



**FACULTAD DE ARTES**  
UNIVERSIDAD DE CHILE

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ESCUELA DE POSTGRADO**

**The Haptic Presence  
Dimensions of touch in contemporary Dance**

Tesis para optar al Grado de Doctor en Filosofía  
con mención en Estética y Teoría del Arte  
presentada por

**Sofia Muñoz Carneiro**

Profesor Patrocinante  
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Profesora Coguía  
Prof. Dr. Katja Schneider

Santiago de Chile, 2023

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## Abstract 1

### (English)

Based on different dance performances, this thesis examines the relationships between the notions of *presence* and *touch* from an interdisciplinary perspective –including dance and theatre studies, and philosophy– to introduce the notion of *haptic presence* and to identify different dimensions of touch in contemporary dance.

Some of the questions that this research is based upon were: How does touch come into presence in contemporary dance? In which forms? Which dimensions are being opened? How does this become a significant aspect of contemporary dance?

To approach these questions, this thesis has been configured following two main paths. One of them corresponds to the characterization of the *haptic presence*. The other one refers to the identification of the different dimensions of touch. Regarding the first one, the *haptic presence* is introduced considering both the contemporary dance performances mentioned throughout this research and the relationships between the notion of presence and touch. I identify, therefore, the notion of *haptic presence* throughout this writing as “haptic coming into presence”, as “haptic weighing”, and as “local instance of touch”. In the second path, dedicated to the recognition of different dimensions of touch in contemporary dance, three main dimensions are highlighted: a sound dimension, a thermal dimension, and a hyperbolic dimension. Nonetheless, further dimensions are also described throughout this writing, like an olfactory dimension, a proprioceptive dimension, a weighing dimension, and an animal dimension.

Due to the significative role of touch in contemporary dance, the notion of *haptic presence* is introduced as a fruitful notion to explore and analyse contemporary dance performances that deal, to a higher or lesser degree, with the issue of touch. Through the ideas of “haptic coming into presence”, “haptic weighing”, and “local instances of touch” it is possible to identify the complexity of the different dimensions of touch that are being opened up or created in contemporary dance.

*Keywords:* presence, touch, haptic, weight, dimensions of touch, contemporary dance.

## Abstract 2

### (Spanish)

A partir de diferentes performances de danza, la presente tesis examina las relaciones entre las nociones de presencia y tocar desde una perspectiva interdisciplinaria –incluyendo los estudios de la danza y del teatro, y la filosofía– para introducir la noción de *presencia háptica* e identificar diferentes dimensiones del tocar en la danza contemporánea.

Algunas de las preguntas en las que se basa esta investigación son: ¿Cómo viene a presencia el tocar en la danza contemporánea? ¿En qué formas? ¿Qué dimensiones se abren? ¿Cómo se convierte esto en un aspecto significativo de la danza contemporánea?

Para abordar estas preguntas, esta tesis se ha configurado siguiendo dos caminos principales. Uno de ellos corresponde a la definición de *presencia háptica*. El otro concierne a la identificación de las diferentes dimensiones del tocar. En cuanto a la primera, la *presencia háptica* se introduce considerando tanto las performances de danza contemporánea mencionadas a lo largo de esta investigación, así como las relaciones entre las nociones de presencia y tocar. Identifico, por tanto, la noción de presencia háptica a lo largo de este escrito como "venida háptica a presencia", como "pesaje háptico" y como "instancia local del tocar". En el segundo camino, dedicado al reconocimiento de las diferentes dimensiones del tocar en la danza contemporánea, se destacan tres dimensiones principales: una dimensión sonora, una dimensión térmica y una dimensión hiperbólica. No obstante, a lo largo de este escrito también se describen otras dimensiones, como una dimensión olfativa, una dimensión propioceptiva, una dimensión del peso y una dimensión animal.

Debido al rol significativo del tocar en la danza contemporánea, la noción de *presencia háptica* es introducida como una noción fructífera para explorar y analizar las performances de danza contemporánea que tratan, en mayor o menor grado, la cuestión del tocar. A través de las ideas de "presencia háptica", "peso háptico" e "instancias locales del tacto" es posible identificar la complejidad de las diferentes dimensiones del tocar que se abren y crean en la danza contemporánea.

*Palabras clave:* presencia, tocar, háptico, peso, dimensiones del tocar, danza contemporánea.

## Prologue

The four dancers, Breeanne Saxton, David Pallant, Gabriel Lawton, and Kim Kohlmann, move through the almost empty stage executing different actions like running, going down to the ground, stretching on the floor, and rising up again. They also dance different sequences and phrases generating a constant rhythm that is combined with the persistent pulse of grave sounds, creating a certain tension. This tension takes place while we hear recorded interviews from different persons talking about touch and their experiences regarding the deprivation of touch during the pandemic. The four dancers interact with the sound of the voices and the meaning of the stories, exploring different forms of proximity and distancing while they move. They also speak, lip-sync, comment, or convert the texts that the audience hears, generating a complex sound dimension of touch while they embody the different voices that are being heard. The dancers barely physically touch each other until the end of the performance. Nevertheless, the issue of touch is all over the space.

What happens when no one touches? This was one of the leading questions approached in the dance performance *Skin Hunger*, presented (live) in the HochX Theater in Munich, in September 2021.<sup>1</sup> The choreographer Jasmine Ellis and the musician, radio-, and podcast-composer Johnny Spencer, explored the repercussions of the lack of touch in society during the coronavirus pandemic

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<sup>1</sup> I recently wrote an article about touch in the context of the pandemic, in which I approach the performance *Skin Hunger* by Jasmin Ellis. See Muñoz Carneiro, Sofia. "Skin Hunger. Touch, dance, and sharing in times of social distancing" in Bayraktar, Sevi et al. (Eds). *Tanzen/Teilen – Sharing/Dancing*. Transcript Verlag. Bielefeld, 2022. I also come back to the performance towards the end of this writing. See Sixth Chapter: "Dancing the haptic III. Hyperbolic Dimension".

throughout the dance performance. Maintaining social distancing and using masks, a reduced number of spectators was allowed to sit in the same closed space shared with the dancers and artists. The audience experienced both the separation through social distancing and the connection with the common and different experiences regarding touch deprivation that are being heard during the performance.

In a context of untouchability, of constant surveillance of touch, of policies of distance and separation, and of searching for alternative forms of contact, the performance *Skin Hunger* explored the reconfigurations of human relationships during the pandemic with regard to the deprivation of touch. As the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy suggests, the deprivation of touch during the pandemic has also brought to light what we have been deprived of. We cannot touch each other, he writes, “which means that we touch this separation all the more and all the better” (Nancy, 2022: 80). This awareness of the separation prompts us to think, the author suggests, about the ways in which one can come (or not) into contact. In a similar direction, the Cultural Studies researchers Henriette Steiner and Kristin Veel (2021) suggest that this raising awareness of touch as one of the means by which the virus was being transmitted during the pandemic, generated a “massive reconfiguration of relationships; with oneself, with other people, with places, with things” (Steiner/Veel, 2021: 1). These reconfigurations are also understood as a crisis in terms of physical, emotional, and affective circumstances that urged us to search, the authors argue, for other ways of contact, of touching and being touched (Steiner/Veel, 2021: 3). Behind this urge lies this craving for physical contact of which Jasmine Ellis reflexions and explores in the dance performance *Skin Hunger* as one of the side effects of the deprivation of touch, experienced by numerous persons, especially during the times of social isolation. In this sense, Ellis understands and addresses in an artistic way how touch became one of the critical social issues during the pandemic.

The issue of touch as being one of the elements at the centre of public preoccupations during the pandemic is also addressed by Gabriele Klein and Katharina Liebsch in a recent article (2022). The authors describe this situation in

terms of a crisis of the touch regime. Considering this, the authors refer especially to theatre and dance because of the fact that these are places in which people reunite and share experiences, often in the same room. The idea of co-presence between spectators and performers is well known to be a distinctive aspect of performative events. In light of the pandemic, therefore, Klein and Liebsch describe how theatre and dance have been particularly shaken by the crisis of the touch regime insofar as they are “places of co-presence” (Klein/Liebsch, 2022: 137-138). It is interesting to note that the authors describe these places of co-presence also as “places of touch” when describing the implications of the crisis of the touch regime. In this sense, one can argue that the pandemic has also made evident the intimate relationship between touch and presence in social, cultural, and artistic contexts. The crisis of touch, therefore, is also connected to a crisis of presence, where the ways in which we understand and perceive those notions are constantly being challenged.

Since I am approaching the relationship between presence and touch throughout this research –entitled *The Haptic Presence. Dimensions of touch in contemporary dance*– finishing this writing in the context of the pandemic has been a complex experience, especially considering the prohibitions of touch, deprivation of touch, and regulations concerning physical presence. As I will explain extensively throughout this research, touch has been historically a fundamental element of dance.<sup>2</sup> In the past decades, nevertheless, it came increasingly into focus in contemporary initiatives, and it kept being an element of interest and concern during the pandemic. Finishing this writing in this context, therefore, has meant revisiting this notion under another light, approaching the density of its intertwining with the notion of presence, especially regarding dance. This brought me, nevertheless, new perspectives on the complexity of this matter linked to the experience of the performance *Skin Hunger* and

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<sup>2</sup> I will come to this point further in the following introduction when approaching the notion of touch. Nevertheless, for the historical importance of the sense of touch, see, for instance: Brandstetter, Gabriele, Egert, Gerko and Zubarik, Sabine (Eds.). “Touching and being touched. Motion, Emotion, and modes of contact” in Brandstetter, Gabriele, Egert, Gerko and Zubarik, Sabine. *Touching and being touched. Kinaesthesia and Empathy in dance and movement*. De Gruyter. Berlin/Boston, 2013.

the contributions of thinkers like Jean-Luc Nancy, Henriette Steiner, Kristin Veel, Gabriele Klein, and Katharina Liebsch, mentioned before, that reflected about the issue of touch in the pandemic. Their ideas and contributions allowed me to develop the idea of another haptic dimension of touch in dance: a hyperbolic dimension.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See: Sixth Chapter. Dancing the haptic III. Hyperbolic dimension.

## Introduction

### 1. About this research.<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation was written in the framework of a doctoral cotutelle agreement between the Ludwig Maximilian Universität München –specifically the Department of Theatre Studies– and the Universidad de Chile –particularly the Doctoral Program in Philosophy, Aesthetics and Art Theory, Arts Department–.<sup>5</sup> In this context, this research has been carried out within an interdisciplinary framework including dance and theatre studies, and philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, based on the different dance performances, this dissertation examines the relationships between the notions of *presence* and *touch*, from an interdisciplinary perspective, to propose the notion of *haptic presence* and to identify different dimensions of touch in contemporary dance. Based on my experience as a spectator, I am considering the works of choreographers such as Francisca Morand, Stéphane Gladyzewski, Jasmine Ellis, Lia Rodrigues, and Ceren Oran, among others, to examine touch in connection to the notion of presence.

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<sup>4</sup> This dissertation was written with the support of the doctoral scholarship Conicyt (Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica) for National Ph.D. Program 2013. Scholarship Folio: 21130878.

<sup>5</sup> A cotutelle agreement means that the doctoral process is carried out in two universities from different countries, accompanied by a supervisor of each university. The doctoral thesis, therefore, is submitted in both universities.

See: <https://www.pags.pa.uni-muenchen.de/promotion/cotutelle/index.html> (20/03/2022).

<sup>6</sup> As this thesis was written in the context of the cotutelle, there is a summary written in Spanish Language at the end of this writing.

As Gabriele Brandstetter, Gerko Egert, and Sabine Zubarik indicate, touch is a fundamental element of dance that can be recognized throughout its history, both in a physical and affective sense (Brandstetter et al., 2013a: 3). Nevertheless, touch began to come into focus in contemporary dance. To a lesser or greater extent, either as a primary concern in itself or as one of its elements involved, the matter of touch has been explored regarding multiple forms and possibilities. As I will extensively address in the unfolding chapters, this renewed interest in touch in contemporary dance has been already mentioned by several authors, like Gabriele Brandstetter (2013), Gerko Egert (2020), and Laurence Louppe (2010), among others, especially concerning different reconfigurations of touch and new possibilities of movements for dance. Considering their contributions, I am proposing here the idea of *haptic presence*, through which a dimension of touch or different haptic dimensions emerge in certain contemporary dance performances. Throughout this writing, the notion of *haptic presence* allowed me to identify three haptic dimensions: a sound dimension, a thermal dimension, and a hyperbolic dimension (the latest related to the idea of excess of touch), that arise in different dance performances. Each of them is analysed in a chapter of its own, considering which elements and strategies are involved in creating every dimension. These ideas are what gave the name to this research: *The haptic presence. Dimensions of touch in contemporary dance*.

Considering this, the leading questions that guided this research were the following: How does touch come into presence in contemporary dance? In which forms? Which dimensions are being opened? How does this become a significant aspect of contemporary dance?

From these questions, I propose as a hypothesis the idea that through a *haptic presence* in contemporary dance, different dimensions of touching emerge that configure the way in which touching comes into presence. These dimensions are diverse and consist of multiple relationships or interweaving between touching and other heterogeneous values in a given context. In this sense, the idea of *haptic presence* comes here to expand the notion of touching, giving rise to a haptic regime or aesthetics in contemporary dance.

In the works of choreographers such as Francisca Morand, Stéphane Gladyszewski, Lia Rodrigues, Ceren Oran, and Jasmine Ellis, among others, a very wide range of dimensions and relationships regarding the issue of touch were identified as being part of different artistic explorations. One could mention, for instance, the relationship between touch and sound, between touch and colour, light, or darkness, or between touch and temperature or thermoception, touch and visuality, corporeality, space, gravity, and weight. One will also observe different ways of thinking about the relationships of closeness and distance of the bodies, or the interconnections between the touchable and untouchable, where multiple figures or disfigurations of touch appear, as well as those related to the caress, the hit, the eroticism, and the emotions.

I identify the *haptic presence* throughout this writing as “haptic coming into presence”, as “haptic weighing”, and as “local instance of touch”. Each of these notions is explained in a chapter of its own. In the First Chapter, I identify the notion of *haptic presence* as “haptic coming into presence”. In the Third Chapter, I identify the notion of *haptic presence* as “haptic weighing”. And in the Fifth Chapter as “local instance of touch”. The chapters in between (Second, Fourth, and Sixth Chapter) are dedicated to the identification of the different dimensions of touch that these categories open: sound dimension, thermal dimension, and hyperbolic dimension. I divided, therefore, this writing into six main chapters. A Seventh Chapter is included as the conclusions of this research.

In the First Chapter– “Presence, touch, haptic”– I begin by introducing the notion of “coming into presence”, developed by Jean-Luc Nancy in several of his works.<sup>7</sup> Following Martin Heidegger, Nancy redefines presence out of the scope of the metaphysical tradition understanding it as passage, as the action of coming and going.<sup>8</sup> I connect these ideas with perspectives on presence in theatre and dance studies, in correspondence to certain dance performances, to approach presence as coming, offering, and exposition in connection with touch and the

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<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Nancy, *The birth to presence*. Trans. Brian Holmes & others. Stanford University Press. Stanford, California, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Besides the First Chapter, see the section “About the notion of presence” in this introduction regarding the idea of understanding presence out of the metaphysical tradition.

haptic. These three notions allow me to approach the elements that open a dimension related to the sense of touch.

The Second Chapter – “Dancing the Haptic I: Sound Dimension”– focuses especially on the dance performance *Invisible, danza que explota los sentidos* by the Chilean choreographers and dancers Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio. I approach here how the performance, using technological devices, opens a complex sound dimension of touch where touch comes to presence throughout different sound combinations connected to the movements of the dancers. I consider here some philosophical perspectives on sensation and resonance, like that of Giles Deleuze (2003), in combination with some perspectives on the relationship between arts and technology, like that of Anne Cauquelin (2006) and Kerstin Evert (2002). I also approach further in this chapter the notions of presence and touch, considering especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts regarding the invisible, which also gave the name to the dance performance.

In the Third Chapter – “Weighings”– the focus lies on the notion of weight as a fundamental point of contact between the notions of presence and touch regarding the dancing body. As a starting point I take the etymological relationship of the French words “peser” (weighing) and “penser” (thinking) highlighted by Jean-Luc Nancy in *The weight of a thought* (2008b), and the contributions of philosophers like Marie Bardet (2012a) and Miriam Fischer-Geboers (2010) about this matter regarding dance. From there, following especially Laurence Loupe, who identifies a “poetic of weight” in contemporary dance (2010: 65). I approach how some contemporary dance performances explore, interrogate, and reconfigure touch considering the weight of a thought and the weight of the body, connecting philosophy and dance. The idea of *haptic presence* is further developed here as a *haptic weighing* as constitutive for the emergence of a haptic dimension.

The Fourth Chapter – “Dancing the Haptic II: Thermal Dimension”– focuses especially on the dance performance *Chaleur Humaine* by the Canadian choreographer Stephan Gladyszewski. I approach in this chapter how the performance, using a “thermal-video projection system”, creates a thermal dimension of touch, where the invisible traces of temperature that are involved in

the tactile experience of the dancers acquire a certain weight through the movements of the colourful waves that are projected on the bodies. In this chapter, I also draw attention to Jacques Derrida's notion of "trace" from Jacques Derrida in connection to the idea of "emergence from colour" addressed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emanuel Levinas's thoughts about the caress to further develop the relationship between presence and touch involved in the display of a thermal dimension.

