

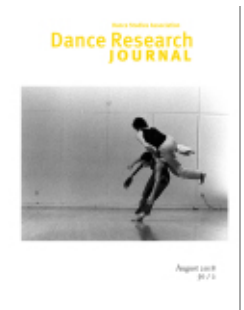


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How to Re-View Things with Words? Dance Criticism as Translation—Pina Bausch¹

Christina Thurner

In her review of the Bavarian State Ballet's restaging of *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen*, dance critic Malve Gradinger writes that "as far as the dance is concerned, [Pina] Bausch is absolutely contemporary" (Gradinger 2016).² But what exactly does "contemporary" ["zeitgenössisch"] mean in this context? Why is it mentioned as an attribute and consequently given the status of an "aesthetic assertion"?³ Conversely, in what way is Pina Bausch no longer contemporary, and what is she instead? Furthermore, in declaring Bausch's work to constitute "important dance heritage"⁴ within that same review, Gradinger also implicitly describes it as being the opposite of "contemporary" (in the colloquial sense of "current"), namely, from the past or of a different time. What are we to make of this? Is Bausch to be considered contemporary or part of our heritage and therefore, historical? For are not these adjectives mutually exclusive, and does their simultaneous use not constitute a contradiction in terms? And what role does dance criticism play; what position does it occupy within this web of (temporal) relations in its retrospective translation of dance into language?

I will consider these questions with specific regard to reviews of Bausch's work,⁵ along with a general theoretical reflection on the concepts of temporality and contemporaneity. My hypothesis is that the contradictoriness mentioned is symptomatic of dance journalism's perspective on Pina Bausch's work. Reviews of even her earliest pieces remarked on their respective positions in time although the reviews were by no means consistent in their ascriptions. Moreover, comparisons drawn over the years between her latest choreographies and previous ones prompt critics to speculate on possible future developments. For instance, in his review of the *Tanzabend* (subsequently given the title *Bandoneon*) printed in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on December 31, 1980, Wolfgang Stauch-von-Quitow writes that "in a way [it] seems to be a new version of a retrospective on past performances of the Tanztheater Wuppertal" and his article ends with the prediction: "Yet after this performance, it is certain that only something new or nothing at all can follow" (31).⁶ The author of this early review clearly asserts the necessity of a timely turnaround in the series of Bausch's pieces. At that point in time (end of 1980), Bausch had recently completed her seventh year as director of the Tanztheater Wuppertal and would continue in that capacity for almost

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another three decades. Rolf Michaelis expressed a similar view to that of Stauch-von-Quitow in his review of *Nelken*, printed in the German weekly journal *Zeit* in February 1983, which reads: “Though Pina Bausch may, finally, have arrived in Wuppertal (in more senses than one),” the “critical observer” is “wistfully awaiting the new, the old Pina Bausch” (Michaelis 1983).⁷ Here, the author clearly differentiates between an “old” and a “new” Bausch; yet, in the same breath he demands that they somehow coalesce, meaning that, in his opinion, the artist should henceforward go back to whatever she had done in the past.

Throughout the following decades, thematizations of the contradiction between or fusion of the old and the new (and even the future) became a veritable topos in reviews of Bausch’s work. Critics perceived the artist as being progressively contemporary and somehow outdated *at the same time* or even as iridescently oscillating back and forth in (and out of) time. Such explicit, albeit diffuse, attributions of temporality are astonishing in their early accumulation; of course, later this had to do with the fact that Bausch’s pieces were continuously being produced and even restaged. On the occasion of the restaging of the 1974 dance opera *Iphigenie* in 1990, Michaelis states: “Finally, a performance has once again been fortunate enough to meet with success. And yet it is not of our time” (Michaelis 1990).⁸ Similarly, in his review of a guest performance of *Nelken* given in London twenty-three years after its world premiere, Ramsay Burt remarks on a corresponding incongruity: “When it was new, [Dominique] Mercy’s solo was part of Bausch’s radical critique of the social construction of the dancing body. . . . So when Mercy asks “What do you want?” in London in 2005, it sounds like he’s asking, why do London audiences still want to see this old stuff? Don’t they realize times have changed?” (Burt 2005).

