Waltzing Through Europe
Attitudes towards Couple Dances in the Long Nineteenth-Century

From 'folk devils' to ballroom dancers, this volume explores the changing reception of fashionable couple dances in Europe from the eighteenth century onwards. A refreshing intervention in dance studies, this book brings together elements of historiography, cultural memory, folklore, and dance across comparatively narrow but markedly heterogeneous localities. Rooted in investigations of often newly discovered primary sources, the essays afford many opportunities to compare sociocultural and political reactions to the arrival and practice of popular rotating couple dances, such as the Waltz and the Polka. Leading contributors provide a transnational and affective lens onto strikingly diverse topics, ranging from the evolution of Roman couple dances in Croatia, and Strauss's visits to Hamburg and Altona in the 1830s, to dance as a tool of cultural preservation and expression in twentieth-century Finland.

Waltzing Through Europe creates openings for fresh collaborations in dance historiography and cultural history across fields and genres. It is essential reading for researchers of dance in central and northern Europe, while also appealing to the general reader who wants to learn more about the vibrant histories of these familiar dance forms.

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Cover image: A drunken scene in a dancing hall with a sly customer eyeing a young girl. Coloured etching by G. Cruikshank, 1848, after himself. Wellcome Collection, CC BY.

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2. The State of Research

Egil Bakka

A comprehensive body of literature deals fully or partly with round dances, and particularly with the Waltz. There are works that deal with the form and structure of the dances based on first-hand knowledge, such as manuals from dancing masters. Many surveys describe the history of round dances, often as part of broader projects. These are often built upon the compilation and study of scattered excerpts from a large variety of historical documents, such as diaries, letters, memoirs, newspapers etc. A large number of these excerpts recur in various books to justify different arguments, and sometimes with conflicting interpretations. There are also studies of the music that accompanied the round dance, which discuss the dance form and the historical context. The moral and medical criticism of, and resistance to, the round dances, and particularly the Waltz, is a recurrent theme that is also central to this book.

Writers in the field range from the dancing masters of the nineteenth century, dance historians belonging to quite different professions, and more typical academic researchers from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In the survey that follows, I shall concentrate more on the knowledge made available than on the research methodologies, both because this was the main focus of the researchers themselves, and because it is the dominant interest of the present book.

Works on Dance Form and Structure

The manuals of the dancing masters contain discussions about and, eventually, descriptions of, round dances from the very beginning of
the nineteenth century, well into the twentieth century. These are not research publications, but since experts who could dance (as well as teach the dances) wrote many of them, they are trustworthy sources for the forms of dance enjoyed by the educated classes from the nineteenth century onwards. The writers’ skills in analysis and description vary, however. Additionally, many writers copied their descriptions from each other, particularly if they did not have first-hand knowledge and/or were putting together encyclopaedias or surveys, rather than descriptions for their dance pupils. Such weak points are not always easy to identify.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, around a century after the dancing masters’ first descriptions of round dances, pioneers in different European countries started to collect what they called folk dances. These were similar to the dances in the collections of the dancing masters, again written by experts who knew and could teach them. The aim was to prevent the characteristic dances of each nation from being lost, and to enable groups and organisations to use them.

In western Europe, round dance types constituted a major part of the rural dance repertoire, but the collectors found that these dances were mostly too common, too new and too simple to be included in the

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manuals. As a result, if any material about round dances is included in these manuals it is, at best, very uneven and selective.\(^5\)

