

Ausdruckstanz

Traditions, translations, transmissions

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Definitions between history and memory

The term *Ausdruckstanz* (dance of expression) defines a heterogeneous group of choreographic languages and teaching methods that became known in the German-speaking regions in the early twentieth century.¹ Though these languages and methods covered a broad range of theoretical, practical, and aesthetic approaches (whose definitions emphasized their “new,” “modern,” “artistic,” “free,” “rhythmic,” “plastic,” and “expressive” character) they still agreed on certain major principles: dance was aesthetically independent from the other arts; body movement was closely bound to emotional and mental processes and reflected the rhythm of the cosmos; the dancer’s role was that of creator–interpreter; and improvisation was of major importance. During the first international tours *Ausdruckstanz* was defined as “German dance,” so as to differentiate it, in particular, from American modern dance. With the rise of Nazism, this foreign definition was transformed into *Deutscher Tanz*, and used in a nationalist and racist key by the regime and by the artists, critics, and cultural managers who followed their directives. From the Second World War on, the term *Ausdruckstanz* took on an increasingly broad hold and ended up conveying a falsely monolithic image of this tradition. The picture was further muddled when the term was erroneously translated into the Italian, the English, and the French as “expressionist dance,” making it the equivalent of the expressionist movement in literature, painting, film, and theater. *Ausdruckstanz* was implicitly attributed an ideological and aesthetic affinity with expressionism (which history – though not without debate – had deemed revolutionary and anti-bourgeois), and banned by Nazism as a consequence. Unlike expressionist art, however, which was labeled as degenerate and then silenced, *Ausdruckstanz* continued to flourish with the regime’s support after 1933.

The shifting definitions are only the first layer of a belabored cultural, artistic, and political history, the full complexity and ambiguity of which has only recently come to the fore and has not yet been fully examined. They neither resolve the ideological issues *Ausdruckstanz* raises nor explain how the movement was, or still is, perceived.

Interest in the history of *Ausdruckstanz* was first aroused in coincidence with important celebrations of its two major exponents: two publications on Wigman – a book by Walter Sorell² in 1973, and a biography written thirteen years later, in occasion of her centennial, by Hedwig Müller³ – and an exhibition on Laban at the Tanzarchiv of Leipzig⁴ in 1979. This historical rediscovery led in 1986 to the birth of an association named after Wigman (Mary Wigman Gesellschaft) that organized the first international conference on *Ausdruckstanz*⁵ and founded the magazine *Tanzdrama*, which in turn rekindled the debate on dance in Germany.⁶ The fact that early attempts to narrate the history of *Ausdruckstanz* were entrusted mostly to episodic monographs, biographies, often with a hagiographic slant, and exhibition catalogues⁷ has to be seen in relation with the state of dance studies, which was then a discipline in search of identity.

Early research on *Ausdruckstanz* was also prompted by *Tanztheater* (dance theater), a genre that made a name for itself in the early 1970s. This label took in the rather heterogeneous choreographic research of a young generation of artists (including Hans Kresnik, Gerhard Bohner, Pina Bausch, and, later, Susanne Linke and Reinhild Hoffmann), who considered themselves direct heirs to *Ausdruckstanz*, in as much as they had been trained by one or more masters of this tradition (mostly Wigman and Kurt Jooss). The innovation launched in the same period in East Germany by pupils of Gret Palucca and/or Jean Weidt, such as Tom Schilling, Harald Wandtke, Dietmar Seyffert and Arila Siegert, and others, was also presented as *Tanztheater*. If scholars have reached no consensus on what the two currents of the new *Tanztheater* share in their aesthetics, there is no doubt about their ideological differences: in the West it was a tradition that aimed at subverting the status quo, in the East it was a tradition that supported it.⁸

The term *Tanztheater* had first been introduced by Rudolf von Laban and Kurt Jooss in the 1920s. It defined the trend in German modern dance that sought to integrate dance into the major theatrical circuits and adhered to a model of training which taught various techniques side by side. This trend was opposed by Wigman's ideal of *absoluter Tanz* (absolute dance), which demanded that dance assert greater independence in its narrative apparatuses, in respect to institutions (the opera houses, essentially) and, last but not least, from ballet. But for the generation of

the 1970s, *Ausdruckstanz* became *the* source for the new *Tanztheater* as a whole. From this perspective, it had successfully nurtured the new avant-garde movement because it had managed to keep its artistic lesson alive and its ideological charge intact during the 1930s and the early 1940s (despite Nazi exploitation of its most irrational component) and even during the 1950s and 1960s (despite weak institutional support and scarce receptivity by new generations of dancers and audiences, a situation that Dore Hoyer's suicide in 1968 made emblematic). The label *Tanztheater*, used by artists and critics, but not explored by historians, had re-evoked the flourishing and eclectic years of the 1920s without questioning the fate of this art or its ideology. This was symptomatic of the uneasiness artists and critics felt in placing dance in a trajectory of history (and of memory) that included both the Nazi period and the years immediately thereafter.⁹ The need to root the new in the old, which was felt by Jooss (who returned in West Germany in 1949 after sixteen years of exile in Great Britain),¹⁰ and by the younger generation of the choreographers of the 1970s, revealed on one hand the nostalgia for an old tradition, and on the other hand the desire to learn about one's own fascinating past, whose real historical dimension was not as yet fully known. It also grew out of the process of invention (and re-invention) of the tradition that had traversed the history of *Ausdruckstanz* ever since its major exponents of the 1910s and 1920s had molded it as the essence of "authentic German-ness" and as the most complete realization of the Nietzschean ideal of community, which was a starting point for German cultural rebirth. How then, if *Ausdruckstanz* was able to shape the desire to regenerate the national body as an original form of knowledge and archaic traditions,¹¹ could such great oblivion have followed? How much of this tradition was transmitted and how much of it was forgotten or betrayed in the attempts to recover it on an artistic and a historical level? Which aspects of this process were repressed and which were re-worked? Where (in the East? in the West? in the diasporical dimension?) and when (after the Second World War? after 1949 in the West? after 1953 in the East?) does it break continuity with the past? What is the relationship between ruptures and continuities in the historical and memorial narratives? Which is the road to take between truth in history, faithfulness of memory and right of forgetting?¹²