The question critics repeatedly seem to ask is whether Bausch’s works are a testimony to the past, present, or future. Is the Tanztheater Wuppertal contemporary or always somehow out of time? The subtitle of the conference “Dance Future II” (Hamburg 2017) was “Claiming Contemporaneity,” in accordance with which I, too, would like to ask, with reference to the iridescent temporalities already mentioned, how “contemporaneity”—or which concept of “contemporaneity”—can be specifically employed to ascertain the extent to which dance criticism as a specific text genre influences how Bausch’s work is perceived. What are the performative qualities of journalistic utterances on the topic of Pina Bausch’s work? Or, to rephrase the question in allusion to John L. Austin: *How to Re-View Things with Words?* (Austin 2014, esp. 28–19). As translations⁹ of dance into language, reviews also move *within* time while discursively performing their implicit or explicit assertions and assumptions: They record, analyze, and judge.¹⁰ In doing so, they not only react to the perceived, but also act upon and influence perception in the form of discourse, as I have explained elsewhere.¹¹ In this respect, a particular concept of contemporaneity can be said to be inscribed in them—a concept I will offer a brief general outline of before returning to reviews of Bausch’s work. However, I cannot enter into the highly diversified and complex discussion on the topic of “contemporaneity” here.¹² Instead, I shall focus on one specific concept of contemporaneity, namely, that of French philosopher and former dancer Frédéric Pouillaude.

For Pouillaude, the term denotes not some “schema of epochal figuration” (unlike, for instance, periodizations such as modern, romantic, classical art, etc.), but rather a “structure of temporality”: “In this case: a neutral simultaneity, a contingent coexistence. In its broader meaning and without indicating any epoch, ‘contemporary’ is all that coexists, all that belongs to a particular time” (2007, 127). Of course, such a concept is not immune to criticism, for instance, concerning Pouillaude’s emphasis that it should be considered in an “extra- or parahistorical sense” (134). His concept’s relative merits with regard to the topic under consideration, however, are threefold. The first is the close connection Pouillaude constructs between the term “contemporaneity” as a “structure of temporality” and dance by stating that “dance, as a scenic event, is directly shaped by such a structure” (Pouillaude 2007, 127); the second is the emphasis on “coexistence,” which is described as being contingent, or in conjunction with, and the third is the assertion of belonging to a “particular time” (127) notwithstanding.

This concept of “contemporaneity” allows us to identify several characteristics common to reviews of Pina Bausch’s work along with, of course, the obvious functional, decade-long coexistence between certain journalists (as critics) and the choreographer and her dancers (as the critiqued).¹³ It also allows us to analyze these characteristics in terms of their discursive performativity.

Close Partnership of Dance and Contemporaneity

Let us first consider the connection between dance (as shaped by structures of temporality) and contemporaneity (as such a structure). I contend that the reviews I draw upon in this article mirror the assumption that dance is directly shaped or formed by structures of temporality by presuming Bausch’s creations to reveal their own formation, a formation involving dimensions of synchronicity and diachronicity. The former dimension becomes apparent in the specific temporality of Bausch’s individual pieces, which characteristically employ repetitions and are (often) of pronouncedly long duration. The latter dimension concerns Bausch’s almost peerless career (which is also characterized by repetition and longevity).¹⁴ Journalistic criticism, in turn, reacts to the formation of Bausch’s pieces with its own corresponding (textual) structural elements: the repetition and persistence of statements, arguments, and narratives.

A seemingly marginal, yet significant Bausch-specific example of such recurrent statements concerns the use of titles or rather lack of them for premiering pieces. “The new piece, which—as is almost invariably the case with new work by Pina Bausch—carries no title yet” (Weber 1997, 19).¹⁵ Similar, if not identical, statements are made with a regularity bordering on monotony in practically every premiere review.¹⁶ Conversely, the existence of titles for premiering pieces is explicitly emphasized as an exception to the rule, as was the case, for instance, with *Masurca Fogo* in 1998.¹⁷ Reviewers seem content to play along with Bausch’s name-game (for which there may be several reasons) without complaint. There is one review, however (of *Nelken*, written by Michaelis in 1983 for *Die Zeit*), that makes metaphorical use of this lack of a title as an argument against the piece. Critic Rolf Michaelis, usually favorably inclined toward Bausch’s work, deduces that this piece is “without title—not because it is so coherent that it requires none, but because . . . there is no longer a name that could possibly serve as the common denominator for so random a scenic collage” (1983, 2).¹⁸ Here, the critic is drawing a parallel between a formality (the piece being untitled) and a formal structure (the piece as verbally incommunicable scenic collage). This argument, however, is in point of fact a value judgment (on the part of Michaelis); it is a value judgment left entirely unconcealed in a text by an experienced critic who uses it to figuratively consolidate his critical appraisal.