The development of folk dance manuals throughout the twentieth century is too large a subject to discuss here. The simplest and most widespread versions of round dances were not particularly attractive to these manuals, but forms with round dance elements as part of more complex structures were well represented; Tvrtko Zebec discusses this point further in Chapter Fifteen of this volume. It was not until the 1970s that there was any interest in collecting even the simple round dances, at least in the Nordic countries.\(^6\) One notable exception is a work of academic standard by the Finnish amateur folk dance collector Yngvar Heikel, who collected and systematically published all the material his informants could show him, even their loose references to dances. His book is therefore a unique work from the first half of the twentieth century, giving us a survey of the whole dance repertoire of several generations in the Swedish region of Finland.\(^7\) A study from the Nordic countries, could, however, be seen as a continuation of the early folk-dance collections, using modern techniques, at the end of the twentieth century. In 1983, the Nordic Association for Folk Dance Research began a research project on the Nordic repertoire of round dances, and some results from this project have served as a basis for the delimitations in Chapter One.\(^8\)

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7 Yngvar Heikel, *Dansbeskrivningar. I: Finlands svenska folkdiktning* (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1938).

8 The project uses the term *Gammaldans* [old-time dance], the colloquial term at that time in Sweden and Norway. The delimitation of the project is the same as used here under the term round dances.
The aim of the project was to survey the main features of the genre in terms of patterns of variation, type division, structure and form. It began by filming social dances in twelve Nordic communities that had round dances at the core of their repertoire, and in which the transmission was not dominated by organised teaching from the folk dance movement or dancing schools. It concentrated on the age groups for whom round dances were the most important part of their dance knowledge. We documented two communities in each of the six countries: Denmark, Finland, Faroe Isles, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The scope of the study was intended to include all the main types of Nordic round dances.

Fig. 2.1 Project meeting in the Nordic Association of Folk Dance Research at the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki, 2002. From left, Mats Nilsson, Anders Christensen, Gunnel Biskop Pirkko-Liisa Rausma, Egil Bakka, Henning Urup, Göran Andersson. Photo by Esko Rausmaa, CC BY 4.0.

10 The Faroe Isles are part of Denmark but are geographically and culturally distinct.
11 Urup, Bakka, and Sjöberg, Gammaldans i Norden, p. 15.
A selection of two hundred and ninety-nine dance realisations was used for video publication, but the total material was considerably larger.\textsuperscript{12} During the fieldwork, interviews were undertaken that showed round dancing was a popular and well-known dance genre in many Nordic communities, particularly among people who were more than fifty years old when the study took place. Attitudes towards round dances, however, were not a particular focus of the investigation. The material was surveyed, and examples of all different types of round dances documented in each of the countries were selected for detailed analysis and comparison. The results showed that the dances contained five different types of motives: turning motives; promenade motives; on-the-spot motives; resting motives; and special motives.\textsuperscript{13} There were four main types of musical metre and a number of different step patterns. The project shows a cohesion in structure and motives, which supports the idea of considering round dances as a dance paradigm. The project also investigated nineteenth-century manuals from Nordic dancing masters,\textsuperscript{14} as well as other historical source material, and concluded with estimations of when the different round dances were established in the Nordic countries.\textsuperscript{15}

By comparing the descriptions from the dancing masters’ manuals with the forms in our fieldwork material, we saw that some of the forms were very close to the descriptions in the manuals of the dancing masters.

\textsuperscript{12} Several or many couples participated in each of the realisations.

\textsuperscript{13} Urup, Bakka, and Sjöberg, Gammaldans i Norden, p. 249. The term ‘motive’ is a conventional term for the structural analysis of dance, and it means a movement sequence. See Egil Bakka, ‘Analysis of Traditional Dance in Norway and the Nordic Countries’, in Dance Structures. Perspectives on the Analysis of Human Movement, ed. by Adrienne L. Kaeptler and Elsie Ivancich Dunin (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2007), pp. 105–12.

\textsuperscript{14} Jørgen Gad Lund, Terpsichore, eller: En Veiledning for mine Dandselæringer til at beholde de Trin og Toure i Hukommelsen, som de under mig have gjennemgaet (Mariboe: C. G. Schultz, 1823); Fredrik Alexander Gjörcke, Anvisning att inom möjligaste korta tid och utan serskild undervisning grundligt lära alla nu brukliga sällskapsdansar: Med upplysande teckningar. Genomsedd och ändamålsenlig befunnen Af F. A. Gjörcke (Stockholm: Östlund & Berling, 1850); Paul Petersen, Danse-Album (Copenhagen: [n.p.], 1884).