In the Fifth Chapter – "Haptics"–, on the one hand, I follow the idea of "separation" and "local" from Jean-Luc Nancy to identify a "separation of touch" in contemporary dance. From these notions, I identify a "local instance of touch" as a useful notion to approach the relationship between dance and touch in terms of the multiple and singular configurations, reconfigurations, or creation of a sensitive regime. On the other hand, I follow the ideas of the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) to identify an aesthetic function of the haptic, and the expansion of the notion proposed by authors like Mark Paterson (2007). The contributions of dance scholars, such as Gabrielle Brandstetter (2013), are also considered key for the expansion of the notion of haptic, especially towards the somatic senses, which makes it possible to identify a singular aesthetic of the haptic in contemporary dance. The notion of *haptic presence* is further developed, considering these contributions as a "local instance of touch". In this context, I analyse particular moments of the performance *Low Pieces* by Xavier Le Roy, to approach the scope of localities of touch that produce the emergence of a "*haptic-animal-dimension*".

The Sixth Chapter – "Dancing the haptic III: hyperbolic dimension"– focuses particularly on the dance performance *Skin Hunger* by the choreographer Jasmine Ellis and the artist Johnny Spencer, mentioned at the beginning. Considering the context in which the performance was created and presented, this chapter also approaches the new condition of touch during the pandemic, based on the fact that touch had come to be considered and experienced as an issue of risk in an expansive way. In combination with recent perspectives on the matter, I draw on Jacques Derrida's thoughts about that element of risk at the heart of the issue of

touch itself. The author refers to an “excessive intensity of touch” that he describes as a “hyperbole of the tangible” (*L’hyperbole du tangible*) capable of destroying, as it occurs in some threatening contacts. I relate those ideas to the issue of touch in the pandemic to propose a hyperbolic dimension of touch that arises in the performance *Skin Hunger*.

The Seventh Chapter –“The *haptic presence*”– corresponds to the conclusion of this research. I examine here the notion of *haptic presence* in light of what has been approached and discussed in the previous chapters. In this direction, I provide a definition of the notion in terms of “haptic coming into presence”, “haptic weighing”, and “local instance of touch” to show how different dimensions of touch emerge in contemporary dance. I also examine here the dimensions of touch that have been mentioned throughout this writing to explain how touch comes to presence and acquires a certain weight as a local instance connected to different elements such as sound, colour, light, darkness, gravity, and temperature, among others.

Considering the complexity of the notions of presence and touch and the different discussions that these notions involve, I will refer to both notions in the following, to signalize the actual discussions about the matter and how I am approaching both within this research.

## 2. About the notion of presence.

The notion of presence has been at the centre of crucial debates both in the fields of theory and artistic practices until today.<sup>9</sup> Different approaches, analysis models, and critical perspectives are frequently developed and defied at the same time through this conception. The notion of presence, therefore, has gathered not just several subjects but also controversial positions, challenging constantly their own foundations.<sup>10</sup> In the midst of several discussions, like those between truth and fiction, the real and the simulacrum, materiality and meaning, among others, the notion of presence came to serve different perspectives.<sup>11</sup> Either against meaning or in the name of meaning, for instance, this notion can be sometimes rather elusive.<sup>12</sup> In some cases, for example, the idea of a pure presence has been

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<sup>9</sup> This idea has been expressed by several authors, like André Lepecki (2004), David Krasner and David Saltz, (2006), Ranjan Ghosh and Ethan Kleinberg (2013). In the context of performative Arts, see, for instance, Lepecki, André. *Of the presence of the body. Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*. Wesleyan University Press. United States of America, 2004. For the discussions in the context of philosophy see, for instance, Ghosh, Ranjan and Kleinberg, Ethan (Eds.). *Presence. Philosophy, History, and Cultural Theory for the Twenty-First century*. Cornell University Press. New York, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> This idea can be found in different authors. See, for instance, Krasner, David and Saltz, David Z. (Eds.), *Staging Philosophy. Intersections of Theater, Performance, and Philosophy*. University of Michigan Press. United States, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> These discussions can be traced to Plato's examination of mimesis and theater (2004). This observation has been made by Jacques Ranciere, in which the author compares Plato's understanding of imitation and representation with postulates of the avant-garde art in the context of theater, especially Artaud and Brecht (Ranciere, 2009: 2-3). Hal Foster also describes these discussions in terms of a "return of the real" in connection with the notion of presence in terms of an opposition to illusionism in minimalism and neo-avant-garde Art (Foster, 1996: 127-170). The connection between presence and a "return of the real" is also to be found in philosophical and aesthetic movements. See, for instance, Keith Moxley's observations about the matter in *Visual Time: the image in history*. Duke University Press. United States of America, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Ethan Kleinberg explains how in some contexts the issue of presence has been understood either as a counter to meaning or as an attack on meaning (Kleinberg, 2013: 12). A similar observation regarding the versatility of the notion of presence within different discourses is made by Georges Didi-Huberman, especially concerning the discussions around minimalism (1992: 37-52).

the warhorse against what is called the illusion of representation.<sup>13</sup> In other ones, the notion of a pure presence has been rather considered as an illusion itself, even as a “transcendental illusion.”<sup>14</sup> Some authors criticize its use.<sup>15</sup> It has been described as an ambiguous, utopian, idealistic, and even mystic notion.<sup>16</sup> Other ones defend it instead as an important notion to approach, for instance, theatre and dance practices.<sup>17</sup>

The notion of presence has also been the name of several purposes. Presence has been the name of an aesthetic, especially related to a particular kind of perception (a phenomenological one, par excellence).<sup>18</sup> Presence has also been the name of a pure or minimal materiality, ideal to fight against narrative and figurative aims. But Presence has also been, as a philosophical notion, the name of a metaphysics that would have been underlying the Western thought.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes presence is understood as temporality, as being in a present time and space. Other times, it implies the body and its materiality, or rather it describes the soul, the aura, or even the psyche.<sup>20</sup> On some occasions, it refers to both or all of them. But presence has also been portrayed as performativity or as a bodily capacity, as energy, or as a technique.<sup>21</sup> And sometimes, possibly most of the time

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<sup>13</sup> See: Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde*. Les Éditions de Minuit. Paris, 1992, pp. 37-52.

<sup>14</sup> As Jack Reynolds points out, in his critique of metaphysics of presence, Jacques Derrida describes the idea of an immediate present of experience in terms of an act of consciousness as a transcendental illusion (Reynolds, 2004: 56).

<sup>15</sup> In an article called “Presence”, John Erikson examines how Jacques Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence has been approached in Theatre Studies to undermine the notion of presence in the context of the analysis of theatre and performing arts. As a response the author develops a “critique of the critique of presence” that shows some of the most striking points of the discussions about the issue of presence in the North American Theatre Studies (2006: 144).

<sup>16</sup> In her book *Theater als Ort der Utopie*, Miriam Drewes describes how the notion of presence has been at the centre of different discourses from a critical perspective, considering both philosophical discourses and artistic practices (2010: 268-274).

<sup>17</sup> Although Laurence Louppe, in *Poetics of contemporary dance*, addresses the ambiguity of the notion of presence, the author underlines its importance to describe dance practices (2010).

<sup>18</sup> I am referring here to the “aesthetic of the performative” (Ästhetik des Performativen), that Erika Fischer-Lichte also names as an “aesthetic of presence” (Ästhetik der Präsenz) (2008: 101).

<sup>19</sup> I am referring here to the well-known critics to the metaphysics of presence by Martin Heidegger (1996) and Jacques Derrida (1973).

<sup>20</sup> For these relationships, see: Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The transformative power of performance. A new aesthetics* (Saskya Iris Jain, Trans.). Routledge. United States of America /Canada, 2008, pp. 93-101)

<sup>21</sup> I am refereeing here to the different understandings regarding the well-known notion of “presence of the body”. In addition to Fischer-Lichte (2008), for the idea of technique related to the body in

nowadays, presence would designate a process or movement of evanescence and absence, eventually with political implications.<sup>22</sup> And so, the notion of presence comes to describe the most different phenomenon, becoming sometimes like a glove turning inside out.<sup>23</sup>

This condensed description or enumeration of only a few of the striking points of the different discussions involved in the issue of presence gives at least a first glimpse of the density of this matter. As the dance scholar André Lepecki points out, the use of the notion of presence has never been peaceful, it has rather left its mark on critical theories and performance practices (Lepecki, 2004: 1-2). Lepecki even suggests, regarding the notions of presence and body, that “the very formation of the disciplinary fields of the performance studies and dance studies can be seen as a battle over the centrality, meaning, and relevance of those two concepts” (Lepecki, 2004: 5). In a similar direction, as a philosophical notion, the notion of presence has been a foundational notion throughout the history of philosophy. The central role that the notion of presence occupies, for instance, in Jacques Derrida’s critique of the all-encompassing metaphysical tradition is another example of the vast polemic history of this notion. Without going any further, one of the main preoccupations of Heidegger’s and Derrida’s critiques was, indeed, the determination of being as presence along philosophy itself since Plato (Marchant, 2013).

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performing arts, see Schechner, Richard. *Between Theater and Anthropology*. University of Pennsylvania. USA, 1985. See also Icle, Gilberto. *O Ator como Xamã*. Editorial Perspectiva. Brasil, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> For the relationship between ephemerality and politics, see: Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked. The politics of performance*. Routledge. London and New York, 2005. In this regard, Gabriele Klein discusses the implications of an understanding of ephemerality linked to political discourses in Dance and Cultural Studies in “Das Flüchtige. Politische Aspekte einer tanztheoretischen Figur” in Huschka, Sabine (Ed.) *Wissenskultur Tanz. Historische und zeitgenössische Vermittlungsakte zwischen Praktiken und Diskursen*. Transcript. Bielefeld, 2009. From a cultural political perspective, Diana Taylor approaches the political implications of the notion of presence in a recent publication. See Taylor, Diana, *Presente! The politics of presence*. Duke University Press. United States of America, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> I am borrowing this idea of the glove from Didi-Huberman. The author describes the particular movement of some concepts, like that of presence, in his analysis of the debates within minimalism. He uses this metaphor of the glove, pointing out how some notions have the vertiginous capacity to become the opposite in the sense of a mirror that produces an inverted image, in the sense of a right-hand glove that, turned inside out, transforms into a left-hand glove (Did-Huberman, 1992:48).

The use of the notion of presence involves, therefore, unceasing controversies within different discourses, and has meant taking position within very different disciplinary fields. To examine here exhaustively all the extents of the several debates and positions involved in the understanding of the notion of presence is not my intention, and it would be out of the scope of this work. Nevertheless, considering especially the different contributions regarding the notion of presence of the last decades (both from theatre and dance studies, and from a philosophical perspective), it would be necessary at least to briefly underline some points that may clarify my own perspective when introducing a notion like the one I am proposing here, of *haptic presence*, regarding contemporary dance.

## **2.1 Presence, sense, and meaning.**

In a subchapter of her *Sehen mit dem Stift in der Hand*, Isa Wortelkamp suggests that dance cannot be thought of without considering sense (*Sinn*) (Wortelkamp, 2006: 177). The author refers to how different discourses within theatre studies in the last decades approach the issue of presence opposing it to sense and meaning. Wortelkamp comments especially on some of the assertions about dance that are to be found in Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006). Wortelkamp questions this understanding of the sensible disconnected from or opposed to senses when approaching dance (Wortelkamp, 2006: 177). The author describes how this understanding is frequently described in terms of the opposition between presence and representation, being presence associated with the sensible and representation with meaning and sense. Wortelkamp questions, therefore, the fact that Lehman describes both as part of opposite forms of perception, underlining that the relationship between presence and the sensible cannot be thought of without considering sense.

Wortelkamp's observations give a first idea of one of the paths of the discussions within theatre and dance studies regarding presence. In other words, it is this comprehension of presence as opposed to sense, meaning, and representation that has been especially questioned in the past years. As some authors indicate, this understanding has contributed to building analysis models based on dualistic understandings of the theatrical phenomenon, which legitimizes certain questions while excludes others. Explained in a very succinct form, as mentioned above, in several analysis models within theatre studies, representation would be mostly associated with meaning and understanding while presence would preferably be related to a phenomenological aspect and to the scope of (lived) experience of performances. This is the conclusion formulated, for example, to a greater or lesser extent, by Erika Fischer-Lichte in her *The transformative power of performance (Ästhetik des Performativen)*, an aesthetic that she also names as an "aesthetics of presence" (*Ästhetik der Präsenz*) (2008: 101). A similar idea would be found in Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (on which Fischer-Lichte bases some of her key ideas) especially when the author describes presence regarding current dance tendencies in contrast to dramatic representations (Lehman, 2006: 95-96). Therefore, in this constellation involving presence and representation, a series of conceptual oppositions would be operating within the construction of different theatre analysis models, as well as: understanding/experience, representation/performativity, meaning/materiality, intelligible/sensible, comprehension/perception, etc. Fischer-Lichte identifies, for instance, between two orders of perception regarding the theatrical performance, although the author points out that these are not antagonistic orders. One corresponds to representation and the other one to presence, being constantly interrupted by each other (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 148). Regarding this dualistic coexistence, some scholars identify an accentuated valorisation of the scope of presence, which would mean valuing and legitimizing only one aspect of the binomial. These sorts of perspectives have been questioned because they describe, therefore, not only strategies and forms of artistic creation and tendencies, but also establish positions and paradigms of analysis and research

based on those oppositions and valorisations.<sup>24</sup> This is one of the observations that some authors like Katja Schneider, Gerald Siegmund, Susanne Foellmer, and Miriam Drewes have made regarding presence within the discourses concerning theatre and dance studies. In this regard, Schneider suggests, for instance, a more integral approach not just between presence and representation but also between materiality and semantics when it comes to describe and analyse dance, which means taking meaning and sense into account. (Schneider, 2016: 88).

The discussions regarding presence in connection to meaning, sense, and representation are also to be found in different philosophical movements, art theories, aesthetics, and artistic tendencies of the last years.<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, for instance, the historian and philosopher Ethan Kleinberg describes different approaches concerning a “presence-paradigm” in the philosophy of history and aesthetics, pointing out similar considerations regarding presence and meaning. The author describes how some tendencies seek to consider presence as a return to the real, material, world against meaning (Kleinberg, 2013: 11).<sup>26</sup> Kleinberg identifies the influence of authors like Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht in terms of a turn to presence as a shift away from the dominance of language, textuality, and content, towards experience and the real, especially his *Production of presence: what meaning cannot convey* (2013: 11). The art historian Keith Moxey (2013) also explains this movement in terms of a response to deconstructive and poststructuralist tendencies in arts, aesthetics, humanities and science. Referring to authors like Gumbrecht, Frank Ankersmith, and Eelco Runia, Moxey also identifies a shift “away from the linguistic preoccupations of poststructuralism” towards the realms of experience (Moxey, 2013: 58). Faced with the impossibilities

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<sup>24</sup> In *Tanz und Text*, Katja Schneider analyses the impact that this type of models has had on dance sciences, as well as the difficulties of applying a model of this nature to the analysis of dance performances. (Schneider, 2016: 87-94).

<sup>25</sup> See, for instance: Foster, Hal. *The return of the real. The Avant-Garde at the end of the century*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Cambridge/London, 1996.

<sup>26</sup> See Kleinberg, Ethan, “Presence *in Absentia*” in Ghosh, Ranjan and Kleinberg, Ethan (Eds.). *Presence. Philosophy, History, and Cultural Theory for the Twenty-First century*. Cornell University Press. New York, 2013. The author explains how an important shift took place within philosophy of history and language, especially from language towards experience, as an attempt to reclaim meaning outside the realms of language and representation. This turn was actually a turn towards materiality, towards actual things that can be felt and touched, as an attempt to reconnect “meaning” with something “real” (Kleinberg, 2013: 11).

postulated by deconstruction, like the impossibility of accessing the "real" through language, and the impossibility of any immediacy in the relationship with the world, the author explains how a new interest in the real arises, based on either going against meaning regarding the dominance of language or recovering meaning through the experience of the real (Moxey, 2013: 58). On the contrary, the theatre scholar Miriam Drewes refers to these inclinations and perspectives in her *Theater als Ort der Utopie* ideological and utopian. (2010: 225). The author also refers to this shift towards experience, especially highlighting the role that event and presence have played in the definition of aesthetic experience (Miriam Drewes, 2010). The author characterizes the fundamentals of these theories as fragile. Regarding authors like Erika Fischer-Lichte, Dieter Mersch, Gumbrecht, and Martin Seel, the author criticizes the emphasis and value on presence and event. Drewes refers to this movement as an "apology of the event and presence" that has been especially based on the postulates of avant-garde art regarding the crisis of representation (2010: 239, my translation). This foundation is what turns these categories, Drewes suggests, into existentialist, ideological, and utopian (2010: 225).

