

Terpsichorean Moments in Patrick White's *The Solid Mandala* and Hal Porter's *The Tilted Cross*

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Those who dance will always dance, will share the privileges of air fire water, figures of the tireless dance disguised, ashes strewn on the stagnant surface of the lake a variation on the same theme.

Patrick White, *Three Uneasy Pieces* 16

Literature's arabesque can be dance itself.

Jessica Feldman, "Fifth Position" 571

Significant moments of dance occur in Patrick White's *The Solid Mandala* and Hal Porter's *The Tilted Cross*. In the former, Arthur, a mentally deficient man performs a mandala dance as a means to integrate the various components of his life. In *The Tilted Cross*, set in Hobart in 1847, a drunken actor's terpsichorean movements intermingle metaphorically and elaborately with the shadows cast by four candles. The importance of these choreographic moments is evident in the voluminous critical attention devoted to them. Nevertheless, in both text and criticism the actual act of dance pales into insignificance beside the focus on the meanings and symbolisms of the dance. In this article my aim is to focus specifically on the acts of dance portrayed in the texts, discussing the movements performed and the characteristics of the dancers performing. As a prelude to this examination, I will explore the relationship of the dance experiences of the authors to the way they represent dancing in the two texts under scrutiny. I will also analyse the actual representation of dance, that is, the way the words of the novelists evoke the dance, in order to demonstrate that the movement of dance is conspicuously absent compared to the symbolism and meaning drawn from the dances.

The Solid Mandala narrates the story of twin brothers, Waldo and Arthur Brown, who live in a fictional suburb on the outer fringes of Sydney in the early-to-mid twentieth century. Waldo is intellectually gifted but lacks understanding and warmth while Arthur, who appears to be mentally deficient, intuitively “understands” human relationships in all their complexities. It is the latter who is White’s elected dancer, performing what he calls his mandala dance (extending for two and a half pages), uniting the disparate aspects of his life into a totality: “So Arthur Brown danced, beginning at the first corner, from which he would proceed by stages to the fourth, and beyond. He who was so large, so shambly, found movement coming to him on the hillside in the bay of blackberries” (265).

A significant dance scene of similar length also occurs in Hal Porter’s *The Tilted Cross*. This novel centres on an unlikely friendship between a resident of Hobart’s slums, Queely Sheill, and a former English gentleman and artist-become-convict named Judas Griffen Vaneleigh (based on the actual Thomas Griffiths Wainewright), who at the time of the novel has just been released from gaol. At a moment of narrative tension, Queely’s friend Polidorio Smith, a drunken actor, dances surrounded by four candles:

By the light of four candles Polidorio Smith was dancing in the centre of the small room to his half-drunken, half-dreaming audience. . . . Grave and grotesque, in a melancholy whirlpool, he revolved and undulated in his dance, and his brother shadows, and shadows of shadows, danced about him. (159–60)

At the time of writing these novels, the writers were at different career stages—Porter only starting out as a full-time writer, while White, having already published five novels, was well-established. White and Porter nevertheless shared an interest in experimenting with style. They both deviated from the established “realist” traditions of earlier Australian writers and are thus considered Modernist. The decision to examine these writers alongside each other is not for stylistic purposes, but because in the novels examined they similarly represent “ordinary” people (rather than professional performers) dancing within the context of their everyday lives. Arthur Brown dances in a vacant lot near his home for his neighbourhood friend Mrs Poulter, while Polidorio whirls expressively in one of the rooms of the cottage where he lives with Queely and Queely’s father.

