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Digital inscriptions and the dancing body: Expanding territories through and with the archive

Keywords

Abstract

This article will reflect on British choreographer Siobhan Davies and her changing relationship with her own digital archive, Siobhan Davies RePlay, to explore the creative potential of archives for dance artists, and the ways in which artists engage with and intervene in the archival process. With a focus on Davies' work during and since the creation of the archive, the article will chart the way that her choreography has developed in effect in dialogue with the archive, whether explicit or implicit in her developing choreographic oeuvre. This dialogue has enabled Davies to investigate new ways of conceiving time and space in work that tests the conventions of choreographic practice, creating what might be described as a 'landscape of vitality', which reflects back on the archive as an articulation of her creative strategies. Consequently, several projects since the launch of RePlay in 2009 have developed out of Davies attending more closely to her own making process. In particular, the article will dwell on her current project, Table of Contents *(2014), and trace the way in which Davies has turned towards her own history, and its representation through RePlay, to test the*

living potential of the archive. Through a process of reconstructing and reimagining past choreographies she is re-inscribing the archival traces through her dancers' bodies; archival content is re-embodied, performed by finding its way back into the new work and, in turn, questioning her own choreographic choices.[1]

Can dance be archived?

It is probably not surprising that, of the substantial records of dance that we hold in our memory institutions worldwide, we have very few archives that are readily accessible, and even fewer digital dance archives. Dance is perhaps our most challenging of art forms to 'pin down'. As an ephemeral, intangible and somatic art form that finds its expression through the body, dance has created very few 'hard copies' over time. Attempts to document dance via notation and other forms of inscription have produced a corpus of valuable traces of what might otherwise be 'lost works', but these scores have tended to be either highly complex, requiring professionals other than the choreographer to do the documenting, or are idiosyncratic, reflecting the unique properties of a particular artist or dance practice. As digital technologies have entered the dancer's thinking, making and recording process and offer new forms of digital inscription, dance artists, often in collaboration with a range of other practitioners, have experimented with *new ways to document* their work as different kinds of choreographic outputs.[2] These outputs tend to be 'adjuncts to, and illustrations of, their creative process when making dance works' (Leach 2014: 1).

It is with this backdrop that Siobhan Davies RePlay, the digital dance archive of Siobhan Davies Dance, was created and launched in 2009. As still probably one of very few digital dance archives worldwide, *RePlay* is the result of a collaboration between researchers at Coventry University[3] and Davies herself, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in acknowledgement that we lack easily accessible records of dance. The project was always intended to be an experiment, to find out what we would learn about the process of digitization and curation, to discover what new insights and discoveries would emerge about a choreographer's *oeuvre*, and to ask whether dance can be archived.

The development of *RePlay*

Unusually for an archive, Davies became the subject of her own archive whilst still very much an active artist; hence, it was always intended that the archive would be 'living' in the sense that new content would continue to be added, new functionality would be built-in as funds would allow, and it would be generative, providing a source for seeding new work. Free to access, fully searchable and including some relatively simple tools for the user, such as a digital scrapbook, *RePlay* currently

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includes a vast range of audio-visual material that would otherwise be inaccessible, such as *films of performances, and rehearsal tapes that provide access to some of the creative processes* towards making a number of the works. It also includes an extensive bank of images, texts, scholarly articles and experimental digital visualizations of dances. It reaches back to the beginnings of Davies' career in the 1970s, thus reflecting the development of 'contemporary' dance in the United Kingdom, revealing the rich trajectory of this 'present' practice. It took over 30 months to create *RePlay* and required a great deal of work to gather and catalogue material, to gain permissions and licences to include content, and to curate the content in a way that was attractive and easy to navigate.

Working closely with Davies also enabled the research team to think carefully *about how the design and aesthetic of the archive should reflect something of Davies' choreographic aesthetic* and the oral and written language that supports her making process. It was never intended to replace or fully represent the live dancing body, but the aim was for the structure to be able to *breathe*, to provide access to the anatomy of each dance work and to offer the user ways to make new and surprising connections between content, illuminating the 'connective tissue' that is at the core of making and performing dance. However, as will be discussed, it was built for work that Davies has subsequently ceased to make, not least because of the archive and the role it played in *supporting a shift in her creative process and desires as an artist.*