\textsuperscript{15} This builds upon the assumptions that the round dance forms mostly spread to the Nordic countries from other European countries, particularly Germany: Egil Bakka, ‘Rise and Fall of Dances’, in Dance, Gender, and Meanings: Contemporizing Traditional Dance. Proceedings from the 26th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology 2010, ed. by Elsie Ivancich Dunin, Daniela Stavělová, and Dorota Gremlicová (Praha: Akademie Ved České Republiky (Etnologický Ústav), 2012), pp. 274–80.
Some forms, however, particularly those that included rapid turning, were not mentioned at all in the manuals; these were forms that existed independently of dancing masters. They were probably considered improper at the balls of the higher classes but were still popular among the lower classes.\textsuperscript{16} This was a consistent feature throughout the large amount of Nordic material.

\textbf{Fig. 2.2} The publications resulting from the project \textit{Gammaldans i Norden}, 1988. Photo by Egil Bakka, CC BY 4.0.

\textsuperscript{16} Urup, Bakka, and Sjöberg, \textit{Gammaldans i Norden}, p. 282.
Fictional Accounts

While the descriptions of the dancing masters are essential sources to understand the round dances in terms of their form and structure, novels and fiction are important to understand the reception of, and attitude to, the dances. We will take as an example the famous novel by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* [The Sorrows of Young Werther] (1774), which is one of the earliest sources that describes how the budding paradigm of round dances was received in the south-eastern parts of today’s Germany.\(^{17}\)

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17 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers* (Leipzig: Weygand, 1774). There are a number of novels from the second half of the eighteenth century presenting the Waltz in a social environment, which provide a good illustration of its reception; for instance: Sophie von La Roche, *Geschichte der Fräulein von Sternheim: von einer Freundin Derselben aus Originalpapieren und Andern Zuverlässigen Quellen Gezogen Theil 2* (Carlsruhe: Schmieder, 1777).
Goethe belonged to the bourgeoisie, but he knew the dance repertoire of the lower classes. He also gained access to aristocratic circles, becoming ennobled in 1782. As a keen dancer, he was able to join in at any dance event. He and his sister received their first instruction from their father, who taught them the Minuet, and later Goethe learned ‘das Walzen und Drehen’\textsuperscript{18} while he was in Strasbour as a student from 1770.\textsuperscript{19} Most likely, Werther’s lively stories about dance events are based on Goethe’s own experiences from Strasburg and other places where he stayed or visited during the period from 1770–1774.

Goethe’s description of the Waltz is unusually rich for fiction at this time, and tells us much about the reception of the new dance. On the one hand, he gives a very romantic description of a dancing couple and the feelings the dance inspires in the young man. On the other, since the Waltz allowed a dubious intimacy, the young man is torn by jealousy. The degree to which this was a romantic construction established by novelists, or an aspect of the Waltz that often played out in reality, is hard to establish.

The novel takes place among the bourgeoisie and lesser nobility, but in the beginning the class distinctions are not so visible and the young people at the dance event seem to be socially equal. When Werther begins work in the house of a nobleman, however, he experiences humiliating episodes in which he is excluded because of his lower-class status. It also turns out that the girl he falls in love with is a member of the lesser nobility, and he is not good enough for her. Since the novel is so clearly based on Goethe’s personal experiences, and many incidents and characters seem to have been taken from real life, it is reasonable to believe that the dancing, the dance event and the relationships between the young people can also be taken as historical evidence. The novel describes an environment in which class distinctions are latent, but do not affect the dancing and social life of young people of the ‘educated classes’. It gives an impression that the young people learned to dance among themselves, and that the influence of dancing masters was not very strong, even if it was most likely present. The lower classes, however, are visible only as servants and peasants. There is no hint as to

\textsuperscript{18} ‘Waltzing and turning’.
\textsuperscript{19} Walter Salmen, Goethe und der Tanz: Tänze, Bälle, Redouten, Ballette im Leben und Werk (Hildesheim: Olms, 2006), p. 138
whether new dances might be exchanged between the higher and lower classes in this environment.

