

# Translating Poetry in Motion

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**Abstract:** This text aims to explore the possibility of dance translation as a practice. It will go into the research of how and why one might consider translating dance, the unique challenges of translating dance, how translation affects the work, and the necessity of such translations. This text will examine dance translation by comparing it to the translation of poetry and visual art. It will explore the use of metaphors in dance translation, and discuss the distinction between adaptation and translation in regards to dance. The paper will also consider what makes a good translator, and it will consider relevant translation theories for dance.

**Keywords:** Dance. Translation. Art. Metaphors.

## *Traduzindo a poesia em movimento*

**Resumo:** Este texto tem como objetivo explorar a possibilidade da tradução de dança como uma prática. Ele abordará a pesquisa de como e por que alguém pode considerar a tradução de dança, os desafios exclusivos da tradução de dança, como a tradução afeta o trabalho e a necessidade de tais traduções. Este texto examinará a tradução de dança comparando-a com a tradução de poesia e arte visual. Ele explorará o uso de metáforas na tradução da dança e discutirá a distinção entre adaptação e tradução em relação à dança. O artigo também analisará o que faz um bom tradutor e considerará as teorias de tradução relevantes para a dança.

**Palavras-chave:** Dança. Tradução. Arte. Metáforas.

While the translation of other art forms such as poetry is robust, frustratingly, dance translation is a relatively unexplored discipline. The lack of research and translation into and out of dance is a waste of accumulated human learning. In this paper, I want to dive into the ideas of how and why dance can and should be translated into verbal and written text, and what the translation process does to the work.

### **Translating dance is hard but NOT impossible**

To many it seems like translating an artistic work is impossible. Translator and critic Paulo Rónai wrote on the idea of translating the impossible: “O objetivo de toda arte não é algo impossível? O poeta exprime (ou quer exprimir) o inexprimível, o pintor reproduz o irreproduzível, o estatuário fixa o infixável. Não é surpreendente, pois, que o tradutor se empenhe em traduzir o intraduzível” (RÓNAI, 1956, p.17). “Isn’t the goal of all art something impossible? The poet expresses (or wants to express) the inexpressible, the painter reproduces the irreproducible, the statuary fixes the unfixable. It is not surprising, then, that the translator strives to translate the untranslatable” (RÓNAI, 1956,

p. 17). But attempting the impossible is what artists do, and what they expose through the process of doing it is art. The striving for an impossible task is what makes art beautiful. Yet, how to translate artists' works seems almost as hard as the original effort to create the underlying work.

When I explain that I am interested in translating dance, people I talk to tend to resist the idea. They say that dance cannot be translated. It is too abstract, too much of an "art", more movement than meaning, that there is no one-to-one obvious translation for each step. Most frequently, people assert that one cannot verbally translate incorporated bodily feeling or that it has too many confusing meanings to be properly translated. Dancers themselves often undercut the validity and value of dance translation. Many assert that dance is just about moving the body and that there is not further story to it. For instance, Merce Cunningham said: "When I dance, it means: this is what I am doing" (SMITH, 2003, p. 35). In a similar vein, when asked what one of her dances meant Isadora Duncan replied, "If I could tell you that, I wouldn't have to dance it" (SMITH, 2003, p. 35). But all of these pushbacks are misunderstandings of translation, and of dance. Indeed, the arrogant rejection of the possibility that one's works can be translated may be because not every artist is good at translating their work into a different medium than what they have mastered. That is why translators and critics have work to do. Pioneers in dance translation recognize the challenges of communicating works of dance but also the rewards: "[...]the process of moving from the embodied, sensorial and imaginal ways of knowing in our creative processes to verbal language was difficult, but important, as we wanted to be able to communicate specific meanings we discovered" (MANDERS; CHILTON, 2013, p. 3). And they reject the impossibility of dance translation: "If we accept meaning's ambiguity, multiplicity, and indeterminacy equally in writing as in dancing, then we can believe in the capacity of text to poetically encrypt dance and, further, in dance's embodiment of a poetic language of its own" (MEGLIN; BROOKS, 2016, p. 7). The question then is how to do it.

