4

Caring beyond illness: an examination of Godder's socially engaged art and participatory dance for Parkinson's work

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A tall, balding man in shorts falls. He falls little by little, slowly. As his knees bend, he leans his body into the arms of a slight, young woman, who stands feet apart, arms gathered around his back. As he trusts her with more and more of his weight, she guides him down, down all the way to the floor. Cradling his head so he does not bang it, she whispers something to him. She stays kneeling by his curled-up body. (Field notes, *Stabat Mater*, Bassano del Grappa, 2016)

The above description is an extract from my field notes of a performance at B Motion 2016, the contemporary dance festival in Bassano del Grappa, Italy. Four choreographers were selected each to make a dance work around the Medieval lament *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (The Mother was standing full of sorrow). The particular work I describe above was devised by the contemporary expressionist choreographer, Yasmeen Godder.

Stabat Mater (2016) was the second of two works made by Godder that year. *Common Emotions* premiered in Freiburg, Germany in May, and the short, improvised work *Stabat Mater* in August at B Motion. Both works depart from previous processes Godder has used in dance making and performance: these works, being made with the dancers as leaders during the performance, unusually involved audience participation. *Common Emotions* could be considered as the 'mother' work to *Stabat Mater*, in that one movement motif – the one described above – was taken from the former work and implemented as the main and only motif in the latter. In 2017, Godder renamed *Stabat Mater*, calling it *Simple Action* and toured the work internationally, allowing for a variety of different spaces to be used for the event. In this chapter, which was largely written before *Simple Action*, I explore the new approach adopted by Godder in 2016 when developing *Stabat Mater*.

Through my reading of this piece, I argue that Godder positions the caring encounters at the heart of the creative process, drawing on the practice of care to redefine dance performance, generating a choreographic practice that is determined by an aesthetics of care. The chapter discusses this idea by exploring a specific symbiotic relationship between a community dance programme – Godder’s dance for Parkinson’s programme¹ – and the professional concert production of *Stabat Mater*.

While the focus of this chapter is a study of Godder’s work, the productive dialogue between care and choreography emerging from *Stabat Mater* arguably has implications for dance practice more broadly, particularly for dance initiatives developed with participants who have chronic health conditions. Furthermore, I argue that by placing care centrally within dance practice, dance artists are challenged to reimagine their artistic relationship with non-trained participants and ultimately redefine their own artistic processes and dance works. Correlatively, this approach also challenges community dancers with Parkinson’s to step out of their role as care receivers to position them firmly as co-creators who have some agency over their bodies and creativity.

Community dance developed in the West through the work of practitioners, such as Rudolf Laban in the 1930s. Participatory in approach, it ‘involves a set of attitudes or precepts’ with ‘the belief that artistic practices can have an effect on the social world’ (Kuppers and Robertson, 2007: 2). Diverse in its forms of dancing, it welcomes everybody, including people who are advanced in age or who have degenerative conditions, as in the case of those with Parkinson’s. Collaborative by design, community dance focuses on the participant experience, making it predominantly process orientated rather than for performance (Amans, 2008). In community dance, some work is developed, for instance, with people who are marginalised or excluded in society; for example, in rehabilitation programmes for young offenders, in projects with child sex workers, in work with adults with learning disability and with those who have dementia. Dancing in these contexts, artists argue, highlights a way of resisting injustice within social situations where discrimination and exclusion is apparent (Mills, 2016). In this chapter, I intervene within these debates, proposing a dialogue between socially engaged dance work and theories of care, as developed by care ethicist Joan Tronto ([1993] 2009) and explored in the choreography of Yasmeen Godder. I propose that this dialogue enables the development of an approach to community dance that not only foregrounds inclusion and the validation and visibility of marginal people, such as those with Parkinson’s, but importantly also lays the groundwork for the emergence of an aesthetics of participatory community dance, one that is rooted in relationality, attentiveness and caring.

People with Parkinson’s are often vulnerable and marginalised. Symptoms are multifarious and debilitating, with the person often in need of another’s care as the disease gets more severe. A neurodegenerative disease, Parkinson’s is characterised by three main symptoms: slowness of movement, rigidity and tremor. The first two contribute to a dangerous deterioration in balance and

postural stability. But Parkinson's is more than a disease with motor implications. Movement challenges are accompanied by other non-motor symptoms, such as diminished voices and handwriting, cognitive slowness, apathy and depression. Mainly affecting people over the age of fifty, it is the second most common neurodegenerative disorder after Alzheimer's, with one in five hundred receiving a diagnosis in the UK (Parkinson's UK, 2014). Symptoms of Parkinson's affect people in different ways, but it is common for many individuals to become increasingly isolated, often tied with a lowering of self-esteem. Mobility and the use of public transport often become problematic because of a lack of balance, loss of flexibility and freezing (which is characterised by a sudden and involuntary inability to move). Simultaneously, people living with Parkinson's also report experiencing friends abandoning their long-held friendship, so social networks decrease in size and become unable to support the individual. Apathy is also a symptom of Parkinson's and that contributes to leading a less active life. Depression is much more common in those with Parkinson's than in the general population, which again may lead to less social participation.