Choreographing the past: Feeding the future

Since its launch, we know that *RePlay* has been a valuable touchstone for others building digital archives of performance and a key reference point for dancers, teachers, researchers and general audiences.[4] The extent to which it has been a reference point for Davies herself is interesting. Her relationship with it is rather complex and has changed over time and particularly since its launch. She was initially excited about ensuring that her work, and dance in a more general sense, would form part of our cultural heritage and unsettle our normative historical records in which dance has tended to be absent. But before long there was a period of *anxiety about a dance from the past resurfacing in a fixed, singular form, rather than as a dance in formation.* To address this desire for more indeterminacy, more of the process records were added to the archive. Tapes of the dancers in rehearsal, and particularly the dancers' own 'scratch tapes' that document the thinking, experimenting, sketching stage of the dance-making process, were added. The scratch became a rich resource for accessing the cognitive and corporeal stages through which the dancer develops a response to a choreographic task. We also built prototype graphic scores of two choreographies to expose the many layers of the dance compositional process. We named these '*kitchens*' because they intentionally gathered the ingredients of a work, the traces of what the collaborative team collected in the making of *Bird Song* (2004) and *In Plain Clothes* (2006), and were then 'cooked'. Neither *kitchen*

prototype graphic scores of two choreographies

set out to explain the work but each offers insights into the research and creativity that goes into the development of a dance work.[5]

As *RePlay* began to add more of the accounts of Davies' choreographic process as archival choreographic objects and simultaneously created digital visualizations of some of these processes, Davies' own interest in how to respond to these records grew. A form of dialogue developed between Davies and *RePlay* as her choreography began to draw from or speak back to the structure, content and potential of the archive. Consequently, several projects since the launch of *RePlay* in 2009 have developed that have consciously challenged the authority of the archive.

One of the first of these projects, *The Collection* (2009), produced a series of collaborations that specifically explored the interfaces of contemporary art and dance and how they might inform each other. As one of her first works for a gallery space (Victoria Miro in London), it marked a clear shift in Davies' career by taking her work out of theatres and involved a number of other discipline experts beyond dance. Moreover, as the project followed the launch of *RePlay* it benefitted from *the knowledge gained through the archive development about how to retain records of the making process*, thereby generating substantially more content, particularly film and image, to add to the archive. But the nature of *The Collection*, as a work that consisted of a 'family' of works including video installations, sculptures, objects and dance works, provided a challenge to the existing archive architecture.

Davies' role was as both *choreographer and curator*, but unusually she was more present in the gallery performance than in any previous project since she performed herself in her choreography during the early 1980s.[6] In the live performance of *Minutes*, one element of *The Collection*, Davies is sitting in the gallery softly voicing numbers that seems to provide some kind of structure for the dance. As the performers leave the gallery space a pre-programmed drum plays what we are told is 'an unseen dance performed by Davies', artist Anri Sala's *A Solo in the Doldrums*. It is as if *Davies is partly teasing her audience and partly testing herself*, exploring how she can find a way to be present without dancing, by inviting the viewer to imagine what might be danced and thereby stating her view of the impossibility of holding, catching, fixing and archiving the dance. The material dancing body disappears to ask what it is that the dance leaves behind.

Another project that demonstrates Davies' move towards a more conceptual approach to choreography, one that favours non-theatre settings, promotes choreography as a generator of ideas and activities and fosters the idea of 'multiple' work, is *ROTOR* (2010). As an ensemble of performances, sound and installations, *ROTOR* began with a dance work, filmed from above to generate patterns that created a score. Responding to Davies' interest in 'paring something down to its vital energy' (Helena Blaker, *ROTOR* catalogue), four dance artists[7] co-choreographed with Davies a compact dance of the four walking together, as a line, in concentric circles. Each dancer has his or her own speed depending on where they are in the circle so that the central point barely moves from the spot, whilst the outside dancer has to lengthen their stride in order to avoid creating a curve in the

insights into the research and creativity

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line. This is repeated, building into a relentless and almost hypnotic cycle, until the dancers begin to challenge this by introducing small disturbances that create new movement patterns and shifts of behaviour. *The score, as an abstraction of the choreographic idea,* then triggered responses from eight commissioned artists (including visual artists, sound artists, video artists, a poet, ceramicist and a sculptor) who responded not only to the images from the dance but also to the energies, counterpoints or characters developed by the dancers' actions. The resulting works stemmed from different components of the same root, provoking other artists' creative processes.[8] As Davies herself describes,

> All these new commissioned works fit together, not as different variations of the same piece, but as distinct works that share a common ground. They stand alongside the dance, betraying that is at its heart.[9]

The turn to process

Two more overtly process-focussed projects followed afterwards in 2012: *Side-by-Side* and *The Library of Processes*. Both provide examples of Davies' growing interest in process as a creative strategy, and connect to what might be seen as a wider preoccupation with, and turn towards, process in dance making and scholarship, made easier by the availability of digital technologies for capture and distribution. In *Side-by-Side*, Davies invited two artists, dance artist Laila Diallo and craft artist Helen Carnac, to work alongside each other to investigate the act and process of making over a six-week residency. Described as *'an investigation into making'*, which had no finished product, the two artists were commissioned to collaborate and document their making/rehearsing/discussion/resolving process by image, text, film and object, which was then presented to a live audience as well as online to a wider public via a blog as a project in progress.[10]

