

SUSANNE FRANCO

## *Ausdruckstanz* Facing History and Memory: Reenacting the Past

In my article “Ausdruckstanz: Traditions, Translations, Transmissions”<sup>1</sup> on the historiography of German modern dance, I commented on three essays presented in a section of the volume *Dance Discourses: Keywords in Dance Research*,<sup>2</sup> which deals with dance and politics and the controversial history of *Ausdruckstanz*, whose intricacies did not fully manifest themselves until the late 1990s. I focused on the relationship (often perceived as tension) between history and memory, and among the many questions I raised, two seem to me to be still stimulating: what is the relationship between schisms and continuities in historical and memorial narratives? Which is the road to take between truth in history, faithfulness of memory and the right of forgetting?

Thanks to the research carried out by Susan Manning, Marion Kant<sup>3</sup> and Lilian Karina, Inge Baxmann, Laure Guilbert,<sup>4</sup> who could work in archives

<sup>1</sup> S. Franco, “Ausdruckstanz: Traditions, Translations, Transmissions,” [in:] *Dance Discourses: Keywords in Dance Research*, eds. S. Franco, M. Nordera, London 2007, pp. 80–97.

<sup>2</sup> L. Guilbert, “F. Böhme (1881–1952): Archeology of an Ideologue,” [in:] *Dance Discourses...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 29–45; S. Manning, “Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic,” [in:] *Dance Discourses...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 46–60; Y. Hardt, *Ausdruckstanz on the Left and the Work of Jean Weidt*, [in:] *Dance Discourses...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 61–79.

<sup>3</sup> See Marion Kant’s (pp. 349–369) and Susan Manning’s (pp. 427–445) articles in this volume.

<sup>4</sup> S. Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: The Dances of Mary Wigman*, Berkeley 1993; L. Karina, M. Kant, *Hitler’s Dancers. German Modern Dance and the Third Reich*, Oxford – New York 2003; I. Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft. Körper- und Tanzkulturen*

inaccessible until then, and to the cultural framework offered by Inge Baxmann,<sup>5</sup> official historical narratives have been integrated with forgotten or neglected stories, and modern dance has been reinserted into cultural history. We were also confronted with the memories transmitted by *Ausdruckstanz* recognized protagonists, who continued to work and live in Germany after the rise of the Nazi Regime, and with those dancers who were forced into exile. The majority of them were Jewish, the others were dancers politically engaged in communist or socialist organizations.<sup>6</sup> At that time, the history and memory of German modern dance seemed to have told different truths, often each one standing firm on the principle of non-negotiability, and their relationship has been loaded with emotionally charged binary oppositions such as bad vs. good, false vs. true, ideological vs. authentic, and so on. Altogether, these new narratives – which were based on historical documents, oral testimonies and incorporated techniques and repertoires – told a different version of events and biographies compared to what was assumed as true for decades by scholars, critics and artists. 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 transformation and the forerunner of compelling modern utopias. Today, we take it for granted that the rise of National Socialism after 1933 affected *Ausdruckstanz* and that the majority of dancers remained in Germany and Austria and collaborated for different reasons with the National Socialists, whereas others went into exile in the Americas, in Australia, and in Palestine, where they developed and disseminated *Ausdruckstanz*, integrating its practices and principles with other dance forms.

The research works discussed in the publication titled *Dance Discourses: Keywords in Dance Research* have broken taboos, reopened old wounds, and inflamed polemics about the ideological closeness of many dancers and choreographers to the Nazi regime. It is interesting that as Susan Manning notes today there is opposition to the interest in the links between *Ausdruckstanz* and National Socialism, and only a small number of scholars (most of them working and living outside Germany) are currently inquiring into different aspects of this historical period. Today, we are also aware

*der Moderne*, München 2000; L. Guilbert, *Danser avec le Troisième Reich: Les danseurs modernes sous le nazisme*, Brussels 2000.

