

CHAPTER 21

THE MICROPOLITICS OF EXCHANGE

Exile and Otherness after the Nation

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IN an extended 1975 interview, choreographer Kurt Jooss explained to his friend and colleague, the Swedish dance champion Bengt Häger: “After the war when I came back to Germany I thought I would have become a sort of artistic leader in questions of ballets. But that did not happen because I was a refugee. I came as a stranger and remained a stranger. Nothing doing” (Jooss/Häger 1975, 15b.21:30).¹ Whereas it might be easier to see Jooss as a refugee or indeed a stranger in relation to his company’s flight from Germany during the Third Reich, the night before SS officers arrived at his home in the fall of 1933, what is striking about this statement is how it extends that outsider position to his “return” to a homeland that had itself changed in the interim. His words invite us to see the choreographer’s exile not as a static position “over there” (or a one-way transition across borders to that place), but rather as an ongoing lived condition that needs to be negotiated in relation to multiple forms of otherness, which manifest also, for example, in terms of the nation’s own difference to itself. Such perspectives on displacement thus suggest that it is not enough to reassess the place of exile artists in more familiar national dance histories; rather, these artists offer the opportunity to assess the contours of such historical narrations themselves and, with them, other forms of belonging.

I first wrote about exile in the context of German dance in relation to Valeska Gert, a dance and cabaret artist who left Germany in the late 1930s and remigrated via Switzerland a decade later. What struck me when looking at Gert was the subtle tendency among scholars who looked past her Weimar years to extend the insider-as-outsider artistic strategies of alienation that she explored during that earlier era as a metaphor to describe her later experiences of exile and her postwar return, a kind of heroic opposition, the creative force of which was magnified by real life conditions.² However, looking into the reception of Gert’s work in various places—Paris, London, New York City, Hollywood, Provincetown, Zürich, West Berlin—destabilized that

slippage. It also drew my attention to how the failure to acknowledge difference risks reinforcing the ways in which German twentieth-century exile in particular has often been characterized as a kind of preservation, both in its time and in retrospect. Helpful for thinking between the modernist preoccupation with alienation as artistic device and the situations of displacement in which an artist like Gert found herself was Svetlana Boym's argument that "the theory of estrangement and actual exile do not necessarily go together." Using case studies of two Soviet authors, Boym observes that "actual experience of exile offers an ultimate test to the writer's metaphors and theories of estrangement" (1996, 517, 514). Her point is not about policing the boundaries of what should or should not be considered exile; rather, she begins to elaborate how different forms of estrangement might function in relation to one another.

In "Back Again? Valeska Gert's Exiles" (2012), I argued for the need to see Gert in terms of at least three types of exile, each of which operated differently. The first was a privileged artistic position during the Weimar Republic from which she was characterized by spectators as creating performances that seemed to operate on the margins of the socially and aesthetically acceptable, where "truthfulness" was associated with her ability to reveal a social topography of light and dark, inside and outside. The second began from a moment in which being an outsider was a riskier position; Gert's survival tactics in the United States, and particularly the limited success of her Beggar Bar cabaret venue in Greenwich Village, depended upon various methods of commodifying her displacement into a form of otherness that was exciting and yet acceptable. Finally, after Gert's postwar migration to West Germany, her maturation as an artist and the fact that her work had continued to develop in relation to her experiences elsewhere displaced her from the social position reserved for a returning Weimar Jewish artist. Seeing Gert in terms of these phases, that essay offered a model for thinking about exile not as a mechanism of preservation, but as a force that facilitated more hybrid encounters. It placed pressure on the assimilations of foreignness that haunt the histories of German exiles and émigrés by highlighting the ways in which Gert's "returning" performances came not only from another time but another place. The current chapter is driven by a lingering question about methods for engaging with such various forms of displacement, and the stakes of doing so.

To begin with Jooss and Gert recalls the title of a well-known essay in the field of exile studies, which asks: "Is there an exile art or only exile artists?" (Milton 1990). At the core of this rhetorical question is the complexity of exile as a subject or indeed method of study. On the one hand, there is the specificity of individual stories and, on the other, the need to be able to see them as part of something greater, which both underlines their significance and threatens to turn lived historical conditions into abstraction. Likewise, the movement of a person across borders also has the potential to reveal how ideas themselves may be more or less fixed in space and time than we might imagine. So what does it mean to think about an exile like Jooss's or Gert's in a dance context, in ways that draw out its tensions in terms not only of their individual experiences, but also of how twentieth-century dance is narrated? While dance and migration studies share so much common ground, as Paul Scolieri points out (2008, vi), it seems that "exile" specifically

has received significantly less attention than other means of accounting for the transnational nature of dance's histories.³ I am interested here in what approaching exile might offer to dance, and dance to exile, in particular given the suitability of dance as medium to the micropolitics of exchange.

That said, such a project is too unwieldy to be programmatic, nor should it be. Even limiting by time and geography, mid-twentieth-century European exiles fundamentally reconfigured artistic and intellectual landscapes on multiple continents. There are too many contexts of chronology, places left and traveled to, and personal circumstances for forced migration; too many follow-on effects, some disempowering, and others complicating the straightforward alignment of exile with victimization that was so important to anti-fascist stances; and too many rules, from social conventions to the heartbreaking visa requirements of a particular country in a particular year. My focus is methodological first, at the same time as the microscopic variety that appears in these examples troubles a more systematic approach to method. I begin with an introductory overview of some theoretical and historical building blocks for working with exile: the current state of exile scholarship, its relation to questions of national formations, and the particularities of the German dance history in which this chapter is situated. The subsequent sections place this in conversation with material I have come across in the process of writing about Jooss and Gert, whose stories share certain similarities while offering counterpoints to one another. Since both left Germany and later remigrated, they highlight approaches to displacement that do not privilege a single geographical move. Rather, they articulate transnational exchange in the form of intricate, personalized crosscurrents, catalyzed by survival strategies that registered in the work itself and left traces in history, both marked and unmarked, which can only be seen by engaging with multiple forms of otherness.

