



Routledge Advances in Theatre & Performance Studies

MOVING RELATION
TOUCH IN CONTEMPORARY DANCE

Gerko Egert



Moving Relation

Moving Relation explores the notion of touch in the realm of contemporary dance.

By closely analyzing performances by well-known European and American choreographers such as Meg Stuart, William Forsythe, Xavier Le Roy, Jared Gradinger and Angela Schubot, this book investigates their usage of touch on the level of movement, experience and affect. Building on the proposition that touch is more than the moment of bodily contact, the author demonstrates the concept of touch as an interplay of movements and multiple relations of proximity. Egert employs both depth, using close descriptions and analyses of dance performances with theoretical investigations of touch, with breadth, working across the fields of performance and dance studies, philosophy and cultural theory.

Suitable for scholars and practitioners in the fields of dance and performance studies, *Moving Relation* uses a process-oriented notion of touch to reevaluate key concepts such as the body, rhythm, emotional expression, subjectivity and audience perception.

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Moving Relation

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Moving Relation

Touch in Contemporary Dance

Gerko Egert

Translated by Rett Rossi

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We can and we may, as it were, jump with both feet off the ground into or towards a world of which we trust the other parts to meet our jump – and only so can the making of a perfected world of the pluralistic pattern ever take place. Only through our precursive trust in it can it come into being.

—William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, p. 230



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Introduction

The two dancers, Angela Schubot and Jared Gradinger, stand face-to-face just a few centimeters apart. Slowly their bodies twist, turning to the left, to the right, stretching upwards, drawing inwards. Their arms, heads and torsos draw back, bend forward, draw close, yet never collide. At first, when Schubot lifts her arm, the hand, balled in a fist, seems ready to strike. But as the strike unfolds in slow motion against Gradinger's chest, the gradualness changes the touch, opening the gesture to other possibilities. Other intensities manifest and new dynamics emerge: Now the hand almost tenderly strokes the neck, the shoulders, the chest, until it withdraws.

One touch follows another, they overlap, overtake, cross over. The twisting bodies become a struggle, a fight, an embrace – a couple dancing, but no one leads and no one follows. Their hands splayed, the dancers grab each other's face, a touch that has an intensity as unsettling as it is ambiguous. Is it an attempt to push each other away or to pull each other close? Is the hand lying gently on the face, or is it trying to crush it?

Angela Schubot and Jared Gradinger's *is maybe* (2011) is full of touch. However, none of the touches can be clearly determined: *maybe* one is a hit or *maybe* a tender caress, but usually both, simultaneously loving and violent and beyond that, always more-than. These touches do not express inner feelings; they do not communicate something. Rather, they create an affective relational dynamic, a relational intensity which cannot be broken down into a single meaning. Not only intimacy and immediacy arise: The hand in the face or the fist on the chest also mark distances and differences. Touch configures these relations and disparities. When the slowness of the arm's movement conjures hitting, it occurs in the dynamic of the movement. In approaching, in striking or stroking, but also in withdrawing, relations arise and touch transpires as a configuration of movements. In its intensity – the slowness, the tenderness – and the interplay between a number of movements, touch points beyond the mere moment of skin contact. In the rhythm of the twisting and stretching, of the bending and turning, new touches occur and although they are not found outside these movements, they do exceed them. As a singular event, touch inflects the movements and transforms them irreversibly.

2 Introduction

The multitude of touch's movements, sensations and affects makes the dancers' unity and bodies precarious. At the same time, they question the relationality and processuality of contemporary dance: Which configurations of bodies arise when we begin our thinking not with the given bodies of the dancers, but with these touches and their interplay of movements? Here, touches and relations are speculative processes of movement, sensations and matter. These body processes are not inevitably human, nor do they originate in given entities; they are diverse processes of differentiation: relational bodies, processual bodies, more than human bodies (Manning 2013, 89). The practices of touch are also manifold. They populate choreographies and performances specifically where they exceed their most obvious figuration – two humans touching: in the countless minor touches that inhabit each solo, in each stage set as well as in the moments of supposed stillness.

In their interplay, these concepts of touch, as affective relation, as relation and difference, as movement and event, open at least three intertwined lines. *Multiplicity*: Touch is neither linear nor uniform; it cannot be reduced to one movement, one relation or one sensation. Rather, it forms an assemblage of manifold relations, differences and events (Chapters 1 and 2). *Autonomy*: Touch is not performed by one or two already existing bodies. As an immanent relation, it flows through them like a wave. Only when touch is autonomous can it be released from the idea of individually performed actions (Chapters 3 and 4). *Productivity*: Touch is not a meeting of pre-existing bodies. Touch does not reflect their boundaries and individual entities. It produces bodies and differences. Touch opens processual and relational assemblages of bodies which cannot be dissolved either in the unity of the human figure or in an undifferentiated mass (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). The dancers' bodies are bodies in differential becoming – both human and non-human (Chapters 5 and 6). These lines of touch – multiplicity, autonomy and productivity – simultaneously traverse fields of movement and sensation (Chapters 3 and 7). Touch can also not be reduced to the tactile realm. It courses through all senses as amodal relation. Haptic and visual, seeing and touch, fold into one another creating an assemblage that moves through both the dancers and the audience (Chapter 7).

These lines not only tie together manifold concepts and terms but also link these with the multiplicity of touch and movement in contemporary dance. Movements of thought overlap and intersect with the dancing touches (Gil 2002, 124). These knots of philosophical and dancing movements open a field in which touch's multifarious movements of thought intensify.