<sup>5</sup> I. Baxmann, *Mythos...*, *op.cit.*

<sup>6</sup> L. Guilbert, "Tanz," [in:] *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933–1945*, eds. C.D. Krohn, P. von zur Mühlen, G. Paul, L. Winckler, Darmstadt 1998, p. 1104.

that to approach the history of *Ausdruckstanz* involves the study of two German pasts and its erosion, during the Communist and Nazi periods.<sup>7</sup>

The new research on *Ausdruckstanz* conducted in the 1990s expanded the geographical context to include a transnational perspective, which made it possible to tell about its space and rooting in time. Research work on the diasporic dimension of *Ausdruckstanz* shows that thanks to entering a hybrid relationship with other (dance) cultures, it has rich traditions beyond the borders of Germany. As many other migratory, exile and diaspora phenomena, those related to *Ausdruckstanz* have contributed to stimulating debates on the circulation of bodies, ideas and repertoires, and last but not least, on the preservation of heritage policies.<sup>8</sup>

The study of the transnational and transcultural dynamics of dance is methodologically and theoretically informed by the development of post-colonial and global studies, and of memory studies which – by concentrating on the interplay between the local and the global, the national and the trans-regional – brought to the surface to what extent different memories of a dance tradition circulate and interact multi-directionally. More specifically, in the last decade, the field of memory has been dramatically reconfigured under the influence of globalization processes. On the one hand, global conditions have powerfully impacted on memory debates, on the other hand, memory has become a part of the global discourse, and as a result, memory and globalism are inseparable today.<sup>9</sup>

In dance studies, the meaning and operational value of concepts of memory and cultural memory have opened up new research horizons, transformed our way of remembering dance, and made memory a tool in dance historiography. By considering the collective memory as rhizomatic and discontinuous, rather than built on traceable genealogies (diachronic) or networks (synchronous), scholars have started to deconstruct the idea of continuity in

<sup>7</sup> S. Manning, “Modern Dance in the Third Reich, Redux,” [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*, eds. R.J. Kowal, G. Siegmund, R. Martin, New York 2017, pp. 395–416.

<sup>8</sup> L. Guilbert, *Danser avec le Troisième Reich...*, *op.cit.*; S. Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion*, Minneapolis – London 2004; K. Elswit, “The Micropolitics of Exile, Exile and Otherness after the Nation,” [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 417–436; M. Kant, “Was bleibt? What Remains of East German Dance,” [in:] *New German Dance Studies*, eds. S. Manning, L. Ruprecht, Champaign 2012, pp. 130–146; J. Giersdorf, *The Body of the People: East German Dance Since 1945*, Madison 2013; K. Elswit, *Watching Weimar Dance*, Oxford – New York 2014.

<sup>9</sup> A. Assmann, S. Conrad, *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, New York 2010, pp. 1–9.

the transmission of an individual and collective past, and to rethink dance history as a ramified, fragmented, dynamic structure.<sup>10</sup> The study of memory is also leading dance scholars into questioning the canonical genealogies of dance masters and pupils, and of dance traditions that historians have often assumed without taking into account slippages, removals, oblivion or forms of resistance. In the case of *Ausdruckstanz*, critiques regarding hierarchies of transmission have been structured primarily around the various ways of storing, transforming, and transmitting memory. In the case of Rudolf Laban, the articulation of bodily memories and historical narratives in the reconstructions of some of his works and in the recent historical inquiries produced by his students and pupils, can help in understanding to what extent this genealogical thread has troubled our critical perception of his thoughts and beliefs.<sup>11</sup> Thanks to memory studies, dance scholars started perceiving history and memory as two different ways of recovering the past that do not necessarily contradict or exclude each other.<sup>12</sup> As suggested by Astrid Erll, we would rather need to refer to the notion of “different modes of remembering in culture” and to take account of what is remembered (facts and data), and how it is remembered<sup>13</sup> or, I will add, why it is forgotten.

