



## İstanbul Üniversitesi Kadın Araştırmaları Dergisi Istanbul University Journal of Women's Studies

Submitted/Başvuru: 17.05.2022

Accepted/Kabul: 14.09.2022

ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Transgressive Gestures in the Couple Dance in a Central-Transylvanian Local Community

Dóra PÁL-KOVÁCS<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

In Hungarian couple dances the touch, the bodily contact between the dancing partners of a man and woman, has not been dealt with in Hungarian dance research. The question arises whether dance contains only those touches that are organic parts of dance as movement, or possibly contain such extra touches that are not necessarily forms of a formal-rhythmic flow of a dance, not inherent in its inner logic, yet often occur. My article focuses on taction in couple dances in a Hungarian village, Magyarózd, Ozd in Transylvania (Romania) and tries to detect which ones can be identified as structural elements of the dance and which can be interpreted as transgression. It is also worth exploring to what extent the transgression of these boundaries is considered as breaching social norms in a given community, what are the consequences of the transgression of boundaries, and what degrees of transgression exists. In addition to archival material, the research was based on my textual collections, dance filming (organising a carnival ball) and dance analysis. I conducted interviews with middle-aged people young adults and the older age group.

### Keywords

Couple Dance, Gender, Transgression, Touch

<sup>1</sup> **Corresponding author:** Dóra Pál-Kovács (Dr.), Directorate at the Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Hungarian Open Air Museum, Macaristan, Hungaria, E-mail: palkovacs.dora@skanzen.hu ORCID: 0000-0002-5638-6534

**Citation:** Pál-Kovács, D. (2023). Transgressive gestures in the couple dance in a Central-Transylvanian local community. *İstanbul Üniversitesi Kadın Araştırmaları Dergisi - Istanbul University Journal of Women's Studies*, 26, 85-99. <https://doi.org/10.26650/iukad.2023.qe00004>



## Introduction

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the gender division of roles between men and women were widespread throughout European rural societies. This distinction led me to assume that dance, understood as a socio-cultural phenomenon, could also manifest gendered patterns of behaviour. On the basis of this assumption, I initiated a research project (2012–2018) to analyse the behavioural patterns of male-female relations in traditional dances in Magyarózd, a village in Transylvania, Romania. I analysed the gender roles in the village's couple dance, the *csárdás*<sup>1</sup>, which was general of the second half of the 20th century. In Hungarian<sup>2</sup> couple dances the touching, the bodily contact between the dancing partners, man and woman, has not been dealt with in Hungarian dance research. In general, the touching of the partner is one of the basic formal elements in couple dances. This paper will analyse one of the sub-themes of the research started in 2012, 'transgressive/additional touches' of the couple dance (I will define the term below). My choice of topic is motivated by the marked male-centricity<sup>3</sup> of Hungarian folk dance research and the lack of research on the relationship between couple dances and gender roles.<sup>4</sup>

## The Field of Research

Magyarózd<sup>5</sup> is located in Maros County, Romania, 20 km south of Luduş. Along the Maros-Küküllő river, in the valley of the Ózd stream, also known as the Malozsa valley,

<sup>1</sup> In the book *The Dance Life and Dances of Lőrincréve* (1989) by Zsigmond Karsai and György Martin there is the most accurate description of the Transylvanian Maros-Küküllő valley couple dance: the *Csárdás*, although it belongs to the new style of couple dances, in terms of its motif-repertoire and structure can be classified more as an old style of couple dance. The name of the dance was clearly influenced by the new folk music style wave. The dance is simple in form, with a quarterly rhythm, the turning emphasised at the top is broken up by alternating beats, and its formal units do not fully fit the structure of the accompaniment melody. The couple's grip during the dance is characterised by a relatively constant, closed shoulder-waist grip, which is only released during the changes of direction (Karsai & Martin 1989).

<sup>2</sup> After the First World War, in 1920, following the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Hungary lost part of its territory, including Transylvania, which is now part of Romania. Before that time, Magyarózd was part of the then Kingdom of Hungary and still has a significant Hungarian population.

<sup>3</sup> Martin also recognizes that in the relatively few Hungarian dance historical sources, data on male dances are much more common. He attributes this to the fact that for observers from abroad, these dances were considered unusual and peculiar (Martin 2004).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Lujza Ratkó explains in one of her studies where and how the place of women appears in the Hungarian dance tradition. In the author's view, it is primarily the *karikázó* (circle dance accompanied by singing) that represents the true, genuine female genre, and she also goes into the formal characteristics of this genre in detail. In two separate chapters, we can read about the dances in which women can be considered equal partners such as the dance with the fighting character, which is performed without any contact and the dances in which the dance is about the subordination of the other (the partner) (Ratkó 2001). Ernő Pesovár's monograph, *The Hungarian Couple Dances* (1977), contains historical contributions to dance but does not discuss the gender roles of men and women (Pesovár 1977). In her monograph, Edit Kaposi describes the good female and good male dancing qualities of the villages in Bodrogeköz (Kaposi 1999).

