

Passing on Dance: practices of translating the choreographies of Pina Bausch

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ABSTRACT – Passing on Dance: practices of translating the choreographies of Pina Bausch –

This text aims to analyze the process of passing on choreographies, as exemplified in the work of the Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch. It presents this process as a praxis of translation. The paper discusses the limitations and possibilities of translating choreography, as well as the specific potential inherent and visible in practices of translating choreographies by Pina Bausch. From a philosophical and sociological perspective of translation theory and based on a methodology of the ‘praxeological production analysis’ (Klein, 2014a; 2015a), I’m using data gathered during rehearsals and two years of interviews with dancers and collaborators of the Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch. The text will demonstrate that the translation of choreographies is characterized by a paradox between identity and difference.

Keywords: **Dance Theatre. Translation. Identity and Difference.**

RÉSUMÉ – Partager la Danse: pratiques de traduction dans les chorégraphies de Pina Bausch –

Ce texte cherche à analyser le processus de transmission de la chorégraphie en l’abordant à partir de l’exemple du Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch et en présentant ce processus de transmission comme une pratique de traduction. Les limites et les possibilités de la traduction de la chorégraphie sont discutées ici, ainsi que le spépotentiel inhérent et visible dans les pratiques de traduction dans les chorégraphies de Pina Bausch. Dans une perspective philosophique et sociologique de la théorie de la traduction, et reposant méthodologiquement sur ‘l’analyse praxéologique de la production’ (Klein, 2014a; 2015a), le texte utilise les données recueillies par Klein lors des répétitions de l’ensemble et pendant deux années d’entretiens avec des danseurs et des collaborateurs du Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch. Il démontrera que la traduction de la chorégraphie est caractérisée par un paradoxe entre identité et différence.

Mots-clés: **Danse-Théâtre. Traduction. Identité et Différence.**

RESUMO – Transmitir a Dança: legado e tradução das coreografias de Pina Bausch – O texto

analisa a transmissão de coreografias a partir do exemplo do trabalho do Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch – processo apresentado como uma prática de tradução. As possibilidades e os limites da transmissão da coreografia contemporânea são aqui discutidos, bem como os potenciais inerentes às traduções de coreografias da forma como o Tanztheater Wuppertal e a Fundação Pina Bausch as praticam. A partir de teorias filosóficas e sociológicas da tradução e com base em procedimentos metodológicos da “análise praxiológica de produção” (Klein, 2014a; 2015a), trato neste material de dados coletados e avaliados durante visitas a ensaios e em entrevistas realizadas com bailarinos e funcionários do Tanztheater Wuppertal durante mais de dois anos. O texto pretende demonstrar que a transmissão de coreografias é caracterizada pelo paradoxo entre identidade e diferença.

Palavras-chave: **Teatro-Dança. Tradução. Identidade e Diferença.**

Passing on dance – this practice is a central topic of discussion in contemporary dance. With the rise of modern dance at the beginning of the 20th century, in so-called post-modern dance of the 1960s, right up to contemporary dance since the 1990's, the virulent question has been how to preserve and pass on choreographies that are intricately bound to the subjectivity, the life experience of the dancers and the individual style of a distinct choreographer. Unlike in visual art, a 'work' of dance is closely tied to the individual author, the choreographer and the dancers or to the dancing body itself, which makes it visible and discernible. In contrast to theatre, which, like dance, is a time-and-space based art that only exists in and as performance, modern and contemporary choreographies have no literary text as a baseline to be translated into a theatrical language or context. Moreover, the difficulty in passing on contemporary choreography and dance is that – unlike classical ballet or modern dance – they are not based on a specific dance technique. And unlike in classical ballet, most of the choreographies are rarely notated in ways that allow for reconstruction. While methods of documentation on film have developed parallel to modern dance since the beginning of the 20th century, the quality of the film material is quite diverse. Dance videos are to a large extent neither systematically available, nor were they originally produced with the aim of using them for reconstructing dance. Last, but not least, few are archived accordingly.

These fundamental problems in passing on choreographies have become all the more evident since the beginning of the 21st century – due also by the deaths of globally influential choreographers such as Maurice Béjart, Merce Cunningham or Pina Bausch, who worked with their companies for decades. The question is and has been whether and how their paradigmatic and pioneering artistic works could be preserved by passing them on to other companies or to younger dancers in their own companies – or simply by archiving them. Some choreographers emphasize the ephemeral character of dance and the cultural-historical framework of their choreographies, which do not allow for musealization. Merce Cunningham, who passed away in 2009, e.g. arranged for the Merce Cunningham Company – originally founded in 1953 – to go on a two-year tour after his death and then be dissolved¹. The Cunningham Dance Foundation's estate and the rights to his pieces were then transferred to the

Merce Cunningham Trust, which grants leading dance companies the rights to perform Cunningham's works, thus allowing his choreographies to be passed on.

The legacy of Pina Bausch, who also passed away in 2009, is another matter. In her work, passing on the legacy is not simply an enormous and daunting task that her company, the *Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch*, was confronted with upon her death. For years, passing on material was an integral part of her work, and that of her assistants and the company. Passing on roles, scenes and solo dances to new and younger dancers, or pieces to other companies such as the Paris Opera (*Sacre du Printemps* and *Orpheus and Eurydice*), or to 'amateur dancers', as in the case of *Kontakthof* (1978) to younger and elder people, and finally also the passing on of her art to other media, such as movies (feature films like *Klage der Kaiserin* and documentaries), all these acts of passing something on were a central part of Pina Bausch's artistic work and that of her dancers.