After 1945 generations of dancers in both Germanies inherited a single tradition that was expressed differently according to the cultural politics of their respective governments. *Ausdruckstanz* still influenced the way in which dancers were trained but was rarely staged in either the East or the West, albeit for different political reasons. In the Federal Republic, Adenauer's cultural politics, in the spirit of Restoration and in the frame

of a diffused Americanization, granted classical dance (as the universal language) a more or less exclusive monopoly. In the Democratic Republic at least two phases ensued: at the beginning the modern dancers who had settled in the East (including Gret Palucca, Marianne Vogelsang, Dore Hoyer, and Wigman until 1949) started working freely once again, but, in 1953, national dance politics officially endorsed socialist realism and *Ausdruckstanz* – deemed excessively mystical, obscure, and inclined to formalism – was banned. This ideological readjustment led to the triumph of ballet (following the Russian model) and to enormous support for folkloric dance, exactly as it had been in the final phase of the Reich, when ballet was considered the most suitable form of entertainment, and deemed capable of expressing the “essence” of Germanness, while folkloric dance was promoted for its more or less authentic proximity to the people. This shows, among other things, the degree of uncertainty and the experimental limits with which totalitarian regimes approached dance. This also shows, at another level, that the memory (or illusion) of what contemporary dance has inherited from the past does not always correspond to historical reality. For instance, the institutional support to dance, that was so fundamental for the new *Tanztheater*, is a model derived more from the Nazi regime than from the Weimar Republic, when private management prevailed.¹³

In what manner, then, has the data provided by archives and processed by historians “dialogued” with the artists’ memories? To what extent have archives participated in the process of memorialization and production of a “sense” of dance history.

It was memorial reconstruction that informed the first study,¹⁴ which came out in 1972, entirely devoted to analyzing the circumstances of *Ausdruckstanz* between 1927 and 1936, the years of its greatest diffusion and of the rise of Nazism. The study was written by Horst Koegler, a post-war dance critic, and is based primarily on his reconstruction of the story told by his colleague Joseph Lewitan. The founder of one of the major dance magazines of the late-1920s, Lewitan was a close observer of *Ausdruckstanz* who was opposed to its nationalist and irrational surge and who had to leave Germany because he was Jewish. Koegler’s study, which does not contextualize this anomaly in the core of the art and society of the time, was the first to focus on the continuity of the careers of many exponents of *Ausdruckstanz* after 1933. The historical narratives that followed developed a theory according to which *Ausdruckstanz*’s approach to the regime was the consequence of a cultural politics that had denied any sort of freedom and had been able to instrumentalize an art of considerable potential but weak identity. The dancers’ allegiance to Nazi ideology was seen as the concomitant result of an idealistic attitude,

a presumed political ingenuousness and an opportunism dictated by precarious working conditions during the Weimar Republic.¹⁵

Other studies, carried out by a generation of militant critics in the 1970s and 1980s, underlined the aesthetic affinities between *Ausdruckstanz* and *Tanztheater* based on their common “essence”. Some argued that *Ausdruckstanz* had a hard time surviving after the war on predominantly or exclusively political grounds (given its involvement with the regime), others concentrated on aesthetic motives (such as the changes in taste and fashions).¹⁶

This chronological and ideological version of the facts was questioned in the late 1990s by studies that outline a more problematic history of *Ausdruckstanz*, its protagonists, the individual choreographic works, and the political dynamics underlying the public management of dance.¹⁷ Susan Manning, Marion Kant, Lilian Karina, Inge Baxmann, and Laure Guilbert have brought to light the degree to which this modernity was not only synonymous with artistic and social progress but also embodied certain reactionary and anti-democratic aspects.¹⁸ Re-reading the ambiguous shift from the experimental phase of the 1910s and 1920s to the rise of Nazism has shown how *Ausdruckstanz* was the result of a long process of cultural maturation and the forerunner of compelling modern utopias. It has also uncovered the roots embedded in the vast and multi-faceted movement that reacted to an industrial civilization in which social and moral values were summed up in the antitheses *Kultur/Zivilisation* (culture/civilization) and *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* (community/society). These studies have disclosed the massive number of dancers that adhered to Nazi cultural politics and, in some cases, their active militancy in support of its ideology in choreographic and teaching practices and in theoretical formulations. The urgency of reckoning with the political and ideological dimension of *Ausdruckstanz* and, in particular, with its relationship with National Socialism, inevitably catalyzed the historical debate, leading both to its investigation and to restrictions in the directions of research. In some cases information-famished readers found themselves face-to-face with an image of this tradition that was so controversial it was difficult to accept.¹⁹ A sign that the times are now ready to open to new prospects is found in the research that has begun to explore the convincing presence of *Ausdruckstanz* in left-wing contexts, such as that of Yvonne Hardt.²⁰ In this case too, the generational turnover is one of the decisive factors for the individuation of the object of study (that openly enters a dialogue with the results obtained in the past) and the selected methodology (that hinges on the theoretical maturation in dance studies of the last twenty years).

These new studies have had a fragmentary and erratic reception in many countries, and in very few cases have been registered in the general histories or dictionaries of dance. This is due primarily to the lack of, or

delay in translations, which has generated a great deal of misunderstanding and many false starts.²¹ Many new issues have been raised but often without awareness of the responses that have already been given.²² Establishing the historical and political framework of *Ausdruckstanz* has been further encumbered by the difficulty in accessing sources, many of which are unpublished, and by the “truths” transmitted by its protagonists, who continued to teach with mixed results in the public and private schools in East and West Germany. The legendary aura surrounding these and other exponents of *Ausdruckstanz* is one of the components of the emotional relationship that has always bound teachers and students in the transmission of dance theory and practice. In many cases, however, their memories have been at variance with those of their colleagues who were forced into exile, and their recollections are quite often irreconcilable with the new histories, which have broken taboos, reopened old wounds, and inflamed polemics. History and memory have ended up telling different truths, each one standing firm on the principle of non-negotiability. While memory represented a factor of cohesion in the post-war construction of a new individual and collective identity, albeit in different ways at different times, history has often been seen as a conflicting factor. The research that attempted to free itself from memory by delegitimizing it was justifiably received as a mortification of subjective involvement, whose unavoidable contribution to historical narration has by now been fully recognized. The politics of memory and oblivion have limited each other. And yet, it is actually in the dynamic between the right to forget and the necessity of knowing that history and memory can find grounds for exchange in reconstructing dance’s past.²³ It is by recognizing the role that memory plays alongside history in shaping mentality and corporeality that *Ausdruckstanz* could take on new meaning and new importance for scholars.