It is difficult even for experts to move from the creation of an embodied experience to the translation of it into verbal or written language. How do we move past this mental block between describing movement and describing movement's meaning? How do we explain the difference between a rose that is red and a Red Red Rose<sup>1</sup> in dance? People often say that the corporeal experience is incommunicable. Pain scales at the doctors will attest to how difficult it is to accurately describe bodily sensation with

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<sup>1</sup> "A Red, Red Rose" is a 1794 poem by Robert Burns.

words. However, "...the incommunicable is not absolute or fixed. This is because the lived experience offers no finalities of meaning. Each language used to communicate it creates its own incommunicable gap just as each gap indicates a kind of language bridge"(AKINLEYE, 2012, p. 110). Practicing this translation helps us learn how to navigate the gap. "Language itself, through its ongoing citationality and otherness, will always create a break, or as Derrida describes it, a "dehiscence," or "cleft," in the subject's intended meaning" (BERMANN, 2014, p. 289). There is a gap between the moment of embodiment and the describing that embodiment. Dance is closer to that moment and expression of embodiment than written or verbal language, and so has an easier time expressing that with which written and verbal language struggle. But skills and tools are needed to make that translation.

### **Dance translation tools borrowed from poetic translation**

The tools dance translation pioneers are using include translation tools long employed for poetry, which is not surprising given both art forms are often conceptually challenging. "Long before [...] more or less contemporary dancers, Plutarch, in the first century C.E., called dance 'mute poetry'" (BROOKS; MEGLIN, 2015, p. 128). Plutarch is not the only one to connect poetry and dance. In the Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning, anthropologist and scholar Judith Lynne Hanna wrote: "[...] dance more often resembles poetry, with its multiple, symbolic, and elusive meanings, than prose" (HANNA, 2012, p. 906). Dance and poetry are both artistic forms of expression that can have multilayered meanings. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines poetry as: "Literary work in which special intensity is given to the expression of feelings and ideas by the use of distinctive style and rhythm" (DEFINITION..., p.1). The Encyclopedia Britannica defines dance as: "the movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself" (MACKRELL, 1999, p. 1). There is clearly a connection between the definitions of poetry and dance, especially in regards to the expression of feelings and ideas through rhythm and artistic choices.

The translation of ideas and emotions in rhythmic art is possible but requires an understanding of artistic and musical intentions. This is no different than what is required of poetry translators. For example, poet and translator Haroldo De Campos describes the literary critic and poetic translator Ezra Pound:

He does not translate words [...] he must even deviate from the words, if they obscure or slip, or if his own language is lacking [...] If it is true that he does not translate words, he remains as a translator faithful to the poetic sequence of images of the original, to its rhythms or the effect produced by its rhythms, and to its tone” (DE CAMPOS, 2011, p. 37)<sup>2</sup>.

This is the type of translation that dance requires. Not someone who is looking at every step and equating it to a single word, but, instead, someone who is looking at the overall artistic function of the piece and translating that. It is easy to get lost in the weeds, if one does not question what one is translating in the moment and why. Are you translating the word “rose” or are you translating all of its different metaphoric meanings? Because if it is the second it is poetry and (it could be dance).

### **Characteristics of a good translator**

So what makes a good artistic translator? Pound talks about the ideal collaboration for translating a poem--how receptive to each other translator and poet need to be. He talks of the meeting between the poet and translator:

[...] where the two contributions, that of the linguist and that of the artist, complete each other and integrate themselves into a work of translation that is competent as such and valid as art. In a product that only ceases to be faithful to the textual meaning in order to be inventive, and that it be inventive to the very extent that it deliberately transcends fidelity to meaning in order to gain a greater loyalty to the spirit of the translated original, to the aesthetic sign itself seen as a total, undivided entity, in its material reality (in its physical support, which must often take the lead in the translator’s concerns) and in its conceptual charge (DE CAMPOS, 2011, p. 46).<sup>3</sup>

In order to translate poetry, the translator must also be a writer and poet in their own right, drawing from the inspiration and coming out with a translation that hopefully

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<sup>2</sup> My translation for “[Ele não traduz palavras [...] ele precisa mesmo desviar-se das palavras, se elas obscurecem ou escorregam, ou se o seu próprio idioma lhe falta [...] Se é certo que não traduz as palavras, permanece como tradutor fiel à sequência poética de imagens do original, aos seus ritmos ou ao efeito produzido por seus ritmos, e ao seu tom]”.