<sup>5</sup> The ethnography of the village is presented in István Horváth's monograph (Horváth 1980), the men's dances are described by János Fügedi in his studies (Fügedi 2007; 2012) and its folk music is described by István Pávai in his volume *Magyarózd's Folk Music in the Mirror of István Horváth's Collections* (Pávai 2015).

there are seven villages: the two largest are Csekelaka (Cecălaca) and Magyarózd (Ozd) (Horváth 1980). In a village with predominantly Hungarian inhabitants, the economic and social changes after the Second World War burdened the men and they died earlier, so there are far more widows than widowers in the village. The village's population has been steadily declining since the First World War, falling below 300 inhabitants by 2015. I analysed the population structure of the village, its demographic structure, ethnic and religious changes, employment distribution and educational qualifications using a village structure questionnaire (Kovács 2017). There has been no significant change in the ethnic and religious divisions, with census data clearly showing that from the 19th century to the present day it has been a Hungarian-majority, Reformed settlement.

### **Sources and Research Methods**

During the first three years of my research (2012–2014), I explored a broad spectrum of the dance tradition of Magyarózd during several periods of fieldworks. In 2015, I supplemented this research with four months of fieldwork. Even if only for a short period, I became an ‘inhabitant’ of the village, so I was also required to follow the norms and rules of the village, which the community expected me to respect. I agree with Boglárka Bakó that such fieldwork also provides an insight into the external picture, from which the community's conflict resolution strategies, female-male roles, child-raising practices, and bureaucratic background can be analysed in a different way than from “external data” (Bakó 2004). This helped me to understand the gender roles that existed in the village at the beginning of the 21st century. In addition to archival material<sup>6</sup>, the research was based on my textual collections, dance filming (organising a carnival ball), and dance analysis. My research informants were women and men over sixty, who were active in the village's dance life in the second half of the 20th century. In addition to the older group, I also conducted interviews with middle-aged people and young adults.

### **Revival Dancers as Informants**

Dance can be interpreted as an intimate form of movement, more intimate than everyday social situations, as an expression of attraction and in some cases sexuality. Looking for the additional information in the given dance that displays the above-mentioned intimacy, I will come to an analysis of the dance that has been missing from the Hungarian interpretations so far. Due to the complexity of the research, I also initiated interviews with male and female revival dancers who had danced with local informants on several occasions during their fieldwork, and their personal experiences helped me to understand the topic more fully.

---

<sup>6</sup> The used manuscripts and dance notations can be found in the collections RCH Institute for Musicology: Akt.1388; Tit.1244, 1245, 1248, 1979, 1310, 1323, 1334, 1395, 1397, 1398, 1399, 1400.

Károly Marót sees revival as a cultural phenomenon that is revived after a previous loss of function, so its former functions are reinterpreted (Marót 1945) and additional functions emerge in the new socio-cultural context (for the functional analysis of dances and changes in function, see Szónyi 2018; 2021). Following Marót's definition, revival dancers are those dancers who no longer acquired their dance skills in a traditional way (see Varga 2009), but who learned the different dances of the dance dialects in dance groups and from dance teachers, and who socialized within the revival movement when dance was removed from peasant society and entered the urban space. The necessity of separating the two group of informants is also justified by the following interview extract, since the dance habits of revival dancers and local dancers are different and interpreting them on one level could lead to misinterpretation.

They know each other, they grow up together, one family relationship, one world, not so consciously, but instinctively for them. Knowing each other is very important (...) My husband danced a lot with Aunt T., and my husband made up his dance from the figures of many dancers, Aunt T. could not adapt to this. But if he whispered in her ear that Z. J.'s figure/dance was coming, she knew it immediately. (Pál-Kovács 2017a)

These two groups of informants (local and revival) should be separated in the analysis and interpretation because researchers from the city were an unusual presence in the villages in the 1980s. It is possible that they were considered underdressed by men, as urban summer dress, short trousers and small tops were not an accepted part of village's dress-code at that time. Added to this, the women researchers were behaving differently from the norms of female behaviour in the village. They initiated conversations, asked questions of the local inhabitants, and may have differed from the known and accepted female role by their distinct appearance. It was not usual for a generation to dance with people of a different age. It may be that they asked the elderly generation to dance for the purpose of learning to dance. The information from two groups of informants, the revival and the local dancers, helps to define and analyse the gender roles in dance and the transgressive movements. The members of these two groups, however, were socialised at different times and in different social environments, which resulted in different boundaries. In other words, this makes comparisons more difficult, because what may be within the boundaries of dance for one group may not be for another.

