

## An Iterative Poetics of Writing Facts

### Louis de Cahusac's *La Danse Ancienne et Moderne ou Traité Historique de la Danse* (1754)

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With *La Danse Ancienne et Moderne ou Traité Historique de la Danse*, published in 1754, the French dance theorist Louis de Cahusac (1709-1759) presents a revised collection and some new drafts of his articles on “Danse”, “Ballet”, “Geste”, “Figurants”, “Fêtes”, and “Enthousiasm” written between 1751 and 1757 for Denis Diderot’s and Jean le Rond d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*.<sup>1</sup> With the aim of advancing the ‘truth’ about dance and hoping to be of some ‘advantage’ for future readers, as mentioned in the “Avant-Propos”,<sup>2</sup> the treatise demonstrates the interrelation between ‘writing’ and ‘fact’ through the re-writing of ancient dance theories such as Lucian of Samosata’s dialogue *On Dance*, the re-writing of own texts and the articulation of current innovations in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century European theatrical dance practice, characterized as *danse en action*.

As this paper elaborates, the treatise deals not only with the cultural practice of writing as a historical fact but also gives insight into how writing influences the facticity of facts when it comes to presenting coincidences with ‘reality,’ ‘truth’ or the results of some ‘acts’ and ‘actions’ in historical writings on dance. Scrutinizing the act of writing allows the discerning of specific types of ‘writing facts,’ which in the case of Louis de Cahusac’s treatise rely on philosophical empiricism and sensualism and will be described in this article as a

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1 Cahusac contributed with more than 120 articles especially on the topics of dance and opera to the encyclopedian project, where his entries are signed with the letter (B). The first edition of the *Traité Historique de la Danse* was published in 1754 in three volumes at La Haye by Jean Neaulme. The quotes in this article refer to the commented new edition published in 2004 by Nathalie Lecomte, Laura Naudeux and Jean-Noël Laurenti at Paris. (Cf. Cahusac 2004)

2 Cf. *ibid.*: 36–40.

poetics of iteration. Therefore, this contribution in a first part elaborates on the notions of 'fact,' 'writing' and 'iteration' and in a second one deepens the poetical analysis of the treatise with the aim to present three different types of an iterative poetics of writing facts.

## 1. On the Interrelation of Fact, Writing, and Iteration

The general understanding of 'fact' in European 18<sup>th</sup> century discourses and cultural practices shows an awareness of the difficulties the term implies as Denis Diderot's entry on "Fait" (Fact) in the *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* demonstrates: To define 'fact' as the 'coming into existence of a potentiality,' which allows obtaining knowledge of facts by experience such as eye witnessing actions, monuments and artefacts or through oral and written tradition, does not prove to be a suitable characterization.<sup>3</sup> But it indicates the intricacy of the relation between 'truth' and 'fact' that can be analyzed from an ontological, epistemological or logical perspective.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to the ontological state of facts, Diderot proposes in the encyclopaedical entry a three-part classification: Facts are first considered as the acts of the divine which are studied by theology. Second, facts mean all phenomena of nature that are the matter of philosophy and third, facts refer to the actions of human beings which are transmitted by history. Each one of these is equally subject to criticism, particularly concerning the certainty of their facticity of which the verification always remains at least partly subjective since it relies on the faculties of man.<sup>5</sup> In relation to Louis de Cahusac's historical and aesthetic treatise, the second and third classes of facts are the most important ones, since the treatise reflects on the natural phenomenon of movement in dance and its history as well as on the related writing traditions.<sup>6</sup> Considering the ephemeral quality of any action, the way of its trans-

3 Cf. Diderot 1781: 786.

4 Cf. Fludernik/Ryan 2020a: 3.

5 Cf. Diderot 1781: 786.

6 With these reflections on historical facts Cahusac's treatise connects to recent studies in historiography. With regard to historical facts, Stephan Jaeger points out with reference to Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, that facts are not given in documents but the result of a selection by the historian seen as a function regarding a certain problem. (Cf. Ricoeur 1984: 108 quoted in Jaeger 2020: 337)

lation into words and text becomes crucial particularly with regard to its pastness.