The Battle of ‘Origin’

Writers on round dances have used much space and energy to pursue questions that might colloquially be phrased as: ‘Where do they come from?’ or ‘To whom does this dance belong?’ This interest is based on the idea that a dance has a place of origin, where it was invented and where it is danced in a way that cannot be easily copied by outsiders, as the quotation from Helmke in chapter one shows. Often this place of ‘origin’ is considered to have a kind of ownership of the dance, which has created intense disputes. Daniela Stavělová’s contribution in Chapter Five of this book examines how such ideas came about in the Czech lands. The idea that a country or a region had characteristic dances is idealised and simplified, but it nonetheless has roots in reality. It was the basis for presenting a character’s nationality through the character dances in ballets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it underlies the folk dance movement of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Fashionable dances such as round dances were probably well established in particular regions or countries before they rose to fame and began to spread.20

The idea that a country’s character is reflected in its dances conflates dance and national pride, but this tendency is sometimes at odds with the references to origin in the dance names themselves. The Czechs consider the Polka their national dance, even if the name refers to Poland; likewise the Swedish consider the ‘Polska’ to belong to them.21

It seems that a nation or a group will name a new dance after the place from which they believe it to come: even if it goes on to develop into something very particular to its new home, the dance keeps its original name, with its reference to elsewhere.

The struggle over origin is not based only on the name of the dance: there is, for instance, a long-lasting dispute between French and German dance historians about the origin of the Waltz. The Franco-German

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20 See, for instance, Stavělová’s chapter in this book (Chapter Five).
21 Polka is the Czech word for a Polish girl, or dance, whereas Polak is the word for a Polish man. A ‘Polska’ is the Swedish word for a Polish woman, dance or melody.

Thoinot Arbeau described the dance in 1589\footnote{Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchésographie: Méthode et théorie en forme de discours et tablature pour apprendre à danser, battre le tambour* (Genève: Editions Minkoff, 1972), p. 63.} and there are several interpretations available on the internet, one clearly based on Arbeau and a looser version in a feature film in which Queen Elizabeth I of England, played by Cate Blanchett, is dancing (see Fig. 2.6).

A large number of dance historians have taken their side in the debate on whether the Waltz has German or French origin, and Hess gives detailed references to this whole discussion. Hess is connected to France as well as to Germany, but usually French dance historians

\[\text{Fig. 2.4} \text{ [Anonymous, possibly Marcus Gheeraerts], *Queen Elizabeth I Dancing La Volta with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester*, c.1580, Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Robert_Dudley_Elizabeth_Dancing.jpg}\]
argue that the Volta is the origin of the Waltz, whereas the Austrians and Germans argue that it is a German dance and vehemently reject the French claim. One of the earliest supporters, perhaps even the source of the idea that the Waltz grew from the Volta, was the dancing master Gustave Desrat (born c.1830) who published several books. Therefore, the feud is nearly two hundred years old. Hess gestured towards the politics that were involved when he proposed that the participants should listen to authors from neutral countries.

As I have indicated earlier, I take the ‘German side’. There are two different understandings of the concept of origin involved here. On the one hand, there is the argument that a dance practised for a long time in a certain place belongs to that place, and that ancient roots elsewhere do not take away that ownership. On the other, there is the suggestion that certain ways of dancing have ‘old origins’ and the place where a technique or principle came into being is the birthplace of the dance. Both arguments have some validity. It is a fact that dance forms and dance practices move and spread from one place to another. The problem is the pursuit of an ultimate origin of a dance, a notion which is essentially a myth. The German art historian and publicist Oskar Bie has