In the footsteps of Mary Wigman. Comparing methodologies

Surveying the main stages of Wigman historiography can be helpful to focalize the different methodologies employed by scholars, in particular as far as the political and ideological import of her practice and theory of dance is concerned.

Müller was the first to openly address a political question, tracing the portrait of an art form plagued by the Reich and of an artist driven to support the regime by opportunism, patriotism, and a sentimental relationship with a Nazi party leader. Manning’s monograph came out about ten

years later. It took advantage of a great deal of information made available by Müller and of documents coming in large part from the Wigman archives at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, which were re-read through the lens of critical theory, at “a convergence of feminism and nationalism.”²⁴ Manning maintains that Wigman’s choreographic work underwent a progressive aesthetic transformation from the 1920s to the rise of Nazism and traces the causes to an ideological shift prompted by political opportunism. From this point of view, Wigman had gone from the use of collective improvisation and the exploration of spatial and corporeal dynamics expressing the vast range of relations inspired by the social democratic ideals of the 1920s to a more marked *Führerprinzip* (leadership principle). The conformist turn in feminine iconography was also emphasized by the educational purposes assigned to choreographic practice. The height of this process is identified by Manning in the works presented at the dance festivals in 1934 and 1935 and at the 1936 Olympics. Manning reaches these conclusions first and foremost through a socio-political reading of photographs from a few performances that privilege the transitional period from one political structure to the other, and focus her analysis either on creation, production, or reception. Her research challenges the theory of a drastic break between Weimar and the Third Reich, and points out new avenues for the analysis and contextualization of dance in culture, which aimed at drawing the attention of other disciplines to the potential of this field of studies. Manning offers a reading of the interplay among the different forces and motives (personal, artistic, and institutional) that, as Mark Franko writes in his state-of-the-art (Chapter 1), constitute the political level of dance. She does this by choosing a circumstance that was “conjunctural,” to use Franko’s terminology; one that was particularly controversial but one in which cultural politics takes on marked visibility. Another conjunctural circumstance was the then all-female composition of Wigman’s company, which was marked by a more or less total generation turnover that favored its director’s leadership. Manning also brings out the discrepancies between oral and written history, as in the case of the training programs that were officially changed after 1933 as a result of greater forces but which, in daily practice, remained quite faithful to those of the 1920s. Her book raises certain fundamental methodological issues that have become key in the wider debate on dance historiography. To what point is it possible to take an approach that implies a constant, albeit ever different, interdependence between ideology and artistic practice? Or between political vision and danced utopia? Is it useful or reductive to delimit Fascist aesthetics chronologically? To what extent can a choreography be considered the result of its creator’s intentions? Is it possible to speak only of dance discourses or also of counter-discourses?

What is the relationship between dance texts and body movement? How else could it be possible to effectively combine the choreographic and narrative reading of a work and how it is rendered in dance?

New studies were undertaken to answer these questions. Some sought to disclose unknown sources, others placed emphasis on aesthetic analysis. An example of the former is provided by a musicologist and historian, Marion Kant²⁵ who devoted to Wigman two articles and many passages of a book she wrote in collaboration with Lilian Karina, a dancer who took exile in Sweden after the rise of Nazism. Kant's articles came out of research begun in the mid-1980s. Relying primarily on Wigman's unpublished diaries, she traced the choreographer's thoughts and feelings, which Kant defines as more patriotic than nationalistic, and goes on to compare this material to the choreographer's artistic work. In the book she co-authors with Karina, the reflections are cross-referenced with a massive amount of information from the archives at the Propaganda Ministry and many other sources, which provide the administrative background on the Reich's cultural politics. The discovery of this substantial documentary corpus has had a strong impact on dance research, opening new horizons and inciting a great deal of tension among dance scholars. Kant and Karina's research was complementary to Manning's in privileging cultural politics over choreographic practices. Kant concluded that Wigman had approached Nazism first on a rhetorical (and theoretical) and later on an artistic level. Published initially in German and only recently in English, the book has had major repercussions in the world of dance in very different national contexts. Some have criticized the tone of the categorical position it takes in the face of those who put their art in the service of the Reich. Others have appreciated its clear and lucid reconstruction of the administrative politics of dance. Undeniably it has offered scholars a fundamental tool for broadening the scope of research on dance and politics. The book's first section puts the reader into the memory of Karina, who traces a profile of emigrated dancers and of the birth and development of *Ausdruckstanz* through the eyes of an artist. The second section provides Kant's historical framework and the appendices include a wide selection of documents. This tripartite structure allows the book to offer testimony of the exceptional "case" of dance's alignment with the Reich and to provide new insight that points toward greater methodological awareness. Does such a closely knit structure leave enough room to develop an argument that considers the various relationships between mechanisms of consensus and seduction? Or between the professional and cultural motivations of dancers' political and artistic actions? What other synergies might be hypothesized between oral testimonies and written sources?