Nevertheless, on the other hand, poststructuralist perspectives still play a fundamental role regarding how the issue of presence has been approached in different disciplinary fields in the last years, especially considering Jacques Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence. As it is well known, Derrida criticized dualistic tendencies concerning philosophical traditions, especially because it involves valorising one of the parts involved in the construction of dualistic conceptions (for instance presence/absence, sensible/intelligible, mind/body, etc). Therefore, it means hierarchizing and establishing orders of subordination within those conceptions (Derrida en Reynolds, 2004: 7). The notion of presence, for Derrida, would be at the centre of this metaphysical exigency representing, through the dichotomy of presence and absence, the rule through which all other dichotomies are built (1997: 71). In this sense, the notion of presence plays an especial role when it comes to constructing meaning and conceptions, for instance, when it comes to understanding the level of presence

involved in the difference between speech and writing, as the author describes in *Speech and Phenomena* and other of his works (Marchant, 2013: 14). Under this light, and I will come to this later, Derrida also understands phenomenology as a metaphysics of presence for establishing dualistic understandings. Other authors, nevertheless, attempted to re-examine the relationship between deconstruction and phenomenology in the last years, identifying several points of contact. Jack Reynolds, for instance, contributes heavily in this regard, especially considering the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Reynolds, 2004). Reynolds underlines how Derrida himself, in his *Memoirs of the blind*, dedicates receptive attention to the work of Merleau-Ponty (Reynolds, 2004:195). Therefore, an important part of the current discourses on presence are related to not only the reception of deconstruction but also to the reception of a reconsideration of phenomenology in the fields of theatre, performance, and dance studies. This means revisiting the relationship between presence, sense, meaning, and representation.<sup>27</sup>

The different critical perspectives regarding the notion of presence in theatre, dance studies, and philosophy are, therefore, indispensable and fundamental to rethink presence nowadays and give us the opportunity to re-examine “paradigms of presence”, “aesthetics of presence” and phenomenological perspectives under another light considering, for instance, its relationship to sense, meaning, and representation.

Considering the above, I am interested in the approaches to the notion of presence developed by authors that seek to rethink the notion of presence out of a dualistic scope, as those described before, but also that do not regard sense or meaning as opposed to presence. One of these approaches, for instance, corresponds to that of Jean-Luc Nancy. Although Nancy is often considered to be in the midst of contemporary discussions that highlight the impossibility of

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<sup>27</sup> John Erikson discusses the reception of Derrida’s critique of the notion of presence in the field of theatre studies. See: Erikson, John. “Presence” in Krasner, David and Saltz, David Z. (Eds.), *Staging Philosophy. Intersections of Theater, Performance, and Philosophy*. University of Michigan Press. United States of America, 2006, pp. 142-159. Susanne Foellmer describes the reception of Merleau-Ponty in theater and dance studies. See: Foellmer, Susanne. *Am Rand der Körper. Inventuren des Unabgeschlossenen im zeitgenössischen Tanz*. Transcript Verlag. Bielefeld, 2009, p.45.

completely accessing sense and meaning in terms of its constant interruption, the author does approach the intertwining or coexistence between sense and the sensitive. As Francis Guibal underlines, following Jacques Derrida, Nancy constantly refers to “sense in all senses of the words sense” considering the complexity of the interrelationship between sense and the sensitive (Guibal, 2004: 11).<sup>28</sup> Nancy’s work in this regard, and his writings concerning dance, and I will come constantly to this in the following chapters, have already contributed to perspectives on dance in the last years, both in the context of philosophy of dance, of dance studies, and dance practices. The works on dance of philosophers like Marie Bardet (2012a) and Miriam Fischer-Geboers (2010), for instance, are an example of how the ideas of Jean-Luc Nancy are bringing about new perspectives on how to approach the dancing body and its relationship with sense (in all senses). Similarly, Dance Scholars, like Leoni Otto (2016) and Gerko Egert (2020) also consider perspectives developed by Nancy to approach the dancing body and its relationship with sense and the senses, the latest particularly regarding the sense of touch.

## **2.2 Presence, absence, and ephemerality.**

Some of the current discussions regarding the notion of presence both in dance studies and philosophy can also be seen as a way to understand the interconnection or coexistence of the movements of presence and absence. In theatre and dance studies, this issue has been approached in terms of ephemerality. This means to understand presence and the presence of the body considering a vanishing aspect, that is, always deferring from itself.

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<sup>28</sup> See Guibal, Francis and Jean-Clet Martin (Eds). *Sens en tous sens. Autour des travaux de Jean-Luc Nancy*. Éditions Galilée. Paris, 2004.

Several dance scholars like André Lepecki (2004), Mark Franco (1995), Gerald Siegmund (2006), Isa Wortelkamp (2006), Gabriele Klein (2009), and Gabriele Brandstetter (1995), among others, identify this comprehension of dance as an ephemeral or evanescent art in terms of a deferring presence to be already expressed in the firsts treaties that inaugurated modern dance, in the late seventeenth century. They suggest, nevertheless, that this ephemerality was not always considered in positive terms. The understanding of dance as a vanishing art was at that time rather conceived as a deficiency to be overcome, especially because dance was able to endure just for a short period of time in comparison with other arts.<sup>29</sup> Along with its choreographers and dancers, dance was condemned to be forgotten once the performance concluded.<sup>30</sup> This understanding will be underlying the different efforts to “fixate” presence through writing, that is, to schematize, inscribe, and codify the presence of the body through the creation of notation systems for movement.<sup>31</sup> The relationship between dance and presence in terms of ephemerality was, therefore, as Lepecki suggests, already understood as a critical issue in dance in that century (Lepecki, 2004: X). The valuing of ephemerality or considering performing arts positively as an art of the evanesce or of the self-erasure, has been identified regarding different historical moments. Gerald Siegmund, for instance, recognizes a turning point in Paul Valéry’s understanding of dance, particularly in his “L’Ame et la danse” and in his *Philosophie de la danse* (Siegmund, 2006: 52-53). Lepecki and Franko, on the other hand, propose that this idea came even more into focus especially due to deconstruction and the Derridean notion of *trace* (Lepecki, 2004: 5). In this context of valuing of ephemerality, the notion of presence and of presence of the body

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<sup>29</sup> See André Lepecki, “Inscribing dance” in *Of the presence of the body. Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, Wesleyan University Press, United States. There the author addresses the understanding of the evanescence of dance as a regret that must have been endured through writing in the eighteenth century. See also Mark Franko, “Mimique”, in *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*, ed. E.W. Goellner and J.S. Murphy (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

<sup>30</sup> This was the conclusion expressed, for instance, by Jean-George Noverre in his *Lettres sur la danse*, published in 1760.

<sup>31</sup> One canonical example corresponds to the notation system developed by Anger Feuillet. See: *Chorégraphie ou l’Art de Décrire la Danse, par Caractères, Figures et signes Démonstratifs*, 1888 [1699].

happened to be re-examined in the last decades, bringing about new perspectives when describing the relationship and coexistence of presence and absence.<sup>32</sup>

Authors like Hans-Thies Lehmann and Erika Fischer-Lichte also approach the issue of presence in theatre studies considering the movements of presence and absence in terms of ephemerality. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, their perspectives have been questioned because of their emphasis on presence. Gerald Siegmund points out that in theater and dance studies, the movement of withdrawing has not been taken properly into consideration when approaching ephemerality, especially because of the attention and valorisation that the notion of presence has received. In this sense, referring to a “spectacle of the value of the notion of presence” within theatre studies, Siegmund questions the reiterative use of the notion of presence (Siegmund, 2006: 10). As Susanne Foellmer points out, Siegmund turns over this Presence–Paradigm (*Präsenzparadigma*), in which the notion of presence and the sensuousness were the distinctive marks of the performative (Foellmer, 2009: 37-38). In this regard, Siegmund uses rather the notion of absence (*Abwesenheit*) to address these distinctive marks of the performative, placing it at the heart of a performative aesthetic of dance (*Performative Ästhetik des Tanzes*) (Siegmund, 2006: 10-11). What Siegmund suggests, therefore, is a strategic change of perspective, away from the notion of presence and towards the notion of absence (Siegmund, 2006: 58). This change of focus has repercussions for the analysis of dance, and it is aimed at addressing contemporary dance performances that challenge the analysis models and aesthetics based on the notion of presence. Instead of focusing on how presence is produced and intensified in the performances, Siegmund identifies several elements or manifestations of a staged absence based mainly on the works of choreographers like William Forsythe, Jérôme Bell, Xavier Le Roy, and Meg Stuart. Some of these elements that manifest a staged absence are an empty stage (with no human presence), particular treatment of objects, the treatment of dancers like

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<sup>32</sup> I recently published an article about this matter. See: Muñoz Carneiro, Sofia. “The intriguing presence of the body. Discussions around dance notation systems in the eighteenth century” in Althammer, Miriam/Arend, Anja K./Wieczorek, Anna (Eds.): *SCORES – Zwischen Dokumentation, Vermittlung und Kreation*, Epodium. München, 2023.

objects, or dancing around movements that are actually absent (Siegmond, 2006: 452).

The theatre compositor and writer Heiner Goebbels also introduces what he calls an “aesthetics of absence” –that defines his “theatre of absence” – as opposed to a more traditional understanding of the notion of presence in the context of contemporary dance and theatre. The author questions the idea that the artistic experience is guided just by the notions of presence and intensity. As elements of his aesthetic of absence, Goebbels also describes empty spaces that are part of his compositions on absence, like empty stages and a particular work with objects on stage (Goebbels, 2015: 4-5).<sup>33</sup>

However, relying on some perspectives coming from deconstruction, André Lepecki and Mark Franko, for instance, also approach the issue of presence in terms of ephemerality, highlighting the movements of vanishing but without considering any valuing of presence in terms of a dualistic comprehension of theater, dance, and performance.

As it has been suggested, the discussions concerning the relationship or intertwining between presence and absence are also to be found in different philosophical movements, such as that of deconstruction. Before Derrida, Martin Heidegger addressed the shifting nature of presence, pointing out a double movement of “coming closer” and “going away” (Heidegger, 1968: 236). Following some Heideggerian ideas and challenging the idea of an absolute presence, an indivisible self-presence or invariable presence, and a self-contained now, Derrida develops the notion of trace (1997). The author argues that the present or now is always compromised by a trace, which is in turn inscribed in presence itself. The inscription of traces is understood as a return *ad infinitum*, which means the possibility of their return and the finitude of their retention (Derrida, 1967a: 75-

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<sup>33</sup> An example of the functioning of some of these elements might be the performance *Stifter Dinge*, that has been touring since 2007. In the performance, explains Goebbels, “the performers are replaced by non-anthropomorphic machines and objects –elements of nature as water, fog, rain and ice–and elements of the *mise-en-scène* such as the curtains, the lighting and acoustic voices” (Goebbels, 2015: 6).

76).<sup>34</sup> The latter means that the trace cannot be completely maintained available, since it is always fading away. In other words, as similarly explained by Heidegger, there is always a simultaneous movement of returning or repetition intertwined with the movement of a withdrawal in terms of “coming closer” and “going away” (Heidegger, 1968: 236).

This movement of withdrawing is one of the key elements of Jean-Luc Nancy’s perspective on presence, described as “coming into presence”. Through this notion, Nancy understands presence as a passage, as the action of coming and going (Nancy, 2016: 218). In this movement, Nancy takes the notion of presence out of a dualistic understanding, focusing on the movement or process of constant arriving and withdrawing. As Christopher Watkin underlines, unlike Derrida, Nancy does not dismiss presence as metaphysics but rather attempts to reconsider presence from another perspective, especially otherwise than as self-presence or an absolute presence, challenging different dichotomies, such as that of presence and absence (Watkin, 2009: 144).

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<sup>34</sup> See Derrida, Jacques. *Speech and Phenomena. And other essays on Husserl’s Theory of signs*. Trans. David B. Allison. Northwestern University Press, 1973. Pg. 67

### **3. About the notion of touch and the haptic.**

The notions of touch and the haptic have gained growing attention in the last decades, both in different disciplinary fields and artistic practices (and the attention has been increased during the pandemic, as I suggested before). These notions have not been exempted from polemics and controversies. In the following, I am approaching some of these discussions concerning both notions.

When one approaches the notion of touch, its histories, multiple forms, and its relationship with the body and the environment, one finds two main ideas involved. On the one hand, touch is the most basic and fundamental of the senses, which allows us to orient ourselves in the world, as it has been identified since Aristotle (2008). But, on the other hand, some authors like Mark Paterson (2007) and Constance Classen (2012) among others, argue that this sense has remained forgotten or neglected for a long time in humanities and social sciences. One of the reasons for this oblivion that Mark Paterson identifies corresponds to the cultural assumption of primacy and superiority of the sense of sight in Western culture, established from the early days of philosophy (Paterson: 2007: 8).

Nevertheless, humanities and social sciences seem to have devoted crescent attention to touch in the past decades. That means a renewed interest regarding the sensory world in general and the sense of touch in particular, developing, for instance, a psychology of touch (Morton Heller), a sociology of touch (Mark Paterson), a history of the senses (Constance Classen), a politics of touch (Erin Manning), and a philosophy of touch (Jean-Luc Nancy).

Since philosophy is one of the disciplines most often attributed to the neglect regarding touch, especially for establishing a superiority of the sense of sight, it would be there where the earliest efforts to claim the sense of touch began to take

place. Following a philosophy of blindness, headed by Diderot's *Letters on the Blind* (2011[1749]) and a Nietzschean claim of the body, both the transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1991) and the phenomenology of perception of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2005), different efforts to reposition the notion of touch in humanities and social sciences began to emerge.<sup>35</sup> In this direction, contemporary philosophy continued to dedicate crescent attention to the senses in general and to the sense of touch in particular, as well as Emmanuel Levinás (1987), Gilles Deleuze (2003), Jacques Derrida (2005) and Jean-Luc Nancy (2008), among others.

Being another concept at the heart of deconstruction, the notion of touch has also been examined regarding the critiques of the metaphysical tradition.<sup>36</sup> In this sense, touch is also being approached considering the movements regarding presence described before (the movements of coming and withdrawing) in connection with other movements like that of interruption, the impossibility of immediacy, etc. Regarding Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, the notion of touch has also been questioned regarding a binary logic. This includes questioning the relationship or opposition, for instance, between closeness and distance. In this direction, Derrida questions touch when it becomes a new form of the metaphysics of presence that privileges immediacy over distance (Derrida, 2005). Derrida dedicates, therefore, one of his works to the issue of touch in Jean-Luc Nancy, because Nancy is considered as one of the authors who approaches touch out of a dualistic perspective (Derrida, 2005). Nancy approaches the fact that touch has been defined mostly by proximity and contact without considering the movements of interruption and separation (Nancy, 2013: 15). The author is not denying proximity and contact but approaching the role that distance plays in the

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<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche criticized traditional categories of being throughout his work. His criticism extends to the ways of understanding the body and experience, where the author questions the dichotomies, for example, of "body" and "mind." See: Brown, Kristen. *Nietzsche and Embodiment. Discerning Bodies and Non-dualism*. State University of New York Press. Albany, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> See: Derrida, Jacques. *On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy* (Christine Irizarry, Trans.). Stanford University Press. Stanford, California, 2005.

definition of touch and contact, questioning an absolute union and the immediacy of the contact between the bodies (Nancy, 2013:18).

This interest and attention to the notion of touch is also to be found in the field of dance studies, especially in resonance with the role of touch in contemporary dance. As I mentioned before, Gabriele Brandstetter underlines the fact that the sense of touch has played a fundamental role in dance throughout its history, both in a physical and affective sense (2013:3-4). The author suggests that the different forms of touch, considering its liberties, limits, options, and taboos, give insight into the different forms of dance (Brandstetter, 2013:3). Nevertheless, in addition to this fundamental role of touch in dance in general, in the context of contemporary dance, touch came into focus and began to be approached reflexively as a theme in itself in the artistic praxis. This has been mentioned and documented by several authors, like Gabriele Brandstetter (2013), Laurence Louppe (2010), and Gerko Egert (2020) for instance, particularly concerning different reconfigurations of touch and new possibilities of movement in dance. This means that touch has been explored in various dance practices, projects, and performances, creating several new forms of movements, interactions, gestures, and relations. As it is known, and I will come to this later, touch has also implied the development of techniques of movement, as well as that of *contact improvisation* which, as Laurence Louppe points out, play a fundamental role in certain aesthetic of weight in contemporary dance (Loupe, 2010: xx). Tactile relationships and dynamics of touch, thus, also began to be approached in all their intensities, considering what they have from darkness, sensuality, eroticism, intimacy, resonances, confusions, violence, and its tangible and intangible forms. As Egert suggests, contemporary dance performances can implicate different forms of quotidian touch in the forms of modulations, intensifications, and dramatizations, in the sense of actualization and differentiation (Egert, 2020: 3). This means that touch is always transforming itself through dance and transforming dance in its turn. In this sense, Egert suggests, regarding dance, that the “abstract forces of touch – their movements, sensations, affects, their productivity and multiplicity – produce new possibilities, and further movements” (Egert, 2020: 3).

Perspectives on touch developed in dance studies and in dance artistic practices are in constant and renewed dialogue with philosophy and human sciences, especially perspectives on phenomenology and deconstruction. Just to mention some examples, the dance performance *Invisible, danza que explota los sentidos* by the Chilean choreographers and dancers Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio, approach the sense of touch based on the work *The visible and invisible* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Following the philosopher, the choreographers address the notion of invisible—which gives the name to the performance—to explore what goes beyond the visible through the use of technology. As another example, this time coming from dance studies, in the introduction of Gerko Egert's *Moving Relation, touch in contemporary dance*, one can identify the contributions of philosophical movements, like deconstruction. The author mentions, for instance, the dance performance *is maybe* by Angela Schubot and Jared Gradinger, in which the sense of touch is considered by the movements not only of “coming closer” but also of “pulling away”. In this sense, Egert considers an integral approach between not only the movements of intimacy and immediacy but also those of distance and differences (Egert, 2020: 1).