DEFINITIONS AND CONTEXTS

It is important to acknowledge from the outset the uneasiness of the term “exile” itself—the ways its boundaries have been mobilized for ideological ends, the privilege of its more metaphorical connotations, and also its eccentric placement relative to more recent theories that promise to exceed the nation. Some of the most common distinctions involve the privileges of voluntary versus involuntary exile, the individual historical actor versus larger political conditions, those with the possibility of eventually reversing their journey's geography versus those who cannot.⁴ While there is a tendency to align exile with the “poetics” of modernist aesthetics—the fashionability and romance of the privileged choice to heighten one's creativity through a form of “transcendental homelessness” (see Buruma 2001; Evelein 2009; Said 2000)—others demonstrate that it is not enough to think of exile as synonymous with modernism in the singular. Ehrhard Bahr, for example, makes the case that the failure of the utopian aspirations of creative works during the Weimar Republic caused a crisis to emerge in exile literature, film,

and art, which ultimately reconstituted those forms as a subsequent “exile modernism” (2007, 20). Some argue for the need to turn away from the historical particularity of exile studies altogether in favor of terms such as “displacement” that might better lend themselves not only to conversation between moments, but also between situations, for example those who were displaced to camps or ghettos but did not get to cross borders, or those who escaped only to have the borders shift again as their new locations were invaded (Scheding 2010, 130–131). Others, however, are apprehensive of such a move’s seeming neutrality and the way in which it might too easily equalize experiences, preferring phrases that expose their “historical taintedness” (Clifford 1992, 110).

Such terms themselves are further politicized by their usage in particular contexts. In a poem entitled “Über die Bezeichnung Emigranten,” Bertolt Brecht famously rejected the designation “emigrants” for its suggestion of volunteerism: “That means those who leave their country. But we / Did not leave, of our free will.”⁵ His insistence upon naming resists the ways in which the National Socialist state had characterized the expulsion of both Jews and political opponents as a form of chosen emigration. However, the instrumentalization of this mantle carried into both postwar Germanies as well. In West Germany immediately after 1945, there was a question whether exiles who chose not to migrate again should now be understood as *émigrés*, because they were technically no longer forced to remain away. In East Germany, the term “exile” was reserved for those who left for political reasons, whereas all other impetuses, such as racial or ethnic persecution, were considered to have produced emigration. Beyond the usage of the term itself, its study has also been instrumentalized by scholars, as Martin Jay points out. He calls for the necessity “to stand one remove from the migration and examine instead the pattern of politicization in the histories of migration themselves,” the ways in which such retellings have been allegorized in service to various periods that followed (Jay 1997, 326–327).⁶

While earlier studies of exile were based in drawing strong national lines to demarcate “here” from “there,” so much scholarship since the 1980s has opened up understandings of the nation as simultaneously centering and decentering—how it continues to be important in the way it draws emotional investments and belonging, while, at the same time, an idea of home might be stretched across time and space, thus producing links between places that are unpredictable or contingent, rather than representative (Westwood and Phizacklea 2000, 2; see also Cvetkovich and Kellner 1997, 21). In particular, postcolonial theory and discussions of globalization have thrown into question the distinctions between home and away that lingered from the nineteenth-century geography of empire. They offered up concepts such as hybridity as tools to think about belonging, homeland, and identity in terms of transnational or translocal processes of negotiation.⁷ Although such discussions are more prevalent today, they are not necessarily a new framework from which to look back on the past. Rather, as Claus-Dieter Krohn has pointed out, hybridity was not a later application to 1930s *émigrés*, because the theories of acculturation that have been so productive for exile studies since the 1970s were themselves grounded in the work of certain exiles at the New School for Social Research whose theories of the cross-fertilization of cultures and of the creative mind as itself

migratory (“a permanent emigre in the world” according to Paul Tillich 1937, 305) came from a self-reflexive place and yet claimed to move beyond it (see Krohn 2009).

Finally, the context of German dance exile in particular requires an introduction of its own. In her excellent overview of dance for the *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933–1945*, Laure Guilbert points out that, of the three primary motivations that caused artists to leave Germany, dance artists in particular tended to leave more for racial and political than artistic reasons; the majority were Jewish, plus a small number of politically engaged dancers, many of whom had worked directly with communist or socialist organizations (1998, 1104). She estimates that at least 120 dancers emigrated, a number far lower per capita than in other arts, although the periodization still aligns with the three phases of emigration found more generally in histories of German exile. Artistically motivated exile was less prevalent because dance had a very particular relationship to German fascism, in that many prominent and lesser-known artists saw a means to achieve social and artistic recognition through collaboration with the Third Reich by fitting the dance principles they had been developing over the past decades into the National Socialist discourse of renewal (see Karina and Kant 2003; Manning 1995; Müller and Stöckemann 1993). After the war, the artists who returned to East and West Germanies were in far more precarious positions than those who had stayed (see Kant 2012; Müller, Stabel, and Stöckemann 2003). As one of Jooss’s dancers, Juan Allende-Blin, explained, “There was no Stunde Null . . . after the war” especially for the arts, by which he meant that artists did not simply stop in 1945 to create a new body of work, and this meant that many artistic tendencies that had developed under the Third Reich continued, despite all suggestions to the contrary (1993b, 228).⁸ This also impacted, in turn, how the role of exiled artists has been understood. Guilbert observes, “although emigrant dancers and choreographers played a decisive role in spreading modern dance, little attention is paid to their history by the public and by research” (1998, 1111). She elaborates that it was, ironically, exiled artists who were “dirtied by the legend of ‘inner emigration’” when those who had remained during the Third Reich reaffirmed their own careers on the basis of their own struggles under fascism, in the process minimizing the impact of those who had left.⁹ All of these contexts matter in drawing out how exile functions in the histories of Jooss and Gert.

