**Re-defining the ‘Contact Zone’: Translation, Transformation and the Space In-Between**

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**Abstract**

This article explores the space ‘in-between’ in intercultural arts practice. Drawing on my engagement as an academic participant in the ArtsCross/Danscross project, I unpack Mary Louise Pratt’s term ‘contact zone’. Pratt defined contact zones as ‘social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other’ (Pratt 1991: 4) and in exploring the processes that took place at Beijing Dance Academy and The Place, London in 2012 and 2013, both in the rehearsal studio and in the seminar room, I re-define the idea of the ‘contact zone’. Drawing on theories of translation and pragmatist philosophy as well as ideas from performer training and Chinese aesthetics and etymology, I move towards a more nuanced understanding of the ‘in-between’ as a productive space both for the creation of new artistic works and as a strategy for intercultural working practices.

**Keywords**

performance

choreography

translation

contact zone

intercultural

in-between

situation

**Figure 1:** Chinese character for ‘in-between’.

The Chinese character for ‘in-between’ (see Figure 1) shows two leaves of a gate with the moon appearing behind.[[1]](#endnote-1) Although the gate is closed, the brightness of the moon can be perceived through ‘a median space between the leaves of the gate that allows the moon's rays to pass through’ (Jullien 2009: 940). This article explores the space ‘in-between’ in intercultural arts practice. The character above, which of course is never fully translatable, both proposes and exemplifies such a moment of ‘in-betweeness’, as I will go on to explain. I use as my theoretical point of departure the idea of the ‘contact zone’; a term coined by Mary Louise Pratt in the 1990s, who defined ‘contact zones’ as ‘social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other’ (Pratt 1991: 3). This notion of a ‘contact zone’ is still widely deployed within research on intercultural practice across a range of disciplines, but has also been critiqued, as I will discuss.

I draw on my own engagement as an academic participant in the ArtsCross/Danscross project between 2012 and 2014 in order to unpack and re-define the ‘contact zone’. Arts Cross is a long-term project working between universities and arts institutions in China, Taiwan and the United Kingdom exploring intercultural working practices in the creation of new performance works.[[2]](#endnote-2) In 2012 and 2013, nine choreographers and 30 dancers worked together for three week periods to create short performance pieces (ten minutes each) around a specific theme (Beijing Dance Academy, 2012: *Light and Water* and The Place, London, 2013: *Leaving Home: Being Elsewhere*). Academics were invited to observe these processes and reflect in seminars and conferences and on the ArtsCross/Danscross blog alongside the artistic work.

I argue through this article, that the ArtsCross/Danscross project itself operated as a space ‘in-between’, and the artistic processes that took place under the aegis of ArtsCross/Danscross also created multiple such spaces. The article draws on three artistic processes from ArtsCross/Danscross 2012 and 2013 as mini case studies to unpack the idea of the ‘contact zone’. I draw on theories of translation and pragmatist philosophy as well as ideas from performer training and Chinese aesthetics and etymology to work towards a more nuanced understanding of the ‘in-between’ as a productive space both for the creation of new artistic works and as a strategy for intercultural working practices.

**Contact zone/translation zone**

The origins of Pratt’s ‘contact zone’ lies in the linguistic term ‘contact language’. This refers to communication approaches developed by groups of speakers who do not share the same language (also known as ‘pidgin’), commonly used in trade and commerce contexts (Pratt 2007: 8). Pratt’s use of the term has been deployed to tell the stories of ‘imperial encounters’ in histories of travel, in conditions ‘usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict’ (Pratt 2007: 8). However, she places emphasis in her framing of ‘contact’ on ‘how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other’:

[Contact] treats the relations among colonziers and colonized, or travelers and ‘travelees,’ not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. (Pratt 2007: 8)