Side-by-Side resulted in no outcome or product, or, more accurately, *the documentation and public sharing of process was the product.* What might have previously been a private and unseen stage was made publically available in the same way and equal to the performed event. Its composition onto the screen and into the public arena of a series of live 'artist sharings' become product, and thus ontologically similar to the final event even though offered to the viewer as a process. Its online presence became a highly designed, on-screen or cyber process 'spectacle'. On one hand its resistance to completion by continuing to evolve as a process 'in process' restated Davies' affinity with the processual nature of choreography as inherently unfinishable. However, a further tangle in the process/product dichotomy is that the *Side-by-Side* site continues to change as the process unfolds further but previous iterations of the site are replaced rather than archived; thus, the site and therefore the work exists only in the present moment, yielding to the ontological condition of dance as a living, changing, evanescent form.

Davies' affinity with the processual nature of choreography as inherently unfinishable

Davies' fascination with how to share the processing of choreography led to the desire to create a *Library of Processes*,[11] for storing an online library of the processes that artists collect as they are involved in projects that are either led by, or commissioned by, Davies. *The Library of Processes* has generated a lot of discussion about what this 'library' might be and how it might articulate with *RePlay* and the other process-rich digital objects. At present, it is an imagined, quasi-anthropological project, a series of artist *shoeboxes* yet to be filled. The methods of collection, storage and cataloguing is in development, as is who is it for and what purpose it serves, reinforcing the challenge in pre-determining the archival form for emergent and unfinished traces of a bodily practice. The library seems to be instigating a reversal of the traditional archival process. What is archived/documented is the work in process towards a performance rather than archiving the remains of a work once completed; therefore, its impact on the user who might not witness the work that the artist is working towards is interesting. *The aim is to transmit something of the milieu in which the dancers work*, a field of practice, or, as Erin Manning points out, a relational field activated by the event in-forming, in which event and milieu are always cogenerative (2013: 26). The challenge is always in retaining the durational properties of the making processes when the digital object, however cognizant of a chronological and conceptual unfolding, tends to flatten the temporal properties of artist process and outcome.

Perhaps an even more radical departure for Davies came later in 2012 with *All This Can Happen*, which most clearly shows her changing relationship with *RePlay* and the journey through its creation and evolution, up until that point. *All This Can Happen* rekindles a relationship with film, collaborating with film-maker (and veteran screendance-maker) David Hinton. The film is itself archival in terms of content and perhaps speaks to something she has always acknowledged – that (her) dance is more closely related to film than other performing arts, for its poetic and multi-layered compositional possibilities. The film has a poignancy, not only in its narrative reference to human fragility and failings (it is developed around an adaptation of a text *The Walk* [1917] by Robert Walser), a condition that has perhaps subtly infused much of her choreography over time, but also for its sense of mapping an individual journey or career, and the way a *life is imprinted on or inscribed by changing patterns in our working*, social and emotional lives. *RePlay was always considered a creative project in its own terms, even a 'screen choreography'* for its compositional properties in its organization. The multiple layers and entry points that constitute the archive were always intended to be coherent and communicate a singular intent and artistic 'voice', but the film, itself comprising many archival traces yet singular in form, means that the choreographic properties of *RePlay* are reinforced and reiterate its coherent singularity.

The film, *All This Can Happen*, is itself archival by drawing on content from film archives, including the first instances of the film of man walking. There are archival documents from the past, archival images and film, re-enacted, remade, remediated, re-rendered as a contemporary digital dance film (so not a 're' anything that tends to be associated with the idea of re-engaging with archival

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remains). As a montage, each image, film or document embodies its own particular history and much of the source imagery is damaged or decayed. Whether inspired by the work of nineteenth-century scientist Etienne-Jules Marey, who made early attempts to record movement through photographs, or drawing from the more local, personal records from our social history, the film makes clear the performative potential of these appropriated visual memory objects and provides a 'constant interplay between stillness and movement' (Davies 2012). More significantly, the emphasis on privileging archival content means that, when viewed together, *RePlay* reads differently.

Dancing the archive

A new relationship with *RePlay* is perhaps most clearly revealed in her current work *Table of Contents* (2014), which illustrates well how Davies has turned towards her own history, and its representation through *RePlay*, to test the living potential of the archive. Working with a group of five dancers who she emphatically acknowledges as 'co-creators' in the work (Andrea Buckley, Helka Kaski, Rachel Krische, Charlie Morrissey and Matthias Sperling), Davies has approached *RePlay* as a creative source for what she has described as a 'live movement installation', thus avoiding any direct reference to 'dance' or 'choreography'. Initially entitled '*Echo*' for its reference to the past, rehearsals began with Davies offering the dancers the option of how they might respond to *RePlay* and the general idea of 'archive'. Davies invited her dancers to draw on content from *RePlay* that took their attention. How does it speak to them today? How does it elicit movement and conversations about dance? How might the re-embodying or 'remantling' (Davies 2014) of dance from the past speak to audiences today?