Just as Gilles Deleuze (2004a, 57) describes the task of a painter as rendering invisible forces visible through painting, choreographers and dancers bring to light the forces of dance: forces of movement (speeds, directions, rhythms), of sensation (intensity, lightness, dynamics), of touch (rawness, heaviness, tenderness), of relationships and of differentiation. All these are choreographed and can be experienced in the performance. They are also tied to the multiple forces of thought, philosophical forces which, from different directions, intensities and strengths, turn, divert, deflect and re-connect the assemblages, thus producing

this very text. It is not necessarily bad that this dynamic of writing changes the dancers and choreographers' practices, intervenes in them and interferes with them, thus (collaboratively) producing new concepts. On the contrary, it is necessary as a starting point for a shared transductive becoming.

Forces of touch are in no way limited to dance, and yet they are magnified through the performance's framing: In the act of framing, movements, affects and percepts, usually found in the background of our perceptions, move into the foreground (see Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 206). Dance intensifies touch. It is not about variables such as speed or acceleration increasing linearly, but rather the relations and tensions that deepen. This "theatre of multiplicity" is not concerned with representing or reflecting on touch, it is a "theatre of problems and always open questions" (Deleuze 2001, 192). Contemporary dance therefore takes up the manifold touches of everyday life, modulates them, intensifies them and dramatizes them. In the dramatization, though, there is no drama building predetermined relational structures; there is no linear arc of suspense. Instead of showing "what is", the dramatization is concerned with asking: "who? how? how much? where and when?" (Deleuze 2004b, 94). These questions do not stipulate that which exists in the sense of a "what is this?" Rather, the differences are taken up and further differentiated in their actualization. In the process of this dramatization, suspenseful assemblages arise. The dancers' performances are thus intense dramatization processes of touch. In taking these differences up, in repeating them, touch changes and with it the manifold relationships in and outside of the theatre space. No linear sequences of movements or clear constellations of bodies are created, though; instead, what arises is a differential interplay between movements, sensations and affects which, through the frame of the performance, intensifies and dramatizes.

Dramatization is not just a method used in art; it is also a way of thinking and in the broadest sense, a way of actualization. Together with dance, movements of thought dramatize the infinite chaos of becoming. Through their connections and interweaving, dance and philosophy create new movements and new individuations: "Art thinks no less than philosophy, but it thinks through affects and percepts" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 66). The movements of creating concepts and producing sensation combine, "cross-cutting the chaos and confronting it" (66). Again and again, movements of thought leap from the plane of immanence of philosophy to the plane of composition of art and back. Not one of these jumps lands in the certainty of knowledge; rather they are an invitation to jump further, a speculative offer of collaborative change. *Moving Relation* is not a book about touching or about contemporary dance. In the words of Michael Taussig, touch's practices of "tactile knowing" are like the shaking hand of a surgeon cutting into a body full of "palpitating masses": no healing, no fixed knowledge, rather quivering together (Taussig 1993, 31).¹

None of these movements claims to be completed. In their interplay, those abstract forces of touch – their movements, sensations, affects, their productivity and multiplicity – produce new concepts, new possibilities and further movements. In no way does the abstraction of concepts and terms oppose their being

4 *Introduction*

anchored in concrete experiences. Abstract and concrete are not opposites; they are two sides of a coin (Massumi 2011, 41f): In its concrete situatedness of experiences, the text produces manifold “abstract machines” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 4), which on their part can be productive in other situations and other contexts of dance, philosophy, art and beyond. Turning to the thoughts of William James, the underlying trust is that these concepts do not leave the multiple (thought-)movements of the world unchanged. Each concept and each term is an invitation to take up these movements and to continue moving with them.

We can and we may, as it were, jump with both feet off the ground into or towards a world of which we trust the other parts to meet our jump – and only so can the making of a perfected world of the pluralistic pattern ever take place. Only through our precursive trust in it can it come into being.
(James 1916, 230)

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Subsequent to Benjamin's "optical unconscious" and his reference to surgery, Taussig formulated a concept of "tactile knowledge".

Thus, insofar as the new form of vision, of tactile knowing, is like the surgeon's hand cutting into and entering the body of reality to palpate the palpitating masses enclosed therein, insofar as it comes to share in those turbulent internal rhythms of surging intermittencies and peristaltic unwindings – rhythms inimical to harmonious dialectical flip-flops or allegories of knowing as graceful journeys along an untransgressed body of reality, moving from the nether regions below to the head above – then this tactile knowing of embodied knowledge is also the dangerous knowledge compounded of horror and desire dammed by the taboo.

(1993, 31)

Tangent: approaches

- 1 See Aristotle (1991, 66f). When Derrida, at the very start of his book *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, opens his debate with Aristotle by asking "When our eyes touch, is it day or is it night?" he takes up the need for distance between the object and sensory organ in order to be able to perceive at all (Derrida 2005, 2).
- 2 In the very next passages, Freud clarifies that his prohibition of touch is not just physical, but also mental:

The prohibition does not merely apply to immediate physical contact but has an extent as wide as the metaphorical use of the phrase "to come in contact with". Anything that directs the patient's thoughts to the forbidden object, anything that brings him into intellectual contact with it, is just as much prohibited as direct physical contact. This same extension also occurs in the case of taboo.

(1981a, 27)

- 3 See Mbembe's concept of *necropolitics*:

Technologies of destruction have become more tactile, more anatomical and sensorial, in a context in which the choice is between life and death. If power still depends on tight control over bodies (or on concentrating them in camps), the new technologies of destruction are less concerned with inscribing bodies within disciplinary apparatuses as inscribing them, when the time comes, within the order of the maximal economy now represented by the "massacre".