<sup>3</sup> My translation for “[...]onde os dois aportes, o do linguista e o do artista, se completem e se integrem num labor de tradução competente como tal e válido como arte. Num produto que só deixe de ser fiel ao significado textual para ser inventiva, e que seja inventiva na medida mesma em que transcenda, deliberadamente, a fidelidade ao significado para conquistar uma lealdade maior ao espírito do original transladado, ao próprio signo estético visto como entidade total, indivisa, na sua realidade material (no seu suporte físico, que muitas vezes deve tomar a dianteira nas preocupações do tradutor) e na sua carga conceitual]”.

moves the reader's soul in a way that the original did. Dancers do this as they take choreographers' movements into their bodies and perform. Critics must do it as they absorb dancers' movements into themselves and describe the artistic and semiotic qualities to the public.

Clearly, having the experience of being a dancer or choreographer will assist in the dance translation process:

Mirror neurons in the brain are active in someone carrying out a particular dance movement as well as in someone else who watches the same movement. Greater bilateral activations occur when expert dancers viewed movements that they had been trained to perform compared to other movements (HANNA, 2012, p. 908).

Whether trying to capture a dance for performance, review or just enjoyment, someone who dances will clearly have an easier time translating as an audience member and likely get more from watching a performance.

However, I firmly believe those who do not dance still feel something when they attend a dance work. I want all people to revel in the bodily sensations a dance work brings to them or at the least to find some relief in being able to kinesthetically empathize with the dancers. Everybody has a body. I know that everybody can move and movement is dance, just like everybody can make art -- whether or not it is museum worthy does not mean one cannot express oneself artistically. If you can see or hear or move, then you can be an audience member and experience dance. What can be gained by witnessing dance is the same thing that can be gained from reading poetry. What can be gained by writing poetry can be gained by dancing. I want more people to see dance. I want more people to find meaning in dance. I want people to talk about the dances that they see with their friends. I want them to re-find meaning in the performance when they think of it again. Unfortunately, the conceptual challenges of modern dance can be off-putting and impede these goals.

### **Contemporary dance can be semantically frustrating**

Modern art often pushes people to reimagine what art IS. In a lecture by scholar and translator Cynthia Costa, she brought up this quote by Arnold Houser: "Uma obra de arte é um desafio[...]". Art should be challenging, and we should seek out art that challenges us, moves us in unexplainable ways that we continue to interpret. Yet contemporary art, poetry and dance can overwhelm because they are so full of meaning and so elusive

to immediate understanding. Although dance can take a narrative story and tell it, like modern art or poetry it can also simply take the moving body of an emotion and have that be the entire piece. Sometimes the rhythm or the form is the point, is the meaning, is the story. This makes modern dance's and modern art's significance hard to capture in words.

This can lead to frustration from the reader or audience to the point where they do not want to engage with modern dance forms anymore declaring the whole genre pointless.

It is perhaps striking that in the case of dance (and, most especially, contemporary dance) an audience will feel a particular obligation to consciously and determinedly enact this last stage — to 'understand' the dance. In some cases, audiences will feel excluded from dance as an art form because they feel they do not understand or 'get' the dance (SMITH, 2003, p. 36).