The ‘contact zone’ has been employed across disciplines since Pratt’s definition in 1991 as both a metaphor for, and a paradigm of, knowledge in intercultural research.[[3]](#endnote-3) It has also been used by participants during the ArtsCross/Danscross project itself (see Johansson 2012; Chen Ya-Ping 2013; Loukes 2013b). The metaphor of the ‘contact zone’ has been widely adopted in intercultural research because it disrupts and problematizes existing linear, western dominated theories predicated on Patrice Pavis’ ‘hourglass’ model of exchange. This framework articulated an intercultural working practice based on the binary relationship between ‘source’ and ‘target’ ‘cultures’, which has been notably critiqued by Bharucha (1993, 2006) and Lo and Gilbert (2002) for its dominant Eurocentric and semiotic perspective. As Chinese theatre scholar Min Tian puts it, in relation to Pavis’ ‘hourglass’ model: ‘Such a discourse tends to valorize the target (western) culture’s appropriation of its source cultures because it fails to look at intercultural theatre necessarily as an *inter* or *mutual* negotiation and displacement of different theatrical forces’ (Tian 2008: 4).[[4]](#endnote-4)

Likewise, contemporary theories of translation refute the simplistic view that translation ‘involves a simple process of linguistic transfer, whereby whatever is written in one language (known as the source… can be transferred unproblematically into another language (known as the target)’ (Bassnett 2014: 2). Epitomized by Homi Bhaba’s landmark proposition in 1994 that cultural meaning is created in the ‘Third Space’, ‘the “inter” – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space’ (1994: 38−39), theories of translation have attempted to describe and account for the complexity of the construction of meaning in the space *between* languages in a globalized, postcolonial, transcultural context.[[5]](#endnote-5) Comparative Literature scholars, therefore, have drawn on Pratt’s ‘contact zone’ to articulate ‘a space of encounter between peoples in which discursive transformations occur as different groups endeavour to represent themselves to one another’ (Bassnett 2014: 57). Emily Apter names this ‘the translation zone’ which:

Defines the epistemological interstices of politics, poetics, logic, cybernetics, linguistics, genetics, media and environment: its locomotion characterizes both psychic transference and the technology of information transfer. (2006: 6)

Crucially for this article, Apter’s idea of the ‘translation zone’ goes beyond only the framework of language. [[6]](#endnote-6) Dance, of course, offers us a ready and useful model for exploring and re-defining linguistic concepts through examining moments of corporeal encounter and representation. I am interested in translation *beyond* words; the translation of ideas, training, movement, acknowledging as Apter provocatively puts it; ‘Nothing is translatable… Everything is translatable’. (2006: xi−xii).

**Into the ‘Zone’…**

The first example I want to examine is Rachel Lopez de la Nieta’s piece *Beijing Bucket Blues* created in Beijing in 2012 and reprised for the ArtsCross/Danscross Fifth Anniversary event in 2014. In this rehearsal process, I observed the ‘in-between’ created through the interaction of choreographer and her translator construct a further productive working space for the dancers. Lopez de la Nieta is a choreographer based in London who trained in contemporary dance but cites a wide range of influences in her practice.[[7]](#endnote-7) She was working with four dancers – two from BDA and two from Taipei. Dancers and choreographer did not share the same language so Lopez de la Nieta communicated with them directly through the translator/interpreter. [[8]](#endnote-8) Lopez de la Nieta’s working process with *Beijing Bucket Blues* drew from improvisational and task based structures that are a familiar part of theatrical and choreographic pedagogy in the United Kingdom but with which the BDA and Taipei based dancers were less familiar.

**Figure 2:** *Beijing Bucket Blues* in rehearsal. Photo: Nigel Boardman.

The starting point for Lopez de la Nieta’s piece was giving the dancers empty buckets and asking them to begin to play with them (Figure 2). They spent early rehearsals improvising with the buckets and through the process, Lopez de la Nieta selected moments from these improvisations to repeat develop and eventually ‘set’. I began to observe Lopez de la Nieta’s rehearsal process towards the end; in the last week of a three week period. The following excerpt is Lopez de la Nieta speaking to her translator about one of the dancers:

The other day when we were doing some practice in here she was referencing some things that came up from her childhood that were really beautiful... Don’t say that... she was referencing some stuff from her childhood and maybe she could just go through the memory of that... the light... light and seeing...just have a think about what that was... (Lopez de la Nieta 2012, in rehearsal)