### **Theoretical Background**

The focus of my research is primarily on dance as a cultural and social phenomenon, and thus focuses on the interpretation of the meaning (presumably) expressed by dance and, in this context, on the analysis of gender roles. Based on this approach, I consider

the approaches and methods of dance anthropology<sup>7</sup> to be predominantly applicable. The study of gender roles began to spread in the academic disciplines in the early 1970s, with gender being used as a simplified umbrella term for the masculine and feminine adjectives resulting from biological sex and from behaviour and competence (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004). After the 1980s, studies on the relationship between dance and gender roles began to appear more frequently in international dance anthropology. One of the most comprehensive books was written by Jane K. Cowan (1990), who in the late 20th century gave a detailed account of the manifestations of gender roles in the village community and dance tradition of a Greek village. In Hungary, research in this field started at the end of the 20th century. Earlier, mainly descriptive works<sup>8</sup> only provided particular information on gender roles.

In my view, the American historian Natalie Zemon Davis articulated most accurately the direction of gender studies in academic discourse in 1996:

Our goal is to understand the significance of gender, of gender groups in the historical past. Our aim is also to explore the diversity of gender roles and gender symbols in different societies and periods, to determine their meanings, and to learn how they have functioned to maintain social order and to promote its changes. Our aim is to explain why gender roles were sometimes strictly defined, sometimes freer, sometimes noticeably asymmetrical, sometimes more evenly distributed. (Zemon Davis 1996: 78)

In my research, following Mária Neményi, I consider gender as a cultural interpretation of biological sex (Neményi 1999), which sets patterns of expectations for individuals, regulates the social processes of everyday life, and is embedded in the basic institutions of society, the economy, the family, and politics. One could also say that dance, which is seen as part of society, also has patterns of expectation of gendered behaviour, but these are not permanent, but constantly changing from culture to culture and from age to age.

---

<sup>7</sup> In his doctoral dissertation, Máté Kavecsánszki deals with the typical folk dance approach in East-Central Europe, the distinction between dance folkloristics and dance anthropology, which expanded dance folkloristics at the beginning of the 21st century (Kavecsánszki 2015). According to Kavecsánszki, '[dance folklore] is fundamentally interested in morphological, structural, functional and historical issues', while anthropology 'takes a more complex approach, starting from the semantic study of the movements and movements of the human body. To add to this, Sándor Varga notes that, although dance folkloristics does indeed include an attempt to understand the social context of dance, it is mainly descriptive (Varga 2016). Since the early 2000s, the Department of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Szeged and the RCH Institute of Musicology have been conducting more research on dance anthropology and social history (Szőnyi 2018; Varga 2020; Székely 2022)

<sup>8</sup> It would be beyond the boundaries of this paper to give a full description of the background, which I have discussed in detail in chapter 3.4 of my doctoral dissertation. (Pál-Kovács 2019)

## A Brief Conception of The Body

In talking about gender roles, couple dancing, and touching, it is necessary to discuss the concept of the body.<sup>9</sup> The different disciplines (such as sociology, anthropology, biology) have given varied definitions of the body but it is not the purpose of this paper to explore and detail all these. In this article, I have only described some cultural anthropological and ethnological approaches that are relevant and guiding for my work. Firstly Sherry B. Ortner (1974) classifies the body into three categories: as nature, as a social construction, and as embodiment and although Ortner's body approach was written in the 1970s, it remains a very relevant and still useful concept in body-theory. This paper uses the socially constructed body as a framework for interpretation because in perceiving it, members of society follow their own social and cultural practices. They associate with a given biological body the pattern of behaviour and socialization roles<sup>10</sup> that they expect boys and girls to adapt in childhood<sup>11</sup> (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004).

Ortner's view reflects Pierre Bourdieu's statement that of all the manifestations of personality, the body becomes one of the most recognizable forms. Bourdieu interprets the body as a language "which is not so much spoken by us as it says something about us, behaving as a language of nature" (Bourdieu 1977: 151–152). Even our own images of our bodies what is beautiful, what is fashionable, what is acceptable male and female dress, etc. are determined by social constructions<sup>12</sup>. Cultures, societies and groups thus determine their own images of the body, define their own boundaries, and legitimize or reject interventions (e.g. a new hairstyle, different dress, etc.) (Bourdieu 1977).