The significance of these moments of dance in the novels (particularly in *The Solid Mandala*) has been much debated. Ann McCulloch asserts that Arthur’s dance embodies the entire meaning of the text (52). Rodney Edgecombe believes it allows Arthur to order his life into “pattern and significance” (84), a pattern and design that Ratnakar Sadawarte feels resembles an Indian spiritual practice called Tantra Sadhana (40). And, as a last example, Michael Giffen con-

siders that the dance grants Arthur the capacity to express a Dionysian affinity (81). In regards to *The Tilted Cross*, Giovanna Capone considers Polidorio's dance to be a dance of death (190), while Laurie Hergenhan claims that it expresses the painful burdens of the novel—burdens touched by the “beauty of human tenderness and innocence” (167). The critical discussion of dance in both novels is thorough and insightful but almost entirely directed and shaped by the themes of the novels and preoccupations of the characters.

Such an approach, while justifiable, tends to close off hermeneutic possibilities. Helen Gilbert has addressed the question of dance, albeit in contemporary Australian drama, in a different way. She argues that criticism that focuses on “discussing how the dance contributes to the plot, character, and imagery of the play” fixes “meaning within the hermeneutic world of the play text” while denying the “historical, geographical, and sociocultural specificity of dance, and virtually ignor[ing] issues of representation” (133). Necessarily, fiction and drama differ in their deployment of dance. In drama dance is *performed* and, even if it is not, explicit instructions may be provided on the actions to be performed (for example, see Act 1 of Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Brumby Innes*). Dance in fiction tends to be more symbolic and the actual movements opaque. Nevertheless, the *act* of dance is represented in *The Solid Mandala* and *The Tilted Cross* and can itself be a point of focus and investigation. In line with Gilbert's call to examine the “historical, geographical, and sociocultural specificity of dance” and how it is represented, I will explore four issues: the authors' experiences of dance; *who* dances in the texts and who does not; the *nature* of the dances themselves; and *how* the dance is conveyed in the novels. Such scrutiny illuminates stereotypes and assumptions associated with dance and throws light on how dance is commonly represented in fiction.

David Marr's biography reveals that White was attracted to dance from an early age. While a young boy he would dance for his mother and her friends (38), and at a later age enjoyed watching performance dance, but disliked participating in social dance because his mother forced him to attend dances nearly every night for two weeks when he was seventeen (91). This distaste for social dance is reflected in some of White's novels. For example, in *Voss*, the female protagonist, Laura, observes the “tragic hilarity of the polka” (321). Significantly, in preference to formal dancing, White delighted in performing spontaneous movements. His university lover, “R,” commented: “On this evening he put his gramophone on, and almost at once Patrick started dancing. It quickly became rather wild, and I found this almost flamboyant expression of himself a strange revelation of a Patrick I had hardly known” (Marr 135–36). This dance clearly provided White a form of release. In a similar way, the dancing in White's short story “Dancing with Both Feet on the Ground” allows an

old man to transcend the debilitating physical limitations of age (*Three Uneasy Pieces* 15–23). It is the free and spontaneous movement of ordinary people in ordinary circumstances that White most closely identifies with, and it is this kind of movement that Arthur performs in *The Solid Mandala*.

Like White, Porter both watched performance dance and participated in social dance. Unlike White, he disliked the former, deciding that ballet was “affected, boring and bloody silly” (*Watcher* 214). Also, unlike White, he enjoyed social dance enormously. Porter became very well versed in many different styles of social dance, including the Foxtrot, the Gipsy Tap and a variety of Circular Waltzes (Porter, *Paper* 19). Porter also spent some years in Japan where he witnessed the Japanese Dance of the Dead, a dance that is represented in very similar terms in both his autobiography *The Paper Chase* (282) and his novel *A Handful of Pennies* (167). For *The Tilted Cross*, Porter claims he drew his character Polidorio and Polidorio’s dance straight out of a London club in the 1960s (“Answers” 14).