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26 Desrat and Nuitter, *Dictionnaire de la danse*, p. 370.
argued against the simplistic idea that there was an originary moment when a dance was first invented.\textsuperscript{27} Certainly, traditional social dances are unlikely to have a precise point of genesis, and it is more probable that new forms arise when existing dances are mixed, when triggered by new impulses, or from some novel twist gaining popularity.\textsuperscript{28} The idea that the Volta was the predecessor of the Waltz seems to have developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Nobody apparently made the connection in the first century of Waltz history, and, in any case, the Volta was out of use long before the Waltz appeared. The mooted connection is based on an alleged similarity in form and musical metre, but such a resemblance can easily be found between dances that are not connected at all, so the likelihood of a connection is very slim.

The Austrian folk dance researcher Richard Wolfram (1901–1995) was a strong voice in defending the Austrian claim to be the place of origin of the Waltz. He argued vehemently against the assertion that the Waltz was ‘gesunkenes Kulturgut’, or that the higher classes had supplied the models for the Waltz and even the Ländler forms through the Allemande, a description of which was first published in France in 1769. He also disagreed that the Waltz was invented in the theatres for the operas and ballets.\textsuperscript{29} He supported his views with studies undertaken in diasporic Austrian communities located in what we know today as Ukraine and Romania. These communities emigrated from Austria in 1732 and 1775, and had continued to dance their Austrian Ländler well into the twentieth century. The newer Allemande or a Waltz from an opera could therefore not be the basis for the Ländler.\textsuperscript{30}

Even if there are different ideas about the origin of the Waltz, there is hardly anyone who disputes that the dance became famous in Vienna,

\textsuperscript{27} Examples of such arguments include the suggestion that the Waltz was first presented at the Opera \textit{Una cosa rara}, Oskar Bie, \textit{Der Tanz} (Berlin: J. Bard, 1919), p. 228; or the suggestion that a rural Czech maid invented the Polka step, Mark Knowles, \textit{The Wicked Waltz and Other Scandalous Dances: Outrage at Couple Dancing in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries} (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), p. 196.
\textsuperscript{28} Egil Bakka, ‘Rise and Fall of Dances’, p. 274.
\textsuperscript{29} Simon Guillaume and Jacques La Hante, \textit{Almanach dansant, ou, positions et attitudes de l’Allemande: Avec un discours préliminaire sur l’origine et l’utilité de la danse} (Paris: Chez l’auteur rue des Arcis, 1769), https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8626149j/f41.item.zoomin
due to the many compositions for the Waltz and for many other round dances written by the celebrated musicians who lived there, such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Haydn, Joseph Lanner, and, first and foremost, the Strauss family. The influence of Strauss the Elder is more fully explored in Chapter Ten of this book, where Jørgen Torp discusses the impact of his concert tours. In the early twentieth century, nostalgic, nationalistic descriptions of the old Vienna were prevalent, and can be read as evidence of the heritagisation and branding processes to which the Viennese Waltz and Viennese culture were increasingly subject.\footnote{Hess, Der Walzer, p. 41. Fritz Klingenbeck, Unsterblicher Walzer: die Geschichte des deutschen Nationaltanzes (Vienna: W. Frick, 1943); Joseph August Lux, Der unsterbliche Walzer Altwiener Tanz und Lied (Munich: Holbein, 1921), p. 99; Fritz Lange, Der Wiener Walzer (Vienna: Verlag d. Volksbildungshauses Wiener Urania, 1917).}

The Nazi regime banned African-American dances, so the Waltz was danced more frequently as a consequence, but the regime did not promote it directly. Hitler personally had no liking for ballroom dancing and refused to learn to waltz or to dance in public.\footnote{Sherree Owens Zalampas, Adolf Hitler: A Psychological Interpretation of His Views on Architecture, Art, and Music (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State Univ. Popular Press, 1990) p. 114.}