(Mbembe 2003, 34)

See also Brian Massumi's analysis of "affective politics" (Massumi 2015).

4 For a comprehensive discussion of this book, see also *Derrida Today* 1(2), 2008 and 2(1), 2009 as well as *SubStance* 126, 2011.

5 Nancy is repeatedly occupied with the etymological connection between sense and the senses in the French term *sens*. Touch occurs for him, specifically at the limit between sense and the senses, between body and soul (without these forming separate entities). In his chapter “On the Soul”, he writes:

We are touching on a certain interruption of sense, and this interruption of sense has to do with the body, it is body. And it’s no accident that the body has to do with sense, in the other sense of sense, sense in the sense of sensing, in the sense of touching. Touching on the interruption of sense is what, for my part, interests me in the matter of the body.

(Nancy 2008a, 125)

6 Drawing on Paxton’s comments about movement in contact improvisation, Brandstetter writes:

The emphasizing of the motor aspects of movement – such as working with “momentum”, “gravity”, “mass”/“weight”, “chaos”, “inertia”, the attention to highly differentiated states of muscle tone between release/inertia and contraction, and finally the shifting of spatial perception between the focus on the interior of the body and the exterior of space make clear that an accent of the overall concept of contact improvisation lies on the conscious work with the “sixth sense”, kinesthesia. (2013, 166)

7 In contrast to the *no-emotions* paradigm of contact improvisation, touch in other dance forms such as Pina Bauch’s *Tanztheater* is closely connected to touching and affecting the audience. Using the example of the well-known embrace scene in *Café Müller*, Sabina Huschka explains how “a touching that touches itself, a fluent yet tarrying kinesthesia [. . . emotionalises] the events on stage” and a “smoldering longing for intimate closeness, a *pathos* of physical contact” arises (2012, 323, 324). Gabriele Brandstetter also describes dance theatre (taking up one of Alexander Kluge’s expressions) as a “chronicle of feelings”, thus emphasizing the central position of emotion in Pina Bausch’s performances (2006b, 17–34).

8 See Stuart’s comment:

Most Contact dances are about mutual exchange and democratic goals. In real life I saw that relationships are not equal, that people are very rarely in sync with each other and if they are it is only for precious moments. For the most part there are power plays, manipulation, and demands or expectations that are granted or denied. There is always someone weaker and more vulnerable in an exchange. I wanted to bring these ideas in. To do this, it was necessary to set up partnering situations where the roles were not fluid but fixed and each action had to have consequences.

(Stuart and Damaged Goods 2010, 52)

9 With “remote contact”, Stuart refers to one of the numerous exercises she developed. The “*Remote Partners in Contact*” exercise transforms the duets of classical contact improvisation into a collective movement despite or by means of a spatial distance. In doing so the partners can be found in different spaces and locations.

1 Moving relations, or: how touch dances

1 *At Arm’s Length* is the title of a video installation developed in 2010 by Gehmacher and Miller.

2 “For me touch probably begins with the turning towards, which is why I also always start with this torso, that is with this projection”. Gehmacher in an interview with Gabriele Brandstetter, July 7, 2011 (trans. RR).

- 3 Nancy repeatedly describes approaching as a movement, which – like the asymptote – comes close to the other, yet never meets or only meets in infinity. “‘Approaching’ rates as the superlative movement of proximity, never cancelled out in an identity since what is ‘closest’ needs to remain at a distance, an infinitesimal distance, so as to be what it is” (2013a, 18).
- 4 In a book, published as part of Gehmacher’s *incubator* project, the term “pre-movement” is used by a number of contributors to describe this overlapping of movement and motionlessness: “The pre-movement is not visible, but the audience can feel the pre-movement through space, through time, through distance” (Stamer 2006, 23).
- In his text “*Le geste et sa perception*”, Huber Godard formulates another notion of pre-movement, which differs significantly from the one described here. Godard describes pre-movement as the subjective starting point, from which the individual executes a movement: “We will call ‘pre-movement’ that attitude towards weight or gravity which, simply because we are standing, already exists before we move, and will produce the expressive charge of the movement we are going to make” (Godard 2004, 57). In contrast to Godard, Gehmacher formulates a concept of movement which does not originate in the subjective body, but rather in the relations and thus – despite its name – is closer to Manning’s concept of pre-acceleration (Manning 2009, 6).
- 5 Vogl borrows the term “storm of movement” from Sigmund Freud’s essay *The Moses of Michelangelo*. With the term “storm of movement” Freud (1981b) describes the movements of the sculpture’s “beard, hand and tilted Tables” (228). In this context, Vogl is speaking about the image of Moses tarrying as a “diagram of forces” and “a constellation that is determined by the effect of opposing forces and their collision” (2011, 5).
- 6 Melville (1856, my emphasis) repeatedly characterizes Bartleby through his motionlessness: “In answer to my advertisement, a *motionless* young man one morning, stood upon my office threshold” (45). Following that, his “long-continued *motionlessness*” (68) is described, until he finally “*refuses to budge*” (91) and is left “the *motionless* occupant of a naked room” (92).
- 7 Stuart (Stuart and Damaged Goods 2010) describes her exercise: “Shaking is one single action that transcends so many different experiences of being alive. It’s one of the most effective ways for a group to drop into my work as it integrates emotional state work, intense physicality and improvisation” (165).
- 8 Deleuze describes Bartleby’s refusal as a ravaging of the reference system:

The formula *I prefer not to* excludes all alternatives and devours what it claims to conserve no less than it distances itself from everything else. It implies that Bartleby stop copying, that is, that he stops reproducing words; it hollows out a zone of indetermination that renders words indistinguishable, that creates a vacuum within language. (1997, 73)

- 9 All citations from Didi-Huberman (2008) are translated by RR.
- 10 The relation between imprints and traces is discussed by both Didi-Huberman and Derrida: “The imprint’s vocabulary overlaps significantly with that of the *trace*, even when the conceptual difference between both – for example in the sense of the imprint as a trace, destined to last, to survive, to recur – certainly deserves to be refined” (Didi-Huberman 2008, 314).