Importantly, Davies was clear that *the aim was not to 'do' any of the archives as a form of reconstruction or recreation*, acknowledging the individual proclivities of her dancers. In some ways, the project initially mirrored a choreographic commission that was offered as part of the 'Digital Dance Archives' project (2010–2011)[12] in which two dance artists were invited to create a performed response to the digital dance archives that feature on the portal, including *RePlay*. The aim at that time was to explore the potential for digital archives to seed new choreographic responses and what that might reveal about historical dance records and archival methods. Choreographers Efrosini Protopapa and Oliver Scott (neither of whom had any prior connection with *RePlay*) drew on the archive to reconnect with their own histories, working through a process of making-documenting-making and revealing aspects of their working methods using the digital scrapbook tool that provided a narrative of their working process. The project offered something of a prototype for what would emerge later in *Table of Contents*.

Created once more in a gallery context,[13] viewers are much closer to the action than before, building on the intimacy that began with *Manual* (2013).[14] The audience is able to wander through *Table of Contents* as it unfolds, participating in the organizing of the space, changing their proximity

the living potential of the archive

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Figure 1: Table of Contents *by Siobhan Davies. Performers Matthias Sperling, Rachel Krische, Andrea Buckley and Charlie Morrissey. Photograph by Pari Naderi.*

to the dancers, hearing stories about past dancers and witnessing the performers' curiosities about content in *RePlay*. The work is durational, lasting several hours in total, and blurs the division between 'performance' and 'artist talk' by combining moving, thinking, discussing, talking and interaction with the viewer. Based on a score that provides a structure in which much of *the movement is improvised, the work is formed around sixteen 'chapters'*, from which the performers select and discuss how they will be presented.

The decision-making takes place around a large, heavy table (which arrived as an idea during the making process) and provides a focal point for the room around which the audience is invited to gather to witness the dancers' deliberations. The dancers decide on an order of the chapters they want to perform and map out their floor paths and 'stage directions' with chalk drawing on the table. Davies described the table as a 'magnet', 'an active land' and a shared domain that offers a sense of equality for the work and which is imbued with the process of the development of the work (Davies 2014). For Davies, it was an object that 'knows its place' in the gallery, enabling dance to find its place within the gallery without trying to be something else.

The order seems to be 'in the moment', and thus whilst they are very practised at each 'chapter' and at different ways of spacing and ordering the performance, the sequence changes each time. Some chapters overlap and so dancers work together in the space at times. Chapters are solos or duets and include the dancers talking, sometimes commenting on what they are doing as they do it, sometimes referencing the work that they are 're-embodying'. For example, 'Right now I am going to do a bit of *Bank*'. Chapters include two previous solo works by Davies almost in full – *To Hand* (2011) and *Manual*. After the planned series of chapters, which vary in length, the dancers re-gather, every 30 minutes or so, move the table somewhere else in the room and choose another selection of chapters and map out where to go next and in what order. The dancers are in everyday clothes; there is a pedestrian, naturalistic quality to the event. Being free to move around, within, between the dancers, the audience is implicated within the performance, providing an immediate sense of involvement, perhaps being asked to speak to a dancer, follow a script, or use headphones to listen to audio records, drawn from archival records. The audience is part of the feedback loop; energy passes through them all as much as through the performers.

Dancing in the 'memory space'

Each 'chapter' is the outcome of the dancer's exploration of something from, or which has been triggered by, *RePlay*, and in relation to their own embodied history, memory and interests. Each has embarked on a different journey. For example, Charlie Morrissey considers how early man moved, what would he do, how would he move? Andrea Buckley focuses on an anatomical study of the heart: how does the structure and function of the heart influence her as a dancer? Morrissey and

Buckley dance together in playful contact, performing their attempts to remember a previous lift, hold or catch as an 'extraordinary collaborative act' (Davies 2014). Matthias Sperling re-embodies some of the early video rehearsal 'scratches' to ask how the dancer of the (recent) past speaks through his own dancing? Rachel Krische moves with speed and intensity in response to an audio recording of Gill Clarke, discussing her philosophy of ethics in dance.

Interestingly, Davies talks of how the *dancers were mostly drawn to the records of unfinished dances,* such as the 'scratch tapes' as direct movement sources. She describes how dancers took shards of material from different dancers who feature in the archive (including Henry Montes, Gill Clarke, Deborah Saxon, Lauren Potter), initially feeling removed, retaining a distance from them, but gradually those dancers and their dance 'came into them', creating a relationship of curiosity, finding out what it does to their own dancing, meaning that each dancer becomes a 'physical library'.[15] Glimpses of past choreographies and voices from Davies' history infuse the performance, seeping into the room, like vibrations from the past. In particular, those dancers who are now absent but have been so central in Davies' past are invoked, memorialized, such as Gill Clarke.[16] They inhabit the gallery and add to the collective experience of the current dancers.