From the beginning of the establishment of the modern fact in science and history in 18<sup>th</sup> century, historiography has discussed methodological criteria for facts to deal with the unreliability of data and to confront the subjectivity, partiality, ideological prejudices or interests of the historian.<sup>7</sup> Already Diderot discusses the question of certainty in relation to facts: he explains that a person has to confront both, the obstacle of being mistaken and of being deceived by others in the process of perceiving a fact. This in turn depends on the specific disposition of the objects and the subjects involved. Because, on the one hand, the more simple and ordinary the fact is and the more gullible the person concerned is, the greater the level of certainty would appear to be. On the other, the more the person concerned is sensible and the more the facts considered show a certain complexity, the less the certainty of the facticity will be. Hence, dealing with facts challenges not only the acquired knowledge, but it also demands a critical dealing with the passions, prejudices and senses, because even if man relies on his experience, the impressions provoked by an object remain subjective, since their quality in two men can hardly be compared.<sup>8</sup> This leads Diderot to the conclusion that in the end all facticity remains bound to a certain belief.<sup>9</sup> In studying the writing of dance history and of contemporary dance practices, such beliefs become observable and with this the factualization of natural phenomena and human actions. Additionally, in Diderot's classification, the writing itself appears as fact in the sense of action, and serves as both the means and the result of factualization at one and the same time. But what do we mean by 'writing' and how can it be studied in historical texts?

Roland Barthes reflects on 'writing' as cultural practice in *Variations sur l'écriture* (1973). Inspired by Barthes, Rüdiger Campe and Martin Stingelin developed in their writing theories the concept of *Schreibszene* ('writing scene') as a methodological tool for text analysis.<sup>10</sup> Writing as scene results from the arrangement and interaction of heterogeneous elements like language, writing instruments, material and media technologies as well as the physical

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7 Cf. Jaeger 2020: 338.

8 Cf. Diderot 1781: 787.

9 Cf. *ibid.*

10 Cf. Campe 2012: 269–282; Stingelin 2004: 7–21; Barthes 1994: 1535–1574.

dimension of gestures within the frame of a certain historical situation.<sup>11</sup> For Stingelin, the instability and heterogeneity of this constellation can also be problematized within the text. Hence, he differentiates between the historical *Schreibszene* (writing scene) and its thematization in the text, the *Schreib-Szene* with hyphen, to which this article refers with the ‘written writing scene.’<sup>12</sup> For both scenes, the question of the frame, within which the writing process occurs allows the distinguishing of elements, actions, their relation and effects as accompanying or not belonging to the writing scene. Furthermore, the distribution of roles, for instance of writer, reader, or editor and the directing of the scene provide perspectives on how to approach the process of writing in literary studies. Within this variety of elements, this paper concentrates on the handling of language, the gestural dimension and the question of the direction of the writing scene.

In the context of 18<sup>th</sup> century dance theory, the gestural dimension unavoidably points at the expressive qualities of the non-verbal body that is discussed within dramatic and dance theories under the topic of ‘mime,’ particularly concerning the relation between gesture and the expression as well as transmission of emotion. Nevertheless, although Roland Barthes already refers to emotions in the act of writing in *Variations sur l’écriture*, the role of emotions in text production still is hardly explored, as Susanne Knaller remarks.<sup>13</sup> But, whereas Barthes focuses on the pleasure or the boredom as effects of the writing act from a mere physiological point of view,<sup>14</sup> Louis de Cahusac problematizes how passions can direct writing scenes in the sense of influencing the facticity of the content to be written about. Thus, in his treatise the relation between writing and fact is coupled with emotion. This trinity appears on two levels: First, as thematization of positive and negative emotions and their impact on writing. And second, when Cahusac’s writing becomes visible as iteration due to the performativity of writing historical and aesthetic dance facts.

In cultural studies the term ‘iterative’ alludes to the concept of performativity, where it is discussed in relation to citation within the context of language philosophy, writing studies and theater studies.<sup>15</sup> ‘Iteration’ in the

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11 Cf. Campe 2012: 270.