SURVIVAL TACTICS IN/AS TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY

To think about exile in terms of its place not only in spreading modern dance, as Guilbert suggests, but also underscoring the micropolitics of cultural exchange in a broader sense, begins with the basic relational conditions under which a dance performance or even a technique class occurs, and under which it travels. Dance is a particularly rich site for the questions of exchange that exile foregrounds, because of the requirement

that some number of artists and students or audience members share a time and place in which they must negotiate their similarities and differences. Although a piece might go into repertory so long as a company is able to stay intact, there is no written manuscript saved for later publication, or a plastic art object that might be displayed without a performer's presence. As scholars of cultural diplomacy have pointed out, dance exchange is not only about the high-level planning and execution, but the day-to-day encounters by which networks are established and assumptions reformed (Croft 2015). In the case of exile, the necessity of travel as a survival tactic often catalyzes a much larger circuit of dance's contact. The term "survival tactic" should not be taken lightly; many exiles never recovered from the challenges of forced migration. However, portraying them solely as victims risks another form of disempowerment, this one retrospective, because it misses the ways in which exiles made do, with varying degrees of success, in the process building new connections.

When Gert's Beggar Bar cabaret was forced to close in 1945 after four years, this in fact made it the longest running exile cabaret in New York during World War II. It is important to ask not only about the licensing technicality that ultimately forced its closure, but also how it stayed alive so long when many others did not—the adaptations and transformations on the parts of Gert, her performers and staff, and her audiences. One of my favorite commentaries from the prominent German-Jewish exile newspaper *Aufbau* that was founded in 1934 describes an "Evening at the Beggar Bar," which was seen as becoming a landmark in Greenwich Village. It includes an instance in which a sailor ("who has obviously been reminded of his overseas duty by listening to so many French songs") called out "Give us an American song"¹⁰ and the Austrian chanteuse Maria Collm who was performing switched over to a sea chantey in parodic response. While the code switching of this example is marked by an overt mixture of language, class, cultural identity, and travel—not only on behalf of the performers but also the audience—the Beggar Bar also worked between worlds in less obvious ways, as the article also suggests. When the author refers to "foreigners" (*Fremde*, in quotes) arriving in ever thicker flocks, the twist of such an observation was that "foreigners" were, in that instance, defined by contrast to the "initiated" regulars (*eingeschworene Stammgäste*) who frequented the exile performer's establishment, many of whom might have been seen as foreigners elsewhere in New York (Lub. [signed] 1944, 10).

Let me trace another example more systematically. It begins with dancers from Jooss's second company, crosses between three continents multiple times, includes both his students as well as those of the former dancers who traveled with him, and spans almost four decades.¹¹ When war broke out after the company's 1939 North American tour, it was not possible for the Ballet Jooss to return immediately to the United Kingdom. Although they had initially been able to tour without Jooss while he remained in England with the school, the group could not continue to play the same cities once they became stuck in the United States, because they did not have additional repertoire. Their manager, Leonid Greanin, organized a three-week run in South America. In Santiago de Chile, the critical social components of the dance struck such a nerve that the music institute attached to the University of Chile decided

to engage the dancers Ernst Uthoff, Lola Botka, and Rudolph Pecht to found first a dance school attached to the university, and later a separate company that became the Chilean National Ballet. Almost a decade later, in 1948, after Jooss's third company was disbanded and he faced hard times ("I was a complete flop. I didn't exist in London, I couldn't manage to make myself known"), he accepted an invitation to come to Santiago, where he did four of his more well-known choreographies on the group established by his former company members. When Jooss, now a UK citizen, turned down an offer in between Montevideo and Buenos Aires in favor of returning to Essen, two Chilean dancers whom he met came to dance in his short-lived fourth company, which lasted from 1951 to 1953. That fourth company of 24 dancers included 10 nationalities, and dancers recall speaking a total of seven or eight languages among them. To continue one line from there, Chilean dancer Patricio Bunster married British dancer Joan Turner (later Jara), who had followed Jooss from England to West Germany and subsequently returned to Santiago with Bunster and other dancers after the company disbanded, remaining there after their divorce.¹² When Bunster needed to leave Chile again for political reasons in 1973, he sought political asylum in the German Democratic Republic, where he is credited with reintroducing East Germans to *Ausdruckstanz*. To follow another strand of this same South American story, a medical student named Maximilian Zomosa came to Uthoff after seeing *The Green Table* and asked him if he could train to be a dancer in order to dance Death. After two years, Zomosa was given the role, and performed it with the Chilean ballet on tour in the United States, which is how Robert Joffrey saw the piece and decided to reconstruct it on his own company. Zomosa performed with the Joffrey Ballet in that 1967 production, and then stayed on with the company afterward in New York before his early death (see Giersdorf 2013; Jara 1984; Jooss/Häger 1975, 1a.8:55, 5b.30:09, 31a.34:30, 37b.21:20, 37a.20:30; Stöckemann 2001; Züllig 1993).