There are, of course, other appraisals that recur in almost identical wordings over a surprisingly long period of time. The topos of “age-induced” clemency, for example, is reproduced time and again by critics, having been introduced into critical discourse relatively early by Hartmut Regitz (among others) who, on the occasion of his review of *Ahnen* in 1987, concludes that the work of the then forty-six-year-old Bausch was becoming “more conciliatory, moderate, peaceable” (1987, 39).¹⁹ Subsequently, countless reviews attest to Pina Bausch’s regained youthfulness, lightness,²⁰ and renewed interest in movement,²¹ or proffer diagnoses of the recent, more harmonious representations of gender relations (as opposed to earlier, more violent, cruel ones).²²

The reviews also bear witness to the fact that criticism as a text genre does not merely depict the Tanztheater Wuppertal in its appraisal of it; rather, as a translation of dance into language, criticism performs discursive assertions that, in turn, influence audience perception, including that of the critics themselves.²³ For example, in response to the 1978 piece *Er nimmt sie an der Hand und führt sie in das Schloß, die anderen folgen*, journalist Stauch-von-Quitow transfers his perception of the nonverbal kinaesthetic performance into verbal imagery, only to instantaneously charge this imagery with interpretations and judgments. He writes:

In the environment of an upper-class residence . . . , Pina Bausch has developed an absurdist-pantomimic dramatic ballet demonstrating in sheer endless repetitions the banal movement repertoire of human behavior. Special emphasis is placed on bodily movement, on gestures, on danced choreographic actions that reveal more about human nature than mere rhetorical self-renunciation ever could. The scene unfolding between the ten protagonists, who accomplish superhuman feats throughout the evening, begins with them lying mutely on sofas, couches, beds, or the floor. Slowly, their bodies start to move. (1978, 41)²⁴

Furthermore, the critic seems to be reassuring himself of his own capacity to respond to everything unconventional with an open mind when he writes: “The production refused to conform to the ‘normal’ expectations of a conventional audience.” (1978, 41).²⁵

The initially brusque dismissal of Bausch’s Tanztheater by that same “conventional” audience, among whom this particular journalist—like many others—apparently did not count himself, is taken up in numerous reviews, for instance, in the form of citations such as, “[for] shoddy workmanship of this kind, even the term ‘degenerate art’ would be a false compliment” (cf. Schmidt 1980, 25).²⁶ This caustic attitude toward Bausch is also echoed in reviews that make mention of vociferous protests during performances of “jeering, whistling, door-slamming” audience members leaving the auditorium and even of serious threats made against the choreographer.²⁷

Significantly, however, in reviews dating from the early 1980s notes on the audience’s disapprobation yield to the observation (sometimes offered in amazement) that the audience had apparently learnt to appreciate Bausch. In 1983, for example, Michaelis writes the following about *Nelken*: “It might just be: a Pina Bausch premiere such as we have often witnessed over the past ten years in the opera house of Wuppertal-Barmen. But then everything is different: For the first time ever, no public outcry during the performance. No subscribers slamming doors seeking to escape the vagaries that the fantasy of Germany’s boldest choreographer-director would have them endure” (Michaelis 1983).²⁸ Yet precisely as the audience apparently begins to comprehend what Bausch is presenting and critics are attempting to translate or explain it, a new divide emerges as critics begin to distance themselves from the audience. While the audience’s stance toward Bausch turns into acceptance, journalists begin reacting dismissively to her work. The justification for this reaction occupies a considerable amount of space in their respective reviews, as the following excerpt from a review by Michaelis exemplifies:

Under ordinary circumstances, ten years of working with the same (albeit frequently replaced) company would be taxing on both parties, the choreographer and ensemble alike, to the point of mutual creative exhaustion. . . . If a company denies itself challenges in the form of “foreign” ideas, pieces, choreographies, dance or dramatic music styles, or the collaboration with artists who think and experiment differently—such as the company in Wuppertal have been doing for quite some time now—then insider-inventions, which may or may not continue to delight the community that (for good reasons!) has formed around Pina Bausch, will cause the critical observer to leave for home in sorrowful reflection, especially if he or she has learnt much from this artist. (1983)²⁹