This is exactly why I am interested in furthering dance translation as a discipline. I find that dance, especially contemporary dance, can have people feeling lost when they first encounter it, balking at both how much meaning and how little meaning everything has. If it is too literal in its meaning it is miming and not "dance"; if it is too abstract it is just people wiggling around and is a stupid waste of time. People want to know exactly what art *means* and when they do not immediately, they give up and write it off as indulgent nonsense. But understanding a work takes reflection and effort which does not fit the current fast-paced, "Google it and know now", type of life. Sinking into full kinesthetic awareness can take time. If one has ever attempted to meditate this is clear -- entrance into only kinesthetic consciousness is difficult in a world full of distractions trying to pull us out of our bodies. Understanding dance instantly as an audience member is almost impossible. It takes time, it takes practice: practice at opening one's mind, practice at feeling it with one's body, practice at being vulnerable to art, practice at living in the discomfort of not knowing and still finding artistic value.

### **Forms of dance translation**

Robust accessible dance translations would likely help foster greater understanding and acceptance of challenging dance pieces. But there are other less demanding writing options. Simply writing about the personal impact of a dance piece has inherent value. Academics in this new discipline recognize that the process of translating dance into words invigorates both the dance work and the writing: "The reciprocity between dancing and

writing engages a double motion and involves a synergy, even symbiosis, that animates not only the body but also words, ideas and ambient” (KING, 2004, p. xi). Challenging a choreographer or dancer to write down what the piece means can improve the performance for them and the audience. “When I wrote a story in response to a dance, I found it was at once translation and analysis” (MANDERS; CHILTON, 2013, p. 6). Critical reviews and video recordings are also important. Dance professor Christina Thurner wrote of the critiques of Pina Bausch’s Tanztheater Wuppertal: “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, [they act] as a translation of dance into language” (THURNER, 2018, p. 6). People find out about dance and want to go and see it and understand it in the world through the reviews and the videos, both of which are translations.

As translations of dance into language, reviews also move within time while discursively performing their implicit or explicit assertions and assumptions: They record, analyze, and judge. In doing so, they not only react to the perceived, but also act upon and influence perception in the form of discourse (THURNER, 2018, p. 5).

Reviews are also historic records, which can be traced through time, allowing for knowledge to be easily kept. Without the review descriptions and few videos of Isadora Duncan’s dancers, an important part of dance history would have been lost.<sup>4</sup>

Another related translation type is being able to write down what happened during the original piece so that it can be performed again in the same way or can be built upon. “When choreographing classical ballet repertoire, most companies use notations. Neoclassical companies and some modern companies also work with notators and choreologists, who record the pieces in writing” (KLEIN, 2018, p. 402). But that is classical ballet;

[...] modern and contemporary choreographies have no literary text as a baseline to be translated into a theatrical language or context. Moreover, the difficulty in passing on contemporary choreography and dance is that – unlike classical ballet or modern dance – they are not based on a specific dance technique. And unlike in classical ballet, most of the choreographies are rarely notated in ways that allow for reconstruction (KLEIN, 2018, p. 394).

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<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately we have no visual record of Duncan herself but at least the videos of her dancers are a translation of this modern dance icon’s intentions.

This is why it is so important to practice modern dance translation and continue to attempt such translation. If not, all of this accumulated artistry is lost to time.

### **Why dance translation requires something different**

While capturing the meaning of dance can be analogized to translating poetry, dance translation does require some different skills because of dance's physical and spatial components. While poetry also plays in space around itself, running lines together or cutting them off, it does not have the same three-dimensional translation challenges of dance. Hanna describes:

The process of dance-making engages some of the same components in the brain for conceptualization, creativity, and memory as does verbal poetry or prose, but obviously not the same procedural knowledge. Dance is also linked to the right hemisphere that involves elementary perceptual tasks, nonverbal processing of spatial information, music, and emotional reactivity (HANNA, 2012, p. 907).

Dance is the combination of many different arts which exist in different temporal and physical spaces, which means the amount of information not typically found in other arts that could be translated out of dance is enormous: the proprioceptive experience, the mental talk, the emotional feelings, the spatial awareness outside of the body in relation to the space, the dance's relation to sound (especially music which creates its own timing and emotions).