Research on therapeutic support for people living with Parkinson's has strongly advocated dance as an activity that helps temporarily relieve some motor symptoms (Hackney and Earhart, 2009, 2010; Batson, 2010; Heiberger *et al.*, 2011; Houston and McGill, 2013; Westheimer *et al.*, 2015), as well as helping to foster improved social networks (Foster *et al.*, 2013; Houston and McGill, 2015). Dance programmes for people with Parkinson's have been set up around the world in response to grassroots demand and a growing interest from dance artists to work in this area. Specialist training for dance artists – mainly those who are already established community dance teachers – is currently provided by a number of influential organisations around the world, such as Dance for PD® (USA), the Dance for Parkinson's Partnership UK and Dance for Parkinson's (Australia), which has meant that this sort of provision has escalated globally. However, what has not been so widely explored is the effect these engagements with community dance have had on the dance artist and on dance as an art form, and correlatively neither has the notion of care for people living with Parkinson's become part of dance discourse. Through my examination of Godder's performance work with people with Parkinson's and the focus on care, I examine how new structures of reciprocity and exchange emerge in this kind of socially engaged dance work, providing new ways of imagining dance both as a mode of care for the other and as an evolving choreographic form that enables us to rethink care in the context of the support of people living with Parkinson's.

Stabat Mater: a performance of care

First, I would like to start with an examination of *Stabat Mater*, a scored (improvised with instructions) performance, led by the Yasmeen Godder Company and that, I argue, should be understood as a performance of care.

Godder's interpretation of *Stabat Mater* was first set in the nave of a small chapel in the North Italian city of Bassano del Grappa. The chapel features patterned squares of cold marble and an ornate apse decorated with large, white-bodied angels, with painted walls soaring upwards to a high ceiling depicting biblical scenes. Prior to the beginning of the performance chairs are set in a pattern that follows the architecture of each individual space where the work is performed (sometimes a square, sometimes a rectangle, even a hexagon). In the chapel in Bassano, the chairs face the centre of the nave and this is where the audience and company dancers sit. At first in silence, one dancer stands up and walks over to a random audience member. Offering their hand, they talk quietly, inviting them to come into the space with them: 'Hello my name is [...], I would like to offer you, if it's ok, to give me your weight, and slowly we will go down towards the floor. You can really lean on me.' In accepting that offer, the audience member, now participant, falls slowly to the floor in the dancer's arms. Slowly releasing their weight, giving it all to their partner, the participant relinquishes control over their body. Falling slowly, both figures reach the ground, the supportive partner taking care over their charge's head on the marble floor. Once on the floor, the participant is invited to stay there for as long as they want before going back to their seat. Their partner stays for a while too, sitting or kneeling by the other's body.

Slowly, the other dancers from Godder's company stand and make the same offer to other audience members. At the same time, the music begins. Performed by composer and sound artist Tomer Damsky on a shruti box, it is the old medieval lament of *Stabat Mater*, but the timing of the music is stretched. Each syllable of each word is drawn out so that nothing familiar remains of it, but the intense emotion: it conveys the searing, grieving lament through the drone and an achingly raw, sung solo chant.

The dance work develops by allowing participants to invite other audience members into the space to hold them in their arms and take them down to the floor. There is no obligation to take part. Men hold women, women hold other women, children hold men, men hold men, older and younger bodies fall, keep falling and lying on the ground. Although the movement instructions remain the same, the work itself shifts and develops as audience-participants are gently encouraged to adopt more challenging levels of participation and actions, all of which are framed by a responsibility of caring for each other.

The responsibility for care seems high. If the faller is dropped, there is potential for their head to strike the hard, marble floor or for their legs or back to get twisted. Even if the fall is physically safe, there is still potential embarrassment for both parties if one overbalances and falls on top of the other or skirts rise too far to maintain dignity. The risk is not low and yet everyone takes time to lower to the floor, taking time to think through what they need to do in order to take care and to think through the steps required to lower someone safely and with dignity to the floor. The instruction 'to give weight' also allows for different interpretations of going down to the