Michaelis goes on to ask: “Are Pina Bausch and her Tanztheater Wuppertal finally running out of questions to ask?” (Michaelis 1983).³⁰ This question concerning the end of all questions is a dance journalistic translation of a value judgment that, significantly, is issued in temporal terms. Here, the critic is voicing his regrets about the artistic practice of asking questions and the effects it produces—a practice that though it may have proven its worth at least as far as this critic is concerned is obviously no longer effective. The critic interprets this in his question as the end of a phase, a phase to be superseded by something different that, although less suited to himself, will please the audience (or at least parts of it).³¹

Contemporaneity and Coexistence

This leads us to the second aspect of contemporaneity, namely, to Pouillaude's definition of it as a "contingent coexistence" (2007, 127). This coexistence should not be understood as pertaining only to Bausch's choreographies, but also and even primarily to the perception of the same (e.g., in the form of criticism). According to this aspect of Pouillaude's concept of contemporaneity, different modes of perception of Bausch's creations exist simultaneously. In addition to this, I would argue that the assertions and assumptions performed by critics in the form of translations influence these perceptions and consequently nurture their contingent coexistence—a coexistence that, in turn, is addressed in reviews. The following passage from a review in the *NZZ* by Lilo Weber on the restaging of *Die sieben Todsünden* bears witness to this dynamic: "Whoever sees the old pieces will understand the earliest Bausch supporters shedding a tear or two in remembrance of the choreographer's late phase of open societal critique. Yet Pina Bausch's choreographies are still as relevant as ever" (2001b, 57).³² This citation both illustrates and discursively reproduces the complex, multilayered temporality pervading Bausch's work. In 1981, a full twenty years before Weber, Michaelis already explicitly identifies such a "structure of temporality" in terms of an aesthetic "coexistence" by proposing to view the "Bausch ballets" as "one big dance suite," considering their being but "variations on the same theme," albeit with "subtle changes, [and] delicate nuances" (Michaelis 1981)³³ between them. A comment made by Pina Bausch herself and cited by Bettina Trouwborst on the occasion of the world premiere of *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen* seems to underscore such a proposal: "'The topics are always the same, only the colors change' is what Pina Bausch once said about her work" (Trouwborst 2002).³⁴ While Michaelis speaks of "variations," Trouwborst uses the term "self-reference" to signify repetitive elements in Bausch's work. And she is not alone in this regard.³⁵

What interests me most about these comments with regard to my topic is the following: If we give credence to the claims made by the reviews drawn upon here (which range from around 1980 to 2009),³⁶ then Bausch's work had been perceived or presented almost from its inception as a single body of work comprised of individual pieces ("one big dance suite," Michaelis [1981]).³⁷ This implies its description as a "structure of temporality"; a structure following no (particular) linear trajectory but consisting of coexisting variations and quotes in contingent cross-reference to one another, much like a web. This description is equally appropriate to the texts (reviews) themselves, however, since it is apparent that the claims made in some of them are repeatedly taken up or referenced in others and thereby, reproduced in discourse. In a way, Bausch's self-references are effectively exponentiated in the self-references of critics, in the variations of discourse. As cases in point, I will quote two reviews that, in my opinion, both paradigmatically demonstrate and simultaneously reflect on this circumstance. On the occasion of Bausch's *Orpheus und Eurydike* given at the Paris Opera in 2005, Eva-Elisabeth Fischer attempts to bring not only the piece and the circumstances of its several restagings but also her own perception of it into alignment with the above-mentioned "structures of temporality." She writes:

A retinue of people, spearheaded by Malou Airaud and Dominique Mercy who danced the lead roles at the 1975 world premiere, arrived for the rehearsals. These two dancers even performed the roles of the tragic lovers a full 18 years later in the 1993 restaging in Wuppertal and did so touchingly, movingly, from the first second to the last, more maturely, though without any apparent signs of having aged. The memory of such experiences and the moments of artistic happiness connected to them cloud one's perception of the current restaging. Every comparison could prove fatal. How does one respond to the piece after so many years? Do one's past views still correspond to one's present attitude toward life? Are feelings subject to fashions and has the form in which these feelings are expressed possibly become outdated? (2005, 15)³⁸