People also have told me that dance is too difficult to translate because it is ephemeral, unlike written texts. I would offer that it is even more important to translate dance because of its ephemerality. Dance requires translation even more because it is changing and fleeting with every different performance. Therefore, it is even more critical that choreographers, dancers, and audience members practice translating it. Dance lives in a body; I as the dancer am the piece of paper onto which the poem is written. And yet as the ink dries on the paper I must translate it again because the ink fades, as a person's memory is not infallible. I am a brittle fragile piece of paper, the pieces will eventually crumble away and if I do not translate it outside of myself the dance and I will not stand the ravages of time. If this art, if these ideas and emotions in the order and context in which they are placed, are to live on then the dance must be translated, from one dancer to another, from a dancer to paper, from a dancer to video and then back again, from dance out of dance and back into dance many, many times.



## **Dance remembers and reinvigorates history**

For most cultures, dance is a form of remembrance and reinvigoration of history. For example, traditional Indian dance like Bharatanatyam (South India classical dance), alongside musicians and singers, retells different stories from Hindu scripture and keeps them alive because they are translated into multiple medias. They are written, they are danced, they are sung, they are acted, they are sculpted and then they are danced again and again. Each translation keeps the story alive, and reinvigorates and re-highlights certain aspects that inevitably get lost in translation. How better to physically feel what a character in a story was feeling than by embodying it?

[...] Bharatanatyam involves translation in another important way. The content of the dance expresses one of nine different bhavas or 'moods' — love, jealousy, anger, fear, pride, devotion, disgust, surprise, humility. The bhava is what the dance and the dancer express; correspondingly, the audience should experience the rasa or 'taste' of the dance, such that when the dancer performs in srīngara bhava (the mood of love), the audience should feel srīngara rasa (the feeling or 'taste' of love). Bhava translates into rasa; the presentation of the performer translates into the experience of the audience (SMITH, 2003, p. 35).

Through embodying the tale the dancer then gives the audience member the chance to embody it and experience it physically and temporally and spatially in a way that other methods cannot.

## **The importance of metaphor in translation**

So, in addition to familiarity with dance, what else is required for an effective dance translator? Research shows that effective translation of dance and poetry invariably requires use of metaphors, in which one easily understandable thing stands in for another more difficult to understand thing. A metaphor is defined as a:

figure of speech that implies comparison between two unlike entities, as distinguished from simile, an explicit comparison signaled by the words *like* or *as*. The distinction is not simple. A metaphor makes a qualitative leap from a reasonable, perhaps prosaic, comparison to an identification or fusion of two objects, the intention being to create one new entity that partakes of the characteristics of both (THE EDITORS OF ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA, 1998, p. 1).

Metaphor is incredibly pervasive in everyday discourse. “By some estimates, English speakers produce one unique metaphor for every 25 words that they utter” (THIBODEAU; BORODITSKY, 2011, p. 10). Metaphors are used frequently in poetry (dare I say that most poetry is generally mostly metaphors?) -- they are one of the classic poetic devices. Metaphor comes from ancient Greek for “to transfer.” I like the poetic resonance between metaphor and translation. Metaphor feels connected to the fundamental concept of translation – transferring meaning and making the hard to understand understandable through equating two unlike things.

But, really, why do metaphors matter besides the frequency with which they show up? Because of “the importance of linguistic framing in reasoning, and the importance of narrative structure in instantiating meaning” (THIBODEAU; BORODITSKY, 2011, p. 1). Metaphors have an outsized reach on our conceptualization of the topic and most of their effects are subconscious. This source talks about how metaphor affects how people think crime should be handled:

The studies presented in this paper demonstrate that even minimal (one-word) metaphors can significantly shift people’s representations and reasoning about important real-world domains. These findings suggest that people don’t have a single integrated representation of complex issues like crime, but rather rely on a patchwork of (sometimes disconnected or inconsistent) representations and can (without realizing it) dynamically shift between them when cued in context (THIBODEAU; BORODITSKY, 2011, p. 10).