Finally, the interest in the notion of touch has also increased in recent years as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. As I mentioned in the beginning, the pandemic produced a raising awareness of touch as one of the means by which the virus is transmitted. In this context of untouchability and constant surveillance of touch, different perspectives examine the repercussions of policies of distance and separation, as well as the motivations for the search for new forms of contact. Perspectives on the matter, like those of the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (2022), the Cultural Studies researchers Henriette Steiner and Kristin Veel (2021), and the sociologists Gabriele Klein and Katharina Liebsch (2022), became key to rethink the notion of touch in the context the pandemic. The ideas of “proliferations” (Nancy 2022: 79), of “massive reconfigurations of relationships” (Steiner/Veel 2021: 1), and of “crisis of the touch-regime” (Klein/Liebsch 2022: 136), for instance, give important insights about how the pandemic made us rethink touch. This interest in touch in the context of the pandemic is also shared with arts, as I

already mentioned some pages back when addressing the performance *Skin Hunger* which explores the reconfigurations of human relationships during the pandemic with regard to the deprivation of touch.

As to the notion of haptic, one of the first times that it appeared in connection to arts was in the book *Late Roman art Industry* published in 1901, by the Austrian art historian Alöis Riegl. The author develops a system based on a “near view” (Nahsicht), related to the sense of touch, and a “distant view” (Fernsicht), related to the sense of sight. That is to say, he relates a “tactile/optic system” to a “near/distance” system, to analyze the development of Baroque’s sensibility, characterized, for Riegl, by a “haptic (near) view”. For Riegl, therefore, the haptic is related to what is near, to closeness, proximate, and contact (Riegl, 1985: 24).

Considering Riegl’s ideas, Deleuze and Guattari (1987), dedicate a chapter in *A thousand Plateaus –“Smooth and the striated”–*, to further develop the notion of haptic. The authors underline that one of Riegl’s essential contributions is that he gave the haptic a fundamental aesthetic dimension, where the eye can acquire a haptic function (1987: 492-493). In *Logic of sensation*, Deleuze approaches further the notion of haptic in connection with colours, especially in the works of Francis Bacon and Paul Cézanne, introducing the idea of a haptic space (2003: 133). The author argues that certain arrangements of tonalities in the canvas that accentuate, for instance, the idea of warm and cool, generate a “close vision” that defines the haptic space (Deleuze, 2003: 133).

Nevertheless, despite Deleuze’s contributions, his notion of haptic has been criticized, since it appears to be dependable on proximity and closeness. Jacques Derrida, for instance, identifies in Deleuze’s argument the value of a close presence at the heart of Deleuze’s notion of haptic, which will ultimately define the idea of “close vision” involved in the haptic space (Derrida, 2005: 124).

In a similar direction, the sociologist Mark Paterson suggests that from Riegl’s art history through Deleuze and Guattari, the notion of haptic is constantly formulated in terms of closeness and proximity (Paterson, 2007: 20). In this direction, Paterson proposes including the notions and movements of distance in the understanding of haptic.

Some authors, such as James Gibson (1983), Paul Rodaway (2002), and Mark Paterson as well (2007), aim at incorporating an expanded definition of the notion of haptic, including not just the movements regarding distance, but also those of the somatic senses. Paul Rodaway, for instance, refers to a “Haptic Geography” in which he defines the haptic including tactile contact through the skin, the movements of the body, and the relationship of the movement through the environment. In this conception, the author includes the notion of kinaesthesia in the definition of haptic (Rodaway, 2002: 42). Similarly, Mark Paterson identifies as haptic what corresponds to the sense of touch in all its forms, including the senses and perceptions related to proprioception, vestibular sense, kinaesthetic sense, cutaneous, and tactile sense.

This idea of an expanded definition of the notion of haptic that connects touch with the somatic senses has already been approached in the context of dance, dance studies, and philosophy of dance. The philosopher Marie Bardet, for instance, identifies a “proprioceptive paradigm” in which touch and the somatic senses come into contact, generating “haptic corporalities” (Bardet, 2018). This means integrating awareness of space, spatial location, and the action of the different parts of the body within the notion of haptic. The importance of the relationship between the somatic senses and touch has been described by different authors in terms of “listening”, understood as an expansion of the awareness of the body regarding space, movement, and the relationship with other bodies. Gabrielle Brandstetter, for instance, analyses how “listening”, in terms of intensified attention, became a key element of dance practices, as that of *contact improvisation*. The author relates, therefore, the idea of kinaesthetic with that of touch in contemporary dance (Brandstetter, 2013b: 164).

## CHAPTER 1:

### Presence –Touch –Haptic.

The soul is the presence of the body, its position, its “stance” and “sistence” as being *out-side* (ex). The soul is the fact that a body exists, in other words, that there is extension and exposition. It is therefore offered, presented open to the outside.

(Nancy, 2008: 128).

It is pressure on the skin, or literally contact between the body and its environment, and it can also refer to kinesthesia, that is the ability of the body to perceive its own motion. Touch is, therefore, about both an awareness of presence and of locomotion. Together these can be described as the haptic sense.

(Rodaway, 2002: 42).

## Introduction

In the present chapter, I introduce a first definition of *haptic presence* as a “haptic coming into presence” and as “haptic exposition”. I start by drawing on the notion of “coming into presence”, developed by Jean-Luc Nancy in several of his works. Following Martin Heidegger, Nancy attempts to redefine presence out of the scope of the metaphysical tradition, understanding it as a passage, as the movement coming and withdrawing. I explore how these ideas about presence are connected to perspectives from theatre and dance studies, especially considering the notions of evanescence and ephemerality. Subsequently, I refer to Nancy’s comprehension of the notion of touch, which opens up new perspectives regarding touch linked to the notions of interruption and distance. In this direction, I discuss the reception of these ideas in Dance Studies, taking especially into account Gerko Egert’s contributions (2020). Considering these interconnections I approach, thereafter, the notion of haptic following the thoughts of different authors, like Paul Rodaway (2002) and Mark Paterson (2007), to refer to an expanded definition of the notion. Throughout the chapter, I analyse specific moments of the performances *For the Sky not to fall* by Lia Rodrigues and *I need a man to perform this duet* by Ceren Oran, to explain how touch comes into presence and how a haptic constellation can be exposed or generated in contemporary dance.

## 1. A (haptic) coming into presence.

### 11. Nativeness: the coming into presence

One of the key ideas that the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy highlights when examining and redefining the notion of presence is that of “coming”. The notion that he suggests is “coming into presence” (*venir* or *naître à la présence*) (Nancy, 1993: 4).<sup>37</sup> This comprehension of presence is related to its etymology. On the one hand, the notion of presence has its roots in the Latin noun *praesentia*. The prefix *prae* (pre) means “before, in front, in advance” (Hoad, 1996: 366), the verb *esse* means “to be” (Partridge, 2006: 994), and the suffix *ia* designates states, qualities, and conditions (Glare, 1968: 812). In this sense, *praesentia* can be described as the condition of being before, in front, or in advance. On the other hand, its meanings as the ancient Greek word *Parousía* (παρουσία) (Spiliopoulou et al., 1997: 619), the notion of presence is related to an arrival, advent, visit, or coming (Strong, 1997: 365).<sup>38</sup> To come into presence, therefore, for Nancy, is related to the idea of the coming of something that is being put or brought forward (*mise devant*) (Nancy, 1993: 3-4). Nevertheless, despite these etymological links, whilst Nancy does focus on coming, he also takes the movements of subtraction and withdrawal into

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<sup>37</sup> In *At the limits of presentation. Coming into presence and its aesthetic relevance in Jean-Luc Nancy's Philosophy*, Martta Heikkilä identifies one of the roots of the notion “coming into presence”, both in Jean-Luc Nancy and in Martin Heidegger, in Hegel's questioning of *Darstellung*. This notion, which refers to the presentation of an idea in its sensible figure, would have been one of the starting points for Nancy to understand the event-like character of being (Heikkilä, 2007: 81). Although the origins of the notion of “coming into presence” is out of the scope of this dissertation, for information about its roots see: “Coming into presence in Nancy's thinking: Remarks on historical background” in Heikkilä, Martta *At the limits of presentation. Coming into presence and its aesthetic relevance in Jean-Luc Nancy's Philosophy*, Helsinki University Printing House. Finland, 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Heidegger criticizes the notion of presence understood as *parousía*, he does so whilst understanding it to mean permanence and constancy, linked to the idea of possession or property (Heidegger, 1997: 168). Jacques Derrida also criticizes the notion of presence as *parousía* as it related to the subordination of the trace to the full presence (Derrida, 1997: 71).

account. In other words, Nancy adds to the “coming” a “going”, a *departure*: “This coming is also a going away” (Nancy, 1993: 4). This going away, this departure, is necessary for the coming to take place.

Heidegger’s influential position with regard to presence has been invoked already in the introduction, directly and indirectly. Certainly, Heidegger’s “destruction” (*Destruktion*), which draws attention to the withdrawal regarding presence, has been an important influence on Nancy’s work. To put it simply, his criticism draws on the fact that presence has been considered, since Plato, as the permanent essence of things, that is to say, as that which permanently remains and persists throughout all that happens (Heidegger, 1997b: 30). This is part of Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics, where being is understood as presence: an authentic or constant presence (*ständige Anwesenheit*) that is permanently available (*vorhanden*). This is actually one direction taken within Heidegger’s famous assertion that the question of being has been forgotten (Heidegger, 1996: 2). In *Was heißt Denken?* The author insists on the notion of withdrawal and the movement of withdrawing as something that still needs to be thought<sup>39</sup>. This withdrawing (*das Sichentziehen*) is not nothing, he argues. It is not so much about what is specifically being withdrawn but about the constant movement of withdrawing. It is, the withdrawal (*der Entzug*), rather an event (*ein Ereignis*). This event is a constitutive part of “being” understood as an unceasing becoming yet remained underexamined in philosophy. Furthermore, Heidegger points out that “the event of withdrawal could be what is most present in all our present, and so infinitely exceed the actuality of everything actual” (Heidegger, 1968: 9). This also means to understand the temporality of presence not as something stable and permanent. The now (*Das Jetzt*), therefore, implicated in the notion of presence, is not understood as a stable present, completely available or eternal, but rather as something always escaping, concealed, always detaching from itself, that has

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<sup>39</sup> In *Was heißt Denken*, Heidegger insists on this withdrawal not only as something constitutive of being but also as something constitutive of the human being as such. It is constitutive to the extent that man is inclined towards that which is subtracted. That inclination, for Heidegger, is what defines the human (1968: 9).

rather an aporetic nature.<sup>40</sup> The notion of presence, therefore, for Heidegger, is also determined by this movement of temporality which is the horizon of being. This is important because Heidegger's criticism —or *destruction*—of the notion of presence is also related to the issue of temporality. Presence is not understood as constant presence, but rather as taking place. Since the early thinking of the Greeks, Heidegger suggests, the being of beings has been understood as the presence of what presents itself, and therefore, as the more general quality of beings. However, Heidegger describes the presence of what is present (*das Anwesen des Anwesenden*) in terms of the double movement between concealment and unconcealment. In this sense, Heidegger points out that what is present comes out from unconcealment, and “having risen from unconcealment, what is present has also entered into what was already unconcealed” (Heidegger, 1968: 236). As put forward by Heidegger, this rise from unconcealment can be described in terms of what lies before us. This lying-before-us entails a certain duration, a duration of unconcealment (Heidegger, 1968: 237). Nevertheless, on the other hand, the coming into presence is not pure unconcealment. There is rather always something being held back and the possibility of its absencing into concealment. These all are traits of presence that, according to Heidegger, were involved in the thinking of the Greeks. In this sense, Heidegger interrogates the Greek etymology of “being present” underlining at the same time the meanings of “coming closer” and “going away” (Heidegger, 1968: 236). Although the Greeks acknowledged this dynamic, shifting nature of the presence of what is present, asserts Heidegger, they did not fully interrogate it (Heidegger, 1968: 238).

Considering Heidegger's understanding of presence, Jean-Luc Nancy, in *Birth to presence* (1993) describes this movement as “nativeness”, approaching the importance of the movement of departure or “going away”. The idea of nativeness means that presence is a birth that constantly erases itself, it consists

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<sup>40</sup> In the withdrawal lies also, Heidegger insists, something essential of the nature of the human being. The human being, for Heidegger, is struck by the withdrawal, in the sense that is attracted or affected by that which constantly escapes. Because of this tendency towards what escapes, Heidegger describes the human being as a pointer (*Ein Zeichen*), in the sense that the human being is always pointing towards what withdraws, or rather towards the movement of withdrawal (Heidegger, 2015: 8-10).

of the constant movement of coming and departing, of back and forth from one birth to another birth (an infinite finitude). Nancy is thinking about the birth, for instance, that is present in all verbs (to think is already to have thought but not already to think). That is why Nancy describes this nativeness as endless birth contained in all verbs: "Birth is this slipping away of presence through which everything comes to presence" (Nancy, 1993:4).

This idea of "nativeness" underlies Nancy's conception of presence as something fluid, where its sustenance and permanence are only understood in terms of *passage* (Nancy, 2006: 191). Nancy points it out this way:

Presence is not a quality or a property of the thing. It is the act through which the thing is brought forth: *prae-est*. It is brought forth or brought before its nature as a thing, before everything that thrusts this nature into the world of its various connections: origins, relations, processes, finalities, becomings. The nature of the thing lies in its birth, as the word "nature" (*natura, nasci*) suggests, and in its unfolding within these relations. It draws its support from this movement alone, and its permanency lies in this very passing.

(Nancy, 2006: 191, italics in the original).

At the heart of this idea lies a notion of presence inextricable from absence (which itself is not understood as the negative of presence). Presence is neither understood as a quality or property of a thing nor as a thing or substance (Nancy, 2006: 191-192). It is rather a movement: a movement of passage, of coming and going. It is in this movement where presence is subtracted. Moreover, presence is the movement of subtraction. In this sense, being is not understood as presence but as a movement of presence.

Considering Nancy's approach to the notion of presence, Christopher Watkin underlines that the author is not dismissing presence as metaphysics as Jacques Derrida does (and others before and after him), but rather attempts to think presence other than self-presence (Watkin, 2009: 144). Presence is not understood as being, that is, as something stable, but rather as passage. In this sense, Nancy elaborates a notion of presence inseparable from the notion of absence, challenging at the same time the dichotomy between both notions.

This idea of coming into presence has also been considered by Heidegger and Nancy when approaching arts. Both authors consider this idea of bringing something forward in connection to arts regarding the notion of technique, especially taking into account how the coming into presence can be displayed (Nancy, 1996: 25). In this sense, the issue of the technique, for Nancy, is closely related to the idea of production. Nancy underlines that "technique means knowing how to go about producing what does not produce itself by itself" (Nancy, 1996: 25). Following Heidegger, Nancy understands production also as "“coming into presence” or “coming into being”. And "techniques" is today the mode in which this coming unfolds" (Nancy, 1996: 25).<sup>41</sup> In this sense, in his essay "The Technique of the Present: On On Kawara", Nancy refers to the coming into presence in the context of arts as a technique, a "technique productive of presence" (Nancy, 2006: 191).<sup>42</sup>

André Lepecki also describes this movement regarding the dancing body when he addresses the question about how to approach the "presence of a dancing body" from the different reconfigurations of the relationship between dance and its "coming into presence" (Lepecki, 2006: 5). The author also considers the movements of coming forward and going away as fundamental aspects of the coming into presence. As mentioned already in the introduction, this idea of presence as passage, as something evanescent and unstable, as something that

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<sup>41</sup> This quote corresponds to the Footnote n°45 (Nancy, 1996:110).

<sup>42</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht also relates the notions of presence and production, following Jean-Luc Nancy and Martin Heidegger in *Production of presence: what meaning cannot convey* (2004). Some of his ideas have been criticized considering the dualistic understanding or opposition between presence and meaning. See: Drewes, Miriam. *Theater als Ort der Utopie. Zur Ästhetik von Ereignis und Präsenz*. Transcript Verlag. Bielefeld, 2010, pp.56-57.

is always coming and going, has been similarly identified in theatre and dance studies as ephemerality. As André Lepecki and other authors argue, this understanding of presence in correspondence with the performative phenomenon can be found in the first treatises for notation of dance movement in terms of a critical issue that already implied presence in connection with absence. Lepecki identifies certain “early ephemerality” documented in dance, that allow us not only to understand dance as an elusive art but also to reconsider *presence* and, therefore, the presence of the body, as something that is always deferring from itself, always within the movement of vanishing. In this direction, Lepecki even suggests that the conditions necessary to establish “an understanding of presence as invisible, elusive –presence as condemnation to disappearance” emerged actually in this context in the eighteenth century (Lepecki, 2004: 129). It is this “early ephemerality” what already posed the critical question about the issue of presence and of the presence of the body in dance. In this sense, Lepecki further proposes regarding Feuillet’s *Chorégraphie* that “the presence of the body is always preceded, always prefaced by, always grounded on, an open field of absence” (Lepecki, 2004: 3).