Here, Fischer is addressing how her memories superimpose themselves on and disrupt her current experience. She thereby illustrates how different times are characterized by different (emotional)

responses that can be recalled in the form of memories and that, in turn, relate to or (as in this case) conflict with other past experiences and feelings. In contrast, Burt seems to respond directly to Fischer's questions by declaring the coexistence of past and present in the form of repetitions to be a creative act consummated collectively by artists and audiences alike. He writes to this effect in his review of a guest performance of *Nelken* in London in 2005, which reads: "[The] dancers are trying to reach out and . . . celebrate the fact that, despite the way things seemed when this piece was new, we're still here" (Burt 2005).

Analogously to Michaelis's wording of a "big dance suite,"³⁹ we might speak of an "epic of criticism" travelling through time, just like Bausch's work, in the form of translations, thereby ensuring its own contemporaneity while still hailing from a "particular time."

Belonging to a Particular Time

This brings us, finally, to the third aspect of Pouillaude's concept of contemporaneity. The idea of belonging to a "particular time" implies occupying a position within time that is considered one's "own" time, that is, the present, while simultaneously referring to different temporalities both pro- and retrospectively.

This paper has been written with the intention of showing how the work of Pina Bausch continues to pose a challenge for critics with respect to its contemporaneity, of showing, in other words, *how* critics *re-view things with words*. My conclusions are the following: On the one hand, reviews not only react to the multilayered "structure of temporality" and contingent coexistence of Bausch's work, but perform discursive assertions and assumptions that, though based on the present, exhibit their own multilayered "structures of temporality" and contingent coexistences. On the other hand, these assertions and assumptions—and this has been my focal interest—are reflected on, challenged, and exponentiated as such within the critical discourse itself and are therefore always already at one remove from their present. So: Is Bausch to be considered contemporary or historical? Both at the same time, I would say, since evidently this does not always constitute a contradiction.

Notes

1. The following text has been translated from German into English by Marcel Behn and is based on a paper presented at the International Conference "Dance Future II. Claiming Contemporaneity," which was organized by Gabriele Klein and her team and took place from January 26–28, 2017 at Kampnagel, Hamburg.

2. "Im tänzerischen Teil ist die Bausch absolut zeitgenössisch" (Gradinger 2016). See also Fischer (2016, 8): "That the Bavarian State Ballet should perform a piece by Pina Bausch is nothing short of a small sensation. Yet it is also a parting farewell, for the company's future repertoire will scarcely include something so contemporary." ["*Das Bayerische Staatsballett tanzt Pina Bausch und vollbringt eine kleine Sensation. Die zugleich ein Abschiedsgruß ist, denn derart zeitgenössisch geht es in München künftig nicht mehr zu.*"]

3. See the abstract for the International Conference Dance Future II: Claiming Contemporaneity, 2.

4. "Wichtige[s] Tanz-Erbe" (Gradinger 2016).

5. I would like to thank Regula Schelling and Gesche Gerdes for their support during the time-consuming (archival) search for reviews. Unfortunately, a formal request addressed to the Pina Bausch Foundation (e-mail sent on August 24, 2016) received no reply.

6. "In gewissem Sinne [stellt der Tanzabend] eine neue Version des Rückblicks auf vergangene Abende des Wuppertaler Tanztheaters dar; doch nach diesem Abend weiss man auch, dass nun nur

noch etwas Neues oder gar nichts mehr kommen kann” (Stauch-von Quitzow 1980, 31). In his review of *Er nimmt sie an der Hand und führt sie in das Schloß, die anderen folgen*, also printed in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, he had referred to Bausch as “Wuppertal’s progressive ballet director” [“*progressive Wuppertaler Ballettchefin*”] (Stauch-von Quitzow 1978, 41). And in 1979, on the occasion of a performance of *Keuschheitslegende* (1979, 35), he writes that Bausch “partly recited and partly refined to varying degrees her unconventional movement theater between text, dance and music” [“*ihr unkonventionelles Bewegungstheater zwischen Text, Tanz und Musik zum Teil neu zitiert, zum Teil in variierten Stufen weiterentwickelt*”].