European ethnological research is also concerned with interpretations of the bourgeois and rural communities' worlds. Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren, analysing examples from Sweden, detail how

<sup>9</sup> In his study *The human body as a medium of communication* (2009) András Németh deals in detail with different philosophical, historical, and cultural anthropological interpretations of the human body (Németh 2009: 106–115).

<sup>10</sup> A young child's biological sex affects not only the way they dress but also the toys. Klára Gazda, in her monograph on *Esztelnek*, points out that in the case of fantasy toys imitating the life and work of adults, girls imitated their mothers' life (baking, cooking, etc.), while boys imitated their fathers' habits (herding, etc.) (Gazda 1980). According to Gazda, this is also reflected in traditional toys, with boys playing with cars and miniature animals and girls with miniature replicas of kitchen tools.

<sup>11</sup> In her monograph on childhood, Zita Deáky (2005) points out that, despite the fact that children are the focus of her book, her writing is more about adults, society and the environment surrounding children. Deáky argues that the child can be seen as a reflection of his or her environment, carrying the expectations of a particular historical period and time, and its images of right and wrong education.

<sup>12</sup> Marcel Mauss (1968) was the first to put forward the courageous thesis that there is no such thing as 'natural' movement and behaviour, that they are socially constructed, and that consequently the perception and use of the body are socially constructed.

in contrast to the rural life, the bourgeoisie was characterised by a 'hidden' body, by prudery, and the body and bodily things were practically taboo. Peasant children if they were mature and observant enough learned (for example, from the reproduction of animals) how a child was born, and how to care for and feed a baby. The mother was a constant presence in the peasant family, and the children inevitably saw her in her underwear. In contrast, in the bourgeois milieu, there were no animals, children saw their mother and nanny all their lives only buttoned up to the neck, and birth and baby care were understood as a private matter for the mother and the baby. (Frykman & Löfgren 1987: 86).

The conclusions of the Swedish authors can also be considered valid for the Transylvanian peasant culture, on the basis of which sexuality could become a natural part of life here, too, but the public expression of intimacy is subject to a completely different perception. In my research, I consider the body not only as a natural object, but also as a socially and historically defined concept.

### **The Concepts of Transgression and Additional Touching**

The movements, touches, judgements and consequently the boundaries of couple dance are all determined by socially constructed patterns of expectation. The term 'boundary' does not, of course, refer to a physical limit, but is a metaphorical reference to social relations, to belonging to a community or to the phenomena that regulate exclusion from a community. It also refers to the boundaries within social relations, which are more strictly regulated by social conventions the closer one approaches the socially intimate bodily areas of the individual (Donnan & Wilson 2002). When applied to dance, the term social boundary also includes socially permissible movements and touches, as well as the possibility of transgression, as individual dances have internal norms and regulating factors that individuals know, accept and use while dancing, and which provide them with a sense of belonging to a community. Michel Foucault writes about the transgression as follows:

Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line which it displays the flash of its passage [...] The play of limits and transgression seems to be regulated by a simple obstinacy: transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a line which closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration, [...]. (Foucault 1977: 32–33).

I argue that the boundary could include the whole world of movement, and at the moment of transgression the person leaves the whole of the known zone. In other words, at the moment of transgression, the individual is in a specific middle space, he or she is on the very concrete or even abstract border, and he or she has a momentary view of both the territory what is inside and what is outside of border. In my interpretation, the transgression can never be permanent: after it we almost immediately step back into the known, legitimate zone, from which the misdemeanour can happen again and again.



When analysing dances, the question arises: to what extent is the crossing of these borders considered a violation of norms in the given context, what are the consequences of such an act, are there degrees of it? Furthermore, is it possible to create what we consider to be transgression with the acceptance and approval of society? Is it truly misdemeanour if the society in question accepts the movements that I, as a researcher, or more precisely the social norms that I have embedded in myself, define as transgressions? Who set the boundaries: society or the individual? In my study, I seek answers to these questions.

### **The Touches of Dance**

One of my informants said that “dancing is an intimate thing by nature. (...) we touch each other in places where we don’t in other situations” (Pál-Kovács 2017b). There are countless culturally and socially defined written and unwritten rules of physical contact that are known, accepted and used by the individuals who live in a given society. In my research, I had the opportunity to observe and experience a number of phenomena related to this topic, of which I will highlight only a few illustrative examples in this study. I hope that it will become apparent to what extent the perception of the touches that I consider to be transgressive, or crossing a boundary is influenced by the personality of the individual, in addition to socialisation.

