenging the Spectator by Code-switching

Multiple studies address choreography-making as intertextuality. Cultural studies may use the cases of delocalized choreographies in order to point out political anomalies happening elsewhere. Two examples analyzed in this study show us how this works: in *Blues for the Jungle*, Eleo Pomare stages in a secure theater space the street life from the dangerous neighborhood of Harlem, while Eisa Jocson turns international travel and a local style of male striptease into an economical seduction endeavor via the choreography of *Macho Dancer*. In that regard, dance and cultural studies explore the perception of arts codes and how they deal with various kinds of social (military), racist (minority), and feminist issues, as we may see in the other two case studies discussed in this paper: *Näss* and *The Sea Within*.

Näss is performed by a small group, constantly moving together in tight proximity. This collective movement may refer to exile, forced displacements, or to visiting, mingling, mixing, and holding onto multicultural townships, multiple languages. Switching dance codes such as steps, or t-shirts via the rhythmic experience of the choreographic structure of *Näss* brings differences and minorities together.

Code-switching in the female ensemble from *The Sea Within*, or in the “gender blender” of *Macho Dancer* between Eisa Jocson and the original *macho dancers*, are more like linked to the sheer act of proposing empowering novelties in a jazz, or nowadays contemporary hybrid performance. The initial question, guiding political and aesthetic inquiries (such as *Black Lives Matter* or *Black is Beautiful*), was which audience actually – white or black? – the choreographer seeks to please.

These choreographic inquiries are addressing fans of all kinds of dance styles – Western contemporary dance audience, Filipino club dance lovers. How does this kind of code-switching negotiate with aesthetic judgement? Some urban style dance elements such as hip hop moves, rap music, or techno beat turn the choreography into an alternative power to mainstream styles such as ballet, modern, or even contemporary dance codified form. The casual outfits of the dancers in all the quoted choreographies allow easy shifts between dance styles, without determining or belonging to tight definitions.

Conclusion: Switching Codes as Choreographic Creativity

Blues for the Jungle, *Näss*, *The Sea Within* and *Macho Dancer* proceed to switch codes by matching contrasts between soft and explosive power, by making spontaneous body reactivity/reactions arise, both within the performers' and the spectators' body-minds. *The Sea Within* plays with codes revealing totem figures, such as subjective sensitive womanhood or stereotypes contained within the feminist ironic quotes. Eleo Pomare discusses the complexity of a dancer-choreographer relationship in an interview²⁴ where he describes the jazz strategy of code-switching in order to avoid hitting in a direct way, termed "shadow boxing." It is often an emergency improvisation, as code-switching is all about the ability to listen, first of all, to a specific social environment.

The issues of code-switching, such as moves and motions between the dancers in *Näss*, are not about choreographing the utopia of freedom, but mostly about the expression of inner liberty. However, code-switching in this piece also carries some political references – such as the bodies outlined on a wall, jumping higher and higher as if to grasp some air and go beyond a frontier, impossible to cross.

Code-switching between the social conventions of certain lifestyles in *Macho Dancer* is transformed into a source of fluid gender expressivity: the overspilling of moves becomes choreography, the sounds become music – such as the feet tapping the ground in *Näss*, or the bodies clashing against it in *Blues for the Jungle*. In that way, code-switching in all these choreographic compositions, including that of *The Sea Within*, can remind us of some creative processes of the Beat Generation – such as the session material brought inside the final structure, which stems from it; or Kerouac's advice to "never revise a manuscript," in order to achieve that peculiar kind of mindfulness nudity, by the use of mutual improvisational interaction.

During the dance performances explored in this study, code-switching plays with the options to tense/release into a lapse of a second; they reverse the respectful attitude of a reverence towards the spectators on stage (to show bits of skin as in *Macho Dancer*, or body parts beneath simple colorful t-shirts in *Näss*). Sometimes it is all about an ironic self-representation of a "dancer at work," but also a barely disguised reversed gaze of the "rich" audience (expats), knowledgeable fans (balletomania), and so on.

Code-switching provokes even more the trouble for the spectator's gaze, as the latter also becomes an active contributor to establishing non-verbal code-switching between the onstage paroxystic figures, as an ongoing process of shifting meaning and highly charged sensory input.

We may conclude that the four choreographers quoted in this study: Eleo Pomare, Lizbeth Gruwez, Fouad Boussouf, and Eisa Jocson, explore the potential of code-switching in dance via careful ethnographic observations and structures of the free flow of codes contained within skillfully conceived choreographic scores.

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²⁴ POMARE: *Archive Material*.

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to approach the concept of a dance code as an alternative kind of knowledge, distinct from intellectual processes, as well as a communication tool. The study was carried out by the analysis of four choreographic pieces that deal with the process of cod-switching within a composition structure: Junkie from Blues for the Jungle (1966), by the American choreographer Eleo Pomare; the Filipina choreographer Eisa Jocson's Macho Dancer (2013); The Sea Within by the Belgian choreographer Lizbeth Gruwez (2015); and Näss (Les Gens) by the French choreographer Fouad Boussouf (2018). The topic is approached by the methods of choreography and movement analysis, combined with embodiment and "practice as research" experience. Researchers in dance studies must harness observation, feeling, sensing, and reading in order to gain some specific knowledge of codes.

Keywords: dance code, gestures, choreography, movement analysis, intercultural studies

*Kódváltás a koreográfiában**Rezümé*

A tanulmány célja, hogy bemutassa a tánckód mint az intellektuális folyamatoktól eltérő alternatív tudás és mint kommunikációs eszköz fogalmát. Négy olyan koreográfia elemzésére épül, amelyek a kompozícióon belüli kódváltás folyamatát mutatják be: Eleo Pomare amerikai koreográfus Junkie from Blues for the Jungle [Junkie a Dzsungelbluesből] (1966), Eisa Jocson filippínó koreográfus Macho Dancer [Macsó táncos] (2013), Lizbeth Gruwez belga koreográfus The Sea Within [A belső tenger] (2015) és Fouad Boussouf francia koreográfus Näss (Les Gens) [Näss (A nép)] (2018) című műveire. A műveket a koreográfia- és mozgáselemzés módszerének és "gyakorlat mint kutatás", élményének kombinációjával elemzem. A táncművészet kutatójának egyaránt bagyatkoznia kell a megfigyelésre, tapintásra, érzékelésre és olvasásra annak érdekében, hogy értelmezni tudja a kódokat.

Kulcsszavak: tánckód, mozdulatok, koreográfia, mozgáselemzés, interkulturális tanulmányok