In this moment in rehearsal, Lopez de la Nieta tells the translator what to say to the dancers, which could be described as the simplistic source/target approach, but rather than being simple instructions for movement, Lopez de la Nieta is employing the translator in a different way. First, she is using the translation process as a *part* of her thinking. She seems to be summarizing the idea for herself, but speaking it aloud. So she says to the translator: ‘The other day when we were doing some practice in here she was referencing some things that came up from her childhood that were really beautiful’. But then Lopez de la Nieta tells the translator not to ‘say that’ directly to the dancer. She does not want to reveal everything. Lopez de la Nieta, in this moment, is withholding direct instructions in order to open up a space of possible interpretation for the dancers, rather than close this down and tell them what to do. This is seen at other moments in Lopez de la Nieta’s rehearsals too: ‘I really liked what he did before when he sat on the bucket... don’t try to make it beautiful – just sit in the bucket... I’m saying too much...’ (Lopez de la Nieta 2012, in rehearsal, Beijing).

The material is not predetermined by Lopez de la Nieta, on the contrary. Rather, she is creating a space in which the dancers have the possibility of ‘translating’ her starting point into movement but it is movement generated through improvisation around a memory; drawing on relationships to the past, technique and training, both cultural and personal.

*Beijing Bucket Blues* itself, the rehearsal process, and specific moments within this process (including the moments of deciding what and what not to verbally translate) can be understood as interlinking sets of ‘contact/translation zones’. The dancers and choreographer are playing between the known and the unknown in a mutually agreed space that is sometimes confusing and difficult as everyone tries to respond to each other on multiple levels, but it is still, I argue, ‘an enabling… space where cultural difference and their imaginative possibilities can be explored’ (Bassnett 2000: 57). Although the choreographer shapes the aesthetic of the final piece, both Lopez de la Nieta and the dancers are co-creating the world of the performance together in a continual process of negotiation, development and agreement. Emily Apter writes of the way that learning another language makes one see one’s own position in the world anew:

Cast as an act of love, and as an act of disruption, translation becomes a means of repositioning the subject in the world and in history; a means of rendering self knowledge foreign to itself; a way of denaturalizing citizens, taking them out of the comfort zone of national space, daily ritual and pre-given domestic arrangements. (Apter 2006: 6)

This could aptly describe the way that dancers and choreographers were relating to each other. They were working between what was previously known on either side, both in terms of language and their own strategies for making work, in a new space that both ‘disrupted’ and ‘repositioned’ existing professional identities and knowledges. In creating their own ‘contact language’, they also created ‘new’ work together.

**Redefining the ‘zone’: What is in-between?**

One of the critiques of Pratt’s term ‘contact zone’ has focused its perceived ‘neutrality’. Jan Cooper takes issue with the militaristic connotations of both the idea of ‘contact’ and ‘zone’ (i.e., one has contact with the enemy in the combat/militarized zone) which, he believes, imbue the term with ‘static, ongoing characteristics oblivious to its human interactions’ (2004: 25). While I actually think that this is a misinterpretation of Pratt’s original idea, which does seem to be far from ‘static’ or ‘neutral’, by drilling further into the idea of ‘in-between’ in the ArtsCross/Danscross experiment we can usefully put flesh on its metaphorical bones.

Playing ‘in-between’ was both at the heart of the intention of *Infinite Connections*, created for the London 2013 edition of ArtsCross/Danscross by Beijing based choreographer Zhao Liang and illustrated in the movement material of the piece itself. *Infinite Connections* was created by six dancers who moved around, between, through and against a giant piece of elastic (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** *Infinite Connections by Zhao Liang*. Photo: Andrew Lang.

As with Lopez de la Nieta’s piece, there is no work that exists outside of a collaboration between dancers and choreographer. Here, on the first day of rehearsal Zhao Liang spoke to the dancers about how he wanted the piece to be about six people on a journey, between life and death, but trapped in space. He presented them with a long piece of white elastic which they tied between two barres in the studio and then began to play and experiment with moving in, with and against the elastic. Out of this play developed more structured tasks which were eventually worked through and ‘set’ to become the final score.