It is an essential part of Hungarian couple dances that the dancers can touch or grip each other’s back, up to the hip line, using the whole arm to hold each other. The question arises as to which part of the body’s touches can be considered as transgressive movements that only fit into certain situations or frames of the dance (or perhaps not). If we look closely at the Magyarózd dance films, we can see that in the couple dances, in addition to the touches mentioned above, men touched women’s breasts and bottom with their palms, fingers and fingertips. Due to the sexual nature of these body parts, the touching of these areas of the body requires further investigation and analysis.

I examine here some examples of this phenomenon in the Hungarian dance tradition as it cannot be considered as a specific feature of the village. Firstly, in 1953, Márta Kiss and Csaba Pálfi made a film in Szenyér, in the South Transdanubian Somogy. During the dance, although the man does not touch the woman’s breast, the dance notation and the textual record shows that in the early part of the dance the man’s hand “was raised towards the woman’s breast with spread fingers, imitating the touching or ‘desire’ of the woman’s breast” (Fügedi & Vavrincez 2013: 98). The dancers are not married. Secondly, Lujza Ratkó, a Hungarian dance researcher, in her doctoral dissertation dealt with the dance tradition of the Nyírség, North-eastern Hungary, and notes that before World War I, the bottom grip was natural in peasant dance culture, only afterward did the shoulder/shoulder-blade grip become widespread. This brief example shows us that the different touches cannot be considered uniform and unchangeable, the boundaries



of touch are different depending on age, period, and generation (Ratkó 1996). Thirdly, in 1990, János Fügedi organized a fieldwork study excursion, dance teaching and fieldwork for the students of the Hungarian Dance Academy in Magyarózd, with the help of the village's famous dancer József Jakab, Master of Folk Art.

The image below (Figure 1) is cut from a recording of a dance teaching in 1990, in which József Jakab is dancing with one of the Hungarian revival dancers. After seeing the footage, I wondered if it was a real touch, or if the male dancer just had his left hand in front of the woman's breast without touching it. It is clear from the footage and the pictures that the man, having completed the couple turning, makes the change of direction in a jumping motif that would be much more difficult to do if his left hand was just in the air.



**Figure 1:** Shots from dance teaching. Recorded by János Fügedi, 1990, Magyarózd, RCH instead of BTK Institute of Musicology, Folk Dance Archive, Digital Film Library, Vt\_63\_VHS\_Magyarozd\_1990.avi, 0:50:42.

The 4/4 metre, energetically paced Csárdás, accompanied by new-style melodies, is made up of several dance parts without pause. After a short, beating section, the couple turning to the right and left, the moving in one direction is interrupted by a short beating-figuring section, after which the dancers turn in the opposite direction. Between the multiple changes of direction, there may also be a longer separate dance, which can be seen as a lure, to release the rotation. The intense back-and-forth turning, including direction-changing figures, is interrupted by a resting section, when the dancers just

step in place, maintaining a closed grip. A common example of additional touches in films is the short beat-figuring phase associated with the change of direction, in which the man holds the breast of his female partner in an almost natural-looking gesture as if to maintain the already closed grip.

I contacted the woman on the video because I believed it was relevant to know her own experience of what happened. Her memories confirmed my earlier hypothesis that the man had indeed touched her breast with his palm, *not roughly, but cunningly* (Pál-Kovács 2017c).

After the examples, I look at how the two groups of informants perceive the different touches in the dance. My female revival informants mentioned several times during the interviews that they had all been touched on the breast by their partner, in most cases a male partner, while dancing with a Transylvanian local informant.

But this is not the way you perceive it, it is a completely different way. You don't take it as an insult or something I don't know what (...) rather in places in Szeklerland, Sófálva, Nyárádmagyaros, Fenyőkút. There it's completely public, this groping while dancing (...) for example in Sófálva, in a figure, he throws me over and puts me on his thigh and grabs my breast, I felt that it's not to enjoy himself, but that it's the custom. (Pál-Kovács 2017a)

One of my informants from Magyarózd told me: "It's like this, not all sides, because sometimes you just hold your hand, but sometimes you turn around and you put your hand like this /And that wasn't intrusive? No. It was a dance" (Pál-Kovács 2018). So, you can see that this local woman had no difficulty in talking about what I considered to be an intimate subject, for her this kind of touching is part of the dance, it is not taboo at all. This informant was born and grew up in the village, and her husband was also an inhabitant of Magyarózd. During our conversation, she gave me the impression that nothing could be more natural than this, and she did not quite understand why I was asking this question, or why it could be important to me.