floor, permitting fallers different ways of conceiving 'giving weight'. Timing is established by the music, which, through the drone, carries all participants on a repetitive wave, lingering within each note, bending into dissonance and consonance, and by the freedom of the score where each couple has the flexibility of taking as long as they want. Additionally, because each couple's moment of falling is special in that it is uniquely theirs to make, each couple needs to attend to each other in a very focused, even intimate and careful manner. They do not perform falling to the audience. This moment is just for them, a private moment that if one is in the audience, one is privileged to watch, and it is not uncommon to see an audience member weep from the emotion created. In creating this private moment, each couple develops a collaborative caring journey together that is structured through a shared understanding of a relationship of trust that is safe and dignified. The private endeavour is an important way of thinking about *Stabat Mater* as performing, what theatre scholar James Thompson calls 'an aesthetics of care' (2015). The quality of these participatory moments resonates with Thompson's account of aesthetic quality that 'seeks no external recognition' and that possess a 'boldness' because the 'aesthetic value' of the project 'is found in co-created moments and not only in public display' (2015: 438). Projects such as this, as Thompson argues, tend to be configured 'around an aesthetics of care' and rely 'on building mutual activities of sharing, support, co-working and relational solidarity within a framework of artistry or creative endeavour' (2015: 438).

In *Stabat Mater*, there is a vulnerability in falling and holding that produces a performance of a 'conjoined effort' and 'intimate exchange' that discloses a real attempt, in each moment of falling, to embody the sense of trust, responsibility and dignity evoked in this risky undertaking.

As a participant in this performance, lying on the floor, looking up at the ceiling, listening to the incantation, I feel like it allows a space for contemplation, where I am invited to make my own room and to let in the sound of the grieving mother, standing, embracing and falling with her dead son. Holding someone else is more of a responsibility – I hope I won't drop them – it feels a serious, yet pleasurable task to offer someone my embrace. Observing others, I notice a beauty in the piece's simplicity. It is a moving tribute to the Pieta, inscribed in the images around us and alluded to within the musical score. It also seems to offer contemporary reflection on a relation between two people, made all the more genuine by the use of unassuming, untrained audience members. The falls enacted around the room all start with an embrace. The participants must place their trust in the strangers holding them while they let go and each participant and dancer is charged with a responsibility for the person who has entrusted them with the care of their body and dignity. In this way, Godder invites an experiential engagement with both giving and receiving care, while also using this participatory structure to create potent images of the performance of caring itself.

The performances of care in Godder's *Stabat Mater* emerge in several different ways: there is the action of physically caring for another while that

person is falling, the care taken when leading an audience-participant into the performing space so that he or she may fall (with their consent), the care of the embrace of the arms around the body, the careful taking of the body down gently to the floor, the staying with and caring for that person while they lie down and the choreographical care taken when re-enacting the ritual in the same way. To further understand how these different caring actions are conceptualised and embodied, it is useful to reflect on Joan Tronto's ([1993] 2009) account of care being made up of four elements, which include: noticing the need for care, taking up the responsibility of doing it, the work of caring and how the care is received. Within an artistic context, these four elements form part of what Thompson terms 'preparation, execution and exhibition' (2015: 437), which encompasses the preparation and decision making undertaken prior to the commencement of a community arts project, the process of working through art with others and then showing that work to others in some form. Each element can be thought about in terms of the care needed at each stage to foster connection and relationships between participants and artists.

The elements of preparation, execution and exhibition are also all evident in Godder's work, with care central at each stage. Godder made the decision to place care for others, notably, strangers (some old, some young, some possibly with chronic disease or ill health) as a central thematic to *Stabat Mater* at the beginning of the choreographic process when she started preparing for the project and noticed the need for care within the participatory moment itself – when the offer to fall is made within the execution of the performance. The offer to enter the performance space is approached with respect for the hesitant audience member. The stretched-out hand offered to an audience member is open. The person it is directed to need not accept it, yet if they do, they are led by the hand gently into a clear area. The explanation is done in a whisper so only the audience member can hear. This emphasises the privacy of the fall, despite being surrounded by people, and underlines the specialness of the fleeting yet intimate relationship between catcher and faller. This offer with awareness or 'listening', as philosopher Maurice Hamington suggests (2004: 6), is accompanied by a responsibility to perform the encounter of that care. While the dancers initially take on the role of caregiver, this is then passed on to audience-participants who enter the space and then become the caregivers to other audience members who also join. The piece itself choreographically generates an exchange of care. There is even a feeling of reciprocity where roles change, even reverse, where the cared for give back to the carers or to others who have yet to experience falling within the piece.

Thompson argues that arts initiatives are ethical when care is taken to invest in creating relationships between the people involved. It is this thematic of relationality, responsibility and the exchange of care that emerges in *Stabat Mater* that I suggest is most strongly resonant of what Thompson refers to when he uses the term an 'aesthetics of care' to describe an adherence

to 'a set of values realised in a relational process that emphasise engagements between individuals or groups over time' (2015: 437).