12 Cf. Stingelin 2004: 15.

13 Cf. Knaller 2017: 20.

14 Cf. Barthes 1994: 1560.

15 Cf. Wirth 2002: 9–60.

sense of ‘citability’ characterizes cultural practices in their reproducibility and theatricality.<sup>16</sup> Informed by Jacques Derrida’s general observation in *Signature Event Context*, writing as cultural practice is necessarily determined by a general iterability “which links repetition to alterity” so that writing can be legible in the absence of the addressee.<sup>17</sup> For Derrida, a written sign is a mark that remains, but that also includes a “force of breaking with its context,” since it can be removed from the contextual constellations of its inscription and by citation be re-contextualised under other circumstances.<sup>18</sup> Writing in the sense of the mastery of sign-systems carries with it the general possibility of removal and grafting.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the iterative handling of the sign system and its results constitute a fact of the writing scene. Looking at iteration in Cahusac’s treatise on dance, the focus lies methodologically on the variation in repetition and its function for the production of facts that can be seen as an act of quoting, arranging and re-writing existing fragments.

With it, the meta-reflective question *What or who is directing the writing scene?* arises. Whereas the title of Cahusac’s work evokes the factuality of the following lines by the generic concept of ‘treatise’ as well as by its specification as ‘historical,’ quite at the beginning of the “Avant-Propos” the author reflects on the question of whether the subject to be written about affects the writing mode, in other words, whether the passions transported and evoked by dance modify the mode of writing a historical and aesthetic dance treatise and consequently concern the written transmission of historical facts.

## 2. Fearing the Attraction of the Object: Paratextual Reflections on Writing a Dance Tract

The first paragraph of the “Avant-Propos” to the *Traité Historique de la Danse* enters in medias res, as it addresses the relation of an assumed objective perspective on historical facts of the writer and the affective impact of the study’s object on the dance theorist:

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16 Cf. *ibid.*: 42.

17 Derrida 1991: 90.

18 *Ibid.*: 92.

19 Cf. Wirth 2002: 28. See also the analysis of citation modes in Compagnon 1979. For the practice of patch-writing see the article of Doris Pany-Habsa in this volume.

Il est rare qu'on ne se passionne pas pour les genres d'étude que l'on s'est choisi. J'ai craint ce danger en écrivant cet ouvrage, et pour m'en garantir, je me suis rappelé mille fois les prétentions ridicules des différents maîtres du *Bourgeois gentilhomme*. | Je déclare donc, avant d'entrer en matière, que je ne crois point la danse la plus excellente chose qu'on puisse faire, et que je suis persuadé qu'il y a dans le monde des objets d'une plus grande importance que ne le sont même les beaux-arts.<sup>20</sup>

Whereas Cahusac's declaration concerning the little importance of dance in the second paragraph seems to quote a sworn statement and hence alludes to the juridical dimension of the semantic field of 'fact'<sup>21</sup> – which in a treatise on dance aesthetics cannot be taken otherwise than ironically – the written writing scene in the first paragraph refers to the writer's passion for the subject to be dealt with as a possible obstacle in the creation of historical or aesthetic tracts. Moreover, the writer confesses not only his reservation against an emotional disposition in the act of writing that would contradict the presumed ideal of an objective attitude of an enlightened dance theorist but describes the transformation of a certain required passion for dance into fear when it comes to writing about dance.

Starting from these meta-reflexive considerations of his own emotional disposition in writing the treatise, Cahusac generalizes his self-observation that in studying whatever object, one discovers its utilities and the pleasures it might evoke. And with this, he continues, it is difficult to know the studied objects and to write about them without expressing some considerations that they inspire and deserve. The more the insight advances, the stronger the affective relation of the writer to his object of study becomes: "On voudrait alors, pour l'honneur, pour la félicité de son siècle, faire passer rapidement les découvertes qu'on croit avoir faites, ses réflexions, ses vues dans l'âme de

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20 Cahusac 2004: 35. "It is rare that one is not passionate about the kinds of study one has chosen. I feared this danger while writing this work, and to guarantee it, I remembered a thousand times the ridiculous pretensions of the different masters of the *Bourgeois gentilhomme*. | I therefore declare, before entering into the matter, that I do not believe Dance to be the most excellent thing that can be done, and that I am convinced that there are objects of greater importance in the world than even the fine arts." (All quotes follow the original orthography. If not indicated otherwise, all translations by R.R.)