In the twenty-first century, however, the Viennese ball made it onto the Austrian UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage, but the organisers of one of the balls listed were accused of having neo-Nazi sympathies and the balls were taken off the list again.\footnote{‘Unesco streicht “Wiener Ball” aus Weltkulturerbe-Liste’, Die Presse, 19 January 2012, https://www.diepresse.com/725035/unesco-streicht-wiener-ball-aus-weltkulturerbe-liste}

The German musicologist Walter Salmen has contributed substantially to dance history, particularly the history of the German-language area; a number of his publications offer historical source material about iconography. He discusses the role of dance in the lives of Goethe and Mozart, and writes about the dancing masters.\footnote{Walter Salmen, Grundriß einer Geschichte des Tanzes in Westfalen (Münster: Aschendorff, 1954); Walter Salmen, Tanz Im 19. Jahrhundert (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1989); Salmen, Goethe und der Tanz; Walter Salmen, Der Tanzmeister: Geschichte und Profile eines Berufes vom 14. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert (Hildesheim: Olms Goerg AG, 1997); Walter Salmen, Mozart in der Tanzkultur seiner Zeit (Innsbruck: Ed. Helbling, 1990).}

The Austrian musicologist Monika Fink’s work Der Ball is also valuable in this regard.\footnote{Monika Fink, Der Ball: Eine Kulturgeschichte des Gesellschaftstanzes im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 1996).}
Recent Austrian research on the Waltz has been undertaken by the cultural historian Reingard Witzmann, who has published several substantial works on its early history and prehistory. In her monograph *Der Ländler in Wien* her main aim is to discuss the movement and music content of the Ländler and Deutscher dances, which are considered to be predecessors of the Waltz.\(^{36}\) She contextualises the dance material by discussing the dance life of Vienna in this period, including dance venues, dance parties and dance musicians. Witzmann has also contributed to the anthology *Zur Frühgeschichte des Walzers*, a celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the Viennese Waltz. She also discusses its choreo-musical aspects and scrutinises dance descriptions to tease out the progression from the Ländler and the Deutscher Tanz to the Waltz.\(^{37}\)


Music-Dance Relationship

The American researcher Eric McKee published a monograph in 2012 comparing the music-dance relationship of the Minuet and the Waltz. The core of his work is the influence of the social context of dance on the dance music compositions of Johannes Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johann Strauss I, Joseph Haydn, Joseph Lanner, and Frédéric Chopin. He points to some similarities between the Minuet and the Waltz, such as their shared triple metre and what he calls the two-bar hypermetre, in which the pattern of the dance steps takes two bars of music. He does not claim that the Waltz derives from the Minuet, and supports the understanding that the Minuet is a typical creation of l’ancien régime, whereas the Waltz has its roots in the dancing of the lower classes, and rose to fame as a dance of the bourgeoisie.38

Sevin H. Yaraman’s book Revolving Embrace: The Waltz as Sex, Steps, and Sound discusses the Waltzes that were composed in the tradition of western art music. She claims, however, that a study of the Waltz as music cannot be abstracted from the Waltz as dance, which she also takes seriously. She discusses the technical characteristics of the dance steps and dance holds, and combines them with some of the written sources about the reception of the Waltz in the early nineteenth century to situate the totality of dance and music.39

These studies are based on music and dance history, and depart from the written musical score and general descriptions of the Waltz. It would have been interesting to see these supplemented with studies using ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological methods and perspectives, looking at performance practices that can still be studied live today. This has not been done before, would be worthwhile in itself, and would shed new light on historical questions.

Moral and Health Issues

In 1569, the German writer Florian Daul wrote an entire book as a warning that men ‘verdrehten’ women while dancing — that is, they turn them until they lose their reason or senses. This protest against a couple-turning dance in the German lands is, perhaps, evidence of a precursor to round dances. A large number of pamphlets and articles were produced in Europe over the centuries, striking out at new dance genres or dance paradigms. Claims of immorality were supported by arguments about health risks, and the dance masters pointed to norms of etiquette, decency and distinction. The following material has been useful for, and welcomed by, dance historians as first-hand sources about and illustrations of the reception of dance forms, and lately several books have been written about the topic.