The work undertaken in the 1990s by Isabelle Launay²⁶ comes from the perspective of aesthetic analysis. Launay openly questions the conclusions reached by historians who, in her opinion, have used artificial time periods that force the interpretation of facts. From her point of view, the idea that the evolution of art follows close on the heels of political events provides the basis for the causal interpretations of *Ausdruckstanz*'s ideological charge. It does not consider the degree to which dance is ontologically protected from social and political contamination and the extent to which the choreographic work goes beyond historical contingency, ideological implications, and power relationships. In virtue of that impermeability, the lesson of modern dance would have passed through the dark tunnel of Nazism to arrive at nurturing the contemporary trend. This research suggests considering the political dimension of a choreographic project beginning from the practices and theories inherent to the art, and not vice versa. Following closely the lessons of Michel Bernard,²⁷ it has re-focused attention (in dance studies in general, even before more specific work on *Ausdruckstanz*) on the questions of corporeality and of the creative process. To support her theory, Launay makes reference to the poetics of Wigman, heir to the romantic myth of creative and visionary genius, according to which an artist is abstract with respect to his or her socio-political context and thus relieved a priori of responsibility in the name of creative autonomy. A similar reading of modernism, not completely immune to the risk of complying with the critical-theoretical models of the same era, avails itself of a range of sources that privilege thematic over linguistic and chronological choices. Priority is given to autobiographical and theoretical texts, which, however, remain centered solely on the problem of dance's modernity. The author also avoids the bottleneck and easy reductions of an iconographic interpretation by rejecting visual sources.²⁸ These choices are motivated by the conviction that dance archives are not limited to written and iconographic sources but include, also and especially, dancers' physical experience. Gesture, understood in its broadest possible meaning, is to be investigated with the epistemological acquisitions of dance. For Launay, this is the only way to overcome the limits of a narrative reading of form and content and to focus on the dynamics of the forces that confer meaning to movement. From this point of view, the confluence of *Ausdruckstanz* and Nazism and, in particular, of Wigman's and Laban's collaboration with the regime, was originated from the weak status and social legitimacy of the art of dance, from the uncertain professional identity of its protagonists, and, last but not least, from the difficult balance between pure experimentation and the velleity of consolidating a tradition. In opposition to the theory of ideological consubstantiality between *Ausdruckstanz* and Nazism, Launay

identifies gaps in the concepts of body, technique, mimesis, and *Erlebnis* (lived experience) that have not emerged in other analyses because too little attention has been given to the narrative component of dance. Among the fundamental methodological issues raised by this study, the most evident has also been posed in Ginot's essay in the third section of this book (Chapter 15). Can the identity of dance be distinct from that of the artist? Can aesthetic analysis find equally ample space *within* history? How can one avoid the contradiction between choosing to examine only the theoretical works of a dancer-choreographer and aiming to understand the process of choreographic creation and the level of symbolic signification of body movement? Is there really an original and authentic core of *Ausdruckstanz* or is it in its continuous, often contradictory transformations that *Ausdruckstanz* can be grasped? And then, echoing the issues raised by Franko, to what extent can politically sensitive methodologies reveal more about dance than dance itself is perhaps "willing" to?

Guilbert's book was the second volume on *Ausdruckstanz* to be published in French. It reconstructs the history of an entire generation of dancers between the two world wars, in which the figure of Wigman appears in the background and as the focus of a few passages, offering an interpretation of politics as both a structure and a network of relations. Guilbert follows Kant and Karina's example in examining the institutional, ideological, and aesthetic politics of German modern dance, placing emphasis on the relationships between dancers and administrators and unveiling their many paradoxes. The ideological consubstantiality takes on form by cross-referencing sources from dancers' personal archives, criticism of the times, documents from political institutions, and, to a lesser degree, iconographic materials. Toning down the conclusions of Manning and Launay, Guilbert opts for a problematic confluence of an ethical and aesthetic imaginary in Wigman's practice and suggests identifying its traces in the culture that nurtured this dance and in what it produced. This is proposed in virtue of the workings of *Ausdruckstanz* as Wigman herself described them: organic forces that take on form in a visible gestural *Gestalt*. According to Guilbert, the germination of the content from the form has a more explicit (and thus more legible) will to signify in the phase in which it approaches National Socialism: in this process the movement capable of transmitting the mystery of the sacred gives way to ideological dogma. A similar change in the creative modes is compared with the theoretical formulations of the choreographer, who, from the 1930s on, re-read absolute dance as a new category co-inhabited by modern and classical dance under the guise of abstraction. Alongside this, Guilbert observes thematic variations in the 1920s repertoire, in which existential experience and the search for the sacred prevail until the 1940s, when the reference

to Nordic rituality and legends becomes more decided. She identifies in the principle of improvisation the element of continuity, and in the relationship between form and content the discontinuity. Here, too, numerous questions come to mind. Within what limits is dance capable of exercising an ideological power without becoming its emblem? What is the relationship between dance and choreography? What bodies are implicated? What does this type of research gain and/or lose from an iconographic and textual analysis that also considers the qualities of movement?

This brief and surely not exhaustive overview demonstrates how important it is for the Wigman case to remain open and how it actually constitutes grounds for further investigation precisely because so many scholars with such different backgrounds have already begun to address it. It also exemplifies how new methodologies emerge through the circulation of questions and answers, which identify and shape the subject of research. It further illustrates how dance studies develop from the convergence of disciplinary perspectives and from constantly transforming cultural contexts.

Suitcases, backpacks, and trunks. The histories of archives and the archives of history

The politics of interpretation are never free from those of preservation, and the historiography of *Ausdruckstanz* has been especially fraught by the destruction and dispersion of a great deal of its documentary heritage, both during the war and in its re-allotment after the division of Germany. The logic that has determined selection and conservation criteria, as well as the accessibility of archives and libraries, has varied from place to place. The histories of these “storehouses”²⁹ of collective knowledge have conditioned, if not hindered, the work of historians active in both Germanies and of foreigners as well. The collections preserving the documents related to the work of Laban, provide a glaring example of the intertwine between historical interpretations and politics of preservations. The fact that the “evidence” of what is and what is not collected in these archives hasn’t become central in Laban studies invites reflection.