From more transnationally oriented perspectives, we can see in a case study like this not only a striking example of how dance travels by means of the people who perform it, but also the ways in which the work of countless artists began to develop and change through the embodied transfers and interweavings that were facilitated by the need to make ends meet once familiar structures were no longer an option. These interconnections might also reveal how such exchanges engaged with processes of reading other cultures that those artists would have previously had prior to that moment of travel, for example given the ways in which Americanism and anti-Americanism were imprinted on the Weimar Republic (Stephan 2005, 13; see also McClay 1986, 123; Strauss 1983). However, what primarily happened to the concept of the German nation was different; it paradoxically continued to solidify, rather than loosen, through exile in the mid-twentieth century. As Stephen Braese put it, one of the most prominent ideological constraints on German exile after 1933 was "the stunningly quick and then effective installation of the idea of the Other Germany" (2009, 3–4). The "Other Germany" was perhaps the most pervasive of several theories that posited not one but two Germanies: the one that remained but had been corrupted, versus the one in exile, which continued the nation's cultural and historical traditions.¹³ Likewise, because so

much National Socialist rhetoric had depended upon the vitriolic opposition between German and non-German, it was particularly important to articulate the Germanness of those who “returned” after the war, in a manner that again reinforced this image of preservation, rather than acknowledging change—the ways in which those who remigrated were not only from another place, but also out of place in a country that had itself also changed. The exclusion that many exiles faced in the immediate postwar period, for example the mistrust toward them by some for having not shared in their country’s interim suffering, was thus made more difficult by the language of belonging that obscured it.

In “Zum Begriff der Akkulturation,” Christhard Hoffmann argues that the presentation of exiles as the “Other Germany” accentuated the German-ness and German-oriented activities of the emigrants, which masked how the émigrés themselves had also changed, to varying degrees, by acquiring new, intercultural identities. Unmasking is crucial, he points out, also to change the self-understanding of the postwar imaginary community: “to see the rebuilt Germany as an immigrant land, because of those who returned with influences of other places” (1998, 121). Here exile studies connect to projects that seek to rethink European identities. For example, historian Atina Grossman proposes a more “entangled approach” to writings about the immediate postwar period in order to “‘de-Germanize’ a German history in which multiculturalism or heterogeneity is too often seen as an invention of the very recent past” (2007, 13). Likewise, Fatima El-Tayeb advocates a longer historical perspective in order to account for what she considers “a particular European form of ‘invisible’ racialization” in the present, by which a “very precise racialized understanding of proper Europeanness [. . .] continues to exclude certain migrants and their descendants” while simultaneously claiming racelessness (2011, xiv, xii). Whereas El-Tayeb focuses on the problem of being seen as “from elsewhere” generations onward, many exiles ran into the problem of seemingly never having left. And yet both situations return to the boundaries between visibility and invisibility, and the promises but also complications of articulating otherness.

To return to an example like the Jooss company, what would it mean to simply call the traces of this survival tactic “dance history,” rather than labeling every one of its various potential crosscurrents and influences? Which allows for us to better think about dance as one of the many embodied forms through which cultures are altered and changed? The danger of tracing such a network of influence is that it will appear anomalous. But it can also be one steppingstone of many toward a history in which such examples are understood to be pervasive. In this respect, the concerns raised by exile belong among the many challenges being posed by dance scholars to the presumed monoculturalism of Western dance forms. Exile, with its split attention to the general and the specific, reveals the micropolitics of exchange, at once highlighting the interconnections of national narratives, and the intimate person-to-person terms on which those must be realized. The traces of such survival tactics suggest a more permeable history of German dance, in which negotiations regarding otherness are the rule, rather than the exception.

REGISTERS OF MOVEMENT IN MOVEMENT

Gert's third autobiography includes the text for a cabaret number called *Der Remigrant*, in which she describes a warm welcome in West Germany that quickly turned cold. While it is tricky to locate accounts of this in performance, or indeed to imagine how it might have been performed beyond the rhythmic potential of its rhyming couplets, the text itself is worth marking in the way it accounts for postwar migration as at once a celebrated media spectacle and yet complicated on a day-to-day basis: "Germans go two steps forward, and you go one back" (Gert 1968, 206–207). At the same time, it would be a shame to take this piece as emblematic of Gert's later work, although it seems to fit biography and performance neatly together, as well as to be among those numbers that most clearly extend her earlier strategies of illuminating the shadows of society. Isolating the text misses the subtler shifts in Gert's later years toward character- or story-driven numbers that verged on fairy tales, seemingly distant from reality and yet packing a certain punch, recalling Bahr's characteristics of exile modernism as focused at times on human suffering, but tending toward more ambiguous structures that avoided closure (2007, 21). Her first performance back in Berlin in 1949, for example, included several numbers indicative of her later tendency to lead audiences toward meditations on the persistence of memory and the passage of time through more comic or absurd forms, including one that portrayed a nightclub soloist performing the same song at three stages of her life, or another in which an aristocrat attempted to use moth powder to clean out her memories of a particular evening at a ball (Elswit 2012; Poleman 1949).