Despite being frequently used and sometimes hastily thought out, metaphors have a vast impact on how we understand the stories we are told about complex, theoretical, or difficult to parse topics.

Why do metaphors matter for dance translation? It is obvious to any dancer --because one of the most common ways of verbalizing dance is through the use of metaphors (along with simile and onomatopoeia). Go to any dance class and you will find that the teacher most often uses a metaphor to describe how to move. E.g., “Your arm is a whip”. I have found this to be true not just in English speaking classes, but in my Brazilian dance classes as well. For example, in a Zouk class in Brazil the teacher described a movement as “wifi communication” (when communicating over long space through body and eyes) and in a Klaus Vienna contemporary class the teacher asked us to imagine that our “joints are water”. Academics agree:

Panhofer and Payne (2011) found that even experienced dance/movement therapists, trained in a technical language to describe movement, had difficulty expressing the meaning of the embodied experience. They wrote less after a movement experience than before it and made little use of the technical language, preferring metaphor and poetry (MANDERS; CHILTON, 2013, p. 3).

Narrative prose appears to be a challenging form for dance translation in comparison to metaphors. But knowing the power of metaphor to shape reception makes me as a dancer-translator want to be extremely thoughtful and vaguely cautious in what metaphor I use to describe dance (or to offer multiple conflicting metaphors that all edge around the topic, if no one metaphor really fits).

### **Dance translation is not verbatim and that is exciting**

Having methods to deal with dance's unique qualities helps with the difficulties of dance translation. In addition to being familiar with dance and using metaphors, creative arts therapists Elizabeth Manders and Gioia Chilton explored translating dance by pretending it's a fairytale. This approach fosters accessibility but exposes that translation is not a mirror image of the work. "In writing a story, I felt less pressure to capture everything precisely as it happened: a fairytale, by definition, is not supposed to be factual" (MANDERS; CHILTON, 2013, p. 6). The key to this is the creative interpretation; it is freedom from the idea of "fidelity" into which many translators can fall. "I felt less constricted in documenting the dance when freed from the expectation of complete accuracy in my translation. To my surprise, the story then acted not only as a translation of the dance into language, but itself provided further insight into my experience" (MANDERS; CHILTON, 2013, p. 7). This is exactly what good translations should do. You should discover something through translating. Nobody more closely reads a work than a translator -- how better to discover more? The spirit of "the original" is such a fickle concept. It can change as it is subjective. Worrying about being one hundred percent accurate or faithful is like trying to write while simultaneously editing yourself, rather than free-writing first. Cutting yourself off at your feet as your trying to walk makes it hard to dance.

Translation is not simple parroting, and neither is it assimilation (taking in and fully understanding). As philosopher Judith Butler asserts: "[T]ranslation cannot be a simple assimilation of what is foreign into what is familiar; it must be an opening to the unfamiliar, a dispossession from prior ground, and even a willingness to cede ground to

what is not immediately knowable within established epistemological fields” (BUTLER, 2012, 12, quoted by BERMANN, 2014, p. 295)<sup>5</sup>. This type of translation that Butler demands cannot be done with a work with an easy one for one translation. If the work or subject is truly new and unfamiliar, then the translation must be highly innovative. Jakobson speaks on this creativity in regards to poetry:

The pun, or, to use a more erudite, and perhaps more precise term, paronomasia, reigns over poetic art; whether this domination is absolute or limited, poetry by definition is untranslatable. Only creative transposition is possible [...] (JAKOBSON. *Linguística e comunicação*, p. 72, quoted by DE CAMPOS, 2011, p. 20)<sup>6</sup>.

“Creative transposition” is not a mirroring. As the creator of the transposition, one’s fingerprints necessarily change the work.

Creative transposition can yield significant benefits. For instance, that the translator necessarily imprints onto the translated work, evolves its content:

At the same time, translation’s scene-stealing encounter with otherness generates linguistic innovation. In Derrida’s other texts on translation, he emphasizes, often with reference to Walter Benjamin, that translation entails a transformation and growth (not reproduction) of language. (DERRIDA, 1985, 122). The translator inclines toward the language and conventions of the source in order to translate them into her own very different language. A new linguistic production results, one infused with the otherness of its source (BERMANN, 2014, p. 290).