This 'memory space' stimulates thought about how we access feelings, sensations and memories that reside in the body and resurface through the body in different ways. At the same time this moving archive comprises more than a century of experience when the dancers' years of dancing are added together. It is full with the unexpected, unintended, surprising and unforeseen that character-izes any preternatural performance event and seems to provide a tangible sense of the thinking and activity that coexists in a dance work and that escapes the series of films, images and words that comprises the determined 'boxed in' objects of an archive. It is the affective nature of performance practice, and its valuing of indeterminacy, that produces what I want to term a 'landscape of vitality'. Human Geographer Nigel Thrift in his consideration of performance and its ability to perturb offers that performance is a cultural store of expressive longings, sometimes explicitly articulated and sometimes left unsaid (2004: 128). It is this potential expressiveness that Davies seemed to find missing in the archive, which leaves out the thought and action of the moment, the blood, move-ment and change in an artist's history and which she is seeking to find in her work with the dancers in *Table of Contents*. *Table of Contents* is replete with these expressive longings and at the same time reinstates the archive as a valuable repository of *past* expressive longings. *Her re-embodying of the archive thus refuses to see the archive as a dead source* but rather injects it with life or perhaps shows how the archive, as with her choreography, has the potential for 'summoning life' (Thrift 2004: 127) through possess-ing a 'rich and sensuous materiality [that] suggests a very different kind of ethos of engagement with the world' (Thrift 2004: 127).

The relationship between *Table of Contents* and *RePlay* thus unfolds through the danc-er–audience relationship. As a member of the audience, we may not 'know' the work from the

that performance is a cultural store of expressive longings

archive or the dancer whose material is being 'redanced' but we can experience the performer's connection with that dancer and the dance from the past, and we can read and experience it too, as we participate in the energetics of the encounter, of the new dance as it moves towards what it will become, reminding us why we must not lose our past and should find ways to remember.[17]

Body as archive

As movers and makers we are always working with physical memory. Often, one of the main jobs of the thinking body in dance is to accumulate detailed information – movement coupled with conceptual thought processes. This is collated over thousands of hours of 'doing' in the studio. Ultimately, this information is crafted, then offered, momentarily, to an audience … It's there, then gone … However, this information remains stored in our bodily hard drives – an archive of accumulated information contained in the physical tissue of our brains/bodies. The information often comes from or through other bodies. Information from one body is passed to another, to be contained within another body – then it's passed on to another, then another – much like an oral tradition.

(Krische 2014)