21 See the diverse entries corresponding to 'Fait, *jurisprudence*' in the *Encyclopédie*. (Cf. Bocher d'Argis 1781: 787–791)

tous ses contemporains.”<sup>22</sup> Concurrent to the enlightened discourse on *sensibilité*, critical thought is coupled with the aim of transmitting the knowledge gained, by addressing both the cognitive and sensual faculties of man. In Cahusac’s writing this relation of rational and emotional disposition crystallizes in an aesthetic concept of enthusiasm, which is conceived as the director of vivid writing scenes as explored in his article on “Enthousiasme” for the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>23</sup>

In opposition to the common understanding of enthusiasm as a kind of ‘delusion’ or ‘mania’ that masters or even spares the mind, and which illuminates, raises and inspires the imagination so that the enthusiastic writer is able to do and say extraordinary and surprising things, Cahusac defines enthusiasm as “the masterpiece of reason”:

C’est la raison seule cependant qui le [l’enthousiasme] fait naître; il est un feu pur qu’elle allume dans les momens de sa plus grande supériorité. Il fut toujours de toutes ses opérations la plus prompte, la plus animée. Il suppose une multitude infinie de combinaisons précédentes, qui n’ont pu se faire qu’avec elle & par elle. Il est, si on ose le dire, le chef-d’œuvre de la raison.<sup>24</sup>

In Cahusac’s treatise on dance, such a state of enthusiasm in the sense of a specific disposition of reason underlies an ideal writing mode of clear communicating the writing of facts. As will be shown in the following, it emerges in his re-writing of dance history as well as in his demonstrations of the existence of the new genre *danse en action*. Furthermore, with its close relation to reason, the mode of ‘enthusiastic writing’ differs clearly from other passions that evoke more likely moral dimensions as, for instance, envy. With regard to the poetics of the treatise, it also allows to discern a redoubling of writing facts, that surpasses a simple alternation between rational-analytical and affective-emotional writing modes but creates a specific poetics of iteration.

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22 Cahusac 2004: 35. “One would like then, for the honor, for the felicity of his century, to make pass quickly the discoveries which one believes to have made, his reflections, his views in the soul of all his contemporaries.”

23 Cf. Cahusac 1782b.

24 Ibid.: 517. “It is reason alone, however, that gives rise to it [enthusiasm]; it is [enthusiasm] a pure fire that it [reason] kindles in the moments of its greatest superiority. Of all its operations, it was always the most rapid, the most animated. It presupposes an infinite number of previous combinations, which could only have been made with reason & by reason. It is, if one dares to say it, the masterpiece of reason.”

### 3. Writing Facts: Cahusac's Poetics of Iteration

As already mentioned, in Louis de Cahusac's dance treatise, writing facts unfold on two sides: first, in finding different ways to present historical facts of dance history and second, in documenting the diversity of writing as a fact. The two sides cannot be separated and depend on mutual influence. In the following examples drawn from the historical part of the treatise, at least three separate types of iterative writing can be discerned which will be described successively as affecting redoubling of arguments, re-writing of traditional facts and transformative self-citation.

#### 3.1 Soaking the Pen in Spite: Writing between Reason and Passion

Whereas Louis de Cahusac opens his treatise with a meta-reflective comment on the positive evaluation related to aesthetic enthusiasm, his meditations on the impact of envy in the writing scene figures as a counterpart. The effects of the latter are introduced with an anecdote about two historical writers of libretti or programs for royal ballets, the poet Isaac de Benserade<sup>25</sup> and his ambitious younger competitor Octave de Périgny, to whom the story alludes only with "le P... de P\*\*\*".<sup>26</sup> The anecdote is centered on a short plot, that drafts the rivalry of the two dance poets and their dependence on the monarch: With his ballet programs the young poet gains the favors of the king and replaces Benserade until things change and the works of the young star earn a total failure that brings Benserade back to the stage. But instead of enjoying his regained fame, the composer Benserade becomes involved in writing public mock epistles, the negative effects of which fall back on him.<sup>27</sup> Having described the situation and acts of the rivals, Cahusac considers the accompanying negative passions in relation to the writing process in general: "Il est des moments de dégoût, des occasions d'impatience, des préférences piquantes, des coups inattendus, des revers douloureux, des injustices outrageantes. L'âme s'affecte, l'esprit s'aigrit, la bile s'allume, le trait échappe, et

25 Isaac de Benserade (1612/13-1691) was a French poet of the courts of Louis XIII and Louis XIV. He wrote romantic verses and libretti for royal ballets and was elected to the *French Academy* in 1674.

26 Cahusac 2004: 194. Octave de Périgny (1625-1670) was a French poet, president of the *Chambre des Enquêtes*, reader of the King and tutor of the Grand Dauphin from 1666-1670.