Today, archives are conceived as places of research and objects of cultural theory, as institutions hosting a corpus of historical documents, as dynamic spaces where historians move with their bodies, and last but not least, as a metaphor for a way of dealing with history and historiographical practices. As summarized by Christina Thurner, “what is eventually ‘made’ with and out of the salvaged material or rather extracted from what has been the unearthed or discovered, is thus not an object of the past,

<sup>10</sup> *Ricordanze: Memoria in movimento e coreografie della storia*, eds. S. Franco, M. Nordeira, Torino 2010; I. Launay, S. Pagès, *Mémoires et histoire en danse*, Paris 2010; *Recreer/Scripter: Mémoires et transmissions des oeuvres performative et chorégraphiques contemporaines*, ed. A. Bénichou, Paris 2015; I. Launay, *Les danses d'après: I. Poétiques et politiques des répertoires*, Pantin 2017; I. Launay, *Les danses d'après: II. Cultures de l'oubli et citation*, Pantin 2018.

<sup>11</sup> S. Franco, “Ausdruckstanz: Traditions...,” *op.cit.*; S. Franco, “The Motion of Memory, the Question of History: Recreating Rudolf Laban’s Choreographic Legacy,” [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, ed. M. Franko, New York 2018, pp. 143–161.

<sup>12</sup> A. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, Cambridge 2012.

<sup>13</sup> A. Erll, “Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction,” [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. A. Erll, A. Nünning, S.B. Young, Berlin 2008, p. 7.

but a distinct contemporary narrative or production of knowledge.”<sup>14</sup> Two phenomena related to the issues of archive and transmission emerge at this point, namely the history and memory of German modern dance. On the one hand, despite a recent attempt to establish a network of German dance archives (<http://www.tanzarchive.de/en/home/>), these institutions are less and less supported by cultural policies and public funding. This is the case of two important archives for *Ausdruckstanz* and *Tanztheater*, the Tanzarchiv Leipzig and the Pina Bausch Digital Archive. Founded in 1957, the Tanzarchiv Leipzig was made accessible to scholars from outside East Germany in 1989 and after a phase of intense activity, it was incorporated into the University Library in 2011, losing its independent status and agency. The Pina Bausch Digital Archive, started in 2010 and still underway, is an innovative and extremely rich archive, which is currently facing financial cuts that can only compromise its original structure and mission.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, the recent introduction of the concept of “body as archive”<sup>16</sup> proves to what extent the (dancing) body can be considered as a repository for knowledge, and dance as a form of radical embodiment and a way of archiving. This double evidence is precisely what both scholars and artists are currently experiencing in their work on and off stage. In other words, we are now looking at bodies as archives to explore the transmission of knowledge in the form of embodied action. In Germany, the Federal Cultural Foundation (Kulturstiftung des Bundes) has promoted the Dance Heritage Fund program (Tanzfonds Erbe 2011–2018/19) to react to the evidence that the history of modern dance was only visible to a limited extent in the public sphere despite the international reputations of artists such as Mary Wigman, Dore Hoyer, Rudolf Laban, and many others whose careers began in Germany. The processing of historical material has been taken in charge by each applicant, who could select the works, the choreographers, or the topics, on the basis of his/her personal assumption of

<sup>14</sup> C. Thurner, “Leaving and Pursuing Traces: ‘Archive’ and ‘Archiving’ in a Dance Context,” [in:] *Dance [and] Theory*, eds. G. Brandstetter, G. Klein, Bielefeld 2012, p. 243.

<sup>15</sup> *Inheriting Dance: An Invitation from Pina*, ed. M. Wagenbach, Bielefeld 2014.

<sup>16</sup> I. Baxmann, “The Body as Archive. On the Difficult Relationship Between Movement and History,” [in:] *Knowledge in Motion. Perspectives of Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance*, eds. S. Gehm, P. Husemann, K. von Wilcke, Bielefeld 2007, pp. 207–216; A. Lepiecki, “The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances,” *Dance Research Journal* 2010, no. 42/2, pp. 28–48; J. Wehren, *Körper als Archiv in Bewegung: Choreografie als historiografische Praxis*, Bielefeld 2016; *The Sentient Archive: Bodies, Performance, and Memory*, eds. B. Bissell, L. Caruso Haviland, Middletown 2018.