Scoleri points out that, while dance history is only beginning to recognize migrants, registers of such experience may be found much earlier in artists' works themselves, for example the melting pot pieces of the 1920s (2008, ix). Rather than taking later works like Gert's as biographical statement, I am interested in drawing out the ways in which such performance practices help to account for or perhaps even themselves theorize exile experiences. I turn to two of Jooss's early postwar works in particular: *Nachtzug* (Night Train) and *Weg im Nebel* (Journey in the Fog). These pieces were among the first and last that he choreographed on his short-lived fourth company before it was disbanded in 1953. While neither *Nachtzug* nor *Weg* feature among the three choreographies that Jooss considered autobiographical, both drew upon aspects of his recent past to stage images of exile not as a static place but, rather, journey itself.

Of the two, *Weg im Nebel* was much heavier and more direct in its engagement with the present. Following several characters through the aftermath of war, it focused on not knowing where one is, the disorienting loss of one's senses in a new place.¹⁴ The first of its four parts introduced the image of displaced persons or refugees who had to flee and reorient themselves in a foreign milieu. It used the formal structure of a soloist versus a large group to represent the problems of coping within the rhythms of a new society. As Jooss described it, "he is lost [literally "fogged in" (*vernebelt*)]." The second part was set behind barbed wire, drawing not only on the concentration camps about which Jooss

had heard, but also his own experiences in British internment in 1940. Jooss saw this as the central part of *Weg im Nebel*: “regimentation; needing to adapt to being behind bars; desire for home; unfulfilled erotic longing; sperm-collecting.” This theme of longing was oriented on the diagonal from downstage right to upstage left, with dancers being pushed back. The third section, “The Unmanaged Past” (*unbewältigte Vergangenheit*), focused on a love triangle involving a woman whose husband died in the war, the new man she had later fallen in love with, and the memory of the first man, which makes the new relationship impossible. The piece then finished on a hopeful note. The fourth and final section imagined a postwar period in which the fog let up, releasing the group from the unsureness of seeking and searching. Faces looked up, eyes opened, and there was light (Jooss/Häger 1975, 31a.2:06–16:00).

The lighter of the two, *Nachtzug*, portrayed the dreams of strangers caught together on a train that was traveling through the night. The stage was set as a stylized train car, with benches along the right and left, and a door at the back. Jooss explained that it was an idea he had carried around with him for a long time, based on his own late evening journeys during blackouts back to Cambridge after seeing a show in London. He described the slowness, in fact the “unending dawdling,” of the two-hour journey in the darkness. Over the course of *Nachtzug*, each character dreamed, with those sitting across from them appearing in those dreams. For example, the character of Herr Kühnchen, who was meant to be a conservative type who worked in a bank, had come from a ballet and was dreaming of things like Apollo with Diana. While there was a certain structure to the piece—the opening with the train clock, the conductor coming and going, the end in which all of the travelers left except for Herr Kühnchen, who remained asleep—the piece followed more of a drifting arc with little closure (Jooss/Häger 1975, 31a.16:10–27:00).

While *Weg im Nebel* might seem to have more to do with exile in a conventional sense than *Nachtzug*, I am interested in what registers of experience emerge when taking these two early 1950s pieces together. Both pieces begin with isolated individuals in transit, negotiating encounters with strangers to ultimately find new forms of community. They suggest exile as a journey where vision is occluded by night or fog, a form of mobility that may even be frightening in its compulsion and uncertainty, and yet which also has the potential to produce horizon-broadening encounters along the way. We see in *Nachtzug* the kind of creative intersubjectivity possible in such a moment when strangers come together: the real-life experience of contact manifesting in the fantastical mixing of multiple minds. Likewise, the program note for *Weg im Nebel* suggested a more inclusive reading of its passage through the dark: “This is the journey that we are all on.”

In *Exiles, Eccentrics, and Activists*, Katrin Sieg uses Erika Mann’s Peppermill cabaret to discuss the efficacy of the fairy tale and other more indirect modes of critique as exile performance strategy to offer political content without jeopardizing the performers’ already precarious position as foreigners in various European countries during the mid-1930s (1994, 60).¹⁵ Neither *Weg im Nebel* nor *Nachtzug* clearly pulls the critical turn that so many Peppermill numbers did—from catering “to nostalgic or escapist desires [...] towards violence and doom” (1994, 62–63); rather, the two seem linked together.

Even in a piece as direct as *Weg im Nebel*, the framing of the “unmanaged past” in terms of a very specific love relationship refocuses it, in particular given Jooss’s insistence that the first husband should not be seen as a ghost but as a memory. With *Nachtzug*, it was Herr Kühnchen’s trip to the theatre that functioned as catalyst for a whole series of fantasies. It was seen by critics as “no weighty thing, a ‘divertissement’ as one says in ballet, a small, entertaining dream play” (Broesike-Schoen [signed] 1952, 7). And yet, despite the seeming lightness of the work, there is something important about the ways in which strangers shared this journey one could not clearly see, not only coming into contact, but participating in one another’s dreams. In this sense, it belongs in conversation with *Professor Blitz*, Gert’s number about the aerospace researcher and his wife, accidentally cast into outer space, where they rotate in the moon’s orbit on a couch until they drop into hell, ultimately to be kept alive through their friends’ memories (see Elswit 2012, 124).