Nevertheless, Gerald Siegmund, in correspondence with Heidegger’s assertions, points out that in theatre and dance studies, the movement of withdrawing has not been taken properly into consideration when approaching ephemerality, especially because of the attention and valorisation that the notion of presence has received on its own. The author argues that the notion of ephemerality has become a “safe place” for the notion of presence, but it does not account for the movements of withdrawal. That is the reason why he proposes a change of perspective when analysing dance as a way to focus on that process of withdrawing and not just on the coming. As mentioned in the introduction, one of his strategies consists of focusing on the notion of absence, proposing a new aesthetic of the performative in correspondence with artistic tendencies that question a “paradigm of presence” and challenge the presence of the body (Siegmund, 2006: 452). As mentioned in the introduction, the author identifies several elements or manifestations of a staged absence based mainly on the

works of choreographers like William Forsythe, Jérôme Bell, Xavier Le Roy, and Meg Stuart. Some of these elements consist of empty stages (with no human presence), particular treatment of objects, the treatment of dancers like objects, or dancing around movements that are actually absent (Siegmund, 2006: 452). However, Siegmund does not dismiss completely the notion of presence but rather understands it always in connection to the notion of absence when examining dance performance. In this sense, the author indicates:

Starting with the empty space, through a certain way of dealing with the body, to the separation of hearing and seeing, whereby one parameter is made absent, they create significant gaps in the stage action that almost invite the audience to create their own imaginative efforts. The concept of absence naturally also invokes its opposite, namely “presence”. Absence and presence cannot be viewed in isolation from each other.

(Siegmund, 2006: 10, my translation).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Translated from German: “Anfangen beim leeren Raum, über einen bestimmten Umgang mit dem Körper, bis hin zur Trennung von Hören und Sehen, wobei der jeweils eine Parameter abwesend gemacht wird, fügen sie dem Bühnengeschehen signifikante Lücken zu, die die Zuschauer zu imaginativen Eigenleistungen geradezu auffordern. Mit dem Begriff der Abwesenheit ist natürlich auch dessen Gegenteil, nämlich »Präsenz«, aufgerufen. Absenz und Präsenz sind nicht voneinander losgelöst zu betrachten“.

As I suggested in the introduction, the movements of coming and withdrawing recently described concerning the notion of presence, are also consistent with Jean-Luc Nancy's comprehension of the notion of touch. In other words, it is possible to identify the common ground between the notions of presence and touch. In this sense, for Nancy, touch implies the movement of a trace, always fading away and returning since touch:

[...] grazes and pricks, punctures or seizes, indiscernibly and in a vibration where it immediately withdraws. The touch itself is its own trace already, which is to say, it wipes itself away as a mark or the point of its imprint while propagating its effects of motion and emotion.

(Nancy, 2013: 19).

Being the notion of touch another notion at the heart of deconstruction, this notion has also been examined regarding a binary logic that privileges immediacy over distance. In this sense, Nancy approaches the fact that touch has been defined mostly by proximity and contact without considering the movements of interruption and separation (Nancy, 2013: 15). The author is not denying proximity and contact but approaching the role that distance, interruption, and separation play in the definition of touch and contact, questioning an absolute union and immediacy of the contact between the bodies (Nancy, 2013:18). Indeed, Nancy also refers to touch as the movement of engaging in proximity. But even in the closest contact there is always an interruption, always a distance, even if it is an infinitesimal distance (2013:18).

In this direction, Nancy underlines that touch can also be the movement of a distance. In *Noli me Tangere*, Nancy addresses the scene "do not touch me" (*No li me Tangere*) from the Gospel of John, in which the prohibition of contact is evoked at the moment of Jesus's resurrection. Nancy examines how this scene is

approached in different paintings, approaching the figures of touch or of “do not touch”. The author refers to how in some particular cases –as in Pontormo, Bronzino, Dürer, Cano and some anonymous paintings– Jesus touch Maria Magdalena in order to maintain a distance, in order not to be touched (Nancy, 2008c: 34-36).

Nothing prevents us from thinking that, in order to stop or gently reject the woman’s gesture, the man ends up having to touch her. It would, however, be more likely for him to achieve this by withdrawing his hands from her. In making any other gesture, he becomes the one who touches, and accordingly the meaning of his phrase is shifted: “Don’t touch me, for it is I who touch you”. And this touching can be understood – if one indeed wishes to go from one painting to another in thought or to superimpose their motifs– a very singular combination of distancing and tenderness, benediction and caress. “Don’t touch me, for I’m touching you, and this touch is such that it holds you at a distance.”

(Nancy, 2008c: 34-36).

Nancy’s approach to the notion of touch considering the movements of interruption and distance have already been approached within the field of dance studies and philosophy of dance, as I will discuss more extensively in the Third Chapter (Weighings). The dance scholar Gerko Egert, for instance, considers Nancy’s notion of interruption in several of his analysis, to approach touch in contemporary dance. In an illuminating article –“Movements of Touch in MAYBE FOREVER”– Egert (2013) identifies the movements of “drawing close” and “withdrawing” when analysing touch in contemporary dance. The author examines the dance performance *Maybe forever* by Meg Stuart and Philipp Gehmacher, recognizing different gestures and instances of touch not merely as moments of bodily contact, but also as moments containing elements of separation and

distance (Egert, 2013: 64). The author analysis, for example, how the moments of “drawing near” do not produce necessarily a moment of contact: “each other with arms opened forward, but when their bodies touch, they do not put their arms around each other, instead turning away and withdrawing (with their arms still outstretched), thus interrupting the contact of their bodies” (Egert, 2013: 67).

Again and again, the process of drawing near is interrupted and begun anew. In these unfinished movements, characterized by their own interruption, or in which touch misses its end and bodily contact remains partial, the potentiality of touch comes to light. Even in the bodily contact made possible by drawing near, this potentiality is not erased. When the bodies of the two dancers touch, begin to embrace, a potentiality remains in the incompleteness of the embrace: in the very moment in which the arms are not (yet) closed, a non-touch appears, which allows for an openness of the possibilities of movement.

(Egert, 2013: 67).

## 1.2 Lia Rodrigues:

### *For the Sky not to fall*

In a relatively dark atmosphere, ten dancers stand in a row in front of the spectators who are seated on the floor throughout the theatre room. The dancers are naked. They have different elements in front of them, like coffee, flour, and different seasoning powders, like turmeric and ginger. Slowly they take the coffee powder and spread it on their bodies, from the head to the feet.



**Image 1.**

Lia Rodrigues:

*For the Sky not to Fall*

They shower themselves with coffee using one hand first and then with both hands, leaving the body full of this brown powder. They touch and rub themselves with coffee in their hands, leaving traces of this powder and of their movements on their bodies, like visible and smellable traces of touch. Likewise, they also blow the coffee, covering with it their heads and faces.

At this moment, the spectators begin to smell the coffee. After being showered with it, the dancers stand up and begin to walk slowly toward the spectators, that are seated on the floor. Gradually they reach the floor level and go gently through the audience. Without touching the spectators, they pass by, crossing the limits of proxemics. Without saying a word or making any noise, they pass by quietly but so close that one feels intensively the mixture of smells emanating from the skin. The dancers also stop and stare for a few seconds maintaining eye contact and generating a moment of intimacy with each person in the audience. Afterwards, they continue their path across the people in the room, leaving behind them traces of their way in the form of coffee powder. At this moment, one can already describe the double movement of presence, its coming and withdrawal or fading away.

*For the sky not to fall* was created in 2015 and presented in Muffathalle in Munich, in 2017. In the performance, the Brazilian Choreographer Lia Rodrigues approaches a way of resisting crises and chaos in the world. Based on the shaman Davi Kopenawa, from Yanomami culture, the choreographer refers to the myth of the end of the world through a ritual dance. The ten dancers use their rhythms to evoke the need to protect their Amazonian Forest from ecological disasters<sup>44</sup>. In this context, the choreographer asks herself: what can be made in this time of multiple crises in the world? How to avoid or stop the sky, above us, not to falling at all? How resistance can be achieved? Her answer is “to dance, dance to hold the sky. This is what we can do. For the sky not to fall... we dance”.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.dansametropolitana.cat/en/shows/para-que-o-ceu-nao-caia-so-sky-doesnt-fall>

<sup>45</sup> See <https://www.mundodadanca.art.br/2016/08/para-que-o-ceu-nao-caia.html>

The scene described at the beginning creates an atmosphere that one will find throughout the dance performance in different forms and intensities. The use of diverse elements and materialities in the form of flour and powders, like ginger and turmeric powders, are continued to be used, rubbed, or blown on the bodies of the dancers during the performance. Increasingly, the skin becomes full of different powders, of different colours and smells, making the skin come to presence through different pigments and odours.



**Image 2.**

Lia Rodrigues:

*For the Sky not to Fall*

If one returns to the difference between the Latin noun *praesentia* and the Greek term *parousía*, one can think about this scene in different ways. Considering the first one, linked to the idea of the condition of being before, one can identify a variety of elements that are being brought forward, like the different materialities that are being displayed in front of the audience and the bodies of the dancers. But if one considers further the idea of coming in terms of an arrival one can also think about the idea of the visit, where the dancers visit the other, the body of the other. They come close, breaking the proxemics and bringing closer the smells and colours that were felt and seen before. And if we consider the idea of withdrawing contained in the idea of coming one can think about the traces that are going away while they remain, like the traces of coffee on the ground, the mixture of smells whose intensity slowly goes away while the dancers pass by the audience, and the presence of the body of the other that remains while departing. As I mentioned in the introduction, Jacques Derrida points out that the trace is inscribed in presence itself. This can be understood as a return *ad infinitum*, which means the possibility of the return of the inscription of traces and the finitude of their retention (Derrida, 1967a: 75-76). In other words, although the trace cannot be completely maintained available, since it is fading away, there is always a simultaneous movement of returning or repetition intertwined with the movement of a withdrawal.

Therefore, it is important to approach the double movement that presence entails. As I mentioned before, how something comes to presence also means addressing both the coming closer and the fading away. In this sense, the notion of trace is crucial to approaching how a trace of touch is left behind through the traces of coffee. The smell and the feeling of closeness remain, returning beyond that very moment in which we felt the proximity with the dancers. All these haptic elements remain in their fading away, placing us constantly in this haptic constellation during the performance. These moments mark a tone; they give a tone to the coming moments, and they continue to come into presence during the performance, even though they are not there anymore. This means taking into consideration not only what comes, but also how the movement of the withdrawal actually happens, involving the whole performance. It is not just a moment; it rather

sets a tone; it opens a dimension that will accompany us until the end and beyond. There is always something that remains, something that keeps coming into presence, that touches even though it is no longer there.

In *For the sky not to fall*, touch comes into presence through the materialities, through the proximity of the dancers and their distancing, through the smell, and the colours that highlight the skin. This opens a particular haptic dimension and a haptic coming into presence, where different elements related to touch are being displayed. Although the spectators do not really have a tactile experience itself, they have a haptic experience through the relationship with the dancers that brings touch into presence through different powders, colours, and smells displayed throughout the skin.

In this context, touch comes into presence in connection to the rhythms and movements that generate a form of resistance (*for the sky not to fall*). The combination of elements and references to touch generates a haptic constellation that becomes part of this resistance, accompanying the audience in this experience. The spectator is drawn into the performance in an immersive way in which it is possible to experience a haptic constellation through the different senses, like a haptic dimension of smell.

## 2. Presence as (haptic) ex-position.

### 2.1 Exposition and *Expeausition*, the exposition of the skin.

Another key notion that the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy introduces when examining the notion of presence is that of exposition. Presence is being exposed, writes Jean-Luc Nancy. Presence is ex-position (Nancy, 2014: 75-77). This does not mean just the display of a surface or an extension. The ex-position does not consist of putting something in view that has been hidden or concealed (Nancy, 2008a: 35). Nancy refers to this notion rather in terms of taking-place. He understands this as a spacing in terms of “the places for the existence of being” (Nancy, 2008: 91). In other words, the ex-position does not involve just a geographical point, as it could be the location of something at a certain point in the space. It involves rather a certain sort of relational quality of being-exposed, of being outside, on the outside, with others in the world. Following Martin Heidegger, Nancy emphasizes this idea using a hyphen after the prefix “ex,” which means out, outside (or being-ex). As well as in Heidegger’s works, the prefix “ex” is underlined in several of Nancy’s conceptions, for instance: ex-sistance, ex-position, extension, and ex-scription. The “ex” marks, therefore, the movement toward an exteriority. Nancy also approaches this notion when considering the relationship between presence and body. (Nancy, 2008a:123). The body, for the author, has rather its interiority from being outside. The very notion of being, therefore, involves the “ex” as being outside (or being ex). In this sense, Nancy suggests that the

presence of the body is its position as being out-side (ex) (Nancy, 2008a: 128). That means to consider the presence of the body as the ex-position.

Nancy stresses these connections between body and ex-position in *Corpus* using the word “*expeausition*” as one of its subtitles. The author includes a “*peau*” which gives the word the same sound as “exposition” in French but introduces an additional meaning: the exposition of the skin. The English translation of the subtitle is “Skin-Show” (Nancy, 2008a: 33). The reference to the skin is a reference to the body and the senses of the body, or rather, an allusion to the body as a feeling or sensing body in connection to the being outside (ex)<sup>46</sup>. It is also a reference to the sense of touch, to which Nancy gives considerable attention throughout his work. I will approach the notion of touch extensively in the next chapters, but it is worth mentioning beforehand this link between the notion of exposition and the sense of touch, considering the skin. In “On the soul”, Nancy mentions this being outside in connection with the sense of touch regarding the skin. He points out that one touches oneself through the skin, and this self-touching means that one is exposed to oneself by touching oneself.

The reference to the body and the skin —this being exposed of the skin— is inseparable from the being itself. That is why Nancy underlines the exposition of the body as the essential structure of being, where “the body is the being-exposed of the being” (Nancy, 2008a:35). In other words, the skin and certain “materiality” or extension that the body is, are inseparable from its exposition. The author also approaches the body in this fragment in terms of its parts, its members, cells and membranes, features, and colours. For Nancy, the body is also an unceasing assemblage, uncoupling, dissemination, and propagation of cells that never ends its movement. That is why the author refers to the materiality of the body not in terms of substance, reduced to a self-closed substance, but rather in terms of *material freedom* (Nancy, 2008a: 35). In this sense, Nancy refers to the skin as that

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<sup>46</sup> Unlike renowned phenomenological analyses, such as those of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Nancy does not approach the idea of “self-touching” regarding a primary interiority. The author criticizes these perspectives, underlining the idea of the outside as the fundamental movement of the subject. In this sense, for instance, Nancy approaches the self-touching insisting that the body is always out-side and accedes to itself as outside. In this sense, the author argues that “I touch myself from outside, I don’t touch myself from inside” (Nancy, 2008a: 128).

which wraps and exposes a matter of freedom, which the body is. In “On the soul”, Nancy stresses that “it’s not just that the body is exposed but that the body *consists* in being exposed. A body is being exposed” (Nancy, 2008a:124, italics in the original). And that exposition is connected to the skin, to the *expeausition*.

Nancy also approaches the notion of exposition linked to the notion of presence in the context of arts. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in his essay “The Technique of the Present: On On Kawara”, Nancy refers to the idea of production when approaching the notion of technique. In this relationship, Nancy also links the notion of exposition with that of presence: “The pro-duction of the thing brings it forth, presents and exposes it” (Nancy, 2006: 191). To expose, explains Nancy, means is also related here to the movement of the ex, towards an exteriority. To expose, therefore, in connection to the arts, means to “move away from a simple position, which is always also a deposition, an abandonment to the contingency of a passing moment, circumstance, or point of view” (Nancy, 2006: 191). It is a “technique productive of presence,” of what is ex-posed and brought forward (Nancy, 2006: 191). That is, the technique produces the coming into presence. For Nancy, therefore, techniques of presence, therefore, are also techniques of exposition.

This understanding of presence as ex-position in connection to the movement towards an exteriority, to the skin and tactile experience and ex-position of the skin, and to the notion of production opens the possibility to examine the notion of touch in dance considering different ways and strategies of that ex-position. What happens when touch is being ex-posed, when is being danced?

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This idea of ex-position and *expeausition*, and its intrinsic movement towards exteriority, has interesting points of contact with the notion of haptic, considering an expanded definition that includes the idea of awareness of presence.

The notion of haptic comes from the Greek *háptō* (ἅπτός / ἅπτιξός) which means: “concerning the sense of touch” (Chantraine, 1998: 2). Some authors, as well as James Gibson (1983), Paul Rodaway (2002), and Mark Paterson (2007), consider different etymological links to the notion of haptic to further expand its definition. They include not just the movements regarding proximity and distance, but also those of the somatic senses.

Mark Paterson identifies as haptic that which corresponds to the sense of touch in all its forms, including the senses and perceptions related to proprioception, vestibular sense, kinaesthetic sense, cutaneous, and tactile sense (Paterson, 2007: 4).<sup>47</sup> Proprioception, explains Paterson, refers to the awareness of our body’s position in space and includes the operation of the other somatic senses. That is, cutaneous and tactile senses can also be related to the awareness of the bodily position, movement, and balance. The idea of position already leads us to the prefix “ex” of ex-position in the sense of the movement towards an exteriority that is always intertwined with an interiority that is here linked to the notion of haptic.