what is significant for contemporary audiences. This approach has allowed them to potentially avoid establishing or consolidating a historical canon of key dance works, and to rather focus on different forms of re-performance, remake, citation, re-creation, re-actualization, and so on. Altogether, these re-enactments represent a new choreographic strategy and a dramaturgical modality to explore the past and to question the historiography of (modern) dance. By inquiring onstage the potential of practicing/writing history, they offer an alternative to the linear and evolutionary model proposed by more traditional approaches. Re-enactments are also often recorded in different ways, making documentation circular and a substantial part of the performative project from its conception to its realization, and from its reception to its preservation. In this regard, re-enactment as a genre creates new dimensions for the performance and its preservation, designing each time new (living) archival structures and processes.

These recent perspectives on memory, archives and transmission are strictly related to a major shift that occurred in the ways we currently conceptualize history, both in dance studies and practice. Archiving was usually thought to take place prior to reconstructing, but recently we have been stimulated to consider the opposite, too. Whereas earlier debates concerning dance reconstructions revolved around questions of fidelity and authenticity and of a perceived “original,” re-enactment has tended to focus on what can be made in the present using the past. Whereas reconstructions present the dance of the past as already historical, re-enactments do not aim at restaging the past, but offer a way to illuminate dance history for today’s needs. Re-enactments, which also potentially help understand in what contextual relationship the artistic endeavor was placed, are profoundly tied to conceptual dance, which in turn cannot be separated from a major turn that occurred in dance studies from a socio-historical trend to a broadly philosophical one.

Some re-enactments bring to the stage dance works that have kept their place and role in cultural memory, others make forgotten dance pieces, which for different reasons had a limited exposure at the time of their creation, available again and to a broader audience. Jan Assmann has introduced the concept of collective memory as the combination of communicative and cultural memory.<sup>17</sup> Whereas communicative memory lives in daily

<sup>17</sup> J. Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. A. Erll, A. Nünning, S.B. Young, Berlin 2008, p. 117.

interaction and communication, and is not subject to institutional support or cultivated by specialists, cultural memory is a reservoir of past events and can be mediated by specific dances and performances as much as by texts. Cultural memory is therefore passed on, among others, by teachers, artists, and scholars, and it is possible to regain it as “ours” (as opposed to archaeological and historical research). For this reason, group participation in the collective memory is common, whereas the participation of a group in cultural memory is always highly varied. Aleida Assmann defines the concept of “active cultural memory” as the outcome of what the institutions governing the nurturing of the “past as present” perform as essential, whereas the archive preserves the “past as past” or something forgotten, omitted or unused.<sup>18</sup> These processes, which we call “canonization,” provide certain artefacts a permanent place in the cultural “working memory of a society” or “functional memory,” a form of future-oriented memory.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, the institutions of “passive cultural memory,” institutions such as the archive, store what is neglected by creating a formally organized repertoire of missed opportunities, alternative scenarios, and unused or discarded material. In other words, archives store the “past as the past” and are considered as the “reference memory of a society” or as “storage memory.” Following Assmann, Franko maintains that re-enactment deals with the complex issue of temporality, and distorts our “sense of what is past in the past” precisely because “it transcends the goal of preservation.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, re-enactments bring to the fore the presence of the dancing subject in an inter-temporal dimension where past and present are both questioned. They produce a move from a historical representation (of the past as history) to a lived experience of an event.<sup>21</sup> By connecting multiple times and multiple places, re-enactments are also providing alternatives to historical and philological reconstructions and to the more traditional writings of dance history because of their transnational and globally interconnected perspective.<sup>22</sup> As a form of historiography,

<sup>18</sup> J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> M. Franko, “Introduction,” [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, *op.cit.*, pp. 7, 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> J. Wehren, *Körper als Archiv in Bewegung...*, *op.cit.*; C. Thurner, “Time Layers, Time Leaps, Time Loss: Methodologies of Dance Historiography,” [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, *op.cit.*, pp. 525–532.