Likewise, there is also a connection to be made here with Tronto's ([1993] 2009) account of what she describes as the four basic ethical elements of care, which are attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness. In order to better understand the performance of care in *Stabat Mater*, I shall examine how three of these elements – attentiveness, responsibility and responsiveness – become activated within this participatory context. First, I shall explore responsibility: Tronto describes responsibility of care as a moral decision to say 'I will', because of the specific context in which I am living; not through obligation, but through a moral sense that this may be a good act. She gives the example of the responsibility displayed by some Europeans during the Second World War, who helped Jewish neighbours and strangers to escape Nazi persecution (Tronto, 2015: 132, 209). They did not do this out of duty, but out of a sense of responsibility to their fellow human beings. During *Stabat Mater*, the responsibility during the performance emerges first from the audience-participants, who after experiencing a fall take up the option of continuing with the care act – in other words, taking responsibility for holding someone in their arms as a catcher – and second from the performance act itself where the vulnerability of the individual falling exposes the risk involved. No one is told how to catch someone falling, rather the company dancers perform this and embody the implicit responsibility involved from the beginning of the work. By relying on a form of embodied and remembered know-how, the catcher-audience member has to conduct not just a feat of memory – Where did she hold her hands? At what moment did she bend her knee to help take weight? – but also a feat of embodied imagination. As Hamington argues, our own knowledge about how to care can be embodied and transferred to new situations and to strangers through a 'caring imagination' (2004: 4). In stepping into the performing space, the (now) catcher-audience member draws on his or her own embodied knowledge of care in order to help navigate and support the journey of the next faller. Using his or her imagination and through experimentation, the catcher-audience member finds the best and most supportive way of guiding the person in their arms. This also becomes an ethical act because the catcher-audience member uses empathy and his or her bodily understanding of caring to cross into the unknown territory of catching and to keep the stranger secure and held with attention and care.

The decision to step forth and become a participant in *Stabat Mater* is not without risk in relation to the act of falling itself but also in terms of the care needed to support someone else who falls. While some audience-participants struggle to hold their charges, they are immediately supported by attentive members of Godder's company who quickly step in. No one drops anyone's head on the marble floor. In these shared performances of mutual support and care, Tronto's ethical element of responsibility emerges as an embodied way of knowing and caring for others. The shared sense of responsibility that emerges between the professional dancers and the

audience-participants only becomes possible because of the embodied caring knowledge that develops between both groups. This knowledge is enhanced and extended further through performances of attentiveness, an element of performance that manifests Tronto's second ethical element of care.

The performed attentiveness in *Stabat Mater* creates a situation where the catchers' bodies become alert and able to respond to minute changes of body weight in the faller and where the company dancers are able to respond to occasional drastic changes in the catcher's stance in relation to the faller's weight. In this way, attentiveness is performed through sensing, through sight, through feeling the pressure of another's body, as well as through knowledge of a body's mechanics. Attentiveness in this context, in other words, is channelled through, or resides in the body, yet as shown above, it is also imaginative. The need to sense when the situation becomes too dangerous involves not just bodily embodied knowledge, but also bodily imagination in order to change the course of action. 'What if?' is a question that the catcher's body continually asks in order for the couple to stay safe (What if I put my hands here? What if his head goes back? What if I lunge to the side? What if I go slower?). 'What if?' is a question for the imagination and, following Hamington (2004), is an ethical question of care because it demands that the catcher thinks of the faller's welfare in relation to the catcher's own present and future actions. The response to the other is framed through an imaginative response to care for his or her bodily welfare.

Responsiveness is the third ethical element of care I want to explore here. Although in essence, it focuses on the manner in which the care receiver responds to the caregiver, in Tronto's account of it ([1993] 2009), she concentrates on reminding the reader of the ethical implication of caring for someone vulnerable, where power resides in the caregiver, rather than care receiver. She states: 'The moral precept of responsiveness requires that we remain alert to the possibilities of abuse that arise with vulnerability' ([1993] 2009: 135). Responsiveness calls the carer constantly to evaluate his or her understanding of the needs of the care receiver. Tronto argues that because caring challenges the idea that we are all self-reliant and autonomous beings, one needs to 'consider the other's position as that other expresses it. Thus, one is engaged from the standpoint of the other, but not simply by presuming that the other is exactly like the self' (Tronto, [1993] 2009: 136). Tronto's account of responsiveness in caring acknowledges the unequal power structures between the carer and the care receiver, as well as the need for a physically close relationship. It draws attention to the vulnerability of the care receiver and highlights the otherness implicit in the different physical, mental and environmental situation of the care receiver compared to the caregiver. As I will now move on to discuss, *Stabat Mater* provides a useful manifestation of how vulnerability and care operate together as Tronto's account of care usefully illustrates.