Derrida elaborates the concept of the trace as already disappearing:

Since the trace is not a presence but the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself, it properly has no site – erasure belongs to its structure. And not only the erasure which must always be able to overtake it (without which it would not be a trace but an indestructible and monumental substance), but also the erasure which constitutes it from the outset as a trace, which situates it as the change of site, and makes it disappear in its appearance, makes it emerge from itself in its production. (Derrida 1982, 24)

- 11 Although Stuart is referring to *Maybe Forever* in this citation, the touches in *the fault lines* are characterized by a similar sequence of movements.
- 12 The folding, waving garments found in numerous pictorial depictions of the *Noli me tangere* scene (see Figure 1.3) also express Jesus' moving body.
- 13 Nancy points out that the literal translation of *Noli me tangere* is formulated more as a wish than as a command: "Do not wish to touch me" (Nancy 2008b, 37).
- 14 With regard to Deleuze's and Guattari's use of counter-actualization of the virtual, see (Deleuze 1990, 148–153; Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 156–162). It is interesting to note here that the context of counter-actualization is one of the few places in Deleuze's work where he discusses dance. For an extensive analysis of counter-actualization in dance, see Claire Colebrook (2005, 11).
- 15 Comparing two examples, Deleuze turns against a concept of an event that only names a "special" or "extra-ordinary" occurrence: "An event does not just mean that 'a man has been run over.' The Great Pyramid is an event, and its duration for a period of one hour, thirty minutes, five minutes" (Deleuze 2006, 86).
- 16 "The paradox of relation can be summed in the term *relation-of-nonrelation*. Elements contributing to an occurrence come into relation when they come into effect in excess over themselves. In themselves, they are *disparat*" (Massumi 2011, 20). With regard to the monadic dimension of the event, see also Whitehead: "The term 'monad' also expresses this essential unity at the decisive moment, which stands between its birth and perishing" (Whitehead 1967, 177).
- 17 Manning speaks of an inflection of movement and following Deleuze emphasizes the potentiality, but also in particular, movement's "worlding". With the inflection, the movement changes the spatial-temporal parameters expressed through this and thus the coordinates of its mapping (Manning 2009, 9 and 35f).
- 18 With "simple location" Whitehead describes the characteristic of a piece of material within a defined space for a finite time. He criticizes that this delimitation can only be thought when we ignore what he considers the fundamental aspect of experience (Whitehead 1948, 50).
- 19 An example here would be focusing on the moment of contact in a way that perceives touch as a point in time and not as a movement with duration.
- 20 Although Deleuze formulates his critique of Bergson in relation to film, it is also to be read as a general critique of perception.

In fact, says Bergson, when the cinema reconstitutes movement with mobile sections, it is merely doing what was already being done by the most ancient thought (Zeno's paradoxes), or what natural perception does. In this respect, Bergson's position differs from that of phenomenology, which instead saw the cinema as breaking with the conditions of natural perception.

(Deleuze 1986a, 2)

- 21 All citations from Brandstetter et al. (2007) are translated by RR.
- 22 Bergson and Einstein strongly debated the question of perceptibility and measurability. Bergson repeatedly emphasizes the difference between physical (measurable) and philosophical (intuitively perceptible) time, whereas Einstein negates any conception of a philosophical time. Einstein – according to general opinion – is considered the winner of this debate. Quantum theory shows that philosophical and physical concepts of time no longer need to be understood as contradictions. Already shortly after Bergson's last book *Creative Evolution* (French 1934) was published, Paul Valéry wrote him asking if the newest developments in quantum physics would support some of his ideas (Canales 2005, 1168–1191).
- 23 The critique of a movement concept, which understands movement as a change in a body's location, is not limited to the humanities and can also be found in the natural sciences. See Bergson: "The more it [physical science, G.E.] progresses the more it resolves

matter into actions moving through space, into movements dashing back and forth in a constant vibration so that mobility becomes reality itself” (2007, 158), as well as Whitehead’s discussion on (movement) 17th and 18th century science (1948, 39–75).

2 Surging, fleeting, fading: affect and touch

- 1 In the third part of his *Ethics* with the title *Of the Origin and Nature of the Affects*, Spinoza formulates three definitions, whereby the third of affect is describes affect directly as a physical trait: “By affect I understand affections of the Body by which the Body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections” (1985, 493). In his analysis of Spinoza, Deleuze pursues the consequences of this line of thought:

Concretely, if you define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs, and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable.

(1988, 124)

- 2 Abstract dance and music are examples par excellence of the expressiveness of vitality affects. Dance reveals to the viewer-listener multiple vitality affects and their variations, without resorting to plot or categorical affect signals from which the vitality affects can be derived. The choreographer is most often trying to express a way of feeling, not a specific content of feeling. This example is particularly instructive because the infant, when viewing parental behavior that has no intrinsic expressiveness (that is, no Darwinian affect signal), may be in the same position as the viewer of an abstract dance or the listener to music.

(Stern 1998, 56)

In his later book *Forms of Vitality: Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology and the Arts* (2010) Stern delves more deeply into different art forms, especially in the second part “The Role of the Arousal Systems, and the Examples of Music, Dance, Theater and Film” (99–119).