How is dance material passed on and what happens in this process? These are questions concerning all artists responsible for such processes. Issues such as the aesthetic limitations of translating choreography, as well as methods and means of translation have also become an important subject of discussion in dance studies itself. While the debate in the field currently focuses mainly on archiving dance, cultures of memory and forms of remembrance (Brinkmann, 2013; Cramer, 2009; 2013; 2014; Thurner, 2010; 2013; Wehren, 2016), this text seeks to explore *practices* of passing on dance, as exemplified in the work of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*, as well as to define passing on dance as a *praxis of translation*. The text will discuss the possibilities and limits of translating contemporary choreography, as well as the potentials inherent in acts of translation as practiced by the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* and the *Pina Bausch Foundation*.

My findings suggest a systematic analysis of artistic processes based on empirical research – coming from the perspective of a sociology of art and using the methodology of “praxeological production analysis” (Klein, 2014a; 2015a). The term production here includes – similar to an extended concept of performance – the relationship between text (the choreography) and paratext (booklets, interviews etc.), text and context, the piece and its framings. And it addresses the relationship between process and product, between methods and the piece itself. Production analysis therefore

emphasizes the work process, which is not merely understood as piece development, but also as a specific artistic, as well as a social and cultural practice. From the perspective of praxeological production analysis, the questions of *how, when, where and what* are central for the production of the aesthetic. With the help of this methodology, I have generated empirical material gained from interviews with dancers and associates of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*, as well as from observing rehearsals. This text is based on the analysis of this data.

What Does It Mean To ‘Pass On’ Material?

The practice of passing on artistic material is like the popular children’s game *Chinese Whispers*² where you pass on information from mouth to ear. The last person in line then says out loud, what was whispered in his or her ear or rather what he or she understood.

It’s a funny game. What usually happens is that the sentence changes a lot during the process of passing it on. But at the same time, it’s a very serious game, because it demonstrates how information is based on subjective perception, as well as how it is distorted in the process of being passed on, especially when something is misunderstood or consciously altered before being passed on. *Chinese Whispers* playfully explores the relationships between original and forgery, authenticity and fake, beginning and end.

The game proves that oral translation can never be one-to-one. Rather, the process of passing something on can be described as an act of translation that inevitably includes discontinuities in form of alternative interpretations, readings, or acts of understandings. This game also demonstrates that the question of original or forgery is not so easy to answer, much like the difficulty in determining a beginning or an end, as this is likewise based on mutual agreement. For example, if a round of *Chinese Whispers* begins with the sentence “once upon a time...”, then this sentence is already a translation, namely that of a long tradition of storytelling.

While *Chinese Whispers* is more about translation in terms of word of mouth, the passing on of know-how, life experience, acquired knowledge, artistic choices or aesthetic style follows a different intent, namely one in

which people seek to pass on everything as correctly as possible, hoping for it to be fully understood, accepted and assimilated by the recipient. This act of passing something on – e.g. from one generation to another – may occur with the help of oral narratives, in written ways (reports, autobiographies, documentations, scientific work) or via images (video, photography or film). Visual and written materials that document and store knowledge have special relevance, when it comes to practices of passing something on across generations and cultures and thus to a translation from the “communicative memory” of an oral narrative culture to a “cultural memory” meant to last (Assmann, A., 2012; 2013; Assmann, J., 2013).

In the process of passing on material, the value of intangible goods – e.g. choreographic or dance knowledge – shifts. This is partially due to every individual attaching different levels of importance to what is being received and thus also assuming varying degrees of responsibility for the material. Moreover, every act of passing something on also situates the intangible goods in new personal, life-world, historical and cultural contexts and these new framings continually generate new relevance, meaning and value. The relationship between translating and framing, in other words: the *how, what, when, and in which direction* a piece is translated, as well as the ways that meaning is generated in this process, are of great importance. Unlike tangible goods, intangible goods are never the same when passed on. But like tangible goods, which may be reprocessed, renovated or restored during translation, aspects of intangible goods that may have been lost, can likewise be reconstructed in the process of passing them on, e.g. with the help of new sources, oral history and/or historiographic research.

Passing something on therefore means more than merely transferring the same object or content. Rather, it is a process of translation exposed to a paradoxical relationship between identity and difference: the act of passing on material seeks to transport the identical, but can only do so via the simultaneous production of difference – and this paradox of identity and difference is exactly what makes the act of passing something on so culturally and artistically relevant.

The act of passing something on is based on a process of giving and taking. This process does not necessarily have to be consciously defined, as e.g. in the case of genetic heritage; however, frequently the giver decides *what, to whom* and *when* they would like to pass something on. These

decisions are usually more than a merely cognitive acts, since unconscious, emotional-affective and irrational factors tend to play a substantial role.

After all, all decisions by the giver would be senseless without a 'receiver', without someone who is willing to adopt something, to accept a heritage, to make it their own and to take responsibility for it. Therefore, the practices of passing something on need people, who are prepared to accept material, to give it meaning, to attach value to it, to consider it important, to cultivate and lead it into the future. Thus, the act of passing something on is related to practices of transfer, transmission, translation, dissemination and distribution, and these practices are related to ethical and moral issues, as well as to questions of social, political and cultural responsibility.

These aspects of passing something on are incorporated in the work of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*. In this company, which has worked together for more than forty years, it has always been everyday practice to pass on roles, scenes, solo dances to new and frequently younger dancers. But this was also always an ambivalent practice in itself. On the one hand, it was a routine part of the rehearsal process. On the other hand, it always produced new unstable and uncertain situations (Klein, 2015b) for the individual dancers passing on their solo parts or learning them from others. For Pina Bausch, passing on her choreographies to amateur dancers e.g. to elder and younger people for *Kontakthof*, and translating her artistic work to other media, such as movies and documentaries – i.e. *Was machen Pina Bausch und ihre Tänzer in Wuppertal*^b (1978), *One Day Pina Asked...* (1983), *Coffee with Pina* (2006), *Tanzträume. Jugendliche tanzen Kontakthof von Pina Bausch*⁴ (2010), or Pina Bausch's own movie *Die Klage der Kaiserin*⁵ (1987) – was always a central element of her artistic work.