7. “Zwar ist Pina Bausch, endlich, auch in Wuppertal angekommen (im doppelten Sinn des Wortes); der “kritische Beobachter” jedoch warte “voll Sehnsucht, auf die neue, die alte Pina Bausch” (Michaelis 1983).

8. “Hier ist wieder einmal eine [Aufführung] geglückt. Und ist doch gar nicht von unserer Zeit” (Michaelis 1990).

9. For a discussion of the term “translation” [Übersetzung], here used to denote “transformation” as a cultural or media practice, see also Klein (2014).

10. See Neuhaus (2004, 167–170), according to whom criticism performs the functions of providing orientation, information, criticism, and entertainment alike. Also see Thurner (2015, 39, 66).

11. See Thurner (2009). In contrast, Eva-Elisabeth Fischer (2012, 2) argues that the reciprocity between trends in dance and criticism is in fact a causality. She writes: “The turnaround in dance entailed the turnaround in criticism. . . . So every new art movement always calls upon the critics it requires.” [“*Den Umschwung in der Tanzkritik brachte der Umschwung im Tanz mit sich. . . . Jede neue Kunstrichtung also bringt jederzeit die Kritiker auf den Plan, die sie braucht.*”]. Although this is correct, what I am driving at here is that, in turn, the assertions and assumptions performed by criticism have an effect on perceptions of art/dance.

12. It should be noted that the term “contemporary,” especially as a denotation of genres or epochs in the sense of “contemporary art” or “contemporary dance” is becoming increasingly problematic the longer the time span referred to as “contemporary” becomes. It is for this reason that the topic is currently being discussed at length in art scholarship in general and dance scholarship in particular. In addition to the topic and title of the conference “Dance Future II: Claiming Contemporaneity” (Hamburg 2017), there is also Deutscher Tanzkongress 2016: “Zeitgenoss*in sein” and the exemplary discussion in Schellow (2016).

13. Long-standing critics of Pina Bausch include, among others, Jochen Schmidt, Rolf Michaelis, Hartmut Regitz, Eva-Elisabeth Fischer.

14. As a case in point, see the beginning of a review by Jowitt, “As always with Bausch” (2008, 3).

15. “Das neue Stück, das—wie fast jedes neue Stück von Pina Bausch—noch keinen Namen trägt” (Weber 1997, 1).

16. See reviews written between 1978 (Schädel 1978) and 2009 (Schmidt 2009, 1).

17. See Michaelis 1998: “An evening programme not, as is often the case, awkwardly advertised as *Tanzabend II* . . . but a European dance event which merges the East & West of the continent, Poland and Portugal, two dance nations of Europe, in its title: *Masurca Fogo*.” [“*Ein Abend, nicht, wie sonst oft, verlegen als ‘Tanzabend II’ angekündigt . . . , sondern ein europäisches Tanz-Ereignis, das Ost & West des Kontinents, Polen und Portugal, zwei Tanz-Völker Europas zusammenzwingt im Titel: ‘Masurca Fogo’.*”]. See also Weber (1998, 46): “It already, and quite unusually, bore a title for its world premiere on Saturday at the Schauspielhaus Wuppertal: *Masurca Fogo*.” [“*Dieses hat, und das ist ungewohnt, an der Uraufführung vom Samstag im Wuppertaler Schauspielhaus bereits einen Namen: Masurca Fogo.*”]

18. “Ohne Titel—nicht, weil es in sich so schlüssig wäre, daß es keines bedürfte, sondern weil . . . sich für die Beliebigkeit dieser szenischen Collage der gemeinsame Nenner eines Namens nicht mehr finden läßt” (Michaelis 1983, 2).

19. “Versöhnlicher, moderater, friedfertiger” (Regitz 1987, 39).

20. For example, see Weber (1997, 19; 1998, 46; 2001a, 66), Kogler (2001), Thurner (2003, 44), Burt (2005).

21. See Weber (1998, 46), Kisselgoff (2001, 1), and Burt (2005, 1) on this. By contrast, Michaelis (1990, 3) writes on the occasion of the restaging of *Iphigenie* that “seldom in the past sixteen years has Bausch been similarly possessed by dance as she was in 1974” [“so tanzwütig wie” *damals* (1974) sei “Bausch in den sechzehn Jahren seither selten gewesen.”].