- 3 Following Deleuze and Guattari, Massumi describes abstraction not as something that is external to lived experience, but as something immanent to it:

The reality of this abstraction doesn’t replace what’s actually there. It supplements it. We see it *with* and *through* the actual form. [. . .] The actual form and the abstract dynamic are two sides of the same experiential coin. They’re inseparable. They’re fused, like two dimensions of the same reality. We’re seeing double.

(Massumi 2011, 41f)

- 4 The movements of two bodies are only calculable as idealized, without any form of external disruption. If we were to extend this example with a third ball, the point of their collision as well as the course of their movements would not be predictable (three-body-problem).

- 5 An emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. It is crucial to theorize the difference between affect and emotion. If some have the impression that affect has waned, it is because affect is unqualified. As such, it is not ownable or recognizable and it is thus resistant to critique.

(Massumi 2002, 28)

- 6 Following Darwin, various other theories of emotion assume a series of human emotions that can be read from the human body based on distinguishable facial expressions. Thus, for example, Paul Ekman (1999) describes emotions such as fear, anger, happiness and disgust as distinct basic emotions. See also Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1896).
- 7 Nancy describes love as something that cuts through the limits of the subjects, especially their gender determination and thus questions them.

It [the love, G.E.] is sexual, and it is not: it cuts across the sexes with another difference (Derrida, in *Geschlecht*, initiated the analysis of this) that does not abolish them, but displaces their identities. Whatever my love is, it cuts across my identity, my sexual property, that objectification by which I am a masculine or feminine subject.
(2003a, 266)

In his 2011 work *grauraum mit Egon Schiele*, Gehmacher too formulates his interest in sexual difference beyond the clear categories of man and woman. Under the title *Umar-mung* (Embrace) he asks: “How do today’s bodies meet? Who holds whom? Who wants to melt with whom? And yet they always remain two in the representation” (2011b, 288; trans. RR).

- 8 Especially in the context of existing attempts to classify feelings, the question regularly arises whether love is at all an emotion or only a drive, a social construct or a conglomerate of various feelings (see Demmerling and Landwehr 2007, 127–130).
- 9 The separation of mourning in melancholy from its object can also be found – though in a different way – in Freud’s key differentiation between mourning and melancholy. Whereas mourning is directed towards a conscious and clearly determinable object, this is not the case with melancholia or at least not consciously. This separation is clearly expressed in the following quote from Freud: “In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself” (Freud 1981c, 246).
- 10 Many writings on melancholia examine its paradoxical, intriguing and ambivalent structure. Benjamin, for example, writes about mourning as a “state of mind in which feeling reserves the empty world in a form of a mask, and derives an enigmatic satisfaction in contemplating it” (Benjamin 2003, 139). Freud describes the missing of a conscious object in melancholia as the possibility that it can turn into hatred against itself and thus as a conflict of ambivalence:

This conflict due to ambivalence, which sometimes arises more from real experiences, sometimes more from constitutional factors, must not be overlooked among the preconditions of melancholia. If the love for the object – a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up – takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering.

(Freud 1981c, 251)

Agamben finds a “fundamental ambiguity” of the “noonday demon” in texts from the Middle Ages:

Since its desire remains fixed in that which has rendered itself inaccessible, *acedia* is not only a flight from, but also a flight toward, which communicates with its object in the form of negation and lack. As in those illusory figures that can be interpreted now in one way, now in another, all of its features thus describe in its concavity the fullness of that from which it is turned away, and every gesture that it completes in its flight is a testimonial to the endurance of the link that binds it to its object.

(Agamben 1993, 6f)

- 11 Judith Butler describes one of these aisles as the ego turning towards itself. Butler too sees melancholia as a movement that both precedes the ego and points beyond it: It turns away from the object and towards itself.

only by turning back on itself does the ego acquire the status of a perceptual object. [. . .] The turn from the object to the ego produces the ego, which substitutes for the object lost. This production is a tropological generation and follows from the psychic compulsion to substitute for objects lost. Thus, in melancholia not only does the ego substitute for the object, but this act of substitution *institutes* the ego as a necessary response to or “defense” against loss.

(Butler 1997, 168f)

3 The autonomy of touch

- 1 With regard to the three utopias in *hereses* see Boris Charmatz’ *Notes of intention*:

hereses (a slow introduction) is a piece about contact, specifically about the confrontation – direct, ironic, or interactive – with certain concepts of utopia: 1. a natural utopia, that of the body, liberated and released into a world of green, sucked-up by the so-called essential forces, trees and flowers; 2. the utopia of the couple, the construction of one by the other (encompassing the durability of desire), a choreographic image both irritating and archetypal; 3. the utopia of community, the body shared or intermingled, contacts that are impossible or shameful. These three “utopias of union”, and certain of their corollaries (the melting of the individual for the good of nature, of the couple or of the ideal community – the dream of an absolute and blinding coming-together – team spirit, escape, fusion!) give birth to a work performed by two couples.

(1997, 9)

- 2 With the expression “sea of movements”, Brian Massumi describes a multiplicity of movements in the field of architecture. These are not tied to a body, yet have various potential effects on it.

All the going-on and passing-by around the building constitute another aggregate of relation: a sea of movements, each of which has a potential effect on the body, capable of modulating which determinate threads are pulled from the relational continuum it carries.

(Massumi 2002, 204)

Here and in the following “new” should be understood not in the sense of a replacement, but rather as a manifold-becoming.