Although Pina Bausch never rehearsed one of her own choreographies with another company after becoming director of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*, she did pass on two of her pieces to – just one – other company: *Le Sacre du Printemps*⁶ and *Orpheus und Eurydike*⁷ to the *Paris Opera*. Only after her death did the Pina Bausch Foundation, under direction of her son Salomon Bausch, decided to pass on one more piece – *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen*⁸ (Premiere 2002) – to the Bavarian State Ballet during the 2016/17 season.

So how is it possible to pass something on when dealing with art, which can not easily be categorized or substantialized, but tends to be open, ambiguous, polysemous, sensual, emotional, affective? And: how is it possible to pass something on, when dealing with performance art, which is characterized by the momentary, the eventful and situational? And how is passing on material accomplished when dealing with dances, which are considered to be ephemeral, transitory, inexpressible and the Other of language?

Passing on as a Praxis of Translation: methodological considerations

Based on these initial considerations, passing something on can be described as an act of translation, understood here – in keeping with cultural studies, translation studies and postcolonial studies – as a theoretical concept used to analyze the *how* of transferring choreography and dance (Klein, 2014b; 2015c). Translating choreography and dance is not about decoding motives or meanings of what was intended. “Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point-establishing, with this touch rather than with the point, the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity- a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, there upon pursuing its own course according to the laws of linguistic flux” (Benjamin, 2002, p. 261). In this sense, the dancers of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* pass on their roles, e.g. during the rehearsals with Bavarian State Ballet for *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen* by communicating the *what* and the *how*, as well as the *why*, but not as causal justification for the transposition of an emotion into motion, or as psychologically motivated meaning. Instead, the Bavarian State Ballet dancers should learn to stop asking questions at the point where “they are not necessary anymore” (own interview).

Translating choreography and dance is especially sensitive due to the impossibility of translating movement – movement being ephemeral, existing only in the moment, while at the same time leaving a lasting trace. In this respect, every act of passing something on is confronted with the possibility of failure. This is visible in execution, in the movement practice, namely when the translated movement, follows “its own path” (own interview), as Walter Benjamin so aptly formulated.

Translating choreography and dance may therefore, according to Alexander Garcia Düttmann (1994), be described as a praxis of translating the untranslatable. The productivity of translation – its poetic, social and cultural potential – lies precisely in this impossibility, determined by an oscillation between routinized practices and the constantly new.

When describing the *process* of translation, the practices of translation and thus the question of the mode of translation comes into focus. *How* does translation work and *how* can we study practices of translation and their performative effects from an approach that associates movement with more than just the individual body (e.g. in the sense that the body makes movements and thereby comes into contact with the world), but also as a practice of negotiation (i.e. movements make bodies; they are the constitutive link between humans, objects and the world)? The research approach that such a form of reading dance paves the way for is a *praxeology of the social and cultural translation of movement*. It inquires into *how* these complex processes of exchange and negotiation take place in and as movement practices, by concentrating on the corporeal practices that the translations are based on.

Practices show themselves in their situatedness, their materiality and corporeality. Therefore the investigation of translating dance requires a different focus than semiotic approaches oriented along a dance culture's system of signs and symbols. Practical skill and implicit knowledge of bodies reveal themselves in such translation situations. This is very evident in the exemplary case of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*: the bodies of the dancers are shaped by daily training and specific research methods, which produce specific practical skills. These are based on knowledge gained through experience and the knowledge is implicit insofar as the skills are not reflected in the situation.

A praxeological perspective on artistic production allows the activities, actions, and materiality of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal's* work processes to come into focus: practices of warming-up, rehearsals, improvisation, research, notation, documentation, composition and choreography, of reflection, archiving, memory, critique and feedback, etc. This set of practices is organized along collectively shared, practical forms of knowledge about dance theater, which – as physical and implicit knowledge – always also produce difference. So not only does the *Tanztheater*

Wuppertal's methodology and thus their practical know-how differ from other dance groups. The execution of these practices itself in fact produces other bodies, habitual dispositions and subjectivities. Practices of movement translation must therefore be understood as a set of mental and corporal activities.

Practices of Translation: practical research findings

As a practice of translation, the act of passing something on can be summarized in five points, which I already formulated in more general terms above and will now use to clarify my argument:

- The act of passing something on is based on practices of medial translation, which are subject to the paradox of identity and difference.
- The act of passing something on is always brittle, fragile, and ambiguous.
- The act of passing something on requires a transmitter and a receiver, a giver and a taker.
- The act of passing something on is related to ethnic-moral, social and cultural-political responsibility.
- The act of passing something on has no definitive beginning, nor clear ending.

The act of passing something on is based on practices of medial translation, which are subject to the paradox of identity and difference

When Pina Bausch's choreographies are passed on, it is a complex, time-consuming, intricate, laborious and expensive process. The process of translating the piece *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen* took nine years in total, and as she describes in an interview (Bayerisches Staatsballett, 2016, p. 7), Bettina Wagner-Bergelt, at that time associate director of the Bavarian State Ballet, only actually considered its admission into repertoire after the premiere of the piece's reenactment in 2007. Rehearsals then took a year and a half with breaks from autumn 2014 until April 2016. It was a process involving many people, including fifteen dancers of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*. And in the end, after all dancers of the Bavarian State Ballet had learned various roles, with over thirty dancers from Bavarian State Ballet

forming two casts for the piece, as well as other artistic and technical staff, it added up to around one hundred people having been somehow involved in the process.