One of my revival informants reacted as follows: "The peasant man has a completely different emotional relationship, I think, with his partner. I think it's the same in dance. For them, touching the breast, or maybe touching it in a place that is interesting to us, I don't think they do it for the pleasure of it." (Pál-Kovács 2018)

Here I need to refer back to an earlier idea that the social boundaries in rural society and the urban sphere are different. The last two quotes support this, my local and revival dancer informants agree, both believe that in peasant society these touches while dancing were accepted and tolerated. I also discussed this issue with another elderly couple in Magyarózd, where I met with a particularly contrasting reaction. The woman was rejecting this from the very first moment, denying the existence of the whole phenomenon. I showed the footage in normal and slow motion too, I showed the pictures, but even after

all this she was determined that it only looked like he was touching her breast, in fact, he had stopped his hand before the actual touching and had not touched her breast. The man, in complete agreement with the woman, denied the existence of the phenomenon. At the end of the conversation, I said goodbye<sup>13</sup> to the family. As I knew I would not see them again for a long time, we said goodbye with kisses. As I said goodbye to the old man, he reached under my arm with both hands so that his palm touched the outside of my breast. A similar experience was also reported by a revival informant, who often encountered the situation described above. She had already learned from her many collections which men this could happen to, and in anticipation of this, she would take his two hands or forearms in greeting, to avoid an unpleasant touch.

### Conclusions

The examples above have highlighted the fact that the phenomenon of additional touches was probably present in several areas of 20th century Hungarian folk dance tradition. In all but the last example, the dancers are members of the same community, who learned the couple dances together in a traditional way. In the last case, a woman from Hungary is dancing with a local man, so the two partners did not socialize in the same socio-cultural environment and did not learn the dance in the same way. My revival female informants shared their personal experiences of breast touching while dancing. For all of them, it was a strange, unusual touch, as their Hungarian revival dancing partners had never done this before. The local inhabitants of Magyarózd can be divided into two groups according to their perception of the phenomenon. One group considers it a completely natural phenomenon, a part of the dance, the other group denies its existence.

After the examples and the interviews, it can be concluded that these touches do exist in dance, and I believe that they are an extra in the dance tradition. They are not necessarily inherent to the dance process, without them, the dance would not be damaged. However, more informants than expected earlier had personal experience of it. In my view, these movements can be considered as transgressive movements. From the narratives of my revival informants, we have seen that these gestures, which can be called transgression or boundary crossing, can be found in some of the Transylvanian couple dances of the 20th century. The fact that the boundaries between the revival and my local informants are different means that problems are encountered when comparing the touches. In addition to the fact that the female breast can be seen as a biologically erogenous zone, in our urban world we associate it with sexual content, presumably

---

<sup>13</sup> During the fieldwork, two different ways of saying goodbye became useful: if I knew for sure that I would see you again within a week or two of meeting you, then waving and saying goodbye verbally could be considered as a sufficient goodbye. As I usually try to maintain a relatively close relationship with my informants, when I knew that I would not be seeing them again for a long time, I added the more familiar two kisses to the former goodbye. In the second example I mentioned, I said goodbye in the latter way, which is why the extra touch was given.

thanks to the beauty industry and pornography. As a consequence, the female breast has been subjected to a degree of taboo in which it is automatically associated with intimacy and sexuality as a primary sexual characteristic. It can be assumed that the rural world was less influenced by pornography, where the female breast was used to feed newborn babies, but with the spread of globalisation it is evident that even in this medium it is less and less seen as a body part that simply fulfils this function. In any case, the sexual interpretation of the female breast in peasant society in the mid-20th century seems to be less explicit. The boundaries of dance do not coincide with the boundaries of everyday life, where dancing provides more opportunities for physical contact between men and women than in everyday situations, and dance legitimizes more touching that is not always allowed in everyday life. Examples of this are breast and bottom touching. In conclusion, the perception of these touches is influenced by a number of factors, such as dress, intimacy, and the relationship between the couple. At this point, it becomes necessary to separate the revival and local data sources.

My revival informants learned the dance in the revival folk dance movement, mostly in an urban environment, where the traditional dance learning method is no longer available, and the dance material of the different dance dialects was introduced and learned from dance teachers and dance groups during the education, which emphasized dance technique. It follows, however, that they are masters of the dance material itself, and the society and environment of the dance were only marginally acquired. Thus, the dance material was taken out of its original context, as a result of which, presumably, the movements and moments of the hidden phenomena in the dance, containing metacommunication, were lost, since they only had additional information in or through detailed knowledge of the original socio-cultural context.