Laban was a nomad and a polyglot. He left traces of his thought, his varied endeavors, and his private life in documents that are not only difficult to access but are also written in several different languages. Laban historiography is consequently marked by the quantity and quality of sources referenced but also by the oral transmission of his thought and practice, in Germany, and, to a greater extent, in Great Britain and the US. In most cases, the texts disseminating Laban’s thought are the result of studies by his former students and collaborators, only a few of whom have done

archival research, especially on the German period. The fact that there is still not a complete collection of Laban's essays in German, let alone in translation, is as surprising as is the diffusion of his method of movement analysis and notation, thanks in part to the promotion of the Laban Centre in London, which is one of the best-known places in Europe for training dancers. Of the impressive bulk of Laban's writings from between 1920 and 1937, only his autobiography and his first essay on dance notation have been translated into English. There is no translation of his theoretical manifesto, *Die Welt des Tänzers* (The Dancer's World)³⁰ which was a fundamental point of reference for an entire generation of *Ausdruckstänzer*, or of any of the other theoretical essays, published and unpublished, scattered about in magazines and archives.³¹

The dispersion of the Laban archives reflects both German history and Laban's personal and professional vicissitudes. Laban left Germany in 1937, after what had originally been an intense and vital relationship with the Reich had deteriorated. The mode and timing of his departure made it impossible for him to take all his personal papers, which were then at the theater of the Berlin Opera (where he was the *maître de ballet*). This material ended up in the hands of his collaborator Marie-Luise Lieschke. Sometime later it was rediscovered by John Hodgson, a student of Laban, who "transported" it to Great Britain stowed away in three backpacks, extracting it at one and the same time from both German jurisdiction and from the research of Lisa Ullmann, Laban's last assistant and partner, she too on the tracks of this patrimony. Upon Hodgson's death, this archive was left to his family and, to date, is still not accessible for consultation. What remained in Germany was inherited by Lieschke's sister, who, in the late 1970s sold it to the Tanzarchiv in Leipzig. The documentation regarding Laban's collaboration with the Nazi regime is found in various federal archives, while other materials are scattered about in various places including the Kurt Jooss Collection, Dartington Hall Records, the Albrecht Knust Collection (recently acquired by the Centre national de la danse), and the national archives of all the cities in which Laban lived or worked. Among the most famous private collections are those legendarily known as Laban's "trunk" and "suitcase." The former belonged to his second wife Maja Lederer, the latter initially to his companion and assistant Suzanne Perrottet and then finally, after various intermediary steps, to the Kunsthaus in Zurich.³² Upon Laban's death the documents in his possession were passed on to Ullmann, who donated them and his personal archives to the National Resource Centre for Dance at the University of Surrey, where the Laban Archive was opened in the mid-1980s. Marion North, who took over for Ullmann, tried to bring these archives to the Laban Centre, embarking on repeated legal battles in which she claimed

that the Centre was the only legitimate heir. She was unsuccessful and the archival resources at the Laban Centre, the only institution that carries his name, remain scant.

If institutional politics are key in the conservation of a documentary patrimony, they are equally so in the transmission of dance practices and their history. The Laban Centre provides an example of the incongruity between a political institution that claims to be a guarantor for antonomasia in transmitting Laban's heritage and a real commitment to specific historic research. The Centre's informative materials and, more macroscopically, the biography written by Valerie Preston-Dunlop, who directed the Centre at length, presents the best-known yet least historically accurate image of Laban.³³ The decision to publish this study without referencing other sources that would allow it to be placed within the broader debate on *Ausdruckstanz* has ended up freezing Laban's image within stereotypes that are of little use to either the general public or specialists. More encouraging signs of growing interest in the lesser known aspects of Laban's theory and practice, in the case in point the years he spent in Germany, seem to be coming, albeit sporadically, from independent scholars and the academic context.³⁴

The politics of dance. Considerations and overtures

The three case studies in this section represent some of the numerous directions that research on the relationships between *Ausdruckstanz* and politics might further investigate. Guilbert's autobiographical reflection manifests a two-fold disorientation. It is emotional, for the person who is unveiling, first and foremost to herself, "another" history, finding answers to many questions that are at times unexpected and at times painful. It is also professional, for the dance scholar aware of the instability of a discipline still in the making. Here, writing history (the history of dance) reveals the key importance of the subjective contribution and all the layers of which it is composed (intuitions, discoveries, regressions, hesitations, impulses, and solitude). This reflection brings out the necessity of fully integrating personal experience, which previously tended to be judged rather than analyzed, into the dynamics that converge to define a subject and its attendant methodology.³⁵

The essay by Hardt attempts to go beyond these works, considering first of all the effects of a linear and causal interpretation. Critical repositioning implies the need for a definition of *Ausdruckstanz* that can embrace ideological polyvalence and artistic variety, a shifting viewpoint (the militant-left context), multiple sources (dancers' memories, criticism, photographs, reconstructions), and a refinement of research tools (in the

direction of an analysis of physical dynamics). These moves converge toward shaping a new methodological proposal, whose fruitfulness relies on decoding certain mechanisms of signification that can restore depth to the initial reasons for the success of *Ausdruckstanz* or that can visually and physically translate the most rankling cultural issues of its time (the crisis in writing, the importance of body culture, the fear and fascination of technology, a yearning for an original state, and, last but not least, cultural alternatives to bourgeois education). Hardt's study bursts open the antithesis between a progressive aesthetic practice and a reactionary ideology, which reveals itself to be more constrictive than productive. It intertwines with Manning's case study by identifying conjunctural situations, in which the same teaching method or choreographic genre promoted different communitarian projects. Manning's essay traces the fate of *Ausdruckstanz* in exile. It follows a trail blazed a few years ago by a few pioneering studies that today, reinforced by postcolonial theories on the Diaspora, can bring new information to the study of the politics of the transmission of tradition. Once again, constructing the research subject involves its redefinition, understood in the broadest sense of transcultural tradition. Following the trail of the Holm's school in New York, which trained an entire generation of left-wing dancers, it is possible to investigate the evolution of someone like Gertrud Krauss, who became a key figure in Israel after she emigrated. Her contribution to the *ex nihilo* creation of folk tradition (in collaboration with the Kibbutzim Dance Company) and the development of concert dance (as a consultant to the Batsheva Company and the Israeli Ballet) made her a protagonist in the Israeli dance born in the footsteps of *Ausdruckstanz*.³⁶ New insights may also be gained into the dynamics between political mythologies and the artistic imaginary or between the construction of a national identity and a process of modernization by comparing similar choreographic models under various totalitarian regimes, such as, in particular, the movement choirs in Germany, Russia, and Italy.³⁷ Other dynamics between history and memory (visual and corporeal, individual and collective) are emerging on the horizon, in the case in point those of the memory and history broken up and dispersed with the rise of Nazism. Future studies on how *Ausdruckstanz* was transmitted in the Diaspora will have to productively articulate the politics of denial and of myth making, of isolation and of integration, of preservation and of innovation, of spatial dissemination and of temporal rooting, of communitarian and of individual identity. They might probe beneath the surface of a non-linear process encompassing the multiple ways in which dance is transmitted, from instances in which a strong intention to hand down a tradition is manifest but ineffective to situations where a vague project results in a