22. For example, see Kisselgoff (2001), Weber (2001a, 66), Trouwborst (2002), Fischer (2002, 14; 2016, 8), Thurner (2003, 44), Burt (2005), Schmidt (2009, 1).

23. It would, of course, be interesting to analyze whether and in what way critics’ assertions and assumptions influenced the choreographer and her work. This, however, would constitute an entirely different study requiring more source material than just reviews.

24.

Im Environment einer grossbürgerlichen Villa . . . entwickelte Pina Bausch ein absurd-pantomimisch angelegtes Schauspielerballett, das in beinahe endlosen Wiederholungen das banale Bewegungsrepertoire menschlicher Verhaltensweisen vorführt. Im Vordergrund steht die Bewegung des Körpers, die Geste, tänzerisch-choreographische Aktion, die mehr über den Menschen verrät als rhetorische Selbstentäußerung. So beginnt das Spiel der zehn Akteure, die an diesem Abend schier Übermenschliches leisteten, im stummen Liegen auf Sofas, Couches, Betten oder auf dem Boden. Langsam kommt Bewegung in die Körper. (Stauch-von-Quitow 1978, 41)

25. “Die Produktion protestierte gleichsam gegen jede ‘normale’ Erwartungshaltung eines konventionellen Theaterpublikums.” (Stauch-von-Quitow 1978, 41).

26. “Machwerke dieser Art[, für die] selbst der Begriff ‘entartete Kunst’ noch ein falsches Kompliment wäre”; this statement originates from a letter of protest penned by the “Essener Ballettffreunde” in reaction to the designation of an associate of Bausch’s (Hans Pop) as ballet director at the municipal theatre in Essen and quoted by Jochen Schmidt (1980, 25) in an article on that same subject.

27. See Michaelis (1981), also Stauch-von Quitow (1979, 35; 1980, 31), and Fischer (2003, 16).

28.

Es könnte sein: eine Pina-Bausch-Premiere, wie wir sie oft in den letzten zehn Jahren im Opernhaus in Wuppertal-Barmen erlebt haben. Aber dann ist alles anders. Zum erstenmal keine Proteste des Publikums während der Aufführung. Keine Abonnenten fliehen türensclagend vor Einfällen, welche die Phantasie der kühnsten Choreographin-Regisseurin Deutschlands ihnen zumutet. (Michaelis 1983)

29.

Zehn Jahre Arbeit mit einer (wenn auch immer wieder erneuerten) Gruppe wären schon unter gewöhnlichen Bedingungen des Theaters eine beide Teile, Choreograph und Ensemble, bis zur Einfallsleere ausbeutende Zeit. . . . Versagt sich eine Tanzgruppe auch noch der Herausforderung durch “fremde” Ideen, Stücke, Choreographien, tänzerische oder dramatische Musiken und die Zusammenarbeit mit anders denkenden und probierenden Künstlern, wie dies die Wuppertaler seit einiger Zeit tun, so drohen Insider-Erfindungen, die zwar die “Gemeinde,” die sich um Pina Bausch (mit guten Gründen!) gebildet hat, vielleicht noch entzücken, den kritischen Beobachter jedoch, gerade dann, wenn er von dieser Künstlerin viel gelernt hat, in betrübter Nachdenklichkeit nach Hause schicken. (Michaelis 1983, 1)

See also Fischer (2003, 16): “And then the ending, one of the most superb polonaises Bausch has ever come up with. . . . None other than Pina Bausch could accomplish this. Only it really is a pity that there is nothing more for her to say that hasn’t already been said in the preceding years. Regardless, the exultant crowds honor her with standing ovations.” [“Und dann der Schluss, eine

der grandiosesten Polonaisen, die Pina Bausch je einfiel. . . . Das kann allein Pina Bausch und niemand sonst. Nur schade, dass es für sie nichts mehr zu sagen gibt, was in früheren Jahren nicht schon gesagt worden wäre. Das jubelnde Publikum ehrt sie stehend.”]

30. “Kommen Pina Bausch und ihr Wuppertaler Tanztheater ans Ende der Fragen?” (Michaelis 1983).