MULTIPLE FORMS OF OTHERNESS

While it is one thing to recognize such fascinating registers of exile experience in retrospective, it is another to expect those to have been legible in their time, in particular given the position of these specific performances. Dance’s place in cultural memory most often depends upon some form of iteration, whether through the redoing of particular choreography in repertory, or the physical reappearance of performers themselves. Later in his life, Jooss described the pressure of this as an “unfortunate restorative way of thinking,” calling the expectation of him to somehow embody the past a “tremendous handicap” to his later aspirations (Jooss/Häger 1975, 1a.18:30). However, approaches attentive to multiple forms of otherness not only can think about exile “over there,” but also can help to understand the situation in which performances like *Nachtzug* or *Professor Blitz* occurred. They complicate terms like “return” and “remigration” by drawing attention to the possibility that artists were performing after traveling “back” to a new place entirely, just one that did not always expose its newness.

Exile was succinctly summarized by the writer Carl Zuckmayer as a “journey of no return”: “He may go back—but the place he then finds is not the same one he left behind and he himself is not the same person who went away” (see Koepke 2009). Jooss told Häger that they were so anti-German when they lived in England that they would have preferred hell to their “homeland” (*lieber Hölle als Heimat*) but that, once there again, they saw how complicated things were (Jooss/Häger 1975, 9.39:15). For artists who migrated to one of the two Germanies after World War II, it was not only they or their work that had changed, but also audiences’ frames of reference.¹⁶ Performance studies lends itself to understanding that “national identities are neither biologically or territorially given; rather they are creatively produced and staged” in a manner that both draws on a shared sense of culture, and yet is also dynamic enough to reinvent itself (Harvie 2005, 2). Such reworkings become particularly evident in relation to the

perennially haunted condition of the theatrical space, where performance's iterative nature has the potential to point up difference (see Carlson 2001; Holdsworth 2014, 8). They counter notions of stability, universality, and timelessness, not only of the dances or dancers themselves whose onstage appearances were repeated, but also of the audiences whose encounters with them were both affected by and affected their own iterative self-fashioning. Whereas the capacity for social action has at times in dance history specifically depended on the "impunity" by which artists could rehearse other ways of being, precisely on the basis of the medium's presumed ambiguity (for example, Kowal 2010), the performances of those who remigrated were often caught in a particularly heightened register of historical meaningfulness, at once overdetermined and, at the same time, out of place.

An article from later in the 1950s is telling in this respect. In it, the author begins by marking the time since Gert's last performances in relation to "every evil eternity that one would like to forget," but then says audiences "should not be permitted to forget who this whimsical cabarettist was in former times." At the same time, in the analogy that follows, this commentator makes clear the difference between not forgetting and fitting in: "the atmosphere of her artistic exercises, that are eccentric and wholly bound to her personality, is the atmosphere of an exciting epoch of style, which signifies for us realists of the economic miracle today something like what the Romantic was for Herr Biedermeier" (rg [signed] 1957). Two glosses are necessary here: first the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the economic recovery that was an emblematic part of the Adenauer era's rebuilding of West Germany through a certain onward-and-upward attitude, and the second, Biedermeier, which signifies a form of post-Romantic culture that was both indebted to Romanticism and yet marked a sharp break in the way it both sentimentalized and contained the previous era's individuality and inspiration through a more austere, seemingly apolitical approach. On the one hand, the analogy of the Adenauer era and the economic miracle as a reprisal of the Biedermeier period's petit-bourgeois retreat into the private sphere of domesticity and consumption by contrast to prior instability is actually quite interesting, in particular how it portrays Gert as out of time.¹⁷ But, on the other, the author repeats the very forgetting suggested at the beginning, by organizing a form of historical order in which the exile and remigration of Gert had the potential to narrate a cultural leap from the Weimar Republic to the postwar period, bypassing the Third Reich.¹⁸ In addition, by framing this reordering within German cultural history, the writer further pins Gert's difference only to her pedagogical position as of another time, rather than acknowledging multiple forms of otherness.

Here Jooss and Gert provide a fascinating counterpoint: whereas Gert's style had continued to change more undeniably through her exile encounters, Jooss's first performances for West German audiences included *The Green Table*, along with newer pieces that were generally dismissed as "living from smaller ideas" and lacking its "breath" (for example, Martin 1951, 7). Although the 1951 productions of *Green Table* involved only one member of the original 1932 cast, as one of the only interwar pieces of choreography to return after 1945, it functioned as a very specific type of placeholder in cultural memory at a moment when Weimar dance practices were being retrospectively redefined

(see Elswit 2014a, 128–145). While this means that Jooss's work could ostensibly be recognized as “step by step the same,” despite the accommodations required in order to do so, Gert's audiences tended to have no choice but to acknowledge more explicitly the gaps between their expectations of her relationship to the past and the performances they saw in front of them. They often described changes, in particular the softening of her work, for example, “She no longer lives in the no-man's-land of feeling and her blows do not hurt so much” (Pfeiffer 1949). One commentator even observed that those who attended “to catch up on something of the past, to experience the radical artistic originality of a women who had the effect of an enfant terrible twenty years ago, might perhaps be disappointed by her comeback,” since Gert had “become more amicable and lost the aggressiveness of her youth” (Müller 1949). And yet they rarely attempted to grapple with what such changes signified by negotiating the ways in which the interim time fit into a new present. This produced a compounded form of displacement in the precarious position by which Gert both came from another geographical place to a new nation and also did not fit into the social place of a remigrant, namely the function of recalling the past (see Elswit 2012, 121–122).