The dancing master had to strike a difficult balance between, on the one hand, ignoring or condemning dances that his clientele did not find acceptable, and on the other, not losing out by failing to teach the new and fashionable dances. The dancing master Andreas Schönwald offered a solution to this dilemma, saying that his aim at Freiburg University in 1807 was to teach the students to dance the very popular Waltz decently — in contrast to the (indecent) style of the general public.

The dancing masters found support from many sources in their condemnation of new dances. Medical professionals would warn that they were threatening to the dancer’s health, causing exhaustion or dizziness. A book review in a medical magazine summarises a discussion on contemporary dance and states:

The dances that could be accepted and recommended even by the strictest dietitians and moralists have pretty much disappeared from our dance halls. The wild hopping dance of the Waltz degenerated into even more wildness, and other billy-goat jumps have replaced [the acceptable dances].

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41 Salmen, *Der Tanzmeister*, p. 72.

42 This is most likely a reference to the 2/4 metre Waltz (a Polka type of dance), which can include hopping and becomes much wilder than the softer 3/4 Waltz, at least as we know the dances today. Georg Wilhelm Sponitzer, *Das Tanzen in pathologisch moralischer Hinsicht erwogen* (Berlin: Friedrich Maurer, 1795); *Medizinisch Chirurgische*
Almost all of these discussions are about the upper classes, but the linking of dancing with drinking, gambling, and prostitution among the lower classes probably colours attitudes to dancing even among the upper classes. It is questionable, however, whether moral and health issues were really the most burning concerns of the dancing masters. There seems to be a subtext underlying the distinction between the different social groups: the educated classes needed to behave decently in order to stand out from the supposedly vulgar and uncivilised ways of the lower classes. The construction of an embodied class distinction was at the core of the justification of the dancing masters’ profession and kept their services in demand.

Mark Knowles’ book *The Wicked Waltz and Other Scandalous Dances: Outrage at Couple Dancing in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* is one of the recent studies on moral issues. Knowles starts with the Waltz and the round dances, but also examines an interesting selection of twentieth-century dances. The main focus is the balance between moral attempts to eradicate or limit the new dances, and the enthusiastic reception they nonetheless received. He contextualises the material by

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looking at fashions, trends and societal developments, using the ample sources available in English.43

The contemporary written sources characterising the Waltz and commenting upon its reception are extremely diverse, and a large number of questions remain open. Who is writing or giving information? Do his or her views represent a majority or an extreme minority? Is the source taken from fiction? Is it a hoax taken up by a large number of newspapers? Is it a report of a unique event written by an eyewitness? Is it written at the time the described phenomenon happened, or is it an old memory or a generalisation based more on popular discourse rather than on personal memories?

Now, to be fair, some of the most concrete and simple of these questions can be deduced from the sources themselves, or might even be commented on by the authors. To situate the dancing, the dances and the dancers that feature in any quotation within their full social context is an enormous task.

Fig. 2.9 George Cruikshank, *The Drunkard’s Children*. Plate I, 1848. A series of eight images depicting various vices and their consequences, of which this is the first. Cruikshank’s text to this image reads: ‘Neglected by their parents, educated on the street, and falling into the hands of wretches who live upon the vices of others, they are led to the gin shop, to drink at the fountain which nourishes every species of crime’. We see the pimp in the picture waiting to recruit the daughter. Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/utfd99fy

A Contextualised Dance Study

An example of how to achieve this can be found in Theresa Jill Buckland’s book *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England 1870–1920*. Buckland focuses on the dancing of the so-called ‘Society’ or the ‘Upper Ten (Thousands)’, the cream of the English aristocracy with the Royal family at its helm.\(^4^4\) Using extensive source material, Buckland takes the readers to the ballrooms and describes the dance events and their contexts, their rules and etiquette. She introduces the ladies and gentlemen attending, and the expectations of how they should embody their gendered roles. She also discusses the dance repertoire and dance forms based on concrete and practical knowledge of the material. She describes the slowly changing practices in the ballroom and connects these with broader changes in the politics, economy, and mindset of the country. She also contextualises the dancing of ‘society’ by comparing it with the practices of the lower classes. Further works of this kind would enable the writing of dance histories for longer periods to be based on firm ground.