This fusion allows for wider and differing audiences, which is exciting and expansive.

Creative translation of art also allows new audiences a way into the unknown. Through translation we give power to the new, the unknown, the less powerful: “Through their contact with otherness, translational encounters subvert dominant, universalizing claims, allow new openings for a range of previously foreclosed subjectivities, and forge new languages that belong to no single group” (BUTLER, 2000, 168-69, quoted by BERMANN, 2014, p. 294)<sup>7</sup>. For example, Isadora Duncan’s translation of Grecian urns

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<sup>5</sup> BUTLER, Judith. **Parting ways: Jewishness and the critique of Zionism**. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780231146104.

<sup>6</sup> My translation for “[O trocadilho, ou, para empregar um termo mais erudito, e talvez mais preciso, a paronomásia, reina sobre a arte poética; quer esta dominação seja absoluta ou limitada, a poesia, por definição, é intraduzível (poetry by definition is untranslatable). Só é possível a transposição criativa (creative transposition)[...]”.

<sup>7</sup> BUTLER, Judith. **Contingency, hegemony, universality: contemporary dialogues on the left**. London: Verso, 2000. 329 p. ISBN 1859847579.

into dance and then her translators' exploration of her dance's methods and meanings forged new ideas of what dance is and what topics it can explore and how. As Butler further asserts:

this border-crossing itself makes an ethical demand on the reader: [it] '...is asking us to stay at the edge of what we know, to put our own epistemological certainties into question, and through that risk and openness to another way of knowing and of living in the world to expand our capacity to imagine the human.' (BUTLER, 2004, 228 quoted by BERMANN, 2014, p. 293-294)<sup>8</sup>.

The world expands its understanding of the body and corporeal experiences by translating out of dance. It foreignizes the concept of the mind/body dichotomy. It reinforces the concept of the body as a holder of knowledge, equal, if different, from the brain. Dance translation extends the capacity of understanding humanity.

### **Translation, not just adaptation**

That translating necessarily imprints on the original does not necessarily mean that a translated dance must be an adaptation. Declaring that dance can only ever adapt rather than translate limits one's understanding of both dance and translation. The way I describe this distinction to people is that adaptation is taking a red clay bowl and reforming it into a red clay sculpture. Translation is taking that red clay bowl and then making a blown glass bowl of the same pattern and size. In each there is an essence that stays the same and there is a quality that changes. But in adaptation the meaning or function of the piece can dramatically change while the essence is the same, while in translation the meaning feels more reminiscent even if it gains or loses attributes from the original. I think adaptations have a lot to offer this world, but that dance, just like poetry, can be creatively translated. I want to offer choreographers, dancers, and audience members the opportunity, advice and ideas to liberally translate dance works based equally on semantic meaning as artistic and rhythmic meaning.

### **Dance translation deserves more academic attention**

In this paper we have compared poetry and dance and modern art, examined why translation of dance matters and what translation even means, explored methods

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<sup>8</sup> BUTLER, Judith. **Undoing gender**. [S. l.]: Routledge, 2004. *E-book*. ISBN 9780203499627. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203499627>. Accessed: 26 jun. 2023.

of translating dance including a deep dive on metaphors, and analyzed some relevant translation theory to mine ways to further dance translation. As always with translation, meanings will be gained and lost in the leap. It is impossible to convey one hundred percent of the original information in any translation, but especially in an art like modern dance. But that doesn't mean that works should not be translated or that those translations somehow are not translations. Most ancient texts that we have were originally oral poems, and their translations through repetition and evolution in word (and dance) are the reason we still have vestiges of them today. People still find them to be beautiful and meaningful and relevant and helpful in understanding their time and culture, despite them having undoubtedly changed in their translations. Dance translation is obviously challenging, but I hope that this analysis contributes to further consideration and evolution of dance as a subject of intersemiotic translation theory.

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