A study of the nature of the characters reveals that the dancers in the two novels are, superficially at least, corporeal, mad, hysteric, drunken and feminized simpletons. Arthur is described as having a large “shambly” build (*The Solid Mandala* 265), “fleshy hands” (24), and “red, fleshy” lips (25). He is “not all that bright” (16), and his family, particularly Waldo, live in constant fear that he is going to have the kind of hysteric fit (199) which appears to happen at the end of his dance: “And then, when he had been spewed up, spat out, with the breeze stripping him down to the saturated skin, and the fit had almost withdrawn from him. . . . He fell down, and lay, the rise and fall of his ribs a relief” (267). Ingmar Björkstén suggests that this “fit,” and perhaps even the dancing episode itself, is some kind of epileptic seizure (87). The other characters who dance include his mother (who recalls how, before her marriage, she glided “on the lawns, amongst the topiary, on [sic] the mist which was pouring out of the lake”), and people, with “drunken faces,” crazed beyond reason, dancing at the end of World War II (272, 184). His brother Waldo and father, on the other hand, are associated with intellect and book learning, and do not dance.

Polidorio is similarly overtly corporeal. His body towers seven feet high, he has “long boneless hands,” “large semi-circular ears” and is prone to wig-wearing and excessive rouge application (*The Tilted Cross* 76–77). He is so dim-witted that he allows himself to be robbed by a lover (78), needs to be drunk each night in order to act on stage (89), and is described by the wealthy Rose Knight as a “spindle-shanks hop-pole with its pleated face and idiot chatter” (146). In addition, Polidorio is presented as blatantly homosexual: he sleeps with a male thief, and desires the affections of his friend Queely Sheill. Other characters associated with

dance are a black West-Indian page boy called Teapot who, in order to enact a silent bribe, “stumble[s] and lurch[e[s]] [. . .and] whirl[s] in a circle with his arms outstretched” (63), and a female cripple named Asnetha Sleep. Asnetha’s movements are described as being like a “crooked ballet” and she is likened to a “dancing pig on the parquet” (175, 14). Queely Sheill, like Waldo, does not dance and is prone to long episodes of reverie and apparent reasoning.

On the surface the dancing characters support traditional conceptions of dance which have contributed to its marginalisation as a focus of academic investigation. According to Judith Lynne Hanna, until the last quarter of the twentieth century, dance was considered merely “physical and emotional” (17), and, as Ellen Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy note, has long been distrusted by Western academics working in a logocentric tradition because of its centeredness on human bodies and thus its perceived lack of intelligence, rationality and critical reflection (3). The link between dance and madness in these novels resonates with Felicity McCarren’s view that dance has been, in the West and since the Christian era at least, long associated with order or madness, the latter being a perception encouraged by dances such as the performances of possession in the Middle Ages (*Dance* 3). This connection, she argues, is partly produced through imagery because of a “visual resemblance between some forms of dance and some forms of hysteria” (“Symptomatic” 749). My examination of textual representation generally supports the stereotypical view in Anglophone cultures of dance as a feminine activity unsuitable for heterosexual men. This stereotyping, as Michael Gard explains, stops many young boys from participating in dance. Young boys perceive many of dance’s movements to be too feminine or suggestive of homosexuality and thus antithetical to male heterosexuality because too elegant, refined, supportive or overtly sexual (214, 223). As a study by J. Michael Bailey and Michael Obershneider reveals, this perception extends to adults and even to experienced dancers who consider the typical professional male dancer to be a gay man (433).

But as much as these stereotypes exist in the novels, White and Porter problematise them. For example, the supposed rational intellect of Waldo and Queely is in many ways superficial. Waldo really knows “little” and Queely’s supposed reasoning is morally ambiguous in a way that resonates with Porter’s career and life. Although Queely services the needs of others in an apparently self-effacing way, he also displays an arrogance, blended with moral ambiguity and indifference, not unlike that of the young Porter in *The Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony* who absolves himself of sexual responsibility by saying “I don’t care” when his molester seeks permission to sexually abuse him (157–58). The stereotypes are also challenged because Arthur performs many masculine tasks in his work, initially as