fully accomplished transmission.³⁸ They might probe the solutions found by individual dancers who sought to obey both the logic of practical efficiency and the relationship with the cultural social order from which they came and the one into which they placed themselves. It might also be quite interesting to reinterpret the impact of those who returned from exile or from long sojourns abroad to find a welcome that did not always meet their expectations. This is the case of Hoyer, who after influencing an entire generation of artists in Argentina, had to face the harsh reality of being unsuccessful in Germany. Or what about the round trips of the same tradition, such as that of Renate Schottelius, who emigrated to Argentina in the 1930s, where she trained Daniel Goldin, a Ukrainian Jew born in Buenos Aires, who in turn emigrated to Germany after the war to teach at the Folkwang Schule.³⁹ Or the career of the communist choreographer Patricio Bunster, which is an example of the migration of dance vocabulary and of the ideological diaspora⁴⁰ between Chile and East Germany.

A certain critical distance might make it possible to open a new chapter in the historiography of *Ausdruckstanz* based on the comparative analysis of the reconstructions–recreations done almost contemporaneously in East and West Germany in the 1980s, in works by Siegert and Linke, respectively.⁴¹ Reinforced by the recent conceptualization in the area of reconstruction as a project of practical–theoretical analysis active in dance history, and by the perspective of the *Wende*, these studies could shed new light on the process of embodying the tradition of *Ausdruckstanz* in its post-war ramifications.

These and many others are the roads not yet taken, roads that would enrich and articulate the debate on dance and politics. These are roads along which the threads of history and memory intertwine to weave the fabric of the investigation and representation of the past.

Notes

I would like to thank Susan Foster and Inge Baxmann for the insights they have shared in discussing these issues, and Laure Guilbert and Patrizia Veroli for a continuous exchange of ideas and materials.

1 On this issue see G. Oberzaucher-Schüller (ed.), *Ausdruckstanz. Eine Mitteleuropäische Bewegung der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 1992 (2nd edn 2004), p. XIII (the conference that originated this volume was held at the University of Bayreuth in 1986 and the volume includes papers that had originally been excluded from the programme for political and bureaucratic reasons); the introduction of the same volume by K. Peters, pp. 4–5; M. Huxley, 'European Early Modern Dance', in J. Adshead-Lansdale, J. Layson (eds), *Dance History. An Introduction*, New York and London: Routledge,

- 1994, pp. 151–68; G. Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren. Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde*, Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Verlag, 1995, p. 33.
- 2 W. Sorell (ed.), *Mary Wigman ein Vermächtnis*, Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 1973 (2nd edn 1986; Eng. trans. *The Mary Wigman Book. Her Writings*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986).
 - 3 H. Müller, *Mary Wigman. Leben und Werk der grossen Tänzerin*, Berlin: Henschel, 1986. In addition to the books discussed here see also A. Rannow, R. Stabel (eds), *Mary Wigman in Leipzig. Eine Annäherung an ihr Wirken für den Tanz in Leipzig in den Jahren 1942 bis 1949*, Leipzig: Tanzwissenschaft, 1994, and the brief biography G. Fritsch-Vivié, *Mary Wigman*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1999.
 - 4 See *Die Tanzarchivreihe*, 1979, nos. 19–20 (double monographic issue), and H. Koping-Renk (ed.), *Positionen zur Vergangenheit und Gegenwart des modernen Tanzes*, Berlin: Henschel, 1982, pp. 30–5.
 - 5 *Ausdruckstanz. Eine Mitteleuropäische Bewegung*.
 - 6 The magazine started in 1987 and closed in 2002; in 2003 it merged with *Ballett-Journal/Das Tanzarchiv* and is now called *Tanzjournal*.
 - 7 See among others Müller, *Mary Wigman*; in addition to the exhibition *Ausdruckstanz* and the exhibition mounted on Laban, see A. and H. Markard, *Jooss. Dokumentation*, Folkwang Museum of Essen, Köln: Ballet-Bühnen-Verlag, 1985; *Künstler um Palucca*, Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen/Kupferstich-Kabinett, 1987; N. Jockel, P. Stöckemann, *Flugkraft in goldene Ferne . . . Bühnentanz in Hamburg seit 1900*, Hamburg: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1989.
 - 8 For a preliminary overview, though more focused on news than on the history of dance in the two Germanies from 1945 on, see H. Müller, R. Stabel, P. Stöckemann, *Krokodil im Schwanensee. Tanz in Deutschland seit 1945*, Frankfurt a.M.: Anabas, 2003; on *Ausdruckstanz* in East Germany see also E. Winckler, ‘Ausdruckstanz in der DDR’, *Tanzforschung Jahrbuch*, 1994, no. 5, pp. 53–8.
 - 9 Other than the two volumes cited, see H. Müller, N. Servos, ‘Von Isadora Duncan bis Leni Riefensthal’, *Ballett International*, 1982, no. 4, pp. 15–23; see also the re-elaboration for the Italian and the English versions: ‘Espressionismo? L’Ausdruckstanz e il nuovo Tanztheater in Germania’, in L. Bentivoglio (ed.), *Tanztheater. Dalla danza espressionista a Pina Bausch*, Rome: Di Giacomo, 1982, pp. 57–80; ‘Expressionism? Ausdruckstanz and The New Dance Theatre in Germany’, *Dance Theatre Journal*, 1984, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 10–15; N. Servos, ‘Ausdruckstanz und Tanztheater. Erbe “unter der Hand”’, in *Ausdruckstanz. Eine Mitteleuropäische Bewegung*, pp. 486–92; S. Schlicher, *TanzTheater*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1987; S. Schlicher, ‘The West German Dance Theatre: Paths from the Twenties to the Present’, *Choreography and Dance*, 1993, vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 25–43. The first critical reinterpretation of this historiography is: S. Manning, ‘From Ausdruckstanz to Tanztheater’, in S. Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 221–54 (2nd edn *Ecstasy and the Demon: The Dances of Mary Wigman*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).
 - 10 See the historical biography by P. Stöckemann, *Etwas ganz Neues muss nun entstehen: Kurt Jooss und das Tanztheater*, Köln: Klaus Kieser-Tanzarchiv Köln/Sk Stiftung Kultur, 2001.
 - 11 I. Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft. Körper- und Tanzkulturen der Moderne*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2000.
 - 12 For these topics see P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004 (orig. edn *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000).