The research has allowed me to conclude that the touching of breasts and bottom belonged to a segment of the 20th century Magyarózd dance culture that in certain situations fell within the boundaries of dance. My local informants did not hesitate to discuss this topic in confidence, but open communication on the subject did not fit within the framework of etiquette. If we continue to understand dance as a part of society, it follows that the framework and boundaries of dance in a given society have been appropriated by the people living in that society without being noticed. Of course, we cannot regard these boundaries as a permanent, almost unchanging framework, since they are in a constant state of change. My revival informants, on the other hand, were socialized in a different society, in a different period, where the boundaries of that society and the dance that existed in it were located elsewhere, but they had learned the dance tradition of peasant society. When a revival dancer who has socialized elsewhere starts dancing with a local dancer, these different boundaries collide, and what is already impertinent and unpleasant for the urban dancer is for the other person part of the dance, if not an indispensable part of it, then it is within the boundaries of the dance.

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

**Grant Support:** The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

---

## References

- Bakó, B. (2004). A terepmunka értelm(ezés)e, avagy az etikusság határán [The interpretation of fieldwork, or on the border of ethics]. *Kisebbségkutatás*, 13(3), 388–395.
- Bourdieu, P (1977). Remarques provisoires sur la perception sociale du corps. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*. 14(4), 51–54.
- Cowan, J. K. (1990) *Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Deáky, Z. (2005). 'Jó kis fiúk és leánykák': A kisgyermekkor történeti néprajza Magyarországon ['Little boys and girls': the historical ethnography of early childhood in Hungary]. Budapest: Századvég Kiadó.
- Donnan, H. and Thomas M. Wilson. (2002) Határok és antropológia Európában. [Borders and anthropology in Europe]. *Replika*, 47–48(1), 117–131.
- Gazda, K. (1980). *Gyermekvilág Esztelneken [Childhood in Esztelnek]*. Kolozsvár: Kriterion Könyvkiadó.
- Horváth, I. (1980). *Magyarózdi toronyalja: Írói falurajz [Magyarózdi toronyalja. A writer's description of the village.]*. Budapest: Magyar Helikon.
- Foucault, M. (1977) A Preface to Transgression. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by D. Bouchard Cornell, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 32–33.
- Frykman, J. and Orvar Löfgren. (1987). *Culture Builders: A Historical Anthropology of Middle Class Life*. New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press.
- Fügedi, J. (2012). Motivic Microstructures and Movement Concepts of Expression in Traditional Dances. In Elsie Ivancich Dunin, Anca Guirchescu and Csilla Könczei (eds.) *From Field to Text & Dance and Space: Proceedings of the 24th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology*, ISPMN/ICTM, pp. 43–46.
- Fügedi, J. (2007). A Simplified Use of Consecutive Foot Hooks. In *Proceedings of the Twenty-fifth Biennial ICKL Conference – Escuela Nacional de Danza Clásica y Contemporánea, Mexico City D.F., Mexico, July 29-August 5, 2007*, Mexico City: International Council of Kinetography Laban, 24–25.
- Fügedi, J. (1990). Tánciskola Magyarózd. [Danceschool in Magyarózd] *Táncművészet*, 15(12) 12–14.
- Kaposi, E. (1999). *Bodroglak tancái és táncélete 1946–1948 [Dances and dance life in the Bodroglak 1946-1948]*. Budapest: Planétás Kiadó.
- Karsai, Zs. and György Martin. (1989). *Lőrincréve táncélete és tancái*. [The Dance Life and Dances of Lőrincréve] Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet.
- Kavecsánszki, M. (2015) *Tánc és közösség: A társastáncok és a paraszti táncok kapcsolatainak elmélete bihari kutatások alapján. [Dance and community: the theory of the relationship between ballroom dances and rural dance culture based on Bihar county research]* Debrecen: Press Kiadó, *Studia Folkloristica et Ethnographica* 59.