Think the new not as a denial of the past but as the quality of the more-than of the past tuning toward the future. The new is a qualitative difference, already felt in the will have been. Time loops. The past now carries a potentiality that was always there but was backgrounded.

(Manning 2013, 33)

- 3 In the interview, Le Roy clarifies that this is not just about depicting plants, but rather that these movements are produced through a complex intertwining of different techniques:

I was focusing on the different ways of being together. [. . .] The first thing I proposed to do was that we sit and that we only have movement of the upper body, like grass, like when you look at the grass and the wind and they all go in the same direction but with a little difference. [. . .] The movement would not transform us into something else than this, we would really stay like this. We should not see the whole person we should use part of our body to do this and that is how we started. And then somehow the idea of the grass came after and it’s a mixture of another

scene we had at another time, where there was a trio that was very butoh-esque. The three persons were imagining becoming a plant or a root or grass or trees. We worked like this. These two things, they were mixed at some point. [. . .] Using this and the other idea of working together produced this plant. The technology there is also a result of this construction of the scene.

(Le Roy in an interview with Mariama Diagne and the author on 8.2.2013)

- 4 With the concept of machinic, the desiring machine or the abstract machine, Guattari developed (alone and together with Deleuze) a counter concept to the mechanic, which only comprises the functions of an apparatus.

We should bear in mind that there is a machinic essence which will incarnate itself in a technical machine, and equally in the social and cognitive environment connected to this machine – social groups are also machines, the body is a machine, there are scientific, theoretical and information machines. The abstract machine passes through all these heterogeneous components but above all it heterogenises them, beyond any unifying trait and according to a principle of irreversibility, singularity and necessity.

(Guattari 1995, 38f)

Similar to the assemblages (the concept that increasingly takes the place of the desiring machine in *A Thousand Plateaus*, but does not replace it) the machine produces connections without merging the elements or creating a single unit.

- 5 Regarding the concept of the machine in demarcation to that of representation see Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 36f).
- 6 Le Roy clearly demarcates the scenes in *low pieces* from the logic of representation and the related techniques and speaks instead of “technologies”:

In trying to make these moves – if one wants to use this word – it is like becoming something else. I like this idea of trying to embody this. Rather than technique I would say technologies. [. . .] What do I need to do to embody this animal like the lion? [. . .] It is not a lion technique or it is not an animal technique. [. . .] Of course you could say that’s because we see the plant like this and we see the lion like this, yes it has to do with this but it doesn’t make it a plant technique or a lion technique.

(Xavier Le Roy in a discussion with Mariama Diagne and the author on 8.2.2013)

- 7 Based on Virginia Woolf’s novel *The Waves*, Deleuze and Guattari develop an “abstract wave machine” and the concept of an “abstract wave”: “Each advances like a wave, but on the plane of consistency they are a single abstract Wave whose vibration propagates following a line of flight or deterritorialization traversing the entire plane” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 252).
- 8 Deleuze and Guattari describe perception itself as a movement: “Perception will no longer reside in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather in the movement serving as the limit of that relation, in the period associated with the subject and object” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 282).
- 9 With the concept of “phasings”, Manning refers specifically to the aspect of tension between continuity and discontinuity, expressed in Whitehead’s famous quote, “There is a becoming of continuity, but no continuity of becoming” (1978, 35).

Tangent: nudity

- 1 Maren Möhring (2002) describes the naked body as a form of historically specific visibility and articulability. With regard to the figure of Verità as the naked bearer of truth, see also Federico Ferrari: “Veritas” (Ferrari and Nancy 2014).

- 2 In his study *White* (1997), Richard Dyer delves into the racist connections between white skin color, light and weightlessness in dance (130f).

4 Body tremors

- 1 Brian Massumi describes rhythm specifically in its abstractness, which refuses to be tied to a modality of expression or perception: “Rhythm is amodal. It is the abstract shape of the event as it happens, across whatever modes it happens with. It is the immediate thinking-feeling of nonlocal linkage. Rhythm is the amodal in person” (2011, 125).
- 2 Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that rhythm does not create structure, but rather differentiates. Structuring or territorialization arises through repeating the refrain (*ritournelle*): “In a general sense, we call a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes (there are optical, gestural, motor, etc., refrains)” (1987, 323).
- 3 Deleuze writes: “In this way we construct the map of a body. The longitudes and latitudes together constitute Nature, the plane of immanence or consistency, which is always variable and is constantly being altered, composed and recomposed, by individuals and collectivities” (Deleuze 1988, 128).
- 4 Building on Peirce’s concept of “firstness”, “secondness” and “thirdness”, Massumi describes the virtual line in the realm of visual perception: “Something new: First. And with it, simultaneously and indissociably, a Secondness: a visible separation of surfaces. The separation is across an insubstantial boundary, itself imperceptible. Pure edge. Neither black nor white. Not neither not both. A virtual line” (2011, 89).