Paterson also highlights in this direction Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “synergic totality”, to indicate the correlation and co-dependency of the bodily senses. Through this notion, Merleau-Ponty refers to the functioning of touch as linked to a sort of unity of the body. The author indicates that “only do I use my fingers and my whole body as a single organ, but also, thanks to this unity of the body, the tactile perceptions gained through an organ are immediately translated into the language of the rest” (Merleau-Ponty, 2005: 369). The author also formulates this idea in terms of a “tactile field” when describing the spatiality of the

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<sup>47</sup> Mark Paterson focuses on the notion of kinaesthesia in Edmund Husserl’s *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970) and *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy* (1989) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s conception of touching and of ‘body-schema’ in *The Primacy of Perception* (1964) and *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992) to include the notion of kinaesthesia within the definition of the haptic (Paterson, 2007:15-35).

body motility, in which local impressions of touch may be coordinated into certain shape (Merleau-Ponty, 2005: 125).

Gibson refers to a “haptic system” as an “apparatus by which the individual gets information about both the environment and his body” (1983: 97). This apparatus, indicates the author, involves the whole body, since both the skin and the mobile body are implicated in its functioning (Gibson, 1983: 100). The author is not considering the tactile experiences of the skin as exclusively related to proximity (Gibson, 1983: 100). Gibson mentions, for instance, that certain information related to the haptic system can be acquired at some distance from the skin. The author gives some examples connected to the use of some artificial appendage to the hand, like tools and sticks, approaching the sense of touch not just related to proximity (1983: 100)<sup>48</sup>. He argues that “the old idea that touch is strictly a proximity sense [...] is based on a very narrow conception of the sense of touch” (Gibson, 1983: 102). In this direction, the author identifies touch in connection to the haptic system, including the sense of kinaesthesia, to approach the sense of a distance.

Paul Rodaway, in its turn, refers to a “Haptic Geography” in which he defines the haptic considering: “the tactile receptivity of the skin, the movement of the body parts and the locomotion of the whole body through the environment. To this extent, kinaesthesia is included in the label ‘haptic’” (Rodaway, 2002: 42). Moreover, Rodaway links the notion of the haptic to that of presence in terms of an awareness of presence through the notion of touch when describing a haptic geography. The author understands touch also in a broad sense, indicating that it can refer to the:

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<sup>48</sup> These observations can also be found in René Descartes’s analysis of the experience of blindness in “Seeing with the Hands,” Diderot’s “Letters of the blind,” and in Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of touch in *Phenomenology of perception*. See: Paterson, Mark. *Seeing with the Hands. Blindness, Vision, and Touch after Descartes*. Edinburgh University Press. Edinburgh, 2016.

[...] pressure on the skin, or literally contact between the body and its environment, and it can also refer to kinesthesia, that is the ability of the body to perceive its own motion. Touch is, therefore, about both an awareness of presence and of locomotion. Together these can be described as the haptic sense.

(Rodaway, 2002: 42).

Both Gibson and Rodaway identify a “passive” and an “active” sense of the awareness of touch and presence. The passive sense refers to the potentiality of a sense or awareness, and the active refers to certain attention oriented to the functioning of that sense. This distinction can be traced back to Aristotle, who differentiates between an active and a passive (or potential) form of the senses, as well as expressed in the difference between seeing and looking or hearing and listening (1957a: 147). Jean-Luc Nancy also refers to this distinction when addressing the idea of listening as an attentive hearing, identifying “the simple nature and its tense state”. This difference corresponds to each of the senses, and therefore, also to the sense of touch. In this regard, Nancy points out that “every sensory register thus bears with it both its simple nature and its tense, attentive, or anxious state: seeing and looking, smelling and sniffing or scenting, tasting and savouring, touching and feeling or palpating, hearing and listening” (Nancy, 2007: 5). The “tense sense”, indicates the author, would be discernible by an intensification or attention (Nancy, 2007: 5).

Paul Rodaway suggests that, likewise, one could pose this distinction regarding the relationship between presence and touch: “Just as one is seen or heard and presents a look or gives out a sound or gives voice, so one is in touch or contact with the environment as a physical presence and also one presents oneself as touchable or in reach” (Rodaway, 1994: 47). It is clear that we do not always present ourselves as “touchable”, we do not expose ourselves constantly as

tangible beings. Nevertheless, it is a possibility, a modality of the ex-position (a haptic one), of that being exposed.

To sum up, the notions of ex-position and *expeausition*, in connection to an expanded notion of haptic that includes an awareness of presence, therefore, allow us to associate presence with the idea of a haptic exposition. Regarding the idea of production, one can suggest that this haptic exposition can be produced in the context of artistic practices. That is, it can turn out to be an element of artistic composition.

## 2.2 Ceren Oran:

### *I need a man to perform this duet.*

In October 2016, the choreographer Ceren Oran presented the dance performance *I need a man to perform this duet* for the contemporary Dance Festival Transformance in Munich. In the introduction of the performance, the dancer walks slowly from the bottom of the stage to the audience, blindfolded, crossing a path full of pillows. What guides her, deprived of her sight, is the sense of touch.



**Image 3.**

Ceren Oran:

*I need a man to perform this duet*

Upon reaching the audience, the dancer begins to touch, one by one, those seated in the front row. She touches the hands of one person first, then she reaches the arms to the face. As she is blindfolded, she probes the bodies. The audience receives the touch and reacts to it, touching the dancer back. They touch her hands, and some of them touch her face back. Sometimes she takes their hands towards her face and lets herself be caressed by someone she cannot see.



**Image 4.**

Ceren Oran:

*I need a man to perform this duet*

This introduction to the performance leads us to the subject of touch and what could be described as *haptic presence*, where the dancer not only *exposes* herself as touchable but also transforms the audience into touchable, awakening our awareness as tangible beings and generating a haptic presence. In other words, this gesture of touching the audience places everyone, to a greater or lesser extent, within this haptic possibility of being exposed as touchable.

By depriving herself of vision, Ceren intensifies her proprioceptive senses linked to the sense of touch.<sup>49</sup> She is also exposed by touching and feeling others from a somatic haptic dimension, which includes the position (ex) and perception of the space in terms of a haptic geography. In this sense, the strategy of blindfolding has to do with an activation of the proprioceptive sense, which is part of the haptic, as James Gibson, Paul Rodaway, and Mark Paterson underline in a wider notion of the haptic. This strategy of blindfolding also prompts us to think about the relationship between touch and vision in terms of tactile explorations when visibility is being impaired. The interaction with the hands, therefore, produces a sense of space, where the hands acquire an optic dimension, as a way of generating or activating other perceptual intensities. In these moments of the performance, different haptic experiences are being brought together, like the active sense of proprioception due to the blindfolding, but also the proximity due to the active probing through the audience's bodies.

In *I need a man to perform this duet* a haptic geography is generated in the sense that involves the tactile receptivity of the skin, an awareness of the movement of the body parts, and the locomotion of the whole body through the

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<sup>49</sup> This gesture of touching the audience is not exclusive of *I need a man to perform this duet*, and it can be found in several performances. In *Into the darkness*, for instance, by director Robin van Zutpen, presented at the Solo Tanz Theater Festival 2017 in Stuttgart, the dancer Jaime de Groot crosses the stage to touch the face of one person in the audience, also placing everyone, to a greater or lesser extent, within this haptic possibility of being exposed as touchable. The author approached the deprivation of sight as well, where the hands acquire an optic dimension, as a way of generating or activating other perceptual intensities.

environment. The choreographer creates this haptic geography through the strategy of the ex-position.

To sum up, considering the dance performance *I need a man to perform this duet*, it is possible to illustrate the idea of *haptic exposition* or rather a *haptic expeausition*.

## CHAPTER 2:

### Dancing the haptic I.

Sound dimension: haptic resonances in *Invisible*.

(...) the untouchable of the touch, the invisible of vision, the unconscious of consciousness (its central *punctum caecum*, that blindness that makes it consciousness i.e., an indirect and inverted grasp of all things) is the *other side* or the *reverse* (or the other dimensionality) of sensible Being.

(Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 255, italics in the original).

The dance that is generated by friction, encounters, pressures, and all the actions of touch, produces a sonorized movement that extends and dilates towards the space, creating «other movement», one that goes «beyond» the only seen. Thus, this ability of sound to immaterially flood the space, produces an enlarged and projected image of the moving body in this direct sounding of action.

(Morand, 2014: 39, my translation).

## Introduction

The present chapter focuses especially on the dance performance *Invisible, danza que explota los sentidos* by the Chilean choreographers and dancers Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio. I approach how the performance, using technological devices, opens a complex sound dimension of touch, where touch comes to presence throughout different sound combinations connected to the movements of the dancers.

As the choreographers draw heavily on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1968) notion of invisible to explore, through dance, the field of what we cannot see but is nevertheless present in our reality, I start by highlighting this notion. In doing so, I also underline the points of contact between the notion of invisible and presence.

From there, I explain how the performance generates a multimediality of touch, considering a path from Aristotle's understanding of the medium to the notion of interface in the context of the digital procedures of the new media. I explain how the multiplication of the medium comes to transfigure the nature of the sensitive (of touching) due to a pre-existence produced digitally (sound) that stimulates other logics. Referring to different approaches to the matter, like those of Fred Ritchin (2009), Lev Manovich (2001), Kerstin Evert (2002), I refer to how the body becomes an active element of the interface generating "techo-bodies" and "resonant bodies".

I also consider some philosophical perspectives on sensation and resonance, like that of Giles Deleuze (2003), in connection with some approaches to the relationship between arts and technology, like that of Anne Cauquelin (2006)). I also approach further in this chapter the notions of presence and touch, considering especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of invisible, which also gave the name to the dance performance.

**1. Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio:**  
***Invisible.***

Francisca Morand is lying on the floor with her eyes closed. Pablo Zamorano leans towards her and begins to touch her body. He touches first with his right hand and then with both hands, awakening different reactions. His hands travel from her neck through her back down to the legs, reaching the feet and then returning to the waist.



**Image 5.**

Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio:  
*Invisible.*

He stops briefly. Then he begins touching her again. Pablo touches her in a soft and delicate manner first, as if he were caressing her, or as if he were uncovering Francisca's body with his hands. Then he touches hard, presses with all his hands, and the touch becomes increasingly dense and intense. Francisca gradually reacts to the touch through undulating movements awakened by the rhythm of Pablo's hands. In one of his hands, in one of his index fingers, Pablo carries a small technological device attached to it with white adhesive tape. The device captures the sensitive information that arises from the movements of touching and contact between the dancers. Simultaneously, this information is translated into a variety of sounds. The sounds are generated at the same time as Pablo's hands move through Francisca's body.



**Image 6.**

Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio:

*Invisible.*

The sound is grave and dense, but at the same time light, like the sound of the wind picked up by a microphone. One hears the sound of touch through the body, the skin, and the clothes. When the movement stops, the sound stops too, generating a moment of silence. The sound and movement of touch are connected through a tactile-sonorous choreography that is also evidenced through silences. With this sensor for sound expansion, the movement, the dance, and touch become sonorous while they move. The perceptual experience of the spectators is that the touch between the dancers, which one sees, also sounds. There is an emphasis on touching, which on its own, would not have a sound, and this calls our attention. It is another kind of sensitive perception when it is the sound that, with such intensity, seems to appear from the hand, creating a new sound dimension of touch, and a haptic dimension of sound and movement through a tactile and audible choreography. Touch comes to presence through this choreography of movements and sounds.<sup>50</sup>



**Image 7/8.**

Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio:

*Invisible.*

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<sup>50</sup> I wrote an article about *Invisible* that contains some of the ideas present in this chapter. See: Muñoz Carneiro, Sofia. "Resonancias. Sobre un toque digital a partir de *Invisible, Danza que explota los sentidos* y la noción de lo diáfano en Aristóteles" Revista Meridional. Meridional, Chilean Journal of Latin-American Studies N° 12. Universidad de Chile Press. Santiago de Chile, 2019

In September 2012, the choreographers Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio presented *Invisible, danza que explota los sentidos* (Invisible, dance that explodes the senses) in Santiago de Chile.<sup>51</sup> One of the choreographer's main concerns was related to what gives the performance its title: the notion of invisible, in connection with the sensitive experience. In this sense, the choreographers draw heavily on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of invisible to explore, through dance, the field of what we cannot see but is nevertheless present in our reality. Following especially Merleau-Ponty's last oeuvre *The visible and the invisible*, Morand and Osorio aimed at unravelling what goes beyond what we actually experience, making it visible and expanding it by means of technology. Using digital devices to capture sensitive signals, the performance combines movement, video, and sound interaction to approach physical "internal" sensations and to translate touch into sound. In this constellation, the choreographers dedicate especial attention to the sense of touch, considering the question about the distance and tension between the internal perception of the dancer's body and what is externally seen. Through the use of digital devices, therefore, the sense of touch was "translated" into different sounds while the dancers move through the space developing a choreographic work of touch, movement, and sound.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See: <http://morandosorio.blogspot.com> (20/01/2019).

<sup>52</sup> Francisca Morand and the sound artist Javier Jaimovich carried out a project with the title *Emovere: body, sound and movement* (2014-2015). From the measurement of emotion through bio-signals of the body in movement, the project develops sound and audio-visual environments. In this context, a process of documentation of the creative process was carried out, for which I wrote a text entitled "Entre resonancias. Un ensayo sobre la emoción y a tecnología en la danza: Emovere". In this text, some of the ideas present in this chapter are outlined at: <http://www.emovere.cl/es/descripcion-de-criptas/> (01/20/2019). For more information about this project, see: [www.emovere.cl](http://www.emovere.cl) (01/20/2019).

## 2. Margins of presence.

### Merleau-Ponty's notion of *invisible*.

In the previous chapter, I approached the notion of presence considering especially Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of "coming into presence" and perspectives regarding theatre and dance studies. Presence was, therefore, approached as an unstable process in connection with the notions of ephemerality and absence.

This understanding of presence can be connected to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of invisible, which the author refers to as "margins of presence" (1968: 159). For Merleau-Ponty, the invisible is a fold linked to the obverse and the reverse of our experience. In other words, the invisible is not only of the order of visibility or invisibility, but rather responds to a way of understanding a certain organization of the world where both elements are intertwined in our experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 255). The invisible responds, therefore, to the idea of an inseparable and indeterminate reverse of things:

(...) the untouchable of the touch, the invisible of vision, the unconscious of consciousness (its central *punctum caecum*, that blindness that makes it consciousness i.e., an indirect and *inverted* grasp of all things) is the *other side* or the *reverse* (or the other dimensionality) of sensible Being.

(Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 255, italics in the original).

The invisible, for Merleau-Ponty, does not consist of “an absolute” in the sense that it is “not a *de facto* invisible, like an object hidden behind another, and not an absolute invisible, which would have nothing to do with the visible” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 151). The invisible would rather be what was not originally presented (*Nichturpräsentierbar*) but nevertheless inhabits and gives the visible its possibility and potentiality. The notions of visible and invisible do not correspond to a dualistic way of conceiving visibility, but rather a chiasmic one, where a fundamental intertwining takes place.<sup>53</sup> And this co-functioning is present regarding the other senses (like the untouchable), as well as regarding the functioning of consciousness (the unconscious, its *punctum caecum*).

Merleau-Ponty then calls the invisible an “interior armature” that at the same time manifests and conceals and whose presence counts in the sensible as a cavity or an absence, in the sense, for example, of what leaves a mark (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 149). This internal framework of the visible gives the visible its significant presence, its active essence. This is why Merleau-Ponty describes the invisible as part of a fold that has an obverse and a reverse. In this sense, the author points out that the invisible “is exactly the reverse of the visible, the power of the visible.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 145). The relationship between the visible and the invisible, therefore, does not imply that the invisible consists of the non-visible. It is an invisible that is not actually seen but nevertheless present. In this sense, it is not the presence of the absent, but rather it is “the presence of the imminent, the latent, or the hidden” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 245). For the author, everything visible is invisible, since seeing is always seeing more than what is seen: “It is the very vision of depth” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 242). There lies the *punctum caecum* of consciousness, and, therefore, the invisible of the visibility.<sup>54</sup> For this reason, for

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<sup>53</sup> Merleau-Ponty explores the notion of “chiasm” in “The Intertwining –The Chiasm” in *The visible and the invisible* (1968). The notion of chiasm is related to the notion of reversibility, which refers to the idea that perception takes places connected to a counterpart that occurs simultaneously. It is not about a simple antithesis, but rather a fundamental intertwining that characterizes our experience as pertaining to a world. From this conception, Merleau-Ponty examines the different dimensions of this reversibility, as is the case of touch (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:133).

<sup>54</sup> This comprehension of certain organization of visibility does not form part exclusively of the visible order, but of all sensitive orders and the world of thought. The author examines this dynamic regarding language, thought, and philosophy (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 90).

Merleau-Ponty, there is never just “objective presence” in terms of an absolute presence, but rather it is always surrounded by this kind of latency, depth, and dimensionalities of our experiences.

The untouchable of touching, the invisible of the visible, that reverse, those margins of presence or other dimensionalities are, for Merleau-Ponty, also what opens a space both for thought and reflection and for the artistic creation. Merleau-Ponty suggests that philosophy assumes the same task as art: exploring an invisible. In this direction, the author indicates that: “Literature, music, the passions, but also the experience of the visible world are (...) the exploration of an invisible and the disclosure of a universe of ideas” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 149). Merleau-Ponty leans, therefore, towards these unknown, hidden, and indeterminate forces in terms of elaborating “a phenomenology of “the other world,” as the limit of a phenomenology of the imaginary and the “hidden” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 229).

