PINA: THE WEIGHT OF THE BODY DANCING

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It has been said many times that the most beautiful ballets are the ones that makes us forget the weight of the dancers’ bodies. With Pina Bausch, on the contrary, dance becomes a vehicle of celebration of this weight in its interaction with itself, the others, and the environment. The film Pina (2011) by Wim Wenders is remarkable in this regard. It offers to the spectator another point of view on four of the German choreographer’s main pieces (The Rite of Spring, Café Muller, Kontakthoh and Vollmond) as well as introducing her dancers in various open landscapes thus perpetuating the emphasis on the relationship dance creates with a terrain.

This new point of view is highly interesting as it focuses on details that are almost imperceptible from the audience’s traditional situation. However, all those details are what composes the atmosphere of Bausch’s ballet, and they are beautifully emphasized by Wenders. The sound of the bodies, in particular, is fascinating, whether they inhale, breathe, run, fall on the floor or hit it. Bodies are celebrated both in their power and in their fragility. There is a violence in Bauch’s work that is fascinating and frightening in its crudeness. The film recounts well this dimension of dance, whether it is by those two female bodies which repeatedly encounter the
power of a wall in Café Muller, or the group of women ritually hitting their bodies in Le Sacre du Printemps, or else the rope that prevents a young girl from escaping of the room, or again, the couple, in Café Muller, who can’t stop repeating the same action over and over between embrace and fall. Each time, the sound produced by those bodies reminds us of their weight, i.e. their factor of attraction for gravity, and shocks us by its coldness.

Depending of the matter of which it is composed, the environment reacts more or less visually to those encounters. Earth, sand and water are found regularly in the movie as examples of such visible interactions. Indeed, these materials embody expressively the effect that the environment has on the body and vice versa.

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