the archive's 'betrayal of her past repertoire,

Previous to *Table of Contents*, Davies would sometimes talk of the archive's 'betrayal' of her past repertoire, perhaps because it inscribes the imagined past as an organized, edited, particular moment rather than something that is 'uncatchable'. She has always been clear that dance works evolve and so any single version must inevitably be a misrepresentation. But during the making of *Table of Contents* she began to describe *the archive as 'compost' or 'collective mulch'*, a fertile ground that offers nutrients from which new work can grow. Davies' recent 'languaging' of her choreographic process thus evokes images of her as 'gardener', tilling the soil and tending to the ground out of which her dance then grows, thereby inviting a new ecological perspective on her work. Her interest in sharing her making process through her recent projects, stimulated perhaps by the process records in *RePlay*, reveals how choreographic ideas are sourced and seeded, take root and then developed collectively by her dancers. This gradual move towards making available the fruits of her choreographic enquiry produces work, such as *Table of Contents*, which dissolves traditional boundaries between, for example, the audience/viewer, choreographer/performer and archivist/subject. *Table of Contents* also shows us *how an archive can become multiple, reconstituted through its distribution amongst the dancing bodies of performers*. As a co-creation it reiterates the collective authorship that is a core characteristic of Davies' work whilst revealing the hidden genealogies of choreography and dance production.
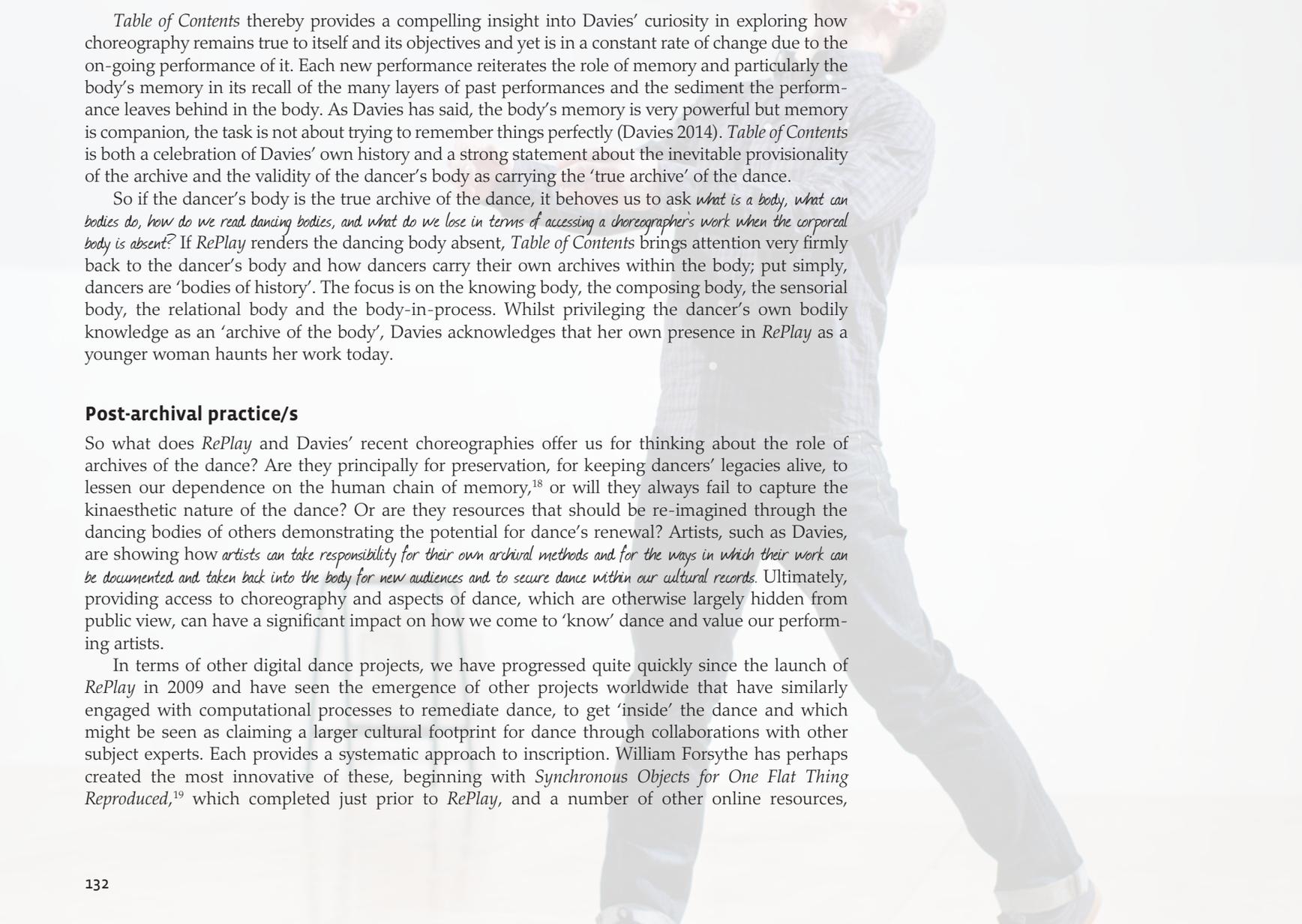
Table of Contents thereby provides a compelling insight into Davies' curiosity in exploring how choreography remains true to itself and its objectives and yet is in a constant rate of change due to the on-going performance of it. Each new performance reiterates the role of memory and particularly the body's memory in its recall of the many layers of past performances and the sediment the perform-ance leaves behind in the body. As Davies has said, the body's memory is very powerful but memory is companion, the task is not about trying to remember things perfectly (Davies 2014). *Table of Contents* is both a celebration of Davies' own history and a strong statement about the inevitable provisionality of the archive and the validity of the dancer's body as carrying the 'true archive' of the dance.

So if the dancer's body is the true archive of the dance, it behoves us to ask *what is a body, what can bodies do, how do we read dancing bodies, and what do we lose in terms of accessing a choreographer's work when the corporeal body is absent?* If *RePlay* renders the dancing body absent, *Table of Contents* brings attention very firmly back to the dancer's body and how dancers carry their own archives within the body; put simply, dancers are 'bodies of history'. The focus is on the knowing body, the composing body, the sensorial body, the relational body and the body-in-process. Whilst privileging the dancer's own bodily knowledge as an 'archive of the body', Davies acknowledges that her own presence in *RePlay* as a younger woman haunts her work today.

Post-archival practice/s

So what does *RePlay* and Davies' recent choreographies offer us for thinking about the role of archives of the dance? Are they principally for preservation, for keeping dancers' legacies alive, to lessen our dependence on the human chain of memory,[18] or will they always fail to capture the kinaesthetic nature of the dance? Or are they resources that should be re-imagined through the dancing bodies of others demonstrating the potential for dance's renewal? Artists, such as Davies, are showing how *artists can take responsibility for their own archival methods and for the ways in which their work can be documented and taken back into the body for new audiences and to secure dance within our cultural records*. Ultimately, providing access to choreography and aspects of dance, which are otherwise largely hidden from public view, can have a significant impact on how we come to 'know' dance and value our perform-ing artists.