- Kovács, D (2017). Magyarózd társadalomszerkezeti változása, [Socio-structural changes in Magyarózd] 1880–2015” *Korunk*, 28(1) 11–19.
- Marót, K. (1945). Survival és revival. *Ethnographia*, 56(1–4.) 1–9.
- Martin, Gy. (2004). Mátyás István ‘Mundruc’. Egy kalotaszegi táncos egyéniségvizsgálata. [István Mátyás ‘Mundruc’. The personality Study of a Dancer from Kalotaszeg.] Edited by László Felföldi, Zoltán Karácsony, Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet / Planétás Kiadó
- Mauss, M. (1968). *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (with introduction by Claude Levi-Strauss), 4th edition, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. pp. 364–386.
- Neményi, M. (1999). *Csoportkép nőkkel [Group picture with women]*. Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó.
- Németh, A. (2009). Az emberi test mint a kommunikáció médiuma: A testhasználat és a performativitás pedagógiai történeti antropológiai vázlata. [The human body as a medium of communication: a pedagogical historical anthropological perspective on the use of the body and performativity] In Németh András et al. (eds.), *Hagyomány és újítás a táncművészetben, a táncpedagógiában és a tánc kutatásban: Tudományos konferencia a Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskolán 2007. november 9–10.*, Budapest: Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola / Planétás Kiadó, pp. 106–115. Táncművészet és tudomány 1.
- Ortner, S.B (1974). Is female to male as nature is to culture? In M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Woman, culture, and society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 68–87
- Pál-Kovács, D (2019) *Társadalmi nemi szerepek Magyarózd tánc hagyományában.* [Gender roles in the dance tradition of Magyarózd] Kolozsvár: Babeş-Bolyai Tudományegyetem, Unpublished PhD-dissertation.
- Pál-Kovács, D. (2018) Interview with G.E. Sound recording, property of the author
- Pál-Kovács, D. (2017a) Interview with N.I. Sound recording, property of the author
- Pál-Kovács, D. (2017b) Interview with M.Á. Sound recording, property of the author
- Pál-Kovács, D. (2017c) Interview with T.Á. Sound recording, property of the author
- Pávai, I. (2015). *Magyarózd népzeneje Horváth István gyűjtései tükrében [The Folk Music of Magyarózd as Reflected in the Collections of István Horváth.]* Budapest: Hagyományok Háza / MTA BTK Zenetudományi Intézet.
- Pesovár, E. (1997) *A magyar páros táncok [The Hungarian couple dances]*. Budapest: Planétás Kiadó
- Pilcher, J. and Imelda Whelehan. (2004) *50 Keys Concepts in Gender Studies*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Ratkó, L. (2001). Női szerepek a magyar néptánc hagyományban. [Female roles in the Hungarian dance tradition] *Néprajzi Látóhatár*, 10(1–4) 263–277.
- Ratkó, L. (1996). „Nem úgy van most, mint vót régen...”: *A tánc mint tradíció a nyírségi paraszti kultúrában [It's not like it used to be...”: Dance as a tradition in the rural culture of Nyírség]*. Nyíregyháza: Sóstói Múzeumfalú Baráti Köre.
- Székely, A (2022). Dance transmission through an archive film in the Hungarian folk dance revival movement In Anne, von Bibra Wharton; Dalia, Urbanavičienė (eds.) *Dance and economy, dance transmission*. Proceedings of the 31th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology Vilnius, Lithuania: ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology, Vilnius: Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. pp. 298–309.

- Szőnyi, V. (2021). How Changes of Age and Social Status are Manifested in the Moldavian Csángó Dance Culture. In: Apjok, Vivien; Povedák, Kinga; Szőnyi, Vivien; Varga, Sándor (eds.) *Dance, Age and Politics. Proceedings of the 30th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology*. Szeged, Budapest: SZTE BTK Néprajzi és Kulturális Antropológiai Tanszék, BTK Zenetudományi Intézet, Magyar Etnokoreológiai Társaság 478 p. pp. 423–429.
- Szőnyi, V. (2018) The Social Embeddedness of the Dance Culture in a Moldavian Village. *Open Journal for Anthropological Studies*, 2. 37–52.
- Varga, S. (2020). Two Traditional Central Transylvanian Dances and Their Economic and Cultural/ Political Background. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 65(1) 39–64.
- Varga, S. (2016) Gondolatok Kavecsánszki Máté *Tánc és Közösség* című könyvéhez. [Reflections on the book *Dance and Community* by Máté Kavecsánszki] *Táncstudományi Közlemények*, 8(1). 85–89.
- Varga, S (2009). Gondolatok a tánctanulás hagyományos és intézményesített formáiról [Reflections on traditional and institutionalised forms of dance learning] *FOLKSZEMLE* 2009: December Paper: [https://archivum.folkradio.hu/folkszemle/varga\\_tanctanulas/index.php](https://archivum.folkradio.hu/folkszemle/varga_tanctanulas/index.php)
- Zemon Davis, N (1996). “Women’s History” in Transition: The European Case. In Joan Wallach Scott (ed.) *Feminism and History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 79–104.