5 I, a touch

- 1 *Solo* was produced in 1997 by William Forsyth (dance and choreography) and Thomas Lovell Balogh (director) for BBC TV/France 2/RD Studio Productions. Camera: Jess Hall, Composition: Thom Willems, Violin: Maxim Franke. The video was first released under the umbrella of the documentary *Evidentia* (BBC TV/RD Studio Productions/SCT 1 Drama/France2) and was published on the CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies* in 1997 (Forsythe 2012).
- 2 Forsythe’s movement description stems (as well as the following) from the CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies*. In sixty-four individual paragraphs, Forsythe describes his way of moving. The video *Solo* forms an aggregation of these “theory lessons” (see Forsythe and Haffner 2012). For an extensive description and analysis of *Solo* in the context of *Improvisation Technologies*, see also Hartewig (2007, 229–236).
- 3 The image and sound tracks for the video *Solo* were composed and combined in post-production (see Hartewig 2007, 218f).
- 4 With the last emphasized words, Merleau-Ponty is referring to Husserl (1989, 153).
- 5 In the tactual realm, we have the *external Object*, tactually constituted, and a second Object, the *Body*, likewise tactually constituted, e.g., the touching figure, and, in addition, there are fingers touching fingers. So here we have that double apprehension: the same touch-sensation is apprehended as a feature of the “external” Object and is apprehended as a sensation of the Body as Object. And in the case in which a part of the Body becomes equally an external Object of an other part, we have the double sensation (each part has its own sensations) and the double apprehension as feature of the one or of the other Bodily part as a physical object.
(Husserl 1989, 155)
- 6 Both Merleau-Ponty and Derrida emphasize the reflexivity of the body in Husserl’s concepts (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 166; Derrida 2005, 168). Furthermore, in his study on the senses of touch, Mark Paterson writes that for Husserl touch is not only a reflexive act, but that as a kinetic practice it leads to the coherence of the body and senses: “Movement

or potential movement, a kinaesthetic background, helps cohere the various patterns of sensation in order to actively correlate visual blobs of color to tactile forms” (Paterson 2007, 29).

- 7 For a critique of body schema as a concept that precedes the processes of the body, see Manning and Massumi (2013, 35–62).

Approaches relying on the concepts of body schema and implicit knowledge fail in their attempted anti-Cartesianism. The body’s dynamism is implicitly returned to a dependency on a core mentality that can be adequately expressed in logical form and is in the element of general meaning shared by language.

(43)

- 8 Massumi describes phenomenology’s way of argumentation as a “closed loop of ‘intentionality’”:

For phenomenology, the personal is prefigured or “prereflected” in the world, in a closed loop of “intentionality”. The act of perception or cognition is a reflection of what is already “pre-”embedded in the world. It repeats the same structures, expressing where you already were. Every phenomenological event is like returning home. This is like the *déjà vu* without the pertent of the new.

(Massumi 2002, 191)

- 9 Another connection between self-touch and sexuality is evident in masturbation, as is analyzed by Thomas Laqueur in his extensive study *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*. Laqueur considers, for example, the relation of sexuality to the autonomy of individuality, as it is dealt with in discourses on masturbation since the early 18th century (Laqueur 2003).

- 10 In July 1959, Merleau-Ponty himself writes: “The problems posed in Ph.P. are insoluble because I start there from the ‘consciousness’-‘object’ distinction” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 200). See also Manning (2014, 163).

- 11 Here, Forsythe’s dance techniques differ from the concepts of classical ballet: Whereas in ballet, the body is ideal, symmetric and often oriented on the form of the body’s core (e.g., the diagonal line of the body’s core or the circle of the *pirouette* that is focused on the axis), Forsythe shifts these geometric forms outwards, decenters and changes them. The form is no longer a transcendental ideal. Instead, in *Solo*, the form is danced with as an external and supplementary body.

- 12 See Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*:

In the view, the hand is part of our bodily organism. But the hand’s essence can never be determined, or explained by its being an organ which can grasp. Apes, too, have organs that can grasp, but they do not have hands. The hand is infinitely different from all grasping organs paws, claws, or fangs different by an abyss of essence. Only a being can speak, that is, think, can have hands and can be handy in achieving works of handcraft.

(Heidegger 1968, 16)

- 13 See Derrida (1987, 182; with regard to the monstrous as de(mon)stration), 166). In relation to Heidegger, Derrida formulates: “The hand is monstrosity [*monstrosité*], the proper of man as the being of monstration. This distinguishes him from every other *Geschlecht*, and above all from the ape” (169).

- 14 In *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*, Derrida contests the generalizing concept of “animal” and draws attention to the diversity of animals, the multiplicity of differences that run transversally to the differentiation man/animal:

I would like to have the plural of animals heard in the singular. There is no animal in the general singular, separated from man by a single indivisible limit. [. . .] I repeat that it is rather a matter of taking into account a multiplicity of heterogeneous

structures and limits. Among non-humans and separate from nonhumans there is an immense multiplicity of other living things that cannot in any way be homogenized, except by means of violence and willful ignorance, within the category of what is called the animal or animality in general. From the outset there are animals and, let's say, *l'animot*.

(Derrida 2002, 415)

- 15 In her countless writings on the borders of the human, Judith Butler has shown that this rhythm of the human at the borders of the body is a movement full of violence. It is precisely the violence of touch that humans articulate at their borders, namely the moment of vulnerability. "Violence", writes Butler,

is surely a touch of the worst order, a way in which the human vulnerability to other humans is exposed in its most terrifying way, a way in which we are given over, without control, to the will of another, the way in which life itself can be expunged by the willful action of another.

(Butler 2004, 22)

Violence is always found where the boundaries of man are drawn, but also where they are broken through. Where the dehumanizing of bodies serves to ensure one's own boundaries and one's own being-human, the possibility of new and other lives is eliminated. This violence is found both in breaking open boundaries as well as closing them and in the act of exclusion. In the touches, this boundary however, is neither drawn per se nor bridged per se; which of the multitudinous differentiation processes of touch are efficacious and which will be negated is negotiated in a complex field of productive and performative practices. The violence of drawing boundaries thus occurs in two ways: It is not only the violence of differentiating touches, but also the violence that determines which difference will be perceived as boundaries and which will be negated.