Tronto's argument about the 'ethical vulnerability of caring' draws attention to the power a carer has over the care receiver. To think critically about

this in the context of *Stabat Mater*, it is useful to examine Dana Mills' (2016) proposal that dance may cultivate a situation where it provides equality for all participants. However, first it is important to note the fertile ground on which dance, as a medium of connection and communication, may have the potential to create a difference for those who feel vulnerable or marginalised. Mills argues that dance is a mode of communication that may give a voice to those who are silenced by other modes of communication and signification. By way of an example, she considers the black miners in apartheid South Africa who invented the gumboot dance to communicate when they were not allowed to speak. Mills argues that this provides a potent example of how dances open up a 'greater equality in our own political discourse' through participation (2016: 122). She argues that 'Dance moves human beings beyond boundaries – of their own bodies, constantly reinterpreted and reconfigured as spaces; and of their shared worlds, challenging the limits of who they may speak with and who perceives them as equal interlocutors' (2016: 122).

Mills also examines some groups of marginalised people who use their bodies to bring a feeling of connection to others, such as Palestinian Dabke dancers and the female 'One Billion Rising' marchers protesting against domestic abuse.² She proposes the notion that by dancing, people may circumnavigate their own boundaries and challenges and find connections with others, an idea that is also explored by other scholars (see, for example, Jackson and Shapiro-Phim, 2008; Rowe, 2010; Houston, 2015). I argue that thinking about the possibility of forming interconnections with others through dance enables us to understand some of the relational moments in *Stabat Mater*. These relational moments – connections between participants – are highlighted at the moment of the fall, when overcoming the challenge to fall and to hold, as well as through the offer of a positive space to take a risk to fall. Yet the idea of equality that Mills also promotes is less evident within Godder's piece, particularly when framed through the element of responsiveness. In *Stabat Mater*, responsiveness is indicated in the minute shifts of body weight of the faller into the carer. As the piece has developed, it has been possible to notice that as the faller trusts more, more weight is given to the person supporting them. The partnership in terms of supporting weight becomes more unequal as the pair get closer to the floor. The faller entrusts where and how they fall to the carer. The carer then starts to take more responsibility for the faller whose vulnerability increases as the fall progresses and at the point the carer realises that this person is not falling like the last person he or she embraced. The carer has to take each individual faller as a unique case as they present themselves to him or her and experience the uniqueness of that fall with the care receiver. Moreover, as the faller sinks into the floor, the audience may witness the body at its most visibly vulnerable, which is heightened by the staging and the positioning of the faller's prone body displayed on the hard marble floor after the fall. The audience also witnesses the crumpled clothing, the socks that the person chose, the dirt on their shoes, dishevelled hair and yet arguably

these fallers appear strangely beautiful. I would suggest that in the moment of the fall, the audience witnesses the human being, rather than the performer. In the vulnerable state as the cared for, the audience-participant is seen in all his or her imperfections most human.

Godder's *Stabat Mater* is not just a performance of care based on the actions and relations within the show, the choreographic approach adopted in this performance is rooted in Godder's participatory dance work with people with Parkinson's. As I shall now go on to discuss, it was Godder's experiential engagement with Parkinson's dancers that led to the caring encounter being explored and placed so centrally within *Stabat Mater*. In order to contextualise Godder's engagement in dance for Parkinson's, I need to situate myself, as a dance scholar, within this context. From 2010–15, I led two mixed-methods research studies evaluating the effect and experience of people living with Parkinson's who came once a week to a dance class led by the English National Ballet (Houston and McGill, 2013, 2015; McGill *et al.*, 2014; McGill *et al.*, 2018). The programme had the art of ballet at its centre. The focus of the project was not to try to heal people through dancing, although the evaluation strongly pointed to the programme's therapeutic benefits on physical, social, emotional and cognitive levels (Houston, 2015; Houston and McGill, 2015). Rather the project aimed to engage with a group of people not normally within the company's core audience (as spectators or participants) and to introduce them to ballet and the repertoire of the company.

As I expanded the research nationally and internationally to absorb the contexts and theoretical dimensions of the field of dance for Parkinson's, I became aware that art making and art doing were ultimately the primary aims for most of the initiatives that had emerged around the world and, furthermore, many dance artists rejected the idea that their work was dance therapy (Houston, 2014). Many of these dancers were influenced by Dance for PD, a dance programme for people with Parkinson's originally set up in 2001 by the Mark Morris Dance Group mentioned above. Like the English National Ballet programme it influenced, Dance for PD is a model of incorporating company repertoire and music within an artistic environment, with the imaginative inflections of poetic imagery, language and movement and a focus on work created by Morris, the teachers and people who live with Parkinson's. One of the artistic initiatives that had a slightly different emphasis was the dance for Parkinson's programme in Freiburg, Germany. Held in the *Museum für Neue Kunst* and initiated by Theatre Freiburg, it was led by dance artists Monica Gillette, Mia Habib and Gary Joplin. What attracted me to this programme was that Gillette, in particular, was eager to explore what dance could offer in terms of thinking physically about movement challenges and what dancers with Parkinson's could offer to the inquisitive dance artist.