What was immediately clear, was that for the dancers, working with the elastic gave them a concrete task; a problem to solve that went beyond any interpretation of movement language/instruction from the choreographer. There are multiple possibilities for transformation of the elastic and multiple entry points to the inter-connected web it created. The dancers are quite literally creating their performance world.

The atmosphere in the studio, in many of the rehearsals that I observed, was one of playful problem solving − the dancers very much taking group ownership and responsibility for the group task. But sometimes there were also frustrations. There were the inevitable times when a problem/tangle in the elastic seemed insurmountable. The final sequence in the piece involved each dancer making their way through the elastic in a complex combination of encounters and ended with a final dancer in the middle of spider’s web network of elastic which the audience see him attempt to escape. In rehearsal, time and again the group would get part way, or almost all the way through this sequence only for one dancer to become tangled and stuck and the sequence had to stop. At one point, Zhou asked the dancers if they found the process difficult. One replied that they had to work together as a group and he agreed, saying that it was difficult to combine everyone's different techniques, approaches and rhythms.

The elastic band provides a very concrete metaphor − a puzzle to solve together, but also it gives the dancers nowhere to hide. They are confronted clearly by differences in their training and have to resolve these together or the piece 'fails'. There is no faking anything. Here, it seems that the translation process is concretely happening on many levels and in many directions. More than any other process I observed, the ownership of the material was necessarily handed to the dancers. There were several times, for instance, when one of the dancers said to the choreographer something like; ‘Just a moment – we need to work this out’ and Zhou Liang would wait while the dancers worked through the problem together.

This idea is reflected in the etymology of the Chinese character for ‘in-between’ (see Figure 1) cited at the beginning of the article. This space between the leaves of the gate, argues Francois Jullien in his theoretical mediation on premodern Chinese landscape painting, has a particular quality where ‘presence is diluted and permeated by absence... [the artist] paints between “there is” and “there is not”’ (Jullien 2009: 2):

It does not strictly separate, as if it were an expression of distance, nor does it mediate exactly, as if expressed in a relationship. The *between*… remains available… and indefinitely open… That 'between' is thus not the 'between things... The 'between' is that by which the thing breathes, gains its freedom, is irrigated, and allows itself to be permeated. (Jullien 2009: 94−95)

This definition of ‘between’ is not to simplify, flatten or reify the space – it does not automatically *assume* a ‘relationship’ but it does theorize a place of *possible* relationship. I think that this way of approaching the ‘zone’ offers intercultural researchers strategies in which nothing is assumed or fixed. It does not start from conflict, nor of relationship, but rather emphasizes movement, a space on the brink of transformation or becoming.

**Making sense of each other: ‘Contact’ in the ‘Zone’…**

The other criticisms levelled at Pratt’s framework have focused on its vagueness. As Cooper states; ‘It is unclear exactly what qualifies as *contact* in a contact zone’ (2004: 27). Schorch writes of the need to humanize the ‘contact zone' (2013: 68) and Manathunga calls for developing ‘sensitivity’ (2009: 165). How, then, can we *make sense* of each other in this context? In dance and performance, of course, the connotation of ‘contact’ is very different to that of a linguistic imbuement of military combat. By starting with Contact Improvisation, for example, we are already moving towards a way of working that is dependent on relating rather than assuming conflict. Also, in the ‘zone’ of performance making there is already shared agreement that dancers and choreographers work together to create the finished piece; but how these processes operate differs in extreme ways dependent on the people involved and the kinds of agreements that are made within the process. I argue that in order to *make sense* of each other it is not enough that one simply puts oneself in the zone; a certain attitude is necessary that can be articulated by exploring further the idea of ‘contact’ within the contact zone.