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Within this phenomenological constellation, the choreographers Morand and Osorio worked with the generation of sound as a way of exploring the invisible of movement and the untouchable of touch. This sound dimension, that *Invisible* displays, can be understood, therefore, as a sort of ephemeral access to the invisible, to that other dimensionality, that of the reverse, that is being interpreted with different combinations of sounds. In this sense – returning to some of the terminology used in the previous chapter- touch *comes to presence* through sound, opening the access to that other dimensionality of touch, in which sound and the untouchable touch each other.

In her article “Oír lo Invisible”, Francisca Morand explains that one of the main intentions of the project was “to make visible the invisible as the absent, the hidden, the not evident” (Morand, 2014: 34, my translation), following the ideas of

the late Merleau-Ponty.<sup>55</sup> Perusing this path, Morand how a series of “materialities of movements” (in the form of the list below) resulted from the dance explorations regarding the notions of invisible, touch, and the untouchable:

Caress, rub, hug, massage, trace, scrub, lick, probe, squeeze, tickle, stretch, smash, press, knead, handle, scrape, rub, compress, take, twist, push, hit, prick, manipulate, hold, squeeze, release, shake, fit, scratch, crush, penetrate, finger, chafe, stick, fold, pinch...

(Morand, 2014: 37, my translation).<sup>56</sup>

The other dimension of those materialities was expressed simultaneously through sound, opening not just a sound dimension of touch but a sound dimension based on that “other dimensionality”: the untouchable, invisible, etcetera. Morand highlights the fact that those bodily processes are not always perceived in a dance performance. And the notion of invisible prompts us to think about different ways in which those processes and sensitive experiences can be unveiled and shown. In this sense, Morand explains that the aim was to “make the body and its sensations present during movement and how do they intertwine with thought and the formation of a sense of self” (Morand, 2014: 34, my translation).<sup>57</sup>

In this direction, the performance *Invisible* explores the relationship between the bodies, considering the sensitive and emotional distance between the dancers and the audience. The three dancers, therefore, delve into their physical

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<sup>55</sup> Translated from Spanish: “hacer visible lo invisible como lo ausente, lo oculto, lo no evidente.”

<sup>56</sup> Translated from Spanish: “Acariciar, rozar, abrazar, masajear, trazar, sobar, lengüetear, tantear, apretar, hacer cosquillas, estirar, aplastar, presionar, restregar, manosear, raspar, frotar, comprimir, tomar, torcer, empujar, golpear, pinchar, manipular, coger, estrujar, soltar, sacudir, encajar, rascar, machacar, calar, digitar, fricciónar, pegar, doblar, pellizcar...”

<sup>57</sup> Translated from Spanish: “hacer presente el cuerpo y sus sensaciones durante el movimiento y cómo estas se entretajan con el pensamiento y la conformación del sentido de uno mismo.”

sensations, projecting them, expanding, and transforming them through technology. Considering this expansion, *Invisible* approaches what is not currently seen, creating a new fold between touch and sound, and opening a sound dimension of touch.

In *Invisible*, therefore, the reconfiguration of the dance experience is generated from the emergence of new forms of movements concerning touch and sound, where a haptic dimension of the body is exposed, is offered, by means of sound. Resonant bodies are built, says the choreographer, where:

The dance that is generated by friction, encounters, pressures, and all the actions of touch, produces a sonorized movement that extends and dilates towards the space, creating «other movement», one that goes «beyond» the only seen. Thus, this ability of sound to immaterially flood the space, produces an enlarged and projected image of the moving body in this direct sounding of action.

(Morand, 2014: 39, my translation).<sup>58</sup>

In this sense, one can also understand that “beyond the only seen” regarding the idea notion of trace. In *Invisible*, sound acquires the quality of a trace of something that we do not necessarily see. It is not just about a trace of something that is left behind, but a trace that goes beyond what it actually produces it. The music and dance scholar Stephanie Schroedter refers to a medial character or quality of the trace (Schroedter, 2017: 27). The author suggests that this quality is related to the fact that the trace oscillates between different scopes of experience,

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<sup>58</sup> Translated from Spanish: “La danza que se conforma por el roce, encuentros, presiones y todas las acciones del tacto, produce un movimiento sonorizado que se extiende y se dilata hacia el espacio creando un “otro movimiento”, uno que va más allá del solamente visto. Entonces esta capacidad del sonido de inundar inmaterialmente el espacio produce una imagen ampliada y proyectada del cuerpo en movimiento en esta sonorización directa de la acción.”

for instance, as between those experiences perceived as visible and those understood as invisible. In this sense:

Traces mediate between the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible, presence and absence, and last but not least between the present, the past and the future, in that they have hardly been noticed and have already disappeared –and always contain potential for what is to come, since they also refer to what is to come.

(Schroedter, 2017: 27, italics in the original, my translation).<sup>59</sup>

Regarding the relationship between movement, sound, and trace, Schroedter also considers the idea of mediality related to materiality. I am going to approach the notion of medium regarding touch and sound in the following sections of this chapter, but it is worth mentioning here how trace and mediality can be related to sound. In the following, therefore, I am going to refer to the idea of a multimediality of touch –through which a sound dimension of touch is created by different mediums – as a form of exploration of the invisible.

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<sup>59</sup> Translated from German: “Spuren *vermitteln* zwischen Sichtbarem und Unsichtbarem, Hörbarem und Unhörbarem, Anwesenheit und Abwesenheit, und nicht zuletzt zwischen Gegenwart, Vergangenheit und Zukunft, in dem sie kaum wahrgenommen schon wieder verschwunden sind – und immer auch Potenzial für Nachfolgendes in sich bergen, da sie eben so auf Kommendes verweisen.”

### 3. Interface.

#### From Aristotle to the multi-mediality of touch.

Both in *On the Soul* and *On the sense and sensible objects*, Aristotle distinguishes between two forms in which sensations are produced regarding the medium. Some of them are produced by external media (as in the case of sight, smell, and hearing) and others by internal media (as in the case of taste and touch) (Aristotle, 1957b: 217). The internal media of the sense of touch is, for Aristotle, the flesh (which would not correspond to the proper organ of touch). The particularity of this medium, the flesh, is that it is naturally incorporated into our body: “The tactual medium through which the several sensations are felt must be an organically attached body” (Aristotle, 1957a: 131). In this sense, unlike visible and audible objects, which are perceived while the medium exerts a certain influence on us, “we perceive tangible things not by a medium, but at the same time as the medium” (Aristotle, 1957a: 133). The complexity of touch, therefore, lies in the fact that its medium, the flesh, consists of an internal medium while its organ remains undetermined. The sensory organ of touch, points out Aristotle, can only be found in an internal place of the body because the medium cannot act at the same time as an organ, since the sensation always occurs at a certain distance from the organ in question (Aristotle, 1957a: 133). The organ of touch must be, therefore, in some place, according to Aristotle, “near the heart” (Aristotle, 1957b: 229)<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> In *On the sense and sensible objects*, Aristotle identifies the tactile organ near the heart for two reasons. First, the author points out that the heart is opposed to the brain, to which Aristotle relates especially to the sense of sight. And second, the author suggests that touch belongs to the earth and, therefore, to the zone connected to the heart, which is the warmest part of the body. It is interesting to note this undetermined place proper to the tactile, pointed out by Aristotle (1957b: 227-229).

Despite this distinction between the internal and external medium, for Aristotle, all sensations take place through a medium, which the author designates as "transparent" or "diaphanous," like it would be the air, the water (Aristotle, 1957a: 105). They are not necessarily transparent in itself; explains the author, they are rather transparent because a certain nature is given in them. This nature is what establishes the relationship between the sensitive and the sensation, or between appearance and perception. For instance, in the relationship between sound (the sensitive) and listening (the sensation), the transparency would be the air. In the case of the sense of touch and taste, nevertheless, this transparency is incorporated in our body, highlights Aristotle. What air and water are with regard to sight, hearing, and smell, suggests the author, the same would seem to be the flesh and tongue regarding touch and taste (Aristotle, 1957a: 133). That is the reason why Aristotle finally concludes that "the medium of the tangible is the flesh" (Aristotle, 1957a: 134).

The transparency or diaphanous can be actively transparent or potentially transparent, depending on whether it is acting as a medium or not. In the case of the vision, light would be "the activity of this transparent substance" (Aristotle, 1957a: 105). It is interesting to note that Aristotle highlights the fact that wherever light is present regarding the transparency, "darkness is also potentially present" (Aristotle, 1957a: 105).<sup>61</sup> In other words, the same underlying nature of the transparent "is sometimes darkness and sometimes light" (Aristotle, 1957a: 107). Not only the sensation occurs actively or potentially, but also the sensible (the object of our perception) such as the colour, sound, smell, taste, touch, etc. (Aristotle, 1957a: 109). As well as the sensations, therefore, the sensible senses can also be in act or in potentially, for example, when something that potentially can sound acquires an actual sound (Aristotle, 1957a: 111). In this sense, Aristotle

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<sup>61</sup> It is interesting to note that Aristotle relates light to presence. This relationship has been a common motive in philosophy and Derrida also accounts for this as part of a metaphysics of presence, where light would be understood as active and present while darkness as absence and passive. This means not just a dualistic understanding, for the author, but also a hierarchy of light and presence. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that for Aristotle darkness it not the contrary as light. In this sense, the author suggests that "the same underlying nature is sometimes darkness and sometimes light" (Aristotle, 1967a: 107).

refers to the *activity* both of the sensible object and of the sensation, in which the “sonance”, for instance, corresponds to what can sound, and it sounds, and audition to the active aspect of hearing (or actual hearing):

The activity of the sensible object and of the sensation is one and the same, though their essence is are not the same; in saying that they are the same; I mean the actual sound and the actual hearing ; for it is possible for one who possesses hearing not to hear, and that which has sound is not always sounding. But when that which has the power of hearing is exercising its power, and that which can sound is sounding, then the active hearing and the active sound occur together; we may call them respectively audition and sonance.

(Aristotle, 1957a: 147).

In this regard, Aristotle highlights that the same applies to the other senses and sensible objects. Nevertheless, as for the sense of touch, warns the author, this interconnection is not evident and remains obscure (Aristotle, 1957a:148).

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If we return to *Invisible*, this time referring to Aristotle in connection to the idea of transparency, one could recognize that touch acquires another sensitive sense in terms of acquiring a sound. In *Invisible*, therefore, touch comes to presence by acquiring another sensitive: the sound. This generates another mode of sensitive perception when it is the sound that seems to come out of the dancing hands. Consequently, touch also acquires another medium besides the flesh: the air, transparency in which the sound travels and through which touch comes to presence in its “sonance”. In other words, the medium of touch, the flesh, becomes intermedial or transmedial regarding an additional “sensible object”: the sound. Touch becomes, therefore, multimedial. Through this multimediality touch spaces out. That is to say, by acquiring a different or additional medium, touch extends and expands with the sound throughout the space. The sound produces a spacing of touch and contact, that becomes audible. Touch expands throughout the space by means of sound. In this multimedial constellation, in which touch becomes multimedial, a sound dimension of touch opens.

Therefore, in *Invisible* the nature of touch is transformed, since touch itself does not have a sound pre-existence or at least that sound pre-existence that we hear. This means that its “being in act” and its “being in potential” is changed. In other words, the transformation or digital multiplication of the medium comes to transfigure the nature of the sensitive (of touching) due to a pre-existence produced digitally (sound). One could argue that this change in the nature of the medium, or this coexistence of different mediums, is what makes the invisible come to light.

These ideas regarding the transformation of the medium in the context of digital procedures have already been discussed in the context of the developments of new media in terms of translation and interface.<sup>62</sup> These two notions shed light

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<sup>62</sup> The philosopher Rodrigo Zúñiga, examines the ideas of dematerialization and demedialization in digital processes regarding the image in his article “Symplouké y Metaxy. Una relectura de la imagen en Platón y Aristóteles para una analítica de la aparición digital” *Revista Alpha*. Universidad de los Lagos. Osorno, Chile, 2015. I refer to his ideas in the article “Resonancias. Sobre un toque digital a partir de *Invisible*, *Danza que explota los sentidos* y la noción de lo diáfano en Aristóteles”. *Meridional*, Chilean Journal of Latin-American Studies N° 12. Universidad de Chile Press. Santiago de Chile, 2019.

on the understanding of the different reconfigurations of the media and how this has implications when we approach the dancing body. I am going to comment briefly on some ideas coming from theories of new media in connection to how the notion of interface is understood in the context of dance.

Beginning with the North American writer Fred Ritchin, the author points out that digital media stimulates “other logics”, since we relate differently to the nature of things (2009: 17). These other logics are characterized by a process of translation that produces different transformations. The author explains that digital media translate everything into data since, it “involves coded signifiers, data that can be easily played with, abstracted from their source” (2009:17). These data can then be reconstituted by an author, an audience, or a machine. In this sense, it is a process of transformation where certain images, for example, can become music, or music can be transformed into a text, and so on. Everything can be modified, indicates Ritchin, through the transfiguration of zeros and ones that, in turn, can be transformed into anything else (2009: 17).

This process of transformation must be understood in terms of multiple possibilities of reconfiguration. François Soulages refers to them as the “never-ending” (*inachevable*) in the sense of the infinite range of possibilities for exploring a medium (Soulages, 1998: 129).<sup>63</sup> In his *Esthétique de la Photographie*, the author suggests that digital processes in photography originate an art of different possibilities, in the sense that it exceeds what already exists (Soulages, 1998: 120). In this sense, the “never-ending” refers to the potential of digital photography unfolded to infinity, and that would constitute its essence. Digital photography, underlines the author, not only allows us to explore this world of possibilities in a very complex way, but also allows us to expand the way in which these possibilities exceed what exists, and therefore, the dimension of the “never-ending” (Soulages,

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<sup>63</sup> In his *Esthétique de la Photographie*, François Soulages develops and introduces the notion of “photographicity”, identifying two dimensions involved in the articulation of analogue photography. One of them corresponds to the irreversible, related to the photographic act. It is linked to an aesthetic of the trace and the “decisive moment”, that is, to an irreversible capture of an unrepeatable moment. The other dimension corresponds to the dimension of the endless or never-ending, related rather to the photographic process, where an infinite range of possibilities opens up, impossible to repertoire. In this sense, the endless is linked to an aesthetic of exploration, interpretation and difference (Soulages, 1998: 114-129).

1998: 117). In other words, the fundamental point in this process corresponds to that infinite range of possibilities concerning the exploration and transformation of the medium, which becomes the essence of the medium in the digital processes.

In a similar direction, Lev Manovich, in *The language of new media*, also refers to this transformation as a “translation” of the medium. The author explains that in these processes the media are translated into numerical data, which turns them into something computable or programmable, which means a radical transformation of the medium. The author introduces here the notion of “interface” to account for this new mode of procedure, since “scripting different media of their original distinctions, the interface imposes its own logic on them” (Manovich, 2001: 65). The interface, explains Manovich, establishes rules, procedures and/or conventions that determine how the data that will be used and retransmitted in a particular way must be organized (2001: 64-65). In this sense, referring to the use of new media in the context of arts, the author highlights the intimate relationship between interface and materiality, especially considering the interfaces used in interactive systems. In this sense, Manovich emphasizes that “it is the work’s interface that creates its unique materiality” (2001: 66-67).

This relationship between translation, interface, and materiality in relation to technology is also addressed by the French philosopher and plastic artist Anne Cauquelin, in the sense of an oscillation between the corporeal and the incorporeal. In *Fréquenter les incorporels* the author points out that the interface is linked to the capture and translation of one system into another one (Cauquelin, 2006: 122). The systems used in the capture and retransition can be divers, like vision caps, gloves, or a full suit to capture the movements of a body (Cauquelin, 2006: 122). The author is referring to a suit with sensors as an example, able to capture different signals from the body. The information captured by those systems is translated into the machine, which processes and retransmits them (Cauquelin, 2006: 122). In these types of procedures, the author identifies an interest and a pursuit of the immaterial, the incorporeal, or the invisible. For Cauquelin, the immaterial, paradoxically, refers to the world of matter and bodies, where something of that materiality is presented to us as unattainable, but nevertheless

not absent (Cauquelin, 2006: 94). The author calls this space of unattainable extension as the incorporeal. Following these ideas, Cauquelin points out that “the interface makes the corporeal oscillate towards the incorporeal and this is where its own poetics is situated” (2006: 124, my translation).<sup>64</sup> The author refers, therefore, to a “poetics of the interface” [*poétique de l’interface*] that she understands as an “expanded poetics” [*poétique élargie*] (2006: 122-124, my translation).

In connection with this interest in the incorporeal, Cauquelin identifies a growing concern for the body and the material world linked to the idea of the invisible in contemporary arts (2006: 96-96). The author explains this rising interest in terms of an attention to those elements that lie behind the functioning of the invisible, like: “flows, air, vapors, vibrations [*des flux, de l’air, des vapeurs, des vibration*]” (Cauquelin, 2006: 97, my translation). Echoing Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of the notion of invisible, Cauquelin identifies different artistic attempts that aim at giving the invisible a visible form:

The hunt for the invisible, to which so many artists seem to dedicate themselves, would be an attempt to give a form to that which has no form, or to make something indistinct emerge from the nebulous domain to make it available to our world, to make it within the reach of vision [...] The invisible, as that which would remain hidden behind, as the imperceptible and intangible background of things, disappeared: it rose to the surface [...]