a grocer and later in a garage, and he deeply loves two women, Dulcie and Mrs Poulter, whom he entrusts with his mandala marbles. The homosexual character in *The Solid Mandala* is not the dancer but the non-dancing “intellectual,” Waldo, who admits he could have loved a male friend named Walter Pugh (128) and, in a highly revealing moment, puts on his mother’s dress, feeling “[s]he could afford to breathe indulgently, magnificent down to the last hair in her moustache” (193). Furthermore, Arthur is not as “loopy as they used to make out” (190) and emerges as one of White’s saintly simpletons or innocents endowed with visionary abilities (Björkstén 91; McCulloch 32). Most importantly, Arthur survives the challenges of his physical and emotional surroundings and lives beyond the intellectualising of his brother Waldo, just as Polidorio supersedes the scheming and reasoning Queely Sheill in Porter’s *The Tilted Cross*.

Despite his supposed madness, Polidorio devises a feasible plan to smuggle the unjustly imprisoned Queely out of gaol and save him from impending death. Only Queely’s stubborn selflessness prevents the success of this mission and, therefore, despite his thoughts and goodwill, Queely does not survive squalid 1847 Hobart, while Polidorio the dancer lives on to face the looming inevitability of death. Polidorio’s dance also challenges the stereotype of male-dancer homosexuality in its suggestion of the death of the possibility of a loving and emotional homosexual relationship with Queely. Queely satisfies Asneth’s sexual needs and supplies Vanleigh’s artistic and medical requirements, but he does not meet Polidorio’s emotional needs, nor allow himself to accept Polidorio’s love. Although he accedes to the rescue plan, Queely characteristically puts another prisoner’s needs before his own and, as a consequence, falls from the prison wall during the escape. This denial of his own interests may be read as a subconscious (if also strategic) *refusal* of love.

Dancing the death of love in a homosexual relationship also highlights a contentious point between the two authors themselves. Though White openly resided with his partner Manoly Lascaris in Castle Hill (Sydney) at a time when “[m]en did not live together as lovers . . . unless they cut hair or danced in the chorus of J. C. Williamson’s musicals” (Marr 246), he did not publicly reveal his homosexuality until the publication of his autobiography *Flaws in the Glass* in 1981. In contrast, although a homosexual with pederastic and bisexual tendencies, Porter responded to White’s “coming out” by condemning him in the *Melbourne Age* for his “carnal carryings-on with fellows” (Sullivan 26). Faithful to a conservative ideology, Porter detested the possibility of being homosexual and resolved his ambiguous sexuality by experimenting with bisexual affairs devoid of emotional attachments (Lord 296). According to his biographer, Mary Lord (whose ten-year-old son he sexually abused), Porter even found paedophilia more justifiable

than homosexuality (28). Emotional commitment was equally abhorrent to Porter, a lesson he says he learnt from his own childhood abuse, which he says taught him to distinguish early in his life the symptoms of emotions becoming uncontrollable and to escape such relationships before this occurred (*Watcher* 158). It is not surprising, therefore, that Polidorio dances the impossibility of a sustained, intimate and loving homosexual relationship between himself and Queely Sheill.

Alongside a consideration of *who* dances, it is illuminating to regard *what* movements the characters make when they dance. In *The Solid Mandala*, White devotes two and a half pages to Arthur's dance, but the number of words that indicate physical movement are few. The biggest clue to the nature of Arthur's dance is when he announces immediately prior to his performance that he is going to "dance a mandala." This, however, is not a term that conjures an image in the reader's mind as words like salsa or tango might. As critics have pointed out, Arthur chooses to dance his mandelic understandings because he remembers a definition he found in Mrs Musto's library that associates the two:

"The mandala is a symbol of totality. It is believed to be the 'dwelling of the god'. . . . Sometimes its geometric form is seen as a vision . . . or—"

His voice had fallen to the most elaborate hush.

"Or danced," Arthur read.