they have challenged the positivistic approach to “doing dance history,” contributing to practicing different forms of historical knowledge.<sup>23</sup> As summarized by Lucia Ruprecht, re-enactments provide some of the most stimulating answers to the post-modern crisis of writing history, and a new epistemological dimension toward the non-ephemerality of dance.<sup>24</sup>

In “Ausdruckstanz: Traditions, Translations, Transmissions,” I suggested that a 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. Today, I would suggest connecting this analysis to a concept focused research on how the re-use of the material of past performances for different audiences in different times has been designed. It is particularly interesting to note here that in the introduction to the *Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, Mark Franko relates the origin of re-enactment to Susanne Linke’s reconstruction in 1988 of Dore Hoyer’s *Affectos Humanos* (1962). Linke punctuated each of the three sections of the piece with intervals in which she undressed and changed into a different costume, thereby establishing a distance between herself as a reconstructor and the artist whose work she reconstructed. Following in the footsteps of Franko we could say that this piece introduced a change in the dancer’s attitude to the historical material, emphasizing what it was like to do it again, in other words, to “re-act it” or “react to it.”<sup>25</sup> Franko also suggests that the importance of *Affectos Humanos* was due to the fact that as early as 1962, the audience perceived the work as inconsistent with the times, and its reproduction in 1988 met with a similar response. This double shift may be the key to understanding Linke’s urgency in finding a staging solution suited to both her time and her desire to recover a complex past retraced by controversial (individual and collective) histories and memories.

Not only the origins of re-enactment are seen in close relationship with *Ausdruckstanz* and *Tanztheater*, but many re-enactments that have garnered attention at the international level are derived from German

<sup>23</sup> R. Burt, “Memory, Repetition and Critical Intervention: The Politics of Historical Reference in Recent European Dance Performance,” *Performance Research* 2003, no. 8/2, pp. 34–41; K. Elswit, *Watching...*, *op.cit.*; M. Franko, “Introduction,” *op.cit.*

<sup>24</sup> L. Ruprecht, “Afterword: Notes after the Fact,” [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, *op.cit.*, pp. 607–619.

<sup>25</sup> M. Franko, “Repeatability, Reconstruction and Beyond,” *Theatre Journal* 1989, no. 41/1, pp. 56–74; M. Franko, “Introduction,” *op.cit.*



modern dance pieces and techniques. In her recent book, *Les danser d'après: II. Cultures de l'oubli et citation?*, dedicated to the effects of forgetting and discontinuity in the transmission of a dance and of a dance tradition, Isabelle Launay provides an explanation of why German modern dance was not popular in France. She based her research work on the evidence that for *Ausdruckstanz*, to transmit a dance or a repertoire was not relevant. From this perspective, Launay stresses that for Mary Wigman (and many other dancers and choreographers) there was no “work” to interpret, transmit and repeat, and the “dancing body” was perceived rather as a “lieu de mémoire” or as a blood memory of an ancestral culture.<sup>26</sup> According to this interpretation, everyone could learn how to create his/her own dances within a school or workshop by inventing and organizing his/her own imagination and mastering some shared rules of composition. At the same time, every single dance piece had a meaning only in relation to the unique body of the dancer. In other words, a dance culture based on ecstasy and possession resisted to the idea of transmitting choreographic works and preserving repertoires. On his side, Rudolf Laban, by means of his movement analysis and notation system, suggested that dance should be distinguished from choreography and that a dance piece should be considered independently of its author/performer in order to make a body movement part of a broader collective memory. This collective memory could be re-incorporated or re-enacted in different contexts – not necessarily to preserve a dancer’s or a company’s repertoire, but rather, as suggested by Launay, some trans-historical patterns of movement.<sup>27</sup> Launay has identified a third model of transmission in the way Valeska Gert explored the everyday culture of gesture to make it the core of a sophisticated citation able to transform its existence and memory in different social and historical contexts.<sup>28</sup>