When choreographing classical ballet repertoire, most companies use notations. Neoclassical companies and some modern companies also work with notators and choreologists, who record the pieces in writing. This relationship between movement and writing – evident even in the very basis of choreo-graphy (*choros*: to dance; *graphein*: to write) and always situating choreography in relation to performance and writing (Klein, 2015d, p. 20) – is not apparent in Pina Bausch's work. No notations of her choreographies exist, contrary to many other modern and contemporary choreographers, and therefore, there are no 'pre-scriptions' for performing the dance. Similarly, there is also quite of bit of scepticism towards 'transcription', i.e. towards dance reviews (critiques) and even academic research.

The auratic character of dance is here understood to lie in the eventfulness and singularity of every performance, which stands in contrast to a lasting text. However, contrary to this position, I argue that passing on pieces can be described as a paradoxical process of translation: on the one hand, it is intermediate, intersubjective and always different, and on the other hand, this same difference actually creates something identical.

The paradox of identity and difference in the translation process is particularly evident in the relationship between dance, visual and written media, video material and written notes, with the translation paradox anyhow specially ingrained in the specific mediality of pictorial and written recording media.

Video Material

The Pina Bausch Archive, which belongs to the Pina Bausch Foundation, houses more than 7,500 videos. It contains video recordings of rehearsals and performances and demonstrates that existing video material of Pina Bausch's work is rich and comprehensive.

This material is of various technical and aesthetic quality: the oldest videos, e.g. from the 1970's, are of poorer picture quality than newer material. Moreover, in some recordings the camera hides more than it reveals (especially of performances mainly filmed in medium close-up).

This is inevitably the case with pieces in which a lot is happening simultaneously on different parts of the stage – as in most of Pina Bausch's pieces, which are notoriously based on that compositional technique of montage and collage, which revolutionized theater and dance in the 1970's. Some videos are 'cut off' at the beginning or the end. Since the pieces were performed with various casts, it not only becomes necessary to consult cast lists from nearly 40 years of dance history, but the pieces themselves also vary depending on their different casts. In other words: practices of passing on material are not solely based on the production as a whole, but on each individual separate performance. This means that the recordings of each and every performance are relevant for the transmission of the material. In the case of the piece *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen*, performed by the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* cast on nine tours between 2003 and 2015 (in Paris and Tokyo (both 2003), Barcelona and New York (both in 2004), Venice (2005), Sao Paulo (2006), Lisbon (2007), Geneva (2011) and Paris (2015)), fourteen dancers premiered and took part in the development of the piece. Thirteen years later, only twelve of them still danced in Paris. However, five new dancers had meanwhile joined the ensemble and because two roles had been divided, the cast of previously fourteen dancers increased to sixteen.

Video as a medium of passing material on brings up additional problems of translation: the piece is recorded from a spectator's point of view. This is a perspective, which most dancers do not recognize, because they have always been dancing *in* the piece and have only observed it from the wings. So dancers have to re-translate the movement material during rehearsal into a mirror image of what the video camera registered from the spectator's point of view. Ultimately, video is moreover also only a two-dimensional medium that attempts to portray a three-dimensional art, one that is time and movement based – on the one hand, as a spatial and dramatic art, on the other as choreography. The spatiality, which is of elementary importance to the dancer, is not clearly recognizable in the video itself, even with best image quality. Temporality is likewise a problem, because the camera has its own temporality, i.e. movement generally appears faster or slower. This different temporality of the film medium is further enhanced by shifts between close-ups and long shots, and even more so by editing. In addition, lighting conditions appear

different on camera and film than on stage (which is also evident in photos of set design). Camera operation, settings and possible film editing may change the temporality and spatiality of the movements, making them appear slower or faster, smaller or larger.

As these examples show, video does not replicate. In fact, due to its specific mediality, a difference is inscribed on what should be depicted. In this sense, the video promises an identical reproduction of reality, but produces a simulacrum. Due to these medial failures of translation, video can be no more than an entry-point for passing on pieces, providing a first impression of the piece or a scene, and giving a general overview of a production.

Written Manuscripts

There is no notation of Pina Bausch's pieces. But there are a large number of written and figurative notes compiled by different people. The written material available for one piece is therefore very different from that for another. Moreover, there is an enormous amount of annotated notes by Pina Bausch herself in her personal archive, which is not yet accessible. I have therefore only gained some idea of what these notes look like through various interviews that I have done, the few photos that I was allowed to see and fragments published in the volume *Tanz erben* (Wagenbach; Pina Bausch Foundation 2014), as well as insights gained from the exhibition *Pina Bausch and the Tanztheater*, shown from 04 March – 24 July 2016 at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn/ Germany and then from 16 September 2016 – 09 January 2017 at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin/ Germany.