- 13 On this particular point see the first critical remarque by Manning, *From Ausdruckstanz to Tanztheater*, and for the later historical inquiries see the volumes by L. Guilbert, *Danser avec le IIIème Reich. Les danseurs modernes sous le nazisme*, Brussels: Complexe, 2000, and L. Karina, M. Kant, *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich*, trans. J. Steinberg, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003 (orig. edn *Tanz unterm Hakenkreuz*, Berlin: Henschel, 1996).
- 14 H. Koegler, 'Tanz in die Dreissiger Jahre', *Ballett 1972*, annual review, 1972, re-worked in English with the title: 'In the Shadow of the Swastika: Dance in Germany 1927–1936', *Dance Perspectives*, 1974, no. 57 (monographic issue).
- 15 *Ausdruckstanz. Eine Mitteleuropäische Bewegung*; H. Müller, Stöckemann, . . . 'jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer'. *Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945*, Frankfurt a.M: Anabas, 1993 (catalogue of the exhibition 'Weltfriede – Jugendglück'. *Vom Ausdruckstanz zum Olympischen Festspiel*); *Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland. Eine Inventur*, Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 1994. Along these lines see: K. Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy. Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture 1910–1935*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997, which still remains the most informative text in English, and also G. Vetterman, C. Jeschke, 'Germany', in A. Grau, S. Jordan (eds), *Europe Dancing. Perspectives on Theatre Dance and Cultural Identity*, New York and London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 55–78.
- 16 Among these critics the most relevant for this topic are Susanne Schlicher, Jochen Schmidt, and Norbert Servos. For this particular aspect of continuity-discontinuity in the tradition of Tanztheater see Manning, *From Ausdruckstanz to Tanztheater*. For a different approach to this topic see A. Sanchez-Colberg, *German Tanztheater. Traditions and Contradictions. A Choreological Documentation of Tanztheater from its Roots in Ausdruckstanz to the Present*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, Laban Centre, 1992, that offers a choreological documentation and a comparative analysis of choreographies by Laban, Jooss, and Pina Bausch.
- 17 Karina, Kant, *Hitler's Dancers*; Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*; Guilbert, *Danser avec le IIIème Reich*; Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft*.
- 18 See in particular A. Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- 19 See Manning's preface to the second edition of *Ecstasy and the Demon*, pp. xiii–xxx.
- 20 Y. Hardt, *Politische Körper. Ausdruckstanz, Choreographien des Protests und die Arbeiterkulturbewegung*, Münster: LIT, 2004.
- 21 The conference *Tanz und Politik* held in Cologne in 2003, and organized by the Mary Wigman Gesellschaft and the Tanzarchiv Köln, was useful for this dialogue. The session on the relationship between dance and National Socialism also presented the first documentary on these issues. See *Tanz unterm Hakenkreuz*, written and directed by A. Wangenheim, Cologne, WDR Fernsehen (2003).
- 22 To the often incomplete bibliographies of many important studies, which reveal all the shortcomings of this indirect dialogue, one can add questionable projects such as the re-edition of *Ausdruckstanz. Eine Mitteleuropäische Bewegung*, which was published without a new introduction that would place its conclusions within an appropriate historical framework. Among the texts that have ignited these polemics among scholars see I. Launay, 'La danse moderne mise au pas?', in *Danse et utopie. Mobiles*, 1999, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 73–106; F.M. Peter, 'War Kreutzberg ein "alter nazi"?', *Tanzwissenschaft* 2, 1996, no. 2, n.p.; 'Diskussion', *Tanzdrama*, 1994, no. 4, pp. 28–33, and 1995, no. 1, pp. 32–4.