- 16 Regarding this and the following discussion of Simondon's concept of individuation, see Combes (2013).
- 17 With regard to information in Simondon's work see: "*The notion of form must be replaced by that of information*, which presupposes the existence of a system in a state of metastable equilibrium capable of being individuated" (Simondon 1992, 315).
- 18 Based on her work with Forsythe, Manning writes: "He asks his dancers to *body*, not to 'represent' a body" (Manning 2014, 165).
- 19 With regard to the connection between the individuation process in Simondon and the diagram in Deleuze, see Blümle and Schäfer (2007, 21).

6 Meteorology of touch

- 1 Regarding the notion of *co-compositions* of movements as "politics of touch", see also Manning (2013, 125).
- 2 See Deleuze's concept of the objectile, which he developed based on Serres, Leibniz and Bernard Cache:

There exists a series of curves that not only imply constant parameters for each and every curve, but the reduction of variables to a "single and unique variability" of the touching or tangent curve: the fold. The goal is no longer defined by an essential form, but reaches a pure functionality, as if declining a family of curves, framed by parameters, inseparable from a series of possible declensions or from a surface of variable curvature that it is itself describing. This new object we can call *objectile*.

(Deleuze 2006, 19)

- 3 In an interview, Stuart, who was born and raised in New Orleans, described *Blessed* as her reflection on the events related to Hurricane Katrina, which had taken place two years before the premiere:

I lived there until I was 5. [. . .] My memories are of hurricanes and big water beetles and Mardi Gras. It wasn't about, O.K. now I have to make a piece about Hurricane Katrina. It just came out, and it connected to a lot of things I've been about: people dancing as if it's the end of a relationship or the end of the world.

(Meg Stuart cited acc. to: Kourlas 2012)

- 4 With regard to a concept of worlding that does not originate in humans, Manning writes:

An otherness of worlding does not begin with the human: it engages with and across in a vibratory expression that must be “read between”. An otherness of worlding is always more than one. It composes—with experience, refuting the notion that the world is already know, pre-formed. This worlding is thought in motion, thought individuating in an amplifying incorporeality, a vibratory materiality.

(Manning 2013, 169)

Ingold also uses the notion of *worlding*, referring to Heidegger's concept of “world's worlding” (Ingold 2011, 130). Ingold's comments often remain in an a priori existing division between perceiver and world(s) and a human that enters into it (them). Yet, it is particularly this assumption of the human as a given that needs to be questioned.

- 5 In his text *Katrina*, John Protevi drew attention to the interplay between the various movements that formed the Katrina event: In addition to the movements of the flood and storm, it was: the flow of the Mississippi, the numerous dams that are supposed to regulate the flow in the north; the sun's and winds' movements which made the hurricane and the transatlantic slave trade with sailboats possible, the abductions and escape of slaves between Africa, the Caribbean and Louisiana; the erosion of the coast in the Gulf of Mexico, the oil platforms; the evacuation movements before the storm as well as the impossibility of leaving New Orleans during the flood; the forced resettling of all those who lost their homes; the second line dancers at the burial of the victims and, it was the president's trip that took place far too late (see Protevi 2009, 163–183). For an extensive discussion of Hurricane Katrina in relation to choreography, see Egert (2016).

7 Touching touch

- 1 In response to critique from his colleague Joseph Strzygowski, Riegl changed the term used in the first edition “tactical seeing” to “haptic seeing”. As an explanation Riegl wrote in a 1902 newspaper contribution:

There has been the objection that this term [tactical, G.E.] could lead to misunderstandings, since it causes one to be inclined to understand it as the opposite to “optical”, as a term borrowed from Greek as well. Further it has been noted that the field of physiology has already brought the term “haptic” [. . .] into use for this. This observation seems justified to me and I think in future I will make use of the suggested term.

(Riegl 1902, 155, FN 1; trans. RR)

- 2 Regarding the immediate experience of relations see William James' concept of “Radical Empiricism” and his critique of classical empiricism, as presented by Hume.

To be radical, an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. For such a philosophy, *the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as “real” as anything else in the system.*

(James 1912, 16)

- 3 Unlike with Aristoteles and Herder, who described touch as a sense of possibility, here touch is not the most fundamental of all senses. It is also not a general possibility of sensory

perception. These conceptions were correctly criticized by Derrida as haptocentric. In the movements and specific ways of folding, the haptic produces singular constellations of sensation, which although abstract are not applicable to all sensory perceptions in the same way. Regarding the concept of haptocentrism, see Derrida (2005, 156).

- 4 This critique of a linear, targeted perception, as formulated following Descartes' touching rod and frequently revisited, has also been criticized from a feminist perspective. In particular from the psychoanalytic perspective, this view has been described as phallic. Bracha L. Ettinger's "matrixial gaze", formulates a concept that counters this distanced and targeted, object oriented perception. The matrixial gaze does not refer to an object or a subject as a given entity. "In the matrixial perspective, *becoming-together* precedes *being-one*" (Ettinger 2006, 72; with regard to her critique of the phallic view, see 50ff). In the matrixial gaze it is the incomplete, involved, divided that is sensed. "The matrixial gaze thrills us while fragmenting, multiplying, scattering, and assembling together the fragments" (154). The too-much of sensation exceeds the unity of male perception. Sensing becomes a multiplicity: more than *one* gaze, more than *one* perception.
- 5 Manning describes the relation of thought, sensation and movement as follows: "Thought is more than a form-taking of words. It is an incipient that proposes articulation through sensation. Thought is a proposition for feeling-in-motion. It is experience's complex instigator, a force that operates at the relational cusp of becoming-events" (Manning 2009, 215).

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