These exhibitions also addressed Pina Bausch's methods, and thus something that is practically common knowledge of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*: Pina Bausch used to ask her dancers questions during rehearsals. However, as the interviews and dancer's notes reveal, these questions were usually prompts, sometimes proverbs, imagery, and occasionally actual questions. In the case of the piece *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen* we have things such as: "shaking someone awake", "having something in your mind", "make yourself smaller", "gleefully destroying something" or "children playing at being adults". During rehearsals, Bausch sat behind at a big table, with not only coffee and cigarettes in front of her, but also a big pile of paper and pencils: she wrote

everything down by hand. Each ‘answer’ by a dancer was recorded on a separate piece of paper. Considering that she asked around one hundred questions per rehearsal process for a new piece and ca. twenty dancers participated in most pieces, it means she received around 2.000 answers. So we can imagine the extent of these notes just for one piece alone and then extrapolate that to a total of about fifty choreographies. Despite asking questions in both German and English, she wrote her notes in German, in shorthand, using abbreviations and sometimes giving names to things observed during rehearsal. In other words, these are her private notes and they were written accordingly. She did not hand them over to anyone to read, but instead compiled and protected them in her bag during the production process. After that, they disappeared into her personal archive. Even if the Pina Bausch Foundation would grant access to this material at some point in the future, it would be an enormous challenge to decode and understand her subjective writing, which was never reviewed for intersubjective comprehension, but whose encryption was probably – quite the contrary – very much intended. It would theoretically be possible to crosscheck her notes with rehearsal recordings, but not everything that happened in rehearsal was recorded on film. Another possibility would be to compare her notes to those written by the dancers, who participated in the same rehearsals.

For the dancers themselves – in 2013, the company consisted of thirty-two dancers from eighteen different countries, of these eighteen were women and fourteen men – also made notes during rehearsals. All of them had rehearsal notebooks. Some of them wrote down all questions and answers, others only noted the ones they thought would be interesting or had personally observed and some only made note about things to which they had given an answer to with their own bodies, voices, materials and props. Sometimes they wrote in German or English, and from time to time, they also wrote in their native languages, e.g. Spanish, French, Italian, Japanese or Korean.

If we look at the rehearsal books of some of these dancers, the problem of an individual dancer passing on choreography clearly emerges as a paradox of identity and difference between (the) piece and (the) writing. Apparently, none of the dancers were methodical in their notes, because – unlike in an academic research process – this was and is irrelevant for a

process of artistic research and analysis, as well as for the development of a piece. Therefore, the notes not only vary greatly in their comprehensiveness and are written in different languages, they also reveal how different each dancer's understanding of the questions was and how diverse their answers. It also shows how they subjectively ascribed their own specific importance and meaning to them and eventually translated them into their own native languages, or into drawings, verse or poetry. In addition, some dancers did not keep their rehearsal books, and so these are now lost to us. Moreover, many dancers, who participated in the development of certain pieces, left the company decades ago, which makes accessing that material much harder, even if it would still be available.

Other written materials that may be important for the translation process are stage manager notes and scene lists, as well as the lists of chosen music pieces. However, the latter have to be completed and compared. They are moreover – especially for the last pieces – mostly the work of Andreas Eisenschneider, who was responsible for the music together with Matthias Burkert, and who usually merged the soundtrack into music collages with fluid transitions that no longer allow for a clear distinction of individual music pieces.

Photographic Material

Photos of the pieces – of which there are thousands and thousands – could be yet another source of material to assist in passing on pieces, especially concerning e.g. costumes and props. Most of the photos were made by a few professional photographers, who worked for the company for many years such as Ulli Weiss and Gert Weigelt. Dancer Jan Minarik took many photos from the early phase on, as later did scenographer Peter Pabst. In addition, there are countless photos taken by dancers, as well as by Pina Bausch herself, who took pictures – as well as shot videos – during research trips. Some of this material also found its way into program booklets. But photographs can only provide clues. They are only the stills of movements, situations and scenes; snapshots of the *research*¹⁰, which give some indication of what the company saw on its research trips and what individuals possibly may have processed in the respective co-production. However, even here the paths of translation are convoluted and fractured: because dancers never translated their experiences one to one, nor reflected

on the relationship between what happened to them during rehearsals and what they had seen, lived and experienced before. The *why*, which the audience – the public, the critics and academia – is interested in, is not only of little relevance to the artistic process, but also too restrictive, too determinant, and too definitive.

As a whole, this glimpse of the available written and visual material points to a fundamental problem in passing on choreography via media: there is a fair amount of material, a vast array of images, film material and writings that not only needs to be compiled, digitalized and archived, but also has to be generated anew. Above all, it has to be evaluated in order to gain any kind of relevance for a sustainable reconstruction of dance works. For this it requires scientific know-how on the one hand, and, on the other hand, intense cooperation by those, who created the materials in the first place, as well as those who accompanied the production at every performance (stage managers¹¹, etc.), i.e. the dancers and those responsible for costumes, set design, technical equipment and props. In this respect, the process of reappraising and completing the materials needing for passing on a piece is also subject to a strict time factor, namely – if one may say so – that of the lifetime of “Generation Pina”, i.e. the people, who actually accompanied her artistic work.

The act of passing something on is always brittle, fragile, and ambiguous

Even if the translation paradox of identity and difference shows itself in the writings, images and filmed material, these only function as points of entry, as reminders and sources of control in the process of passing on choreography. In the case of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*, where dancers developed many scenes and all solos by themselves, the process of orally, linguistically and corporeally transmitting material from one person to another is particularly decisive. My second argument is that this in particular is where the brittleness, fragility, ambiguity and productivity of translation accompanying the paradox of the identity and difference shows itself in the process of passing on artistic material.

For when Pina Bausch’s pieces have been passed on to date, it has been a complex process of multiple steps. Even during Pina Bausch’s lifetime, former dancers directed rehearsals for pieces being passed on, such

as Bénédicte Billiet and Jo Ann Endicott in the case of *Kontakthof* for teenagers, or Dominique Mercy for *Le Sacre du Printemps* at the Paris Opera. Of course, Pina Bausch – as choreographer of the piece and absolute authority – had the last word in all rehearsals that she attended. This is clearly demonstrated in the documentary *Tanzträume* (2010), which portrays the rehearsals for *Kontakthof* with 14 to 18-year-old teenagers (2008) and shows not only the young people, but also the rehearsal directors respectfully and nervously awaiting the choreographer's eye. Sometimes, Pina Bausch herself took over the rehearsal process of passing on a piece, as in the emergency situation, when the dancer meant to portray 'the victim' in *Le Sacre du Printemps* was indisposed and Kyomi Ichida had to very quickly replace her and learn the role.