27 Cf. Cahusac 2004: 191-194.

il nous perd.” (194)<sup>28</sup> To prevent the ‘lines from escaping,’ which in this context can be read equivocally as an allusion to the facial expression as well as to the line drawn by the process of writing, Cahusac recommends to his readers a whole catalogue of measures against similar disgraces: “Du flegme, une étude profonde, beaucoup de patience, un grand fond de fermeté, la certitude que les hommes ne sont pas toujours injustes, le secours du temps, et surtout des efforts redoublés pour mieux faire.” (194)<sup>29</sup>

Apart from the presentation of this list of counter-measures concerning experiences of aggression and struggle, Cahusac seems to compete himself in the objective to a vivid presentation of his thoughts in the subsequent paragraph. There he repeats the topic but presents it in an even more affecting mode by showing the negative consequences if the previously mentioned advice is ignored. For that, he not only addresses the readers directly but also drafts a horrific writing scene of a passionate writer troubled by anger and vindictive thoughts, who finally perishes with his rival:

Une cabale puissante suscite contre vous une foule de juges injustes. Vous connaissez l'auteur de votre disgrâce. La colère vous le peint avec des traits qui rendus au grand jour peuvent le couvrir d'un ridicule éternel. Cette cruelle idée vous rit et rien ne vous arrête. Votre plume se trempe dans le fiel. Vous espérez tracer sa honte, et immortaliser votre vengeance. Quelle erreur! le blanc, contre lequel vous tirez à bout-portant est appuyé sur une colonne de marbre. La balle le perce sans doute; mais la colonne la repousse contre vous: vous tombez l'un et l'autre frappés du même coup, et vous restez à terre, pour y être foulé aux pieds de la multitude, dont vous auriez tôt ou tard fixé l'admiration, et qui vous méprise. (194–195)<sup>30</sup>

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28 “There are moments of disgust, occasions of impatience, piquant preferences, unexpected blows, painful setbacks, outrageous injustices. The soul is affected, the spirit is filled with bitterness, the bile is ignited, the line escapes, and it loses us.”

29 “Phlegm, deep study, a lot of patience, a great deal of firmness, the certainty that men are not always unjust, the help of time, and above all redoubled efforts to do better.”

30 “A powerful cabal raises against you a crowd of unjust judges. You know the author of your disgrace. Anger paints him with features which, when brought to light, can cover him with eternal ridicule. This cruel idea laughs at you, and nothing stops you. Your pen is soaked in spite. You hope to draw his shame and immortalize your revenge. What a mistake! The mark, at which you shoot and which you hit at close range, is leaning on a marble column. The bullet undoubtedly pierces it; but the column pushes it back against you: you fall both struck by the same shot, and you remain on the ground, to

With this passionate writing scene, Cahusac elucidates the influence of socially negative evaluated emotions like anger and envy on the writing process, since they take the direction of the writing scene, guide the pen, metaphorically represent the liquid ink which not only allows revenge to materialize but can transform the passions into transmissible facts via their documentation in dance historical writings.

These examples of the impact of envy build a counterpart to the wished influence of enthusiastic writing scenes as mentioned in the “Avant-Propos”. Interestingly, in the context of the problematization of passions in the writing process, Cahusac applies a strategy of repetition and comparison, where he first presents the impact of passions in the writing process in an objective and emotionless manner followed by an affective presentation through, for instance, an allegory about a pen soaked in spite. This allows him to illustrate the competition between the ballet poets mentioned in the passage above. This coupling of a more rational and conceptual discourse with a figurative and emotional discourse builds the first type of an iterative poetics of writing facts in *La Danse Ancienne et Moderne ou Traite Historique de la Danse*. A second type can be seen in Cahusac’s re-writing of ancient dance philosophical texts.

### 3.2 Re-Writings of Lucian’s Dialogue *On Dance*

Like many other French tracts on dance aesthetics in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Cahusac’s treatise would appear to have been inspired to a considerable extent by Lucian of Samosata’s dialogue *On Dance* which was known in France from the translation by Nicolas Perrot d’Ablancourt of 1654.<sup>31</sup> Most probably Cahusac referred to Perrot’s translation as the following comparative reading will show. However, the interesting point is not a verbatim citation but the tiny modifications introduced by Cahusac which allow us to reconstruct the changes in dance aesthetics and dance practice between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. To stress the authority of the ancient philosopher, Cahusac dedicates to him a whole chapter entitled “Fragment de Lucien”. The often-

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be trampled at the feet of the multitude, whose admiration you would have sooner or later fixed, and which despises you.”