31. In drawing attention to Bausch’s practice of asking questions, Richard Merz (2002, 26) displays a similar reasoning in his NZZ-review of *Für die Kinder*, but his appraisal of the piece differs from that of Michaelis: “Where is the critical, the challenging Bausch? She is still there, but in a different way. She cried out at sanctimonious duplicity; now, while everyone is busy crying out, she lowers her voice.” [“*Wo bleibt da die kritische, in Frage stellende Bausch? Doch die ist noch immer da, nur in anderer Weise. Als man scheinfriedlich zudecken wollte, hat sie aufgeschreckt; nun, da alle aufgeschreckt tun, wird sie leise.*”]

32. “Wer sich die alten Stücke ansieht, wird die Bausch-Freunde der ersten Stunde verstehen, wenn sie jener offen gesellschaftskritischen Phase ihrer Choreographin eine Träne nachweinen. Allein, Pina Bausch choreographiert nach wie vor am Nerv der Zeit” (Weber 2001b, 57).

33.

Whoever declares the new *Tanzabend* to be nothing new, to be typical of Bausch—and there were many who left the theater in the middle of the performance jeering, whistling, door-slamming—mayn’t be so wrong. But because the Bausch ballets merge into one big dance suite and present themselves as variations on the same theme, other things become important: the subtle changes, delicate nuances, and inventive uses of the movement repertoire.

[Vorschlag, die “Bausch-Ballette zu einer einzigen großen Tanzsuite” zusammenzufügen und “als Thema mit Variationen” zu betrachten mit “unscheinbaren Veränderungen, zarten Abschattierungen”: “Wer nach dem neuen Tanzabend erklärt, das sei nichts Neues, das kenne man doch von der Bausch—und schon während des Premierenabends verließen viele johlend, pfeifend, Türen schlagend das Theater—der hat so unrecht nicht. Aber weil sich die Bausch-Ballette zu einer einzigen großen Tanzsuite zusammenfügen und als Thema mit Variationen präsentieren, wird anderes wichtig: die unscheinbaren Veränderungen, zarten Abschattierungen, neuen Inventionen des Gesten- und Bewegungsvokabulars.] (Michaelis 1981)”

34. “Die Themen sind immer die gleichen, nur die Farben wechseln,’ hat Pina Bausch einmal über ihre Stücke gesagt” (Trouwborst 2002). This citation serves as an introduction to Trouwborst’s critical appraisal of the piece, which reads: “A sentence one is painfully reminded of in her most recent [piece]. The relief that she has finally risen above the shallowness of the last four entertainment productions must yield to the bitter realization that major success can no longer be achieved by means of self-reference and many passable but only few beautiful ideas.” [“*Ein Satz, der bei ihrem jüngsten [Stück] schmerzlich bewusst wird. Die Erleichterung darüber, dass sie die seichte Unterhaltung der letzten vier Spaß-Produktionen endlich überwunden hat, weicht so doch der bitteren Erkenntnis, dass mit Selbstzitataten, einigen schönen und vielen mittelmäßigen Ideen keine wirklich großen Würfe mehr gelingen können.*”]

35. See, for example, Michaelis (1983), Fischer (2002, 14), Schmidt (2009, 2).

36. It goes without saying that this paper is based on a relatively small corpus of selected reviews. It would require a corpus larger than was at my disposal to consolidate the remarks that follow.

37. “Eine grosse Tanzsuite” (Michaelis 1981).

38.

Für die Einstudierung war ein ganzer Tross angereist, allen voran Malou Airaudo und Dominique Mercy, die Eurydike und Orpheus bei der Premiere 1975. Sie tanzten das

tragische Liebespaar auch noch 18 Jahre später, 1993 bei der Wuppertaler Wiederaufnahme, reifer geworden, aber scheinbar nicht gealtert, anrührend, ergreifend von der ersten bis zur letzten Sekunde. Die Erinnerung an solche Erlebnisse und die mit ihnen verbundenen künstlerischen Glücksmomente legen sich fatal über das aktuelle Erleben. Jeder Vergleich kann tödlich sein. Was spricht einen nach all den Jahren noch an? Stimmt die Sicht von damals auf die Dinge noch mit dem Lebensgefühl von heute überein? Kennen Gefühle überhaupt Moden, hat sich die Form, sie auszudrücken, überlebt? (Fischer 2005, 15)

39. "Eine grosse Tanzsuite" (Michaelis 1981).

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