In 2015, Gillette helped set up the collaborative German and Israeli project *Störung/Hafra'ah*.³ In conjunction with Theatre Freiburg and the University of Freiburg, it brought together dance artists in Europe and

Israel, postgraduate scientists from several universities in the two countries and people with Parkinson's who danced. I was invited to become a mentor for the postgraduates and a contributor to the Freiburg meetings. The project aimed to explore Parkinson's and movement by disrupting the habits of all those participating in the project. It encouraged project members to research and dance differently to habitual experiences in order to not only potentially learn new ways of exploring movement, but also to think from another's perspective. All the different group members were treated as equals, with everyone participating in the movement sessions and discussions as important contributors.

Godder and her company took part in the project, hosting and leading dance sessions for people with Parkinson's and the Israeli scientists in Jaffa, where the company was based. They also contributed by participating in various symposia hosted in Freiburg and Tel Aviv. The sessions Godder hosted were led by various members of her company and her artistic partners and were based around the expertise of each leader, incorporating movement practices, such as release technique, improvisation, capoeira and folk dance. Despite not having had any experience of community dance work with people with movement disorder before, Godder embraced the project as a challenge and despite *Störung/Hafra'ah* ending in 2016, Godder continued to offer twice-weekly dance sessions to local people living with Parkinson's in the region of Tel Aviv.

Often framed as research workshops, the sessions with the Parkinson's dancers and scientists became a catalyst for the development of Godder's other performance work, leading her to work differently with her company members. For Godder, the experience of working with people living with Parkinson's became impactful not only for the aesthetics of the choreography she was interested in but also how she worked with her company, leading her to say:

The *Störung/Hafra'ah* project really influenced how I see my dance making by simply opening the door of my studio to different people and communities and dancing together in a common space. This kind of unexpected intimate meeting in the studio – through the body, through different methodologies of movement and improvisation – created a drive for me to bring this exact thing onto the stage and propose it in real time in a performative environment. (2016a)

From my observation of the project and the development of *Stabat Mater*, it would seem that what shifted in Godder's approach to her own company work was not simply the meeting of these different groups of people but rather her own developing engagement in the often unspoken dialogues of care that framed the *Störung/Hafra'ah* work. Ostensibly focusing on movement disorder, the *Störung/Hafra'ah* initiative gave members a platform to work together through movement exploration, discussion and experimentation with different research methodologies, and this allowed for new thinking, not only in terms of research, but also in terms of how the

company relates to and involves each other. An illustration of new thinking and new approaches to artistic collaboration and experimentation can be seen in the meeting of different bodies and movement strategies that inspired Godder's choreographic developments in *Common Emotion* and then in *Stabat Mater*. In both of these works, an offer was made to audience members to participate and contribute meaningfully to the development of the performance while it was happening. The participatory experience in the studio was not one that was separate from Godder's performance and creative work. Rather, the importance of interdependence, the demands for attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness in *Störung/Hafra'ah* began to determine Godder's thinking and how she approached the choreography of *Stabat Mater*.

The participatory experience in the studio also had other impacts, as Godder recalls: 'I think the strongest impact this project has had on my research process has been more on a conceptual level of what a company is' (2015a). Dance companies commonly tend to be conceived as around a hierarchical structure with the artistic director and executive director taking the lead. Moreover, dance companies also tend to make work for audiences, without generating much interaction with them. What *Störung/Hafra'ah* introduced into Godder's work was a change in relations between the audience, artists and director and this required company members to reflect on their own interdependence. Godder drew on this challenge to further redefine the relationship between members of her company, as well as between the dancers and audiences. The goal of making art was still there, but audiences took on an importance that became intertwined with making art.

Godder comments that the Parkinson's work 'really shifted something in the way I think about a process' (2015a). So, for Godder, both structure and artistic process were influenced by the Parkinson's engagement and in several ways. Importantly, the experience of opening the door to people with a movement disorder triggered what Godder (2016b) calls a 'cross-pollination' of people, ways of dancing, ways of leading and relating. She notes that, 'it created new relationships and dynamics. Learning this from each other' (2015b). Godder describes this cross-pollination of people as a process of coming together for a common project 'where we met each other and ourselves in different ways, offered a rich renewal in the studio for creation' (2015a). For Godder, *Störung/Hafra'ah* had fulfilled its objectives in that it had allowed her the opportunity to reassess her approaches to movement and choreography and to what it meant to be a contemporary dance company working within, and contributing to, a community. I would also argue that it is the recognition of the need for caring relationships and caring practices when working with individuals different from oneself that has elicited new approaches to making dance. Godder (2015b) describes this as 'a small revolution inside the workings of my company and myself in how I worked with my collaborators'. She views the revolution as shifting 'the artistic process, interpersonal relationships and hierarchy and how to

create classes' (2015b), and it is evident that the Parkinson's work challenged Godder's tendency towards autocracy and seeing the choreographer as the creator who keeps a firm hold on what is produced and how.