Even as Jooss's work seemed more inclined to support such continuities, one of his “big four” dancers, Hans Züllig, recalls that “[t]he true exile began for Kurt Jooss with his return to Germany,” by which he meant that Jooss's style and movement technique now held a different value within postwar dance practices: “He, who left Germany as a world famous and admired choreographer, returned to a country that treated him as unwelcome and received him as practically enemy” (1993, 219). This is what Jooss alludes to in the quotation that begins this chapter, where he describes coming and remaining as a stranger. He, as he put it, “had sort of cut the bridge, because I had been away for so long” (Jooss/Häger 1975, 37b.23:00). Ultimately, neither the performance that went into exile and “returned” from it, nor the dance that had changed through it, fit easily into postwar West Germany. Coming to grips with this is where the organization of history by nation will fall short, unless the concept of the nation itself is fluid enough to allow for its own repeated performances. To think in terms of multiple forms of otherness is particularly important, then, because it overcomes any kind of binary in which exile is aligned with that which is outside and eccentric, by contrast to some more stable center.

DANCING ACROSS HISTORY'S BORDERS

In 1964, Valeska Gert told an interviewer that “[t]here should also be a spiritual compensation, not only a financial one” (Benning 1964). While all historical study involves a certain level of questioning regarding what could have been, such subjunctive questions are particularly potent in the case of exile. The monetary compensation system of reparations or *Wiedergutmachung* (literally “making good again”) that was a condition of Allied withdrawal relied heavily on setting out standards based on what had been to assess damages to life, health, freedom, property, and career, among others

(see Colonomos and Armstrong 2006). However, Gert's words lend themselves to the question of what kinds of potential a "spiritual compensation" might assess and what it would entail. Whereas Jooss's reparations case took almost 10 years, it might be easier to see his 1951 copyright case against the musical revue film *Sensation in San Remo* as a more immediate and public form, because of the way the court proceedings demanded that dancers and critics come forward to recall Jooss's place in German dance history.¹⁹ Yet, looking back, Jooss's choreographic creativity continues to be anchored to the Weimar Republic, while his later career tends to be weighted toward his role as a pedagogue and teacher of Pina Bausch, among others, at the Folkwang School. This casts Jooss as someone who passed along the education of his fertile era to the next generation of postwar choreographers. In so doing, it sidesteps the failures of his later choreographic career—the ways in which it both fit and did not fit into postwar dance culture as it came to be.²⁰

After Gert's postwar cabarets failed in West Berlin, she retreated by 1956 to the small town of Kampen on the island of Sylt. Beginning around the time of Gert's rediscovery by filmmakers of the New German Cinema in the mid-1960s, she started to make claims, some more hyperbolic than others, to reinstate herself in the way early twentieth-century dance was remembered. Regarding the 1920s, she told one audience: "Pah, [it was] nothing but a passing phase, with the exception of dance art—partially Wigman, but for the most part me" (H. O. [signed] 1978). In her fourth autobiography, she claimed credit for both *Ausdruckstanz* and the "modern contemporary dance pantomime" and explained that "I was away for too long; people have forgotten what happened in dance back then" (Gert 1973, 46). Her spiritual compensation, then, had to do with redressing what she perceived as her displacement from cultural memory. As she complained, "At least to the Nazis, I was an enemy; to today's Germans, I am nothing" (Gert 1968, 79; see also in Benning 1964).

At the end of "Back Again?" I argue that

[t]o accept Gert's overstated claim to belong to a central narrative of Weimar dance, rather than the periphery, involves more than a tenuous articulation of belonging. It requires thinking about Gert as carrying that legacy through exile encounters in which she was no longer playing an outsider, but instead had to negotiate more explicit experiences of otherness. [...] These inclusions are only possible by first thinking through the particularities of exclusion, the many modes in which exile can operate. (Elswit 2012, 126).

Gert is now very much re-placed in historical narratives, acknowledged as a predecessor to such movements as punk, performance art, absurdist theatre, and dance theatre, and her name continues to be spread through such honors as the recent guest professorship in dance studies at Freie Universität in Berlin. Yet, Gert's claims worry a different question: What is the difference between re-placing someone into a familiar history from which they were excluded, and rewriting that history in a way that can reflect many levels of displacement in all of their challenges and possibilities?

Boym argues that revising metaphors of exile depends upon the recognition of a new, bilingual consciousness, one that exceeds the imagined community of a single nation: “Some things could only be written in a foreign language; they are not lost in translation, but conceived by it” (1996, 529). Yet such things also risk illegibility. Perspectives on displacement draw attention to such transformations—not only the intricate network of encounters and how such experiences registered in the work itself, but also the ways in which their recognition might reframe more familiar canons. At the same time, it is important that recent theories on hybridity and constructions of national imaginaries are not only used to think past dance’s exiles, but also to revisit them and vice versa, using dance’s embodied exchanges to work toward questions of the mobility of cultural formations. For El-Tayeb, there is no possibility for a “postnational” European formation, without first looking again at a repressed history of how otherness functions, not only post-1945 but even before (2011, 18–19). To think about her proposition for dance underscores the necessity of returning to exile even today in the era of pan-European performance festival circuits. At the same time, it reminds us that such encounters and their displacement start long before figures like Jooss and Gert in the middle of the twentieth century. We cannot think of exile as only a mid-century problem, but not to represent it at all—to jump directly from national to global histories—is even more of a risk.