In terms of other digital dance projects, we have progressed quite quickly since the launch of *RePlay* in 2009 and have seen the emergence of other projects worldwide that have similarly engaged with computational processes to remediate dance, to get 'inside' the dance and which might be seen as claiming a larger cultural footprint for dance through collaborations with other subject experts. Each provides a systematic approach to inscription. William Forsythe has perhaps created the most innovative of these, beginning with *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing Reproduced*,[19] which completed just prior to *RePlay*, and a number of other online resources,

Figure 2: Table of Contents by Siobhan Davies. Performer Charlie Morrissey: photograph by Pari Naderi.

described as digital 'scores' created in collaboration with other artists that form *Motion Bank*.[20] All indicate how, as Davies puts it, 'artists want to bring different forms of thinking to our consciousness and bring new insights to our vulnerable human being' (Personal communication, February 2013). As new initiatives in the documentation of dance, these 'choreographic objects' join others that intentionally traverse analogue, digital and embodied methods of transmission and offer new ways to think about how dance is visualized, remembered, interpreted and transformed. All are archival in nature even though not archives as such, and all in different ways provide a different kind of access to dance.

What links many of these emerging projects is a commitment to exposing something of the artist's making process, releasing previously unreleased material (Leach 2014: 12) even if they reveal only what the choreographer wants to reveal. They 'occupy a different kind of transactional space. They are intended to carry the intentions of their makers in different ways, and with different consequences' (Leach 2014: 12). As a consequence we are already seeing *how having access to artists' thinking methods has generated new research enquiries*. This confluence of dance, science and humanities is producing new inscriptions and tools for capturing and rendering movement, enabling us to study dance in new ways. They raise questions about the extent to which dance is an evolving, mutable process mediated via many different encounters.

What *RePlay* has provided for Davies is perhaps a way to recognize that there are many ways to reveal choreographic intelligence. In studying the development of a number of 'choreographic objects'[21] anthropologist James Leach observed the following:

> What is demonstrated is that choreography and dance involve practice and intelligence of a particular kind, that each piece realises a long process of making, testing, generating and organizing material, and that this process is an intellectual activity that relies on multi-sensory and multimodal skill. In its spatial awareness, its emotional intelligence, its integrated and syncretic character, there is something called 'choreographic intelligence'. It can offer something other knowledge practices cannot, and that is valuable.
>
> (Leach 2014: 8)

RePlay will continue to grow and reflect the changing nature of Davies' work. The process-rich projects that have characterized Davies' choreographic works in recent years have moved far beyond the proscenium arch performances of Davies' earlier choreography showing that she is now making dance work that is quite different from that which featured initially in the archive. *Table of Contents* shows how *RePlay* is now a creative reference point for Davies, but by disrupting the idea of the archive as authority, as a carrier of the truth of the past, it is also probably the most challenging project to archive thus far within *RePlay*.

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'choreographic intelligence' can offer something other knowledge practices cannot

And on ......

Davies' career so far has spanned a time when we have witnessed many changes, from the pre-digital to digital complexity in a world saturated with media. Her work now readily embraces digital technologies, both as a tool for archiving the past, to find connections between dance and other cultural practices and theoretical frameworks, and as a creative, generative resource for making new work, strongly influencing her choreographic practice. As Davies herself has testified,

> the digital tools we now have in a developing archival practice are extra ordinary for a choreographic practice. Both wish to be adept at organizing materials in a clear but irresistible way for a visitor … I think that this will creatively alter our attention to how we make and certainly how we are perceived.

(Personal communication, February 2013)

My aim in this article has been to chart how RePlay participates in the ways in which Davies' choreography is produced, recorded, documented and recreated, to explore how the archive haunts the work she now makes and expands the territories of her choreographic practice. Her current project, *Table of Contents*, coincides with the technical reconstruction of the archive itself; *RePlay* is now being *replayed*. The archive is in the process of being migrated to new software because the proprietary software we built the archive upon can no longer be supported. The reality of the fragility of digital technology sits in close relation with the instability of the dance, which it seeks to secure. Consequently, the archive is already a historical artefact, revealing its own history of production, and participates in the tension between dance's disappearance and permanence. At the same time, *Table of Contents* reveals Davies exploring a novel way of conceptualizing the choreographic process and of articulating dance, which as a form of living archive becomes a 'landscape of vitality' in which Davies, the dancers and the audience share a phenomenological, co-generating process of dance in-forming. *Table of Contents* promises to provide new kinds of content for *RePlay*, but in its conscious folding in of the past into the present it demonstrates that *dance can confidently contest its condition of inherent 'fragility'* and can embrace the potential for its preservation in new ways.