He was so thunderstruck he was relieved to feel that Mrs Musto . . . was preoccupied. (238)

As Edgecombe points out, the link between Arthur's response to this definition and his decision to dance his mandala is evident, particularly in his awed utterance of the words "or danced" (83–84). When Arthur asks his father for the meaning of "totality," Mr Brown fumbles for a dictionary, indicating to Arthur he "would never know" and that it was Arthur who "would remain, the keeper of the mandalas, who must guess their final secret" (240). For Arthur the *word image* or intellectual *form* of his father and brother Waldo is unsuitable for expressing the insights he attains. He is delighted therefore to utilise the predominantly wordless art form of dance to express his understanding of mandalas.

In addition, the definition of mandalas in the novel is an atypical one that White consciously adopts, under the influence of Carl Jung, to connect mandalas and dance. Dance is not ordinarily included in dictionary definitions of "mandala." The entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, however, indicates that in 1931 Jung stated that some women actually danced mandalas (J. Simpson and E. Weiner 299). Marr's biography reveals that, while writing *The Solid Mandala*, White was given a copy of Richard Wilhelm's and Carl Jung's *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. The catalyst for Arthur's dance, therefore, may well have come from this work in which Jung says:

I have . . . found mandala drawings among the mentally ill. . . . Among my patients I have come across cases of women who did not draw mandalas but who danced them instead. In India this type is called *mandala nrithya* or mandala dance, and the dance figures express the same meanings as the drawings. (100)

The question remains, however, about the exact nature of the movements Arthur makes in his dance.

Arthur may move like Jung's patients who chose to *dance* rather than *draw* their mandala dreams. Joan Chodorow reveals that little is known about the details of these dances (2). Their exact movements, the limbs commonly utilised, the patterns made and means of representation are mysterious. The dance may resemble the classical Indian dances Jung refers to: the *mandala nrithya*. But the details of these movements are also obscure in texts on classical Indian dance (for example, see Ambrose). Kapila Vatsyayan provides some insight on *mandala nritya (nrithya)* dances, which are renowned for the circular formations made by groups of people rather than for any kind of annular movements (202). Arthur dances alone, so the sense of group circular formations seems untenable. But Arthur does dance the four corners of his life and the central Christ-like image, suggesting that he physically moves about in a mandala pattern. Ratnakar Sadawarte believes that the geometric designs of Arthur's dancing resemble "Nyasa," a complex method of "Tantra Sadhana" (40). Although this practice is not a dance but a spiritual practice ("Nyasa" 1), Sadawarte's proposition is enlightening because, according to Sri Swami Krishnananda, the notion of duality is central to Tantra philosophy (1). This results in a struggle between duality and unity which, in its description, is not unlike the struggle Arthur confronts in terms of his relationship with his brother:

[The Tantra acknowledges a] double attitude of the consciousness of duality and unity at the same time. There cannot be attraction between the positive and the negative unless they form two poles, and not a single something, and yet, at the same time, there cannot be this attraction if they are absolutely two different things without a basic unity operating in and between them. (1–2)

Alternatively, Arthur's dance may have parallels with the movements of contemporary mandala dances.

The American company Murray Spalding Movement Arts commonly dance mandala dances consisting of annular choreographic movements involving repetition and intricate variations with the aim of creating a trance-like condition (Spalding 1). Arthur's collapse, fit, and sleep at the end of his dance suggests he may have reached such a trance-like state. Or Arthur's dance may resemble the movements of people engaged in dance therapy, a practice influenced by Jung's