31 From the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, French theories on dance particularly refer to the 35<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> paragraphs of Lucian’s dialogue as can be seen for example in Claude-François Méneestrier’s *Des Ballets Anciens et Modernes selon les règles du Théâtre* (1682) or also in the third part of Jean-Baptiste Du Bos’s *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture* (1719/1733).

quoted passage in the context of 18<sup>th</sup> century dance theory highlights the cultural relevance of the art of dancing by exposing its complexity. In Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt's translation of the ancient dialogue the passage reads as follows:

Mais sur tout il [le pantomime ou danseur de Ballet] a besoin de memoire; car il faut que comme Calcas il sache le present, le passé, & l'avenir, & qu'il les ait tousjours prests en son esprit, pour les pouvoir représenter dans l'occasion. Mais il doit savoir particulièrement expliquer les conceptions de l'Ame, & découvrir ses sentimens par les gestes & le mouvement du corps. [...] Il faut donc qu'il sache tout ce qui s'est passé d'ilustre depuis le Cahos & la naissance du monde jusqu'à la Reine Cleopatre; car cette science embrasse toute cette étendue.<sup>32</sup>

Most interestingly, from at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards Lucian's dialogue is no longer received as a piece of literature in dance historiography but as a factual description of ancient dance practices. The written tradition is considered as trustworthy and serves as a fund of dance aesthetics and dance practical principles. But whereas Lucian stresses the many talents of the *dancer* and the ability of gestures to express any mythological or historical story and any passion or inner motion, Cahusac transfers these qualities to the *composer* of dance pieces and thus points to the processes of conceptualizing and writing about dance:

Il [le compositeur de ballet] a besoin de se faire de bonne heure une excellente mémoire. Tous les temps doivent toujours être présents à son esprit; mais il doit surtout étudier les différentes opérations de l'âme, pour pouvoir les peindre par les mouvements du corps. [...] "Il faut donc qu'il s'instruise de tout ce qui s'est fait de considérable depuis le développement du chaos et la naissance du Monde jusqu'à nos jours."<sup>33</sup>

32 Lucien 1664: 441–442. "But, above all, he [the mime or dancer of Ballet] needs a good memory; because, like Calchas, he must know the present, the past and the future, and have them ready in his mind to be able to represent them on the appropriate occasion. But he must know in particular how to explain the conceptions of the soul, and to reveal its feelings by gestures and by the movement of the body. [...] He must thus know all the endless sequence of things that happened from chaos and the primal origin of the world until the time of Queen Cleopatra; since this art extends through all of that time span."

33 Cahusac 2004: 100. "He [the composer of ballet] must begin to form an excellent memory early. All periods must be present in his mind at any time; but above all he must

Comparing the two quotes, Cahusac's style of quotation from Lucian's dialogue seems to be oriented to the *ars memoriae*, which is more committed to the reproduction of the message than to a verbatim citation. This quotation style was common in the context of lectures given to scholars of philosophy or dance, as can also be seen in the citation mode of the dance theorist Claude-François Ménéstrier. The sentence in quotation marks in particular points at the link between repetition and alteration, because the historical span of which a dancer or composer should know the most important events is described by Lucian "from the [...] primal origin of the world until the Queen Cleopatra" and by Cahusac this span reaches "until today."<sup>34</sup>

In 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century dance theory, the references to Antiquity serve as argument to foster the legitimacy of dance as an autonomous theatrical genre that no longer needs to be embedded in courtly spectacles or operas. The substitution of the *dancer* by the *composer* and the reformulation of the historical span to be remembered in dance composition, however, underlines not only the changed cultural dance practices, since it refers to the presence of the writer, it also reveals the unstable certainty of written facts, which can easily be transformed with a few words.