NOTES

1. Unpublished interview tapes held by the Carina Ari Library, Stockholm. Henceforth in-text citation as “(Jooss/Häger 1975, [tape number].[timestamp]).” Research for this essay was funded by the 2013 Lilian Karina Research Grant in Dance and Politics.
2. For example, the tendency to emphasize her postwar *Remigrant* and *Ilse Koch* numbers or the citation of her early letter of concern from the editors of the exile newspaper *Aufbau* without accounting for the very positive critiques that the paper regularly printed.
3. And when dance appears among larger studies of exile, there are often misrepresentations, for example Horowitz’s claim that there was “no American tradition to speak of” for high art dance (2008, 12).
4. As art historian Sabine Eckmann points out, emigration, for example, tends to be distinguished from exile by “the active and voluntary nature of the decision to leave one’s native country for political, economic, or religious reasons,” and both can be distinguished from the migrant’s repeated changes of domicile, yet “in practice, however, such definitions are not of much use” (1997, 30).
5. For commentary that places the historical specificity of this poem as anomalous within the “semi-personalised mythic poetic exile” that Brecht fashioned “out of a real political fate,” see Kuhn (2000, 61).
6. Looking across fields including literature, history, and art, Jay argues that the ease of migration’s allegorization “bespeaks its continuing importance for us” (1997, 335). What, then, for dance? Are there not resonances in contemporary culture from dance’s exiles? Might scholars still draw conclusions from the relatively small set of data points of study to survey? Or does the continuing importance have specifically something to do with its absence?

7. See, for example, Bammer on the usefulness of postcolonial terminology for the reconceptualization of "Germanness" (1998, 23) or Cooke's analysis of the legacy of East Germany as a discursive space articulated in terms of colonization (2005, 11).
8. From his perspective, the postwar "ballet boom" was not a repressive turn to fantasy; rather, it extended the tendencies toward ballet that had begun under the Third Reich. He elaborated elsewhere that the foreign remained uncanny in the immediate post-1945 period, connecting this to the nineteenth-century origins of National Socialist ideology. As telling counter, he traced out a "testimonial of creative negotiation" between Muslim, Jewish, and Christian cultures that went back centuries (1993a).
9. The contested term "inner emigration" was used in the first postwar decades to suggest that artists who did not physically leave Germany might nonetheless have withdrawn rather than actively engaging with the Nazi regime. On the origins of the myth of inner emigration as well as more recent criticisms of the term, see von der Lühe and Krohn, ed. (2005, 7–8).
10. This is quoted in English in a German-language article.
11. I say "second company," in recognition of Jooss's own means of counting his history in the interviews with Häger. His first company, the Folkwang Tanzbühne, grew out of the opera ballet in Essen, won the Paris competition in 1932, and later left Germany with Jooss, disbanding in 1934, after which time many returned to German theatres. The second company was formed in 1935 at Dartington in England, and toured until the spring of 1942, when they became stuck in the United States during the war and had to disband due to a lack of engagements. The third company was based out of Cambridge and ran from 1942 to 1947, with its commitments including touring as entertainment for British troops. The fourth was the first postwar company in Essen, which performed from 1951 to 1953. And the fifth was a student company, the Folkwang Tanztheater Studio, which ran from 1962 to 1968.
12. After she and Bunster divorced, Turner remained a teacher in Chile, where she married the activist singer-songwriter Victor Jara, who was killed in the coup of 1973, and has since devoted her life to preserving his memory.
13. This was supported by organizations such as the American Guild for German Cultural Freedom or the German Academy for the Arts and Sciences in Exile, which was founded on the claim that the best of Weimar culture might have continued to exist, just outside Germany's geographical borders (see Lehmann, ed. 1993; Zühlsdorff 2004; Mann 1936). On other versions of the "two-Germanies theory" see Kant (2016).
14. Jooss described *Weg im Nebel* as a kind of *Spiegel* (The Mirror, 1935) for after World War II. Whereas *The Green Table* (1932) had focused on the moment of war itself in a World War I context that was later seen to be timeless, *Spiegel* had been its utopian aftermath, complete with social revolution. With such idealism no longer feasible during World War II, nor applicable after it, Jooss created *Weg* for the new aftermath that had come about (Jooss/Häger 1975, 2a.33:19; 23a.46:37).
15. These also belong alongside Bahr's observations on the ambivalent strategies found in the art and literature of exile modernism that attempted to grapple with human suffering (2007, 21).
16. The total is estimated at about 4–5 percent of Jewish émigrés and 50 percent of those politically persecuted. On the tensions that surrounded this remigration, see Krauss 2001; von der Lühe and Krohn 2005; and Möller 1983.

17. As Hedwig Müller and Patricia Stöckemann point out, one of the largest problems Gert faced during the Adenauer era was that she was not oriented against communism, but against the mentality of repression in West Germany itself (1995, 20).
18. See also the earlier description of her as appearing “absolutely timeless. A person from the fourth dimension” (Pfeiffer 1949).
19. Jooss filed for reparations in 1954. While some, but not all, of his claims for damages were granted, those decisions did not come through until 1960 and 1965. The full file is located with the Bezirksregierung Düsseldorf, Dezernat 15, Reference number 73.787. On the copyright case, see Elswit 2014a.
20. For example, Jooss’s last dance, *Dixit Dominus*, with Swedish-based Indian dancer Lilavati Häger has tended to be marginalized because it does not fit within familiar narratives. However, as a collaboration between two central and yet exceptional figures, this piece might have allowed for a type of intercultural experiment of a different register than was common in its time (Elswit 2014b).

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