London based choreographer, Vera Tussing described her piece for the 2013 edition of ArtsCross/Danscross *Moving Relations: Research* as ‘encounters between each other’ and ‘encounters between each other’s weight’. In one rehearsal I observed, Tussing was working with two dancers on a sequence where one dancer was attempting to take the weight of another dancer and they were not quite finding it. Tussing said, ‘I want you to try how it feels to go too far so you can feel it... you’re quite tentative with the material at the moment. Let’s really do it’ (Figure 4). For the choreography to work the dancers, in that moment, needed to fully commit, to surrender and really meet each other’s weight. If they were unable to do that for whatever reason (fear, hesitation, shyness) the choreography would fail – the dancers would fall over. Tussing clarified for the dancers that in order to do this they had to feel both their *own* weight and the weight of the other person

**Figure 4:** *Moving Relations* by Vera Tussing in rehearsal. Photo: Andrew Lang.

This understanding of contact as both essential and dependent on a sensitivity to self and other is articulated by German dancer and dance teacher Gertrud Falke-Heller in the 1930s:

Awareness and contact are fundamentally dependent upon each other; there is no real contact without conscious awareness and no awareness without contact. Contact is established when awareness of some sensation touches our conscious self and this self gives its answer with an acknowledging and responding reaction. (Falke-Heller in Loukes 2010: 110)[[9]](#endnote-9)

This quality of contact is necessary for the dancers because if they cannot meet the other performers in the ways articulated by the choreographers, as noted above, the pieces ‘fail’. But it is also necessary throughout each strand of ‘contact’ within ArtsCross/Danscross. It needs to be applied to the way I watch practice, interact with others, listen and let what I learn affect understanding of my own work; in seminars, conferences and other activity around the central artistic processes.

This notion of ‘contact’ can help us re-define the ‘contact zone’ in several ways. Firstly, ‘contact’ does not just mean being there; it is dependent on a certain quality of *attention* that is crucial. Second, it is always in movement; never fixed, static or ‘neutral’. And finally, this understanding of ‘contact’ is inseparable from its context/environment. Like Jullien’s space ‘that breathes’, this is not a ‘zone’ that is somehow ‘other’ to the participants who have agreed to enter it. Rather, I prefer to view it as what pragmatist philosopher John Dewey called in 1938, the ‘situation’:

[T]he primary locus of human experience is not atomistic sense impressions, but rather what [Dewey] called a ‘situation’. By this he meant not just our physical setting, but the whole complex of physical, biological, social and cultural conditions that constitute any given experience – experience taken in its fullest, deepest, richest broadest sense’. (Johnson 2007: 72)[[10]](#endnote-10)

In this ‘situation’ it is impossible to discriminate individual elements without relating them to the whole. Johnson uses the example of seeing an oak tree viewed from his office window. In the moment of viewing, he writes, ‘there is only the situation… an experience with a pervasive unifying quality that is at once visual, auditory, tactile, social and cultural’ (Johnson 2007: 72). Like the web of elastic in *Infinite Connections*, the world of the performance is created in an ever changing ‘situation’. The ‘situation’ exists both on the level of the interaction between two dancers and in the ever-changing network of shared understanding and misunderstanding within the ArtsCross/Danscross seminars. As Falke Heller wrote:

[T]here can of course be no contact preserved in stone, as we are inclined to imagine. Environment and people change their form of existence, everything moves and alters. That which we comprehend today, with which we have contact, we might easily misunderstand tomorrow if we rely on our ‘unchanged’ contact. (Falke Heller 1939 in Loukes 2010: 110)

In this way of thinking about ‘contact zone’, there are no two different things known as ‘contact’ and zone’ – there is only the ‘situation’ which we have agreed to place ourselves in.

**Translation/transformation/transfusion in the ArtsCross/Danscross ‘Zones’**

During ArtsCross/Danscross 2012 in Beijing I posed the question on the ArtsCross/Danscross blog, ‘What is translation? An idea, a movement, a memory, an intention, a particular embodiment of culture, of training?..What is being translated, how and by whom?’ A lively debate followed and Ola Johanssen responded with the following warning:

A choreographer from one culture can create a masterful piece of dance with highly skilled dancers from another culture without there being a reciprocal understanding or agreement about things like aesthetic concepts, movement phrases, personal concerns or purposes, cultures or artistic training methods. I think we are all carrying a quite heavy post-colonial luggage about that. (Johansson 2012: n.p.)