Based on various physical and linguistic practices of passing on material, it becomes clear that the process of passing on choreography is one, in which speaking and dancing are mixed together to a hybrid act of speaking and dancing. Both are only implied, but nevertheless merge in the act of passing something on to become a comprehensible whole that the receiver can understand.

In addition, the mere linguistic act of passing on material already happens in a wide range of ways. While Jo Ann Endicott uses the imperative form when passing on her solo to the young dancer Joy in *Kontakthof* - "Joy, you must..." (Tanzträume, 2010, 02:54-05:19) – and in this way seeks to communicate a specific movement quality, Pina Bausch – in passing on the 'sacrificial dance' – focuses on the movements, which she, wearing rubber boots, a cigarette in one hand and an aviator's cap on her head, suggests perfectly form-wise without being thematically, emotionally or figuratively overwhelming. Instead, she illustrates her movements with words and fragments of sentences.

Pina Bausch: The second time [...] you take up your position, make yourself rounder and stretch [...] too far [...] think about not going too far.

Yes [...] yes, that's it [...] and then [...] two [...]

Kyomi Ichida: Ok, fine.

Pina Bausch: Tata tata ta ta.

Kyomi Ichida: Ah, like that.

Pina Bausch: Tata tata ta ta, there. But you don't have to [...] Don't think about it. Don't do the arms extra. You didn't do it right with the music just now. It's really two [...] and well accented, okay?

Yes. Tata ta ta. Yes.

Spare yourself here for a moment, perhaps just do it from somewhere here...

Kyomi Ichida: Yes.

Pina Bausch: And then we'll carry on with this one.

Kyomi Ichida: Too late.

Pina Bausch: Yes, overall you were a bit late this time, compared to last time you took a different [...]

Kyomi Ichida: At this moment?

Pina Bausch: Yes, you were too late. But you also have to mark a difference here, so [...]

Pina Bausch: Play, play it again, where there's a [...] that's the trumpet, isn't it? (Bausch; Ichida, 2013, p. 50).

The disparities manifesting themselves here differentiate even more, when 'translators' are involved, as for example, when solos are passed on. These acts of passing on material happen individually from dancer to dancer, and differ greatly depending on the constellation of the couple: some convey their role through form, some others through technique, others through a metaphor-rich visual language, and others in a more analytical way. Some speak a lot about what it means to them, how they feel about it; other don't. And they are passing on to dancers, who have potentially learned and habitualized different techniques than their own, as is the case with company members, who have not been taught at the *Folkwang University* in Essen and therefore know little about Jooss-Leeder methods, or who are classically trained, like the dancers of the Bavarian State Ballet. In addition, due to their different countries of origin and their varying proficiency in German or English, there are additional linguistic barriers that sometimes lead to things being understood differently. Overly individualized routines and schemata as commonly implied by specific practices are not recognizable here in terms of the way material is passed on. These are more likely to be found where individual, personal and intimate, direct physical translation is considered precept for highly-qualified acts of passing on material true to the original.

In addition to the cultural and technical differences regarding dance technique, age difference also play a crucial role: the younger generations of dancers – and this also applies to the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* – are not only more athletic than the first generation of dancers in the 1970's, even at the

same age. Their athleticism and sportiness, which has generally found its way into contemporary dance and which they have internalized – like the techniques learned – as habitual disposition, characterize their interpretations of their roles in terms of corporeal comprehension. Dancers taking on roles – such as Marta Navarrete and Mia Rudic in the role of Nazareth Panadero in *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen* – have different body types. They are not only taller, shorter, thinner or more corpulent, their bodies also differ in terms of e.g. proportions, length of the arms and legs or strength of bone structure. This alters movement figurations. Scenes in which the relationship between body and voice play an important role – such as many by Mechthild Grossmann, Lutz Förster or Nazareth Panadero – change too. This comes as no surprise considering that the voice creates and names the subject, i.e. makes subjectivity audible. How would we perceive Marta and Mia on stage if they had no voice? In what ways is a character developed and portrayed by Lutz Förster transformed when someone speaks his text with a softer voice and a clear accent?

Last, but not least, in the case of some pieces, the person passing on a solo is no longer the person that developed it, but is already from a second cast or a third generation. In other words, multiple acts of translation have already taken place.

The opposite was the case when the piece *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen* was passed on to the Bavarian State Ballet. Here the original cast of the premiere passed on the dances, meaning them to be authentic and original. This process also included dancers, who themselves had not been dancing for some time and who now had to re-identify with the situation of being a dancer. But dancers still in the company likewise faced the difficulty of reconstructing or better reenacting the authentic, reacquiring it via the body in 2014, twelve years after the premiere. In this sense, the ‘authentic’ should on the one hand not be seen as something essential, but as a differently framed practice of production. On the other hand, we see here that the act of passing on always relies on positions that are only interpreted in retrospect as being original and authentic, an assumption that Walter Benjamin already formulated in his famous text *The Task of the Translator* (Benjamin 2002). Once again, the act of passing

on presents itself here as a permanent translation process connected to specific positions.