- 23 A. Assman, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Munich: C.H. Beck'sche, 1999.
- 24 Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, p. xv.
- 25 M. Kant, 'Mary Wigman. Die Suche nach der verlorenen Welt', *Tanzdrama*, part I, 1994, no. 25, 14–19; part II, 1994, no. 27, pp. 16–21.
- 26 I. Launay, *A la recherche d'une danse moderne. Rudolf Laban – Mary Wigman*, Paris: Librairie de la Danse, 1996; see also her 'La danse moderne mise au pas?'
- 27 See M. Bernard, *De la création chorégraphique*, Pantin: Centre national de la danse, 2001, and in particular 'L'imaginaire germanique du mouvement ou les paradoxes du "language de la danse" de Mary Wigman' (1984), pp. 225–33.
- 28 For a list of films on *Ausdruckstanz* made between 1925 and 1942 see 'Filme', *Tanzdrama*, 1992, no. 2, pp. 16–19.
- 29 M. Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques*, London: Sage, 1993, p. 2.
- 30 R. von Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers. Fünf Gedankenreigen*, Stuttgart: Seifert, 1920.
- 31 R. von Laban, *Ein Leben für den Tanz*, Dresden: Reissner, 1935 (anastatic reprints: Bern-Stuttgart: Paul Haup, 1989; Eng. trans. L. Ullmann (ed.), *A Life for Dance*, London: Macdonald & Evans, 1975); the anastatic reprints of the magazine *Schriftanz* (founded by Laban in 1928), of which the English version proposes only a few essays in thematic order on the basis of the subject treated and not the original chronological sequence, is among the rare exceptions: see *Schriftanz. Eine Vierteljahresschrift*, Hildesheim, Zürich and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1991; and V. Preston-Dunlop, S. Lahusen (eds), *Schriftanz. A View of German Dance in the Weimar Republic*, London: Dance Books, 1990. For a more singular than rare example of the way in which oral tradition is intertwined with specific references to German texts, of which ample selections in translation are also given: V. Maletic, *Body-Space-Expression. The Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement and Dance Concepts*, New York, Berlin and Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987. The research initiatives brought together in *Espace dynamique. Textes inédits de Rudolf Laban*, Brussels: Contredanse, 2003, are praiseworthy.
- 32 V. Preston-Dunlop, J. Hodgson, *Rudolf Laban. An Introduction to his Work and Influence*, Plymouth: Northcote House, 1990, pp. 123–5; J. Metz, 'Rudolf von Laban. Authentische Quelle', *Tanzdrama*, 1991, no. 15, pp. 30–1; P. Bassett, 'The Library of the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance', *Dance Research*, 1994, no. 1, pp. 48–59. Some of the details surrounding these events were confirmed by Preston-Dunlop during an interview at the Laban Centre in June 2000.
- 33 V. Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban. An Extraordinary Life*, London: Dance Books, 1998. By the same author see also 'Laban and the Nazis. Towards an Understanding of Rudolf Laban and the Third Reich', *Dance Theatre Journal*, 1988, nos. 2–3, pp. 4–7 (German trans. 'Rudolf von Laban und das Dritte Reich. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis eines problematischen Verhältnisses', in *Tanzdrama*, 1992, no. 5, pp. 8–13). Among the major studies on Laban see also J. Hodgson, *Mastering Movement. The Life and Work of Rudolf Laban*, New York: Theater Arts Book, 2001.
- 34 See for example the research that is highly varied from a methodological point of view but based on important archival works: E. Dörr (ed.), *Rudolf Laban. Das Choreographische Theater*, Norderstedt b. Hamburg: Books on Demand, 2004; E. Dörr, *Rudolf Laban. Die Schrift des Tänzers*, Norderstedt b. Hamburg: Books on Demand, 2005; M. Kant, 'Laban's Secret Religion', *Discourses in Dance*, 2004, no. 2, pp. 43–62. See also the already cited studies by Karina, Kant, and Guilbert.

- 35 See for example the polemics that followed the publication of the volume by Kant and Karina, which attributed the outcome of the research to the ideological bias of the former (in as much as she is a Jewish scholar who was trained in East Germany) and to the grudges of the latter (in as far as she is an artist who was forced into exile because of her marriage to a Jewish man). On the authors' considerations regarding their subjectivity see also M. Kant, 'German Dance and Modernity. Don't Mention the Nazis', in A. Carter (ed.), *Rethinking Dance History. A Reader*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 107–18; S. Manning, 'Modern Dance in the Third Reich: Six Positions and a Coda', in S.L. Foster (ed.), *Choreographing History*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 165–76.
- 36 G. Manor, 'Der Weg zu den Wurzeln. Die Anfänge des *Ausdruckstanzes* in Eretz Israel', *Tanzdrama*, 1990, no. 13, pp. 7–11; G. Manor, 'Influenced and Influencing. Dancing in Foreign Lands. The Work of Choreographers/Dancers Persecuted by the Nazis in Emigration', in *Ausdruckstanz. Eine Mitteleuropäische Bewegung*, pp. 471–85.
- 37 E. Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press/Dance Books, 1990; N. Chernova, J. Bowlt (eds), *Experiment*, Los Angeles: Institute of Modern Russian Culture, 1996; N. Mislser (ed.), *In principio era il corpo. L'Arte del movimento a Mosca negli anni '20* (Rome: Acquario romano), Milan: Electa, 1999; P. Veroli, 'Docile Bodies and War Machines', in *The Annual of CESH. European Committee for Sport History*, 2004, pp. 28–46; and P. Veroli, 'Dancing Italian Fascism. Bodies, Practices, Representations', *Discourses in Dance*, 2006, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 46–70.
- 38 C. Choron-Baix, 'Transmettre et perpétuer aujourd'hui', *Ethnologie française*, 2003, no. 3, pp. 357–60.
- 39 On these topics see among others V. Preston-Dunlop, 'Rudolf Laban and Kurt Jooss in Exile: Their Relationship and Diverse Influence on the Development of 20th Century Dance', in G. Berghaus (ed.), *Artists in Exile*, Bristol: Bristol University Press, 1990, pp. 167–78; C. Hoffmann, 'Deutsche und Österreichische Ausdruckstänzerinnen in der Emigration', in D. Hirschbach, S. Nowoselsk (eds), *Zwischen Aufbruch und Verfolgung. Künstlerinnen der Zwanziger und Dreissiger Jahren*, Bremen: Zeichen and Spuren, 1993, pp. 191–206; P. Stöckemann, 'Tanz in Exil', *Tanzdrama*, 1998, no. 42, p. 13; and the useful panorama in 'Emigranten und ihre Zufluchtsorte', *ibid.*, pp. 19–21.
- 40 Patricio Bunster was a leading choreographer in Chile, trained by Jooss and Leeder. After the Pinochet putsch in 1973 he sought political asylum in East Germany where he taught at the Palucca School and introduced his own interpretation of *Ausdruckstanz* based on the Palucca system and the Jooss–Leeder tradition. In 1985 he went back to Chile where he became director of the Chilean National Ballet, combining *Ausdruckstanz* approaches with Chilean folk dance vocabularies. In 1968 he founded the first dance department in Chile. See J. Giersdorf 'From Utopia to Archive: A Dance Analysis', in *Proceedings of the Society of Dance History/Congress on Research in Dance Conference* (Centre national de la danse, June 2007), forthcoming.
- 41 H. Müller, 'Zwei rück, eins vor. Zur Frage der Rekonstruktion von Ausdruckstänzen', *Tanzdrama*, 1990, no. 11, pp. 4–6.