experiences with dance and counselling. For example, Chodorow describes the movements of a dance therapy client who, as a busy executive, portrays her frenzied life in a dance which also includes her pausing and looking towards the ground in the realisation of her extreme tiredness (13). Although obscure, this description suggests that some of the woman's movements are, like the game of charades, gestural or imitative of her state of mind. Dance theorists Noël Carroll and Sally Banes call such movement "unconditional representation," for it generates a clear visual depiction of appearances that trigger the audience's "innate recognitional capacities" (21). The profusion of things Arthur's dance represents suggests this may be the kind of movement he employs. But Mrs Poulter's reactions at the time of the dance, and even years later, do not suggest she has comprehended the actual details of the dance, although she does seem to understand, in a holistic manner, the magnitude and significance of the dance: "Arthur got cured of his trouble anyway on that day to dance the thing the mandala . . . where in a moment or two they had gone through more than you live in years" (300). Moreover, a moment when the dance movement does appear, when Arthur with frustration "beg[ins] to stamp" in the section of the dance that represents his brother, indicates Arthur's movements may not be purely imitative (266). Rather, they may focus on "a certain quality or attribute" of the feeling (repetitive stamping indicates frustration with Waldo, for example)—a mode of representation that dance theorist, Susan Foster, calls "resemblance," which she equates with metaphor (65, 245). Essentially, however, what Arthur dances remains obscure and unknown. Critics, therefore, are justified in ignoring the dance and focusing on its meanings, for this is what White himself has done.

Porter also subscribes to a depiction of dance which masks the actual nature of the movements, although he does not do this to the same degree as White. Some elements of Polidorio's dance are visible in the words: Poli "revolves," "undulates" and "whirls;" he "bows," "swoops" and "drags" (*Tilted Cross* 160). His arms rise towards his feathered headdress and he "pick[s] at the shadows with his long livid fingernails" (161). As mentioned earlier, Porter claimed that what Polidorio dances is the dance of a London "spiv" he witnessed in a club called "Chez Alicia" in the 1960s ("Answers" 14). This depiction, Porter vows, is "gospel-true" because of his attempt to create a "facsimile of reality" (14, 13). The spiv's movements, however, are not elaborated by Porter; and the candles and shadows so central to Poli's dance are not mentioned. Polidorio's dance, therefore, may well be at least partly indebted to Porter's experience of the Japanese Dance of the Dead. In depicting this festival twice (in *A Handful of Pennies* and *The Paper Chase*) and, in particular, the dancing together of the living and dead, Porter indicates the imaginative significance of this event. This resonates with his preoccupation with death, an anxiety undoubtedly fostered by his mother's "tales of death" (*Watcher* 81) and

foregrounded in the first line of his autobiography: “[i]n a half-century of living I have seen two corpses, two only” (*Paper Chase* 9).

Consequently, it is not surprising that Porter is captivated by the Japanese Dance of the Dead which occurs every July or August as part of the O-Bon festival. This festival celebrates the return of dead relatives to visit with the living (Bauer and Carlquist 59). Dances are numerous and vary according to geographical area; the most common, however, is the Bon-odori dance in which performers both individually and in pairs adopt elegant poses, sway from side to side and progress in a circular pattern increasing in speed (61). The nature of these movements, and the fact that the living and the dead dance together, links these movements to Polidorio’s dance. Furthermore, the important focus on the lighting of lanterns at this festival resonates with Polidorio’s candles. Lanterns lit on the first night of the festival are taken to cemeteries throughout the festival and are lit on the last night to serve as guides back to the world of spirits (Bauer and Carlquist 59–61). In dancing, Polidorio does not invoke any dead characters. Death looms, however, in the slums of Hobart, an unspoken but inevitable truth, pervading the atmosphere. It is in the stench of the turbid rivulet “spong[ing] up the town’s muck and the Criminal Hospital’s offal” (*Tilted Cross* 24) and in the screams of the dying in the nearby Criminal Hospital, “disorganised and grating” (93). Furthermore, in being recognized as a dance of death, Polidorio’s dance may be perceived as anticipating Queely’s death, and possibly even inciting it with its magical trancelike qualities. When surrounded by the literal shadows of death, Queely’s last thoughts are of Poli’s dance: “Awh, dawnce’ . . . said a shadow. Polidorio Smith danced. Grave and grotesque, his arms rising to the restless ceiling” (257).