Performance practitioners have fallen into the trap of using their own frame of reference under the aegis of ‘intercultural exchange, as illustrated by Tian’s critique of theatre director Peter Brook’s; ‘Western humanistic view of culture, ideology, politics as well as theatre, which is by no means universal’ (Tian 2008). We need to be aware of this at all times. Postcolonial theories of translation have termed translation as; ‘blood transfusion, as an act of patricide, as reinvention, as disremembering, as vampirism, as transcreation’ (Bassnett 2014: 54). The perspective one takes depends on the agreements that have been made and need to be constantly re-made. This article has emphasized the elements of relationship, collaboration and connectedness but I want to make clear that this is not an attempt to flatten, simplify or envisage a utopia, but rather to explore strategies for intercultural working practices. As Schorch points out, ‘contact zones’ should not be misunderstood as some artificial ‘cosmopolitan essence’ or ‘universal value’ (2013: 78). It is where the agreement comes in, or ‘a common framework in which the “inescapable hermeneutic complexity in moral and political affairs” (Held 2008) can be contested’ (Schorch 2013: 78).

In the seventeenth century, Chinese scientists used the process of translating western scientific texts to create new knowledge. As the scientists worked to translate the books, they performed their own experiments, which both drew from and created new knowledges. The translation process, here was ‘a catalyst, leading to new discoveries’ (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 106). Within the multiple ‘zones’ of interaction in ArtsCross/Danscross, syncretic creation processes took place that went beyond a single art-form and any single viewpoint. As we know, the notion of syncretism goes beyond ‘fusing’ different ideas or creating ‘hybrids’. Rather it is about creating something new. As Balme writes, ‘[T]heatrical Syncreticism proceeds from a perspective predicated on the bridging of cultural dichotomies, liberated from aesthetics and normative rules, performance traditions are viewed as cultural raw material from which *new* works can emerge (1999: 272, emphasis added). Taiwanese cultural historian Chen Kuan-hsin has conceptualized the idea of ‘critical syncretism’ as an ‘alternative strategy of identification’ in order to move towards a process of ‘deimperialization’ and ‘decolonization’ in East Asia. He writes that ‘syncretism not only emphasizes the process of mixing but also produces a much more active and reflexive consciousness’ (Chen 2010: 98). Crucially, this is not a model of working based on source/target cultures, as noted earlier as one of the critiques of western intercultural theatre practices. The ArtsCross/Danscross dancers, choreographers and academics were all working in multiple ‘zones’ translating their ideas to each other both to create new works but also new conceptualizations of professional identities and knoweldges. BDA dancer, Zhao Zhibo has been involved in Arts Cross since 2009 and feels that it has fundamentally changed the ways she has understood her practice. She relished the opportunity to improvise with London and Taipei based choreographers and has begun to develop her own teaching at the Beijing Dance Academy integrating improvisational techniques. Likewise, dancer Azzurra Ardovini from London has also re-considered her own work during her past two years involvement in the project. She reflected that some of the qualities of the Beijing dancers’ approaches have influenced the ways she moves and thinks about her movement, particularly in terms of the virtuosic execution of techniques. The works created at ArtsCross/Danscross have also had further lives beyond the project.

**Conclusion**

The Chinese character for human ‘world’ implies both the notion of two people giving each other their weight, but also holds within it the play of the space ‘in between’ (see also Figure 5).[[11]](#endnote-11) It is both a paradox and a play of images that cannot be ‘translated’.

**Figure 5:** Chinese character for human being/world.

Re-defining the ‘contact zone’ goes beyond linguistic transfer and semiotics and beyond a binary notion of source and target. This article has proposed a way of considering the ‘zone’ or space ‘between’ in intercultural arts practice, alternative to ‘essentialized’, ‘universal’ approaches. I have suggested that such an approach depends on developing real ‘contact’ between people in a shared space or ‘situation’ where participants have agreed to place themselves. It depends on working in between the micro and the macro scale, between traditions, between languages, between training lineages, between the past and the present, between histories and possible futures. ArtsCross/Danscross participants have both co-created new ‘syncretic’ material and teased out meaning in the spaces in between our knowledges. Yi Jing, a Chinese Tang Dynasty translator, defines translation as ‘exchange’ but clarifies that in this process;

One takes what one has… and uses it in such a way as to enable something … to germinate, grow, bear fruit and *‘become’ something else*, something that is different yet still bears important and essential similarities to its source. (Cheung 2006: 175, emphasis added)

Also, in a global context where we are arguably translating ourselves and each other all the time, translation is both personal and political and, as Bassnett argues,needs to be seen as the primary tool in a twenty first century vision… that seeks to encompass multiple forms of communication with the objective of avoiding catastrophic conflicts arising from a failure to read the signs of other cultures’ (Bassnett 2014: 58).