RePlay participates in the ways in which Davies' choreography is produced, recorded, documented and recreated

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Notes

1. Parts of this article appear in a short essay commissioned by the Arnolfini, Bristol, to accompany the performance of *Table of Contents* in April 2014.

2. Examples include William Forsythe and Ohio State University's *Synchronous Objects*, Emio Greco and Pieter Scholten's *Capturing Intention*, Wayne McGregor|Random Dance's *Choreographic Language Agent*, BADco's *Whatever Dance Toolbox* and Forythe's larger project *Motion Bank*.

3. The research team at Coventry University included project lead Sarah Whatley and research assistants Ross Varney and David Bennett.

4. *RePlay* has been cited by teachers, researchers and archivists since its launch. It has been a core reference point for the Routledge Performance Archive (http://www.routledgeperformancearchive.com), Rambert Dance Company's archive project and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA.

5. See Whatley (2013) for more discussion of the *Kitchens*.

6. Davies last performed in *Carnival* (1982) and *Rushes* (1982), both choreographed by Davies for the company she co-led at the time; Second Stride.

7. Andrea Buckley, Lindsey Butcher, Annie Lok, Charlie Morrissey.

8. The description of *ROTOR* is drawn from the description of the work on *RePlay*.

9. Siobhan Davies, November 2010, *ROTOR* catalogue.

10. See http://www.siobhandavies.com/sidebyside/.

11. The *Library of Processes* is another collaboration between Coventry University and Siobhan Davies Dance via an AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award; the Ph.D. candidate is David Bennett, supervised by Sarah Whatley and Scott deLahunta.

12. The Digital Dance Archives (DDA) project was a collaboration between the University of Surrey, Coventry University and the National Resource Centre for Dance; see http://www.dance-archives.ac.uk.

13. First performed at ICA, London, then Tramway, Glasgow, and Arnolfini, Bristol.

14. *Manual* was a commission by Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA). As an intimate dance between a single performer and viewer, an audience member is asked to instruct, through words only, dancer Helka Kaski to rise from lying to standing, which 'draws attention to simple movements, meticulously dismantling their timing and order to encourage us to notice how we orchestrate actions' (Siobhan Davies Dance).

15. These comments are drawn from the conversation between Siobhan Davies and Ramsay Burt (2014).

16. Gill Clarke worked with Davies almost continuously since Davies formed Siobhan Davies Dance in 1988 until her death in 2011.

17. In conversation with Ramsay Burt at De Montfort University(2014), Davies demonstrated how she tried to recall her performance in one of the earliest choreographies, *Sphinx*, in 1977 early on in the process of making *Table of Contents*. Davies could only recall a gesture of the hand, saying 'I carried my older body back to my younger body'. It was for her a realization that she was confronting herself as a young woman, the dance she was doing then and the knowledge she had, and the

recognition that the dance artist is constantly learning. She describes it as a turning point in the making of *Table of Contents* in that she realized that the work would not be about reconstructing past dances. I discuss the genesis of this gesture that Davies recalled in her own 'archive of the body' and its significance in Davies' movement vocabulary in Whatley (2002).

18. The Dance Heritage Coalition states 'From toe to toe, from hand to hand, from eye to eye, dance, more than any other of the performing arts has been transmitted through time by human chains of dancers, choreographers, and others involved in its creation and performance' (cited in Brooks and Meglin 2013).

19. *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing Reproduced* provides an online information base comprising a suite of tools and entry points for understanding and viewing Forsythes's choreography *One Flat Thing Reproduced*; see www.synchronousobjects.osu.edu/, accessed 2 April 2014.

20. *Motion Bank* comprises digital scores by Deborah Hay, Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, Bebe Miller, and Thomas Hauert. *Synchronous Objects* provided the pilot for these later scores that 'aimed at capturing and transmitting the value and potential of contemporary dance' (Leach 2014: 4).

21. The AHRC-funded 'Choreographic Objects' project brought together the research teams working on a number of digital projects, including Forsythe's *Synchronous Objects*, Emio Greco and Pieter Scholten's *Capturing Intention* project, Wayne McGregor|Random Dance's project *Choreographic Language Agent* and *Siobhan Davies RePlay*. The project enabled the teams to share experiences and excitements about how to visualize dance in multiple ways (see http://projects.beyon-dtext.ac.uk/choreographicobjects/). James Leach, Principal Investigator, enabled the teams to consider how 'Choreographic objects are prototype exchange objects, with the experiment being in the social effects of their circulation. And that effect is a function of their content. … most obvious when it came to revealing and demonstrating process itself (unsurprisingly)' (Leach 2014: 12).