Another valuable contribution would be an analysis of dance forms based on what is left of concrete practice, be it in ballroom dancing, in folk dances or in the character dance of the classical ballet. The descriptions in historical sources from people who mastered these dances at various points in history would be an additional source for such a work, although these are difficult to interpret on their own. Such a contribution is necessary in order to critically evaluate the endlessly repeated characteristics that are often chosen from sources incompatible in time as well as in space.

The Dance of Power

The Swiss historians Rudolf Braun and David Gugerli published a book on the power of dance and the dances of the powerful in 1993.\(^4^5\) The book spans the period from 1550 to 1914, and is rich in quotations and


paraphrases of sources, tying the development of dances and dancing to developments in the arts, military training, the uses of the body and to societal developments in general. The authors do not seem to have any expertise in the technical aspects of dance, and rely on dance names and the conventional understanding of the sources when it comes to the form of dances; they do not refer much to music characteristics either. The book has four main chapters: the dancing queen (Elizabeth I of England), the dancing king (Louis XIV of France), the dancing bourgeois, and the dancing imperialists. The third chapter is mainly about the Waltz; it does not have a hero as do the first two, but concentrates on the late acceptance of the Waltz at the German courts. There was no one in this period who stood out as a dancing ruler, or at least they did not use the Waltz to symbolise their power. On the contrary, the Waltz was banned at the main German courts long after it was accepted in the best circles of society.

Round Dancing and the Dancing Masters

Let us now take a very broad and long perspective on some of the major dance paradigms of the aristocracy in Western and Central Europe during the last five centuries. It seems reasonable to assume that the aristocracy mostly used the same dance material as the lower classes during the Middle Ages, before the time of the dancing masters. The distinction then would not be in the dance forms, but in style, dress, music etc. Later, during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, the dancing masters would create ballets and masques at many courts. They even invented social dances for use at courts, and these stood out from the repertoire of the lower classes. The dancing masters might take inspiration from the dances of the peasants of rural regions, but their codification and adaption of these dances would militate against direct similarity. This may be the reason why traces from the noble dances invented or codified at the courts do not seem to be represented to the same degree as the chain dances and the contra dances in the traditional dance material throughout Europe. Even if the contra dances were said

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46 Many dance historians repeat a claim that that the Minuet is based upon the Branle de Poitou; see discussions by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Le dictionnaire de musique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Une édition critique* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008).
to have distant lower-class roots, the creativity of the dancing masters was dominant. This can be seen from the wealth of contra dances in manuals by dancing masters all the way from the English Playford, to the early twentieth-century descriptions, to the many books referred to in this chapter. That they spread to the lower classes can be seen from their presence in the folk dance manuals referred to above.

Then around 1800, the round dances came fully into fashion. These dances came from the lower classes and posed new challenges to the dancing masters. Previously, they had worked with the dances their profession had created, codified or choreographed for the courts and upper classes. Now they had to consider whether and how their customers valued dances from other social classes. I have not seen claims or evidence that dancing masters played a central role in bringing Waltzing into fashion. It seems that they took these dances on when the demand for them became powerful. Round dances therefore have a different relationship to courts and power, since they were not created or codified for the upper classes by the dancing masters. These dances slowly made their way to the upper classes in ways comparable to the journeys of the ‘nouveaux riches’. They also did not have the structural richness of the contra dances, so they could not be adapted as easily to new choreographies. When, however, the dancing masters saw they needed to deal with the round dances, they faced the challenge of adapting them to the mechanics and strategies of class distinction.

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