These translation steps clearly reveal that issues of authenticity and originality become obsolete in the process of passing on material, despite being meticulously pursued, especially since Pina Bausch's death. Instead, the paradox of identity and difference is given far more consideration, insofar as differences are accepted in the interpretation of a role, while expecting choreographic parameters such as expressiveness, intensity, accentuation, rhythm and timing to remain identical. This also renders all criticism obsolete, which claims it impossible to pass on the roles individually linked to specific dancers. It has often been argued that all Pina Bausch's dancers used their own names and developed their roles out of situative, personal perception, experience and emotion. But multiple cases of roles having been passed on to new dancers in reenacted pieces have demonstrated that it is not all about subjectivity or the specific characteristics of a specific dancer. Instead, what is being passed on is the form and above all a specific movement quality, which contributes to the form in order for it to turn into dance. Personality and character are already embedded in this form; making them come alive means having the ability to create the specific movement quality linked to the form.

If we consider the choreography or each solo dance to be purely subjective, then it becomes nothing other than the private amusement of those dancing it. But by translating it into a form that takes on different 'colorations', as Pina Bausch called them, through specific movement qualities and by surrendering the piece as 'art' to an audience, it transcends subjective experience.

There is no doubt that passing on solos and scenes changes them. In order to translate specific parts of the piece in a way that the choreography as a whole retains its quality and identity, Pina Bausch always took the liberty of varying, altering and sometimes even taking out parts of a piece.

However after her death this one omnipotent voice is missing. So far, no one has yet claimed the authority of correctly reading her choreographies. No one, neither dancer, nor intimate collaborators were sufficiently involved in the choreographic development and there are but few dancers, who have watched the pieces from outside and in their

entirety. In the same way that it is difficult to engage in artistic production without clear hierarchies and clear power structures, processes of translation and of passing on material also require unambiguous power structures, even when collectively organized.

In this sense, a first point of reference was fixed at the time of Pina Bausch's death: the last version, the last performance before her death is commonly considered the frame of reference. But in this regard, something has been locked into place that Pina Bausch herself would probably have opened up again and also practiced differently as stage requirements or another necessities arose. Faithfulness to the work in the sense of fixing the form would not have corresponded to her own artistic approach. But now, there is no one that might and could manage all this. Rehearsal coordination teams have gathered to organize the process of passing material on together – in the case of *Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen*, it is the dancers Ruth Amarante, Daphnis Kokkinos and Azusa Seyama. Daphnis Kokkinos was part of the original cast of the piece in 2002 and has helped in previous revivals. Azusa Seyama was a dancer in the piece¹². These artistic practices of passing on material are a sort of oral history.

From this perspective, the brittleness and fragility inherent to the process of passing on material are also caused by different planes of temporality interwoven in the very act of translation: First of all, we have the present, in which the act of passing on material – on the one hand – is currently taking place and in which – on the other hand – a piece is being performed, which must pass as art featuring these specific dancers. The second temporality is that of the choreography: a memory and a reenactment of Pina Bausch's choreographic art and her dancers' creativity at that time. Lastly, the third temporal plane is that of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal's* dancers themselves, having last danced the same roles in 2015, so thirteen years after the premiere – at almost the same time as the dancers of the Bavarian State Ballet. Thirteen years are almost half of a dancer's lifetime and the 'piece', formerly developed with mostly young male dancers, is now, thirteen years later, energetically and physically a totally different one than with the young dancers of the Bavarian State Ballet.

The act of passing something on requires a transmitter and a receiver, a giver and a taker

The Bavarian State Ballet's program booklet for *Kinder von gestern heute und morgen* states that the transfer of artistic material took place on a one-to-one basis. Fourteen *Tanztheater Wuppertal* dancers passed on their roles to twenty-eight Bavarian State Ballet dancers. Mathematically, one-to-one here clearly means one-to-two. However, what the phrase actually means is that material was passed on directly in interpersonal encounters. The goal was to adopt the finished role associated with a specific person exactly as is, while simultaneously being oneself. The paradox of identity and difference is hereby experienced in practice. In order to allow the dancers to appear on stage, a decision was made: they would dance the roles of others, but use their own names. Thus the paradox of identity and difference also reveals itself in the relationship between giver and taker, between the 'Other' and the 'Self'.

In all interviews, the dancers of the Bavarian State Ballet emphasized how important and unusual this personal act of passing material on was in the process of learning the choreography, even in contrast to working with and for other prominent choreographers such as Gerhard Bohner, Mary Wigman, Richard Siegal, John Cranko or Jérôme Robbins, whose works the Bavarian State Ballet had previously rehearsed. In interviews and conversations, dancers of both companies describe the working process as irreplaceable, unique, open, intense, stimulating and surprising. Bavarian State Ballet dancers believe to have discovered new possibilities in themselves, felt inspired and influenced by the rehearsal period – precisely because they were able to work so directly with individual dancers and in this way became familiarized with the aesthetics of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*. In an age of digitalization and anonymous communication, this corporeal practice of passing on knowledge presents itself as a privileged and almost anachronistic process. Not only because the procedure is immensely expensive, but also because young dancers can directly learn from famous role models and have the chance to personally work with them one-on-one, even if learning in face-to-face situations is a common practice in artistic dance.

The act of passing something on is related to ethnic-moral, social and cultural-political responsibility

In his book *Specters of Marx*, French philosopher Jacques Derrida writes: “We are inheritors, which does not mean that we have or that we receive this or that, that a given inheritance enriches us one day with this or that, but that the being we are is first of all inheritance, like it or not, know it or not” (Derrida, 1994, p. 54). Heritage is, thus, beyond our control: you cannot choose it, you cannot be an inheritance, or what has been passed on does not belong to you. However, Derrida does not release the heirs of their responsibilities. On the contrary: responsibility is not conceivable beyond inheritance. Responsibility also always means: to give a response. Inheritance thus obliges us to constantly answer the question what it means to us here and now, and how we can form the future with it. This responsibility is especially present in the passing on of dance as art, i.e. of a bodily art form. This particularly applies to the pieces of Pina Bausch, this ‘anthropologist of dance’, who collected everyday gestures to aesthetically transform them. It is not a compulsive act of ‘keeping the pieces alive’, nor a standstill, as this text has aimed to show, but rather a movement: a brittle and fragile transformation at the crossroads of identity and difference. And that transformation takes place against the backdrop of what is culturally, socially and politically relevant and (also economically) acceptable in order to promote contemporary art.