Following Launay’s account, oblivion, schisms and discontinuity are the keywords to understand the transmission of this tradition in France in its historical and memorial narratives. Here *Ausdruckstanz* was the object of a critical reception before the Second World War (divided between interest and repulsion), and was discredited at the end of the conflict because of its association with the former “German enemy” and because of the dominant

<sup>26</sup> I. Launay, *Les danses d'après: II. Cultures de l'oubli et citation*, Pantin 2018, pp. 43–69.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 133–162.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 43–95, 133–162.

presence of Serge Lifar, the Russian-born French dancer, choreographer, and ballet master at the Paris Opéra who largely imposed his vision of neoclassicism. Modern dance found only limited space in France between the 1950s and 1970s, and not without irony. Despite the fact that it was represented by local artists inspired by left-wing humanism, it was marginalized because of its historical ties with the German enemy, whereas the neoclassic tradition eventually fell under the aegis of an artist who was eventually condemned for his collaboration with the Nazis during the Occupation. In the following years, discourse on the absence of a modern dance tradition in France contributed to the promotion of the myth of orphan art born spontaneously in 1980 from a generation that had made initiatory trips to the US. Only after Pina Bausch's growing successes, the German tradition of *Ausdruckstanz* and *Tanztheater* was recognized, but it was mainly a variety derived from Kurt Jooss and not that of Mary Wigman or Jean Weidt.<sup>29</sup>

Since the 1990s, a significant number of re-enactments by choreographers based in France have cited and/or updated dance pieces rooted in *Ausdruckstanz*, establishing a more or less direct and explicit dialogue with the source works.

The three models of transmission of dance, choreographies and repertoires identified by Launay for the transmission of *Ausdruckstanz* also help in re-considering the reasons why many of the artists who engaged in the re-enactments of German modern dance are not German and often not even directly linked to those masters who have passed on a technique or aesthetics related to *Ausdruckstanz*. This was the case with the American Mark Tompkins, working in France since the 1970s, and his series of *Hommages*, among which one is dedicated to Valeska Gert (1998). Another example is the French-Moroccan Latifa Laâbissi, who produced *Phasmes* (2001), a series of pieces based on works by Dore Hoyer and Mary Wigman. Between 2001 and 2018, she presented a second series of works derived from *Hexentanz* (Witch Dance) by Mary Wigman. Other representatives of this approach are the Ecuadorian Fabián Barba, who presented *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* based on Mary Wigman's first U.S. tour in 1930–1931 (2009), and the Spanish choreographer Olga de Soto, who created *Débords, réflexions sur La Table verte de Kurt Jooss* (2012) based on Kurt Jooss's *Green Table* from 1932. These performances are the result

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 195.

of multiple displacements (geographical, historical, cultural) of the artists, which involve an inevitable study of the opposition between the center and the periphery. Moreover, these re-enactments are only the last layer of a more complex web of changes taking place in the history of *Ausdruckstanz*. They also bear the traces of the double displacement experienced by those who returned to Germany (both East and West) after being exiled: back to their original country they were perceived again “from another time and place,” and often lived in far more precarious positions than those who had stayed,<sup>30</sup> or were considered less significant than those who did not leave.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the re-enactments of *Ausdruckstanz* made by choreographers with complex national and artistic identities help us consider the exile as “an ongoing lived condition that needs to be negotiated in relation to multiple forms of otherness” rather than a static position.<sup>32</sup>

While the re-enactments created by artists who positioned themselves out of the main genealogical line or geographical/cultural contexts shed new light on the establishment of a canon, more problematic in this regard are those created by artists who admitted their limited knowledge about German modern dance. These works are based on periodization passed on by canonical accounts of dance history which favors the erasure of “marginal” traditions and around which only a partial memory has crystallized. Interestingly enough, the most striking examples are Martin Nachbar’s *affects/rework* (2000) and *Urheben Aufheben* (2008). Both are based on Dore Hoyer’s *Affectos Humanos*, but in fact they refer only to Linke’s reconstruction and not to Arila Siegert’s work which was done in East Germany in the same year. Jens Giersdorf notes that Nachbar’s re-enactments, reinforce the erasure of East German dance from the historical canon.<sup>33</sup> The risk is that works like this can prohibit accounting for larger ideological structures that actually support them, and they can generate an ahistorical turn by “strengthening, rather than mitigating dominant narratives,”<sup>34</sup> thereby contributing to the production of oblivion that has influenced the history of *Ausdruckstanz*.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> M. Kant, “Was bleibt?...,” *op.cit.*, pp. 130–146.