As such, the re-writing of the ancient text corresponds to a redistribution of qualities from the dancer to the composer of dance pieces which is an attestation of the changed position that ballet masters had assumed in society at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century with their role departing from that of experts in physical, anatomical and musical arts to that of a well-educated initiate, fully informed and literate in the many forms of writings, such as philosophy, history, literature but also aesthetics and dance notation.<sup>35</sup>

To summarize, the second type of Cahusac's iterative writing produces factual information through writing by the alteration of facts extracted from ancient and contemporary dance theories. This variation in citation can also be observed when dealing with copied fragments of his articles written for the *Encyclopédie* although the iteration takes on a different function there.

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study the different operations of the soul, so that he can paint them with the movements of the body [...] 'It is therefore necessary that he informs himself about all the endless sequence of things that have been done from the development of the chaos and the primal origin of the world until today.'

34 Cahusac's wording does neither correspond to Perrot d'Ablancourt's translation, nor to Ménéstrier's quotation of Lucian, who both mention the Queen Cleopatra as one end of the historical span to describe the faculty of memory of a dancer.

35 Cf. Huschka 2020: 126.

### 3.3 Transformative Self-Citation in Writing the Origins of Dance

Cahusac dedicates the fourth chapter of the first part of his *Historical Treatise on Dance* to the “Origine de la danse, définition qui en a été faite par les philosophes.”<sup>36</sup> In it, he re-writes an idea already published in his article on “Danse” in the *Encyclopédie* with the aim of making it appear more vivid. Like his contemporaries he contributes to a myth of the origin of dance that characterizes dance as a natural mode of expression of the inner movements of the soul via gestures, which is described in analogies to the functions of the human voice:

Le chant si naturel à l'homme, en se développant, a inspiré aux autres hommes qui en ont été frappés, des gestes relatifs aux différens sons dont ce chant étoit composé : le corps alors s'est agité, les bras se sont ouverts ou fermés, les piés ont formé des pas lents ou rapides, les traits du visage ont participé à ces mouvements divers, tout le corps a répondu par des positions, des ébranlemens, des attitudes aux sons dont l'oreille étoit affectée : ainsi le chant qui étoit l'expression d'un sentiment (*Voyez* CHANT) a fait développer une seconde expression qui étoit dans l'homme & qu'on a nommée *danse*.<sup>37</sup>

In this description of the origins of dance, Cahusac defines dance as dependent on music capable of expressing feelings through bodily movements, gestures and facial expression. Dance is thus conceived as a means of passionate and affective expression comparable to the spoken language in song. Concurrent with dance history as exposed by Jacques Bonnet in *Histoire générale de la Danse sacrée et profane* (1724), but also with language philosophy as, e.g., articulated by Condillac in *Sur la grammaire*, which draws back the origins of verbal language and its expressiveness to nonverbal gestures, the facticity of

36 “The origin of dance and its definition according to the philosophers.” (Cf. Cahusac 2004: 49–51)

37 Cahusac 1782a: 260. “When song, which is so natural to man, developed, it inspired other men who were moved by it some gestures in relation to the different sounds of which the song was composed: the body then became agitated, the arms opened or closed, the feet formed slow or quick steps, the features of the face participated in these various movements, the whole body responded by positions, shaking, attitudes to the sounds of which the ear was affected: thus, the song, which was the expression of a feeling (*See* SONG) made develop a second expression which was in man that we named dance.”

past cultural practices is due to the reliability of texts from past and contemporary writers, as Diderot mentioned.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, Cahusac's article on "Danse" in the *Encyclopédie* serves as an example to constitute the facticity of contemporary dance as a cultural practice that reaches back to the origins of mankind, withholding at that moment in the article that there are several differences between the dances of Antiquity and those of Modernity.

For the treatise *La Danse Ancienne et Moderne ou Traité Historique de la Danse* he re-works the passage of the article, from changing single words, to introducing whole new sentences and giving additional examples up to re-structuring the order of the sentences with the aim to render the idea of the origins of dance more intelligible:

Le corps fut paisible ou s'agita, les yeux s'enflammèrent ou s'éteignirent; le visage se colora ou pâlit; les bras s'ouvrirent ou se fermèrent, s'élevèrent vers le ciel ou retombèrent vers la terre; les pieds formèrent des pas lents ou rapides; tout le corps enfin répondit par des positions, des attitudes, des sauts, des ébranlements aux sons dont l'âme peignait ses mouvements. Ainsi le chant, qui est l'expression primitive du sentiment, en a fait développer une seconde qui était dans l'homme, et c'est cette expression qu'on a nommée danse. (emphasizing R.R.)<sup>39</sup>