The origin of the word translation comes from the Latin *translatus*, the past participle of the verb *transferre*, meaning to bring or carry across. In the process of bringing or carrying across, something changes, as illustrated by the examples I have discussed. Ultimately, ‘zone’, ‘contact’, ‘in-between’ and ‘situation’ are only words, which can never be fully grasped; they are always in flight, in movement and on the point of transformation. Or as scholar Zhuangzi puts it:

The hare trap is for catching hares; once you have got the hare, the trap is forgotten. Words are for catching ideas; once you have got the idea, the words are forgotten. How I wish I could find someone who can forget the words, so I might have a word with him…. (Attributed to Zhuangzi 369–286 bce, in Cheung 2006: 40)

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Notes

1. The figure shows the ancient version of the character. In contemporary Chinese (both traditional and simplified) the moon in the character has been replaced by the sun. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. ‘ArtsCross/Danscross is a long-term initiative that brings together academics and artists across cultural, national and artistic borders. It has been designed to enhance the prospects of stronger, more productive debate between East and West at a strategically critical moment. It seeks to harness the transformative power of the arts and art-making, to further intercultural dialogue and understanding, and to develop professional, personal and institutional exchange. For further information on ArtsCross/Danscross see <http://www.rescen.net/artscross>, accesssed 4 May 2016. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. James Clifford stated: ‘Cultural action, the making and remaking of identities, takes place in contact zones, along the policed and transgressive intercultural frontiers of nations, peoples, locales’ (1997: 7). Schorch uses the ‘contact zone’ in a museological context to explore the experience of museum visitors (2013: 68). Catherine Manathunga employs ‘contact zone’ to ‘rethink the kinds of knowledge, attributes and ways of being’ needed to undertake intercultural research (2009: 165). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Useful summaries of this debate can be found in Knowles (2010), Mitra (2015), Tian (2008) and Zarrilli (2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Bassnett (2014) offers a useful introduction to the field. Also see key works on translation by Benjamin ([1923] 1992), Derrida (1981) and Paz ([1971] 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Recent studies look at translation and adaptation of theatre texts (Baines 2011; Rae 2011; Krebs 2014). Though there are crossovers in terms of theoretical concerns, this article instead focuses on translation of languages, ideas and movement within dance and performance practices. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Rachel Lopez de la Nieta is co-founder of Dog Kennel Hill Project who describe themselves as ‘a collectively run company of artists producing performance work that takes on many forms… We see our work not just as making single products but as a series of relationships, negotiations and experiments’, <http://www.dogkennelhillproject.org/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Note: I am acknowledging at the outset that there is a distinction, of course, between ‘interpreters’ and ‘translators’. Interpreters work in verbal exchange, usually moment-to-moment and translators work with written texts. But it is worth noting that, ‘[S]ince the sharp distinction that once existed between speech and language writing has become steadily more blurred during the last half century or so, the traditional distinction between translation and interpreting is also far less clear’ (Bassnett 2014: 127). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Gertrud Falke-Heller (1891−1984) taught at the Jooss-Leeder School of Dance in Dartington Hall, UK in the late 1930s and shared with her students the body awareness practice of Elsa Gindler (1885−1961). Defined as a ‘radically simple way of working with experience’ (Johnson 1995: 3), the training attempted to focus students on paying attention – to their own corporeal experience and that of their partners.

 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Dewey’s work has been used in a recent turn in Cognitive Studies towards a new perspective called Situated Cognition. See Loukes (2013a) for a more extended discussed of Situation Cognition and performance. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. In Chinese, this character is translated as human world, space or zone. In Japanese it means human being. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)