For What Tomorrow... is the promising title of a collection of texts featuring Derrida and psychoanalyst and historicist Élisabeth Roudinesco in dialogue (Derrida; Roudinesco, 2004). In the section “Choosing One’s Heritage” (Derrida; Roudinesco, 2004, p. 1-19) Derrida situates heritage at the crossroads of tradition and the critique of conservatism. To him, heritage is always an ambivalent process, one that oscillates between actively approaching something that has always been antecedent and passively accepting it. On the one hand, the finitude of life requires a heritage both to be given as well as taken. On the other, it is precisely the imbalance between life’s shortness and the permanence of artistic work that invites us to make conscious choices, as well as engage in acts of discriminatory elimination, when passing on certain legacies. By linking the gift received to acts of autonomous continuity, the external commission to self-determined

responsibility, Derrida opens up – with recourse to Emmanuel Lévinas – a conceptual realm of thought in which heritage, tradition and responsibility are caught up between dignity of the individual and the position of the other, or in other words: in which the attitude towards an inheritance is marked by an ambivalence of preserving tradition and the will to incite change.

For Derrida, the secret is where heritage and responsibility overlap. “One always inherits from a secret – which says ‘read me, will you ever be able to do so?’” (Derrida, 1994, p. 18) Inheritance always means two things: on one side, a responsibility to activate the inheritance between tradition and renewal, and on the other hand, the doubt of being able to adequately fulfill the task, which the inheritance entails. Doubt is part of a legacy’s interminable character, especially in the case of an intangible legacy such as art: it is necessary to filter classify, choose, and criticize. Under these circumstances, the only way to honor this responsibility and remain faithful to the inheritance is to use the legacy to counteract the legacy. In other words, by addressing the legacy over and over again in different ways, in order to keep it alive, or even better: to reawaken it time and time again.

The act of passing something on has no definitive beginning, nor clear ending

The performative aspect in dealing with heritage is particularly valid when applied to an intangible cultural heritage such as dance, which is said to be ephemeral and elusive: the meaning of dance heritage is contingent. People, performances, rehearsals, company constellations or public reception are subject to laws of perception and interpretation that are essentially open and infinite. The meaning of Pina Bausch’s legacy is not clear-cut; it has to be re-negotiated again and again in different places and at different times among dancers, as well as between dancers and the public and is continually subject to new academic reinterpretations. Various different individual interests, cultural-political power constellations and research policies play a significant role here. This text has tried to demonstrate what a difficult and fragile process of approximation this is solely due to the state of existing material and the possibilities, conditions and limitations of passing something on. It is a translation process whose productivity lies in failure, in error, in the impossibility of translation or even interpretation. Recognizing this failure, developing its productivity

and using it constructively are important aspects of research – not only in academic research on dance. As this text has also shown, passing on choreography and dance especially touches on sociological aspects of interpersonal relationships, whose scientific exploration utilizes methods of qualitative social research, such as interviews, ethnographies, etc.

But even in research, it has always been difficult to explain the non-understanding and the non-understood. Pina Bausch's work and the passing on of her artistic work also forces researchers to take a different route, off the beaten paths of performance and production analysis, of semiotic and narrative interpretations. Instead, it makes sense to apply procedures that see the art work as a production, in other words: as a mutually determinative and productive relationship between working process, piece and reception as illustrated here in the exemplary process of passing on pieces by the *Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch*.

Notes

- ¹ The tour ended on December 31st, 2011 in New York/ USA.
- ² This game is called *Chinese Whispers* in countries of the former British Empire and known as *Telephone* in the United States of America.
- ³ What do Pina Bausch and her Dancers do in Wuppertal
- ⁴ Dancing Dreams. Youngsters Dance Pina Bausch's *Kontaktthof*
- ⁵ The Empress' Lament
- ⁶ Rite of Spring
- ⁷ Orpheus and Eurydice
- ⁸ For the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
- ⁹ Literally translated from German: "on your heart"
- ¹⁰ The English word research is used by members of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* to describe their ensemble travels to co-producing countries.
- ¹¹ The German term here is "Abendregie": the person, who has to do this job, oversees all performances and has a running list of all scenes. The job is a mix of assistant director and the English "stage manager". For lack of an exact

equivalent in the English-speaking theatre world, “stage manager” will be used in this text, although slightly different in its actual tasks.

- ¹² Others are also involved in the process: the company’s artistic director, scenographer Peter Pabst, and costume designer Marion Cito as well as Matthias Burkert, who was in Wuppertal responsible for the “Abendregie”. Above all, it is the last three, who watched the pieces from the outside most often. But they likewise have their defined realms of work: costumes have to be re-sewn for new dancers; a difficult process if the fabric can no longer be obtained. The set has to be adapted to a new stage and re-aligned with the choreography of the lights. Since Peter Pabst’s set designs frequently have mobile elements or elaborate materials that need to be checked. The stage manager’s set list has to be passed on, because it is a very musical and rhythmic enterprise in itself, with its complex of lighting, set, music and choreographic structure aka *collage technique*, with temporality playing a central role.

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