In the remodeled quotation, Cahusac particularly emphasizes the importance of nonverbal facial expressions in dance. He thus goes so far as to change their position from the fourth to the second in the list of expressive parts mentioned for a dancer. Furthermore, he specifies the facial movements by describing the expressiveness of the eyes, which can be 'sparkling' or 'extinguished' and by indicating the changing colors of the skin from blush to paleness. This modified description in the historical part of the treatise prepares his characterization of *danse en action*, since it underlines the diverse levels of expression in dance and thus the theatrical meaning of dance that is closely

38 Cf. Condillac 1970: 354; cf. Diderot 1781: 786–787.

39 Cahusac 2004: 50. "The body was calm or agitated, the eyes sparkled or extinguished; the face colored or paled; the arms opened or closed, rose to the sky or fell back to the earth; the feet formed slow or quick steps; the whole body finally responded with positions, attitudes, leaps, shakes to the sounds of which the soul painted its movements. Thus song, which is the primitive expression of feeling, developed a second form which was in man, and this is the expression which was named dance."

related to the expression of inner movement transported by the eyes.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the movement directions of the arms as given in the revised version that also include arm raising and bending, can also be read as an allusion to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century theatrical dance practice. In the time of Cahusac, theatrical dance was no longer performed in the center of a ballroom and watched from the galleries as in a 17<sup>th</sup> century spectacle of the *Ballet de Cour* but was performed on a proscenium stage which offered new perspectives to the public and where the vertical direction of movement offered new aesthetic possibilities for the composers.<sup>41</sup>

With regard to the poetics of writing facts in *La Danse Ancienne et Moderne ou Traité Historique de la Danse*, this third type builds a separate class. Although it shares with the second type of iterative writing the modification of written facts to bring into line traditional writings and contemporary experience, the second type refers to the re-writing of works by other authors, whereas the above mentioned third type refers to a polished self-citation.

#### 4. Conclusion

'Writing Facts' in Louis de Cahusac's *La Danse Ancienne et Moderne ou Traité Historique de la Danse* unfolds the complexity of factualization concerning natural phenomena and human actions. This is made possible through writing as cultural practice and simultaneously by writing a historically informed treatise on dance. Scrutinizing this relation, iteration – as discussed in cultural studies – is distinguishable as one of the general characteristics not only of cultural practices such as dancing or writing but also as a characteristic element in Louis de Cahusac's poetics of dance history. Whereas the re-writing of the articles he contributed to the *Encyclopédie* for the treatise aim at a clearer communication of the origin of dance preparing the description of the aesthetic innovation of the *danse en action*, the iteration of Lucian's thoughts about

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40 Whereas iteration allows a description for the writing of the historical part of the treatise, Cahusac's presentation of the aesthetics of *danse en action* mime contemporary experimental and dialectical methods as the titles of the corresponding chapters announce: "V. Préjugés contre la Danse en action", "VI. Preuves de la possibilité de la Danse en action" and "VII. Supériorité et avantages de la Danse en action." "V. Prejudices against the *danse en action*, VI. Proves of the possibility of the *danse en action* and VII. Superiority and advantages of the *danse en action*." (Ibid.: 227–232)

41 Cf. Schoenfeldt 1997: 77–78.

dancers and their re-contextualization under the sign of the composer permits insight into changed dance practices of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The attribution of the mentioned qualities to the composer witnesses the importance of historical and aesthetic texts on dance written by composers since they indicate not only the erudition and the becoming an author of ballet masters but also allude to writing as a proper means in their struggle against being ignored in cultural history and the history of arts. Furthermore, the dance theorist reflects on the relations between ‘writing’ and ‘fact’ under the condition of emotional states of mind. He permits an enthusiastic state only in the sense of a masterpiece of reason to determine the direction of the writing scene, but rejects other passions like anger and envy. At the same time, Cahusac not only speaks about the enthusiastic writing but also shows it to the reader by referring with it to the guiding discourses in 18<sup>th</sup> century dance theory like empiricism and sensualism. Directed by an aspiration to reveal the ‘truth’ about dance and to be of some ‘advantage’ for future readers as mentioned in the “Avant-Propos”, the treatise reveals the mutual influence between writing and facts together with the role of iteration for both.

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