Polidorio’s dance, whether considered simply as imitative of the dance of the London spiv or involving elements of the Japanese Dance of the Dead, is more transparent than Arthur’s. Its details nevertheless remain vague. Thus descriptors of dancing are largely absent in both novels. This is particularly the case in *The Solid Mandala* where the only terms used to describe the movement of Arthur’s body are “stamp” (266), “trampled” (266), “arms . . . laid along his sides” (267) and, ironically, “stillest” (266). Later in the novel a little more detail is given when Arthur remembers how on winter mornings he would “hang his head to one side, . . . extend his herring-bone arms, the fingers dangling in bundles of thawed flesh” (289). But these remembrances merely suggest movements to obtain a static pose, with no movements subtending beyond it.

Since it is largely absent, the act of dance relies heavily on the single signifier, “dance,” which in *The Tilted Cross* is a word that is itself physically emphasised when distorted into “dawnce” and repeated excessively: “Dawnce, Duchess,’ in-

toned John Death Sheill, ‘Dawnce, Duchess, dawnce and dawnce! Awh, dawnce, my goddess of rum, awh, dawnce! Dawnce, devine being, dawnce!’” (159). Alternatively, what takes up the space is an excess of signifieds—meanings and purposes of the dance—which, in *The Solid Mandala*, are quite detailed and specific but which escape Mrs Poulter, the fictional viewer of Arthur’s dance: “He danced the gods. . . . He danced the sleep of people in a wooden house . . . he declared his love for Dulcie . . . he danced the rite of ripening pears . . . he danced the passion of all their lives” (265–66). This creates a situation in which the reader is uncertain about the precise nature of the dance but sure of the meanings, while the fictional viewer is unsure of the meanings but, in witnessing the dance, certain about the movements. Mary Shaw, discussing the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé, describes this phenomenon as the “absence-in-presence of the dancing figure impl[y]ing a presence-in-absence of the literary text” (53). To a degree this is also true in Porter’s text: “[Polidorio] danced the beauty of human sadness, of the weariness of knowledge, of the sorrow of existence, of the calm stupefaction in bemused and tarnished wisdom” (161). Porter also, however, creates an uncertainty of meaning around dance: “he *may* have danced with planets lost beyond reckoning, with pasts yet to come, with eternity he was and was of. . . . He *may* have danced unknowingly for Time . . . or for Life . . . or for Death” (161, emphasis added). This aligns his representation more closely with the experience of actually viewing dance where, according to dance theorist Judith Lynne Hanna, meanings are more like poetry in being multiple and elusive (18).

Finally, the limited presence of the dance movements in the text means the shape and form of the dance is largely relegated to the reader’s mind. According to Robin Grove, the capacity of literature to conjure actions, thoughts and feelings in the reader’s mind is one of its most powerful endowments. Writing, he says, although only consisting of letters, dots and other strokes of the pen, actually allows readers to imagine characters’ voices, and even anticipate their thoughts, feelings and ideas that remain unspoken (“Dance” 1). This “[i]maginative sympathy” (Grove, “Unspoken” 7) or “presence-in-absence” (Shaw 53), Grove argues, may also be evoked in dance-writing which dramatises in a sentence, or even one or two words, a dancer’s actions (“Dance” 2). A reader of *The Tilted Cross* may well latch onto the few words such as “revolve,” “sway” and “picking at shadows,” and conjure a picture perhaps close to Porter’s intentions. In the case of *The Solid Mandala*, the reader’s task is not so easy. With the minimalistic representation of Arthur’s movements alongside a plethora of intended meanings, the interpretive possibilities in terms of the movements are multiple and varied. This multiplicity allows the readers themselves to become performers, giving “the script the chance to play itself out in [the reader’s] imaginary theatre” (Grove, “Dance” 2).

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