In opening the company studio to others to use alongside company dancers, Godder also developed a sharing of space and ideas. The Parkinson's dance sessions brought about a more facilitative, consensual way of working, where learning became more of a two-way process between the non-professional and professional dancers and because of that, input from each individual grew to be valued. So much so, that in 2018, Godder set up the Moving Communities conference (2018) to celebrate the learning from *Störung/Hafra'ah*, inviting people with Parkinson's to co-lead a movement workshop for delegates. There is a connection here with Tronto's account of care's capacity to contribute towards the practice of being democratic citizens. Tronto proposes that: 'The qualities of attentiveness, of responsibility, of competence, or responsiveness, need not be restricted to the immediate objects of our care, but can also inform our practices as citizens. They direct us to a politics in which there is, at the center, a public discussion of needs, and an honest appraisal of the intersection of needs and interests' ([1993] 2009: 167–8). For Tronto, and I would argue for Godder, caring hones the qualities of attentiveness, responsibility and responsiveness as well as the skills of competence. Many people living with Parkinson's are vulnerable, vulnerable to the effects of physical and mental degeneration, as well as vulnerable to social stigma and loss of dignity (Solimeo, 2009; Houston, 2015). Dancing, however, arguably creates a safe environment in which to take physical (and social) risks and to be supported through a network of people who understand (Houston and McGill, 2015; Westheimer *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, it creates an environment in which people with Parkinson's may suggest and create movement ideas themselves. As a productive, positive and collaborative activity, I would suggest that dancing can also aid in building communal strength, inclusivity and richness. Nachum Almog, a Parkinson's dancer who participated in *Störung/Hafra'ah* articulated this well when he said, 'I started feeling a lot more light and refreshed on a daily basis. Participating in the project made me want to move more than before. I feel more vital. I started thinking about new projects I'd like to initiate in the spirit of this project' (2016).

By engaging with dancers who move differently and who sometimes have a high degree of vulnerability, Godder and her company developed ways of working that were caring and embraced people. This meant finding ways of working that initiated a great generosity of feeling and enthusiasm. It put the humanity back into the creation process, in other words. However, I also contend that Godder's decision to take part in *Störung/Hafra'ah* enhanced our understanding of how dance can be attentive and caring in and of itself. While the attentiveness that Godder initially displayed was simply a first action of opening her studio doors to people with Parkinson's, rather than keeping it within the closed circle of contemporary dance aficionados and virtuosos, this simple gesture led to a fundamental development in

her choreographical process and the structure of her company. As Maurice Hamington states, 'we must come to know one another, preferably in direct ways, to appreciate difference and create common cause' (2004: 147). In this sense, for Godder, literal acts of opening her studio door (situated in the mixed Arab and Jewish town of Jaffa) to people with Parkinson's, led to the symbolic championing of diversity and inclusion within dance practice and dance making. This ultimately leads, I suggest, to an emerging embodied awareness of the other.

Working together as partners in dance also importantly challenges the primacy of the trained, non-disabled body over the disabled, non-trained participant within professional performance, as well as in the community setting. By altering her working practices and opening her study to people living with Parkinson's, Godder created an expanded vision to moving, both by people with Parkinson's and also by her company. One Parkinson's dancer who participated in the project wrote: 'I learnt how to start dealing with the disease' (Shalom, 2016), and one of the company dancers commented: 'The meeting with the scientists and Parkinson's dancers forced me to incorporate a new and different way of thinking, change my habits and the very way I express myself as an artist and a human being' (Enosh, 2016). Workshops set up as part of the project were diverse in what they offered, and this alone allowed people with Parkinson's and Godder's company to explore differences and a variety of dance forms, such as folk dance, and movement practices, such as capoeira, which may not have been familiar dancing styles for many people in the workshop. Described as a 'toolbox' by Godder,⁴ the varied forms and practices led to different systems of moving, as well as the development of distinctive philosophies and techniques. As a toolbox, the participants with Parkinson's and the professional dance artists collectively had a wider palette of approaches from which to draw to supplement or overturn physical or mental habits and times of movement challenge. Uri Shafir, one of Godder's dancers and a choreographer of his own work, stated: 'I've discovered new ways I engage with the present in my work. I changed the way I perform and opened my mind to a new experience of being in the moment' (2016). Some of the leaders of each workshop, who were members of Godder's company, also had the first-time experience of needing to adapt movement phrases and tasks for some of the participants, which necessitated thinking differently about their approach to movement. Working specifically with those who move differently, as people with Parkinson's do, challenges the assumptions and attitudes to what movement is considered 'good' or 'correct' in the dance class: the aesthetic moral order alters. Within the workshop context and this inclusive environment, Godder and her company experienced a shift in how they thought about the creation of movement for performance and the aesthetics of performance itself: how movement was created, its aesthetic, who does it. These ideas began to emerge as the company began to develop a new sense of care for each other and the participants they were working with.