<sup>31</sup> L. Guilbert, “Tanz...,” *op.cit.*

<sup>32</sup> K. Elswit, “The Micropolitics of Exile...,” *op.cit.*, p. 417.

<sup>33</sup> J. Giersdorf, *The Body of the People...*, *op.cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>34</sup> K. Elswit, “Inheriting Dance’s Alternative Histories,” *Dance Research Journal* 2014, no. 46/1, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> L. Guilbert, *Danser avec le Troisième Reich...*, *op.cit.*, p. 427.

A new series of inevitable questions mark the current stage of research on German modern dance. Can we look at discontinuity as an antidote to excessive memory and to hagiographical narratives that have given artists and works permanent and homogeneous identities? Is this latest research phase leading us to the recognition of the complexity of historical facts by the way of multiplication of the conflicting memories? Is the new historiography of dance as successful as the traditional one in diffusing the past(ness) of *Ausdruckstanz*? How much has the new consciousness of the history and memory of German modern dance enriched younger artists' aesthetics and practices? Have contemporary artists and critics modified their visions of *Ausdruckstanz* by attending the re-enactments of pieces originated in this very cultural context and/or in its diasporic dimensions?

To answer some of these questions, I suggest focusing on two parallel trends that contribute to setting of boundaries of what seems to be the new dance modernism. Off stage, the expanding trend of what is now defined as "somatics," a field that emphasizes internal physical perception and experience rather than the external observation of movement, and based on the notion of atemporal corporeal memory, is increasingly diffuse. Professional and amateur dance practitioners are overexposed to these discourses, often without historicizing them, because they are presented as contemporary and atemporal at the same time. On stage, numerous dancers and choreographers reproduce the rhetoric of the importance of body culture, the body's ability to communicate in an immediate way, the desire to perceive dances intuitively and non-intellectually, the fear and fascination of technology, and, last but not least, a yearning for an original state and the need to establish a new relationship with nature. In countries such as Italy, modernism and post-modernism in dance were both imported from abroad and in both cases, in a short period of time. This situation certainly did not favor their critical reception (not to mention physical transformations) as a result of which a few generations of dancers were unable to adequately work through these two visions of dance and choreography. In a short film made in 2018, Italian dancer and choreographer Michele Di Stefano, who in 2014 was awarded the Argent Lion at the Dance Biennale in Venice, and who describes himself as a conceptual choreographer, standing on a lawn with the Alps as a backdrop, talks about his curatorial program *Outdoor* for the dance festival in Bolzano (Italy) in these terms:

I'm selecting dance pieces, choreographers and artists who work on an energetic impact and who manage to keep the tension high without resorting to narration. This is because the body is itself so rich in information and in senses that it should be left to appear as it is. Dance has the wonderful ability not to lie because movement is clear and true. Therefore, if artists work on this tension and elaborate a constant flow out of this state of truth in a rhythmic articulation, I feel like the shows all communicate the same thing: "do you see how nice it is to go in time with life?" [...] *Outdoor* is this: a series of encounters. There is universal everywhere and, at the same time, there is a very beautiful territorial specificity. [...] You simply do your own experience, and this is it. Everything is so direct that you only need to open your arms and welcome it. This is what we try to communicate through this program.<sup>36</sup>

By observing the development of somatics and by listening to this description, it is evident how the timeless collective memory of modern dance is surviving beside repertoires and the transmissions of dance pieces. This atemporal memory seems to sustain contemporary discourses on the (dancing) body as much as more critical (if not radical) approaches to the fascinating entanglement of historical schisms and the continuity of memory.

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