Conclusion

Working with people with Parkinson's and the care this necessitated also changed Godder's choreographic approach by leading her to develop more trusting relationships with her dancers and with the work itself. The invitation to become audience-participants in *Stabat Mater* requires individuals to react and be present in 'real time', rather than to rely on rehearsal processes. This means that no one is entirely sure what is going to happen on stage each night. In trusting to the humanity of the artistic process and the caring structures nurtured through the community sessions and rehearsal process, Godder took a big risk artistically, one that required her to also adopt a position of vulnerability. The outcome is a style of work that is rooted in care; that is nurtured, developed and changed by participant involvement. In being openly generous in offering the audience a place to participate in their own style, Godder incorporates a community dance ethos into her artistic work. She also folds back into the performance her own need to trust from a place of vulnerability; just as she asks the audience-participants to trust their carers to catch their fall, so she opens the performance process up and trusts the audience-participants to present in their own ways.

What *Stabat Mater* and *Störung/Hafra'ah* underline is the interdependence and care at the heart of Godder's Parkinson's and performance projects. More than this, what is revealed from these projects is how the demands of caring for others who are vulnerable and physically challenged became a fundamental creative force in Godder's practice, leading to the development of new aesthetics and new ways of positioning professional dancers and community participants together. Responsiveness to caregiving and care receiving becomes a two-way process here, opening out the generosity of that initial attentiveness to trust and vulnerability on all sides. In this way with Parkinson's dancers, artistic practice as caring may be thought of slightly differently to caregiving in the sense of looking after someone ill or frail. Although this is not to deny the power of influence the choreographer still holds, artistic practice as described above may give all participants a feeling of agency and creative ownership within the process at the same time as putting everyone in a position of vulnerability, as well as trust. Interdependence and reciprocity then become a key feature of Godder's participatory, socially engaged art work and art practice.

The implications for community dance and performance work in the light of these innovations are interesting. Godder demonstrates how community dance practice does not have to exist as something shut off from professional performance work. It may be allowed to bleed into and arguably ultimately shape artistic decisions. She is not the first to use non-trained performers.⁵ Godder's work, however, is nurtured within community dance exploration and in this way is different to many other choreographers' works using community dancers. Crossing over into dance for Parkinson's work, she has instituted a three-way discussion between participants, company

dancers and choreographer, where learning is mutual and where care for the integration of different people, bodies, ways of moving has become an important theme and process within artistic creation and production. A more aligned example with similar values would be Fevered Sleep's *Men & Girls Dance* project (2013), discussed in Chapter 3, where the thrust of the work is mutual collaboration and play between a group of girls who dance for fun and the professional male dancers.

The initiatives taken by Godder also have implications for the development of specialist provision for people with long-term health conditions who would like to dance. Although the notion of care is at the heart of the practice, *Stabat Mater* illustrates how dance in this context does not have to be focused around healing or around a direct engagement with medical treatment; it also moves beyond some forms of applied theatre and community dance where participants make art and show what they can do. Godder's choreographic work demonstrates how socially engaged dance can offer a symbiotic relationship between participant community dancers and with artists who are open to investigate their own practice through a performance of care. This caring about the wider social remit of artistic work may alter the aesthetics of dance works. It may also alter ways of working where care for people in the process of making art becomes as important as producing a critically successful end product.

Notes

- 1 See <http://yasmeengodder.com/Parkinson/contemporary-dance-for-people-living-with-parkinson-s-disease> (accessed 05/12/17).
- 2 The One Billion Rising movement became a worldwide protest movement in the early 2000s. Learnt dances were used as the content of flash mobs and marches to highlight the fact that one billion women globally are violently abused by partners and others.
- 3 The title is often written *Störung*/העִרְפָּה which can be translated as 'disorder' from the German and Hebrew (Hafra'ah, 2017).
- 4 See <http://yasmeengodder.com/works/common-emotions> (accessed 05/12/17).
- 5 Jérôme Bel is another high-profile choreographer who includes non-trained dancers in his work, for example. *Gala* (2015), by way of illustration, featured mostly community dancers and highlighted their individual approaches to dancing, although the work was tightly conceived and directed by Bel. See Chapter 5 by Dave Calvert in this volume for a critical response to Bel's work.