(Cauquelin, 2006: 96-96, my translation).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Translated from French: “l’interface fait basculer le corporel dans l’incorporel et c’est là que se situe sa poétique propre”.

<sup>65</sup> Translated from French: “La chasse à l’invisible, à laquelle semblent se consacrer tant d’artistes, serait un essai de donner une forme à ce qui n’en a pas, ou de sortir quelque chose d’indistinct du domaine nébuleux où ça gît pour le mettre à la disposition de notre monde, à portée de vue [...] L’invisible, en tant que ce qui resterait caché derrière, comme fond imperceptible et inatteignable des choses, a disparu [...]

In this constellation, suggests Cauquelin, dance comes particularly into focus in terms of the relationship between the body, movement, and technology (Cauquelin, 2006: 38-39). In dance practices, the author argues, we will frequently find the notion of “techno-bodies” [*techno-corps*] that highlights the link between the body and the machine in this search for the invisible (Cauquelin, 2006: 39).

In “Dance and Technology at the Turn of the Last and Present Centuries”, Kerstin Evert, refers to the importance of this relationship between body and machine, especially considering the learning process and body exploration with the interactive system. In those contexts, as the author suggests, “the whole body is employed as interface” (Evert, 2002: 48). Given the degree in which the body is involved, the body itself becomes a place for the elaboration of procedures, rules, and conventions in combination with the interactive system. In this sense, the author considers the body as part of the interface, or rather the body itself as an interface. In most cases, the author points out, it is an active and experimental process with regard to the human body, which produces also dance and choreographic innovations (Evert, 2002: 48).

In “El descentramiento: cuerpo-danza-interactividad”, the dance scholar Alejandra Ceriani refers to those innovations in terms of the generation of “another grammar of the body [*otra gramática del cuerpo*]” (Ceriani, 2021: 118, my translation). This other grammar is the result of the collaboration with interactive technologies in performing arts, in which the dancer encounters a more complex mixed reality. In this direction, the author points out that interactive systems in dance “inaugurate a new capacity to conjecture and experiment with what is known” (Ceriani, 2021: 118, my translation).<sup>66</sup> The creative process, then, can be understood as a laboratory in which the particularities of the different gestures and movements of the body are experimented and explored (Ceriani, 2021: 124). For this reason, in a similar direction as Cauquelin and Evert, the author also considers

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<sup>66</sup> Translated from Spanish: “inauguran una nueva capacidad de conjeturar y experimentar con lo conocido.”

the body as an active element of the interface, capable of redefining the disciplinary limits and languages (Ceriani, 2021: 118).

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As mentioned before, *Invisible* produces new forms of sensitive perception of touch through its particular coming into presence, in which touch acquires a sound and becomes audible. It is not a sound that the body produces, like an applause, exalted breathing, or the use of the voice. The sound in *Invisible* is connected to a touch that, on its own, would not sound in that particular way. It is a sound that is not the sound of the body, even though it comes from the body. In *Invisible*, this “sonance” of touch is related to a “binary translation” in which the body is involved as an active part of the interface. It is not just that touch sounds, it sounds because it is being translated. This translation can be understood as an additional “transparency” of touch, since touch acquires a new physical dimension in the field of the digital, that generates a spacing of touch in its new digital media.

Therefore, *Invisible* generates a particular type of interface in which two systems or devices come into contact. The sense of touch is captured and translated, generating its retransmission or transcription. Touch comes to presence based on a new digital transparency. Thus, in *Invisible* a new type of experience is generated in connection to what exceeds what exists, the possibilities of existence. *Invisible* is a work of contact and friction. But at the same time, there are techno-bodies: extensions and intensities that belong and do not belong to those bodies. This generates, in turn, profound implications in dance, where new corporealities and qualities of movement emerge, since the body must also search for new possibilities, ranges, and constellations of movement, to achieve not only a choreography of touch but also a sound composition of touch based on a hybrid body interface.

#### **4. The sonorous-haptic.**

##### **Resonance and hybridization.**

Gilles Deleuze suggests that we can find, especially in art, a logic of the senses that rests on an accentuation of the sensation where its levels or domains (for instance, the domain corresponding to the visual sensation) are exceeded and traversed (Deleuze, 2003: 42). It is a common exercise of different organs at the same time, that generates a “multisensible figure” (Deleuze, 2003: 42). That means that “the limits of sensations are broken, exceeded in all directions” (Deleuze, 2003: 73). Deleuze refers to what Antonin Artaud designated as the “body without organs” to highlight that it “is opposed less to organs than to that organization of organs we call an organism” (Deleuze, 2003: 44). In other words, it is not that the body without organs lacks organs, but rather lacks an organism, an organization of the organs. In this sense, Deleuze refers to “indeterminate organs” that make the sensation pass through different levels (Deleuze, 2003: 47). By indeterminate organs, the author refers to the faculty of determinate organs to change depending on the type of force that they encounter (Deleuze, 2003: 48). Therefore, suggests the author, the body without organs “is finally defined by the *temporary and provisional presence* of determinate organs” (Deleuze, 2003: 48, italics in original). Deleuze refers to different paintings by Francis Bacon to discuss this transitory nature of organs and their relationship with a multisensible figure, which resonates with the approaches regarding multimediality of the previous section. In this sense, the author indicates, regarding Bacon, Painting, and the polyvalent nature of organs, that the eyes do not work as fixed organs. Painting, highlights Deleuze, “gives us eyes all over: in the ear, in the stomach, in the lungs” (Deleuze, 2003:

52). In this sense, a multisensible figure can be generated and one could also say “hybrid”, as I will address later, to the extent that different organs, sensations, and sensible objects can be involved and intertwined. The idea of making visible or audible elementary forces (like weight, pressure, or gravitation), like painting sound, or making colours audible, corresponds to what the author describes as “rendering the invisible” or making visible forces that are not (Deleuze, 2003: 57-58). Therefore, Deleuze proposes—in a direction that might recall Merleau-Ponty’s observation regarding the relationship between arts and the invisible—that arts advocate the capture of forces that sometimes are, for instance, invisible or soundless (Deleuze, 2003: 56). The idea of force, suggests Deleuze, is close to the idea of sensation: “for a sensation to exist, a force must be exerted on a body” (Deleuze, 2003: 56). In the capture and recomposition of these invisible forces, the sensation can achieve different levels, producing couplings of sensation. The coupling of different levels of sensations is what Deleuze refers to as resonance (Deleuze, 2003: 72-73). This coupling of sensation, this resonance, is decisive to Deleuze, which he describes as following:

It is a characteristic of sensation to pass through different levels owing to the action of forces. But two sensations, each having their own level or zone, can also confront each other and make their respective levels communicate. Here we are no longer in the domain of simple vibration, but that of resonance.

(Deleuze, 2003: 65).

The notion of resonance in connection with the notion of invisible—in the sense of a multisensible figure where the limits of sensations are exceeded—was also a fundamental notion for the dance performance *Invisible*. However, it is a resonance that involves the whole body, movements of the body, and the tactile

experience. The choreographer Francisca Morand describes this as “resonant bodies” when she approaches the relationship between body and technology. The author indicates that the technological devices in *Invisible* “build a 'resonant body' that generates the exuberance of the gesture while the performers perceive and act with the system” (Morand, 2014: 34, my translation). In this case, the notion of resonance, for the author, has several meanings:

[...] from the intensification and expansion of a sound by vibration and/or reverberation in accordance with other objects or persons, to the generation or evocation of images, memories, affections and emotions. It is here that the concept of "resonant body", which is at the center of this intervention, acquires meaning as an audible expression and as a manifestation of the relationship between movement and sensation. The sound produced by the tactile actions of the performers comes from the real body as manifestation of these actions, and a new organisation of the sensory perception is developed from technological integration.

(Morand, 2014: 38, my translation).<sup>67</sup>

The "resonant body", therefore, acquires meaning as an audible expression and manifestation of the relationship between movement and sensation, while sound intensifies and expands. The sensation, thus, comes in contact with a force: the force of the body, of the danced movement of the body, and the force of the movement of touching. The body becomes resonant in this interaction,

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<sup>67</sup> Modified translation from Spanish: “[...] desde la intensificación y alargamiento de un sonido por vibración y/o reverberación en concordancia con otros objetos o personas, hasta la generación o evocación de imágenes, memorias, afectos y emociones. Es aquí que el concepto de “cuerpo resonante”, que está en el centro de esta intervención, adquiere un significado como expresión audible y manifestación de la relación entre movimiento y sensación. El sonido producido por las acciones táctiles de los intérpretes viene del cuerpo real, una manifestación de estas acciones, una nueva organización de la percepción sensorial desarrollada a partir de la integración tecnológica.”

intensification, and spacing, where the invisible forces of movement and touching come into presence in the sound space.

This multiplicity and coupling of experiences, generated by the integration of dance and technology, where the sound is produced by the tactile actions of the performers, produce a multisensible figure that, as mentioned in the quote above, creates a “new organization of sensory perception” (Morand, 2014: 38). This new organization consists of a complex process in which “the dance, that is formed by friction, encounters, pressure, and all actions of touch, produces a sound movement that extends, dilates into space, creating an “other movement”, one that goes “beyond what is only seen [*más allá del solamente visto*]” (Morand, 2014: 39, my translation). Accordingly, the sound immaterially floods the space, generating couplings of sensation, where different levels or zones of sensation enter into communication while the dancers interact with each other: “seeing through the ears and hearing the movement, creating a tactile dimension of sound” (Morand, 2014: 39, my translation).

At this point, I would like to highlight that in this coupling and resonance of a tactile dimension of sound, also a sound dimension of touch is generated. I will call, therefore, this intertwining between a tactile dimension of sound and a sound dimension of touch, the “sonorous-haptic”. The invisible forces of movement and touch acquire a sound space, a materiality, and a reality, while sound becomes, in turn, haptic. In other words, it is not just the haptic that acquires a sound, but also the sound that acquires a haptic quality, changing the nature of sound and of touch in which both become an interconnected materiality in a virtual space or hybrid situation.

Alejandra Ceriani describes these types of procedures as “interactive metaphors [*metáforas interactivas*]” regarding the relationship between dance, technology, and resonance (Ceriani, 2012: 121, my translation). This notion is useful to understand the interconnection between sound and invisible forces, for instance, those of touch and the untouchable. The author uses the notion of metaphor and connects it with that of interface to refer to the specificity of the relationship between technology, movement, and sound, especially regarding her

project and performance *Hoseo*. In *Hoseo*, Ceriani aims at connecting sound and movement through an interactive interface. Similarly to *Invisible*, Ceriani was interested in the sounds of the internal processes of the body and how these could become audible.<sup>68</sup> The author describes, therefore, the “interactive metaphor” as something that:

[...] would simulate the sound of the human body, its intimate resonance amplified. The design for the programming of the capture would enable the possibility of revealing –through visible behaviour– what is not visible. In this sense, at a programmatic level, the metaphor will be sustained most of the time by both the physical and the virtual part of the interface, also articulating the idea of two cohabiting spaces: exterior and interior. The triggering questions for this construction were: which sounds are composed with the internal structures of the organism when we move? Which audible event occurs inside the body, on the reverse of the skin? What kind of sounds and how could they be heard?

(Ceriani, 2012: 121, my translation).<sup>69</sup>

In this sense, Ceriani seeks to amplify what she calls the “intimate resonance [*resonancia íntima*]” of the body to make visible an invisible aspect of bodily processes through a sound discourse (Ceriani, 2012: 121, my translation). It

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<sup>68</sup> See: <http://www.alejandraceriani.com.ar/hoseo.html> (Last visited: 18/01/2019).

<sup>69</sup> Translated from Spanish: “simularía la sonoridad del cuerpo humano, su resonancia íntima amplificada. El diseño en la programación de captura habilitaría la posibilidad de develar –a través del comportamiento visible– aquello que no está visible. De este modo, a nivel programático, la metáfora se sostendrá las más de las veces tanto por la parte física como por la virtual de la interfaz, articulándose igualmente la idea de dos espacios cohabitantes: exterior e interior. Las preguntas disparadoras para dicha construcción fueron: ¿qué sonoridades se componen con las estructuras internas del organismo cuando nos movemos? ¿Qué acontecimiento audible ocurre dentro del cuerpo, en el reverso de la piel? ¿Qué tipo de sonoridades y cómo podrían ser oídas?”

is important to understand, nevertheless, that the notion of metaphor here does not refer to a sort of illusion. Both Ceriani and Morand highlight, indeed, that the sounds of the body that are being heard, are produced from the human body. As approached in the previous section, these processes take place from the capture and translation of different bodily signals. Both authors and choreographers, nevertheless, refer to the idea of expansion and amplification of the sensitive experience to highlight the procedure of amplifying the real sound of actions (Morand, 2014: 38) The idea of metaphor, therefore, is used by Ceriani as a way to approach how an interpretation of those real invisible processes is generated with the use of technology.

In describing this assemblage of different elements and media, François Soulages refers to a digital aesthetics that he describes as an “aesthetic of hybridization” (Soulages, 1998: 117). This aesthetics is based on a new visual order that takes place considering the mixture or combination of elements, which alter both the way of producing and of receiving images (Soulages, 1998: 117). Fred Ritchin gives several examples of these hybridizations, of this type of use of digital media in contemporary arts, which are related to the sensitive digital capture and translation produced by *Invisible*. One of these examples consists of the experiments and artistic installation *Very Nervous System* by David Rokeby, where “the protagonist moves his or her body in space and the cameras “see” it, translating the image into data and then outputting it as music” (Ritchin, 2009: 43-44).<sup>70</sup> The body moves as if it were dancing, Ritchin points out, producing sounds generated from the visual capture: “The camera, inputting the visual, ends up by making a kind of music” (Ritchin, 2009: 44). In a similar direction, Francisca Morand refers to “hybrid materialities [*materialidades híbridas*]”, when approaching the relationship between the body in motion and the use of new media in the context of the dance performance *Invisible* (Morand, 2014: 38).

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<sup>70</sup> *Very Nervous System* corresponds to a series of interactive sound installations developed by David Rokeby between the years 1986 and 1990. See: <http://www.davidrokeby.com/vns.html> (9/11/2020)

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In the performance *Invisible*, therefore, the choreographers work with the idea of the invisible in connection with the digital, generating an aesthetic of hybridization, which implies a way of re-writing the sense of touch. The work with digital sensors turns the bodies into techno-bodies; they are the “camera” that records and converts data, giving it a hybrid nature. This hybridization in *Invisible* generates a disorder of sensation, a disorder of the senses, a disorientation, and a decomposition from a digital matrix, where new bodies and corporealities emerge. This generates a multi-sensitive experience linked to the resonance in this diaphanous and hybrid touch.

Therefore, from the constitution of resonant bodies, *Invisible* creates a particular and unique type of dance. The performance, therefore, produces a new narrative of the meaning of touch, exploring a new zone of indeterminacy: the resonances of the invisible.

In other words, this diaphanous touch in dance is connected to a haptic coming into presence that generates ways of dancing the haptic in a sound dimension.

In *Invisible*, therefore, a disorder of the senses and sensation is constituted; a disorientation and recomposition based on the relationship between technology and bodies in motion, where new corporealities emerge. Touch comes into presence in *Invisible* through the particular interweaving of different elements related to movement and sound, opening a sound dimension of touch.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Weighings.**

Between the weight of dance and the weight of touch.

[...] work on the presence of the body in the practice of thought, here in philosophy, there in dance, in what it offers of weight to the thought, in the sense that the presence of the body occurs through its relationship with weight and works the thought on its realization and its limits.

(Marie Bardet, 2012b: 27-28).

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.

(Jean-Luc Nancy, 2008a: 125).

## Introduction

“Weight” can refer to many things. Initially, we might think of weight in terms of our body’s mass, in terms of our bodily experience of heaviness. This kind of weight can be displaced, has points of support and contact, and allows one’s body to exert pressure on another, to touch, or to caress. At the same time, it points to the tension between movement and gravity, to the tension, for instance, of the weight of a dancing body. But weight prompts us to think as well of the action of weighing, estimating, balancing, or evaluating in a broader sense. We can think, for example, of the weight of an idea, an image, or a sense.

In this chapter, I introduce the notion of *haptic presence* in connection to the notion of weight as “haptic weighing”. Weight –in terms of the interlinked constellation of meanings sketched above– provides an expansion of the notion, considering the relationship between presence, touch, and weight.

In the first section –“Weighing, thinking, dancing”–, I use the etymological relationship of the French words “peser” (weighing) and “penser” (thinking) as a starting point. I take this observation from Jean-Luc Nancy, who highlights the entanglement of these words in *Le poids d’une pensée* (*The weight of a thought*) in order to draw attention to the physical, sensitive, tangible, and, above all, bodily aspect of thought. This allows us, as the German philosopher Miriam Fischer-Geboers proposes, to consider both dance and philosophy as “ways of thinking” (*Denkarten*). That means considering not only philosophical reflections on dance but also the multiple dialogues and even the overlapping between dance and philosophy as forms of thought.

The second section of this chapter, “Dancing the weight (of touch)”– approaches how contemporary dance explores, interrogates, and reconfigures

touch, considering the relationship between the weight of a thought and the weight of the body. Here, I draw heavily on the work of the French writer and historian of dance Laurence Louppe, as I discuss how various reflexive dance practices, such as contact improvisation, re-articulate ideas about the weight of the body. Adapting Louppe's "poetics of weight", I identify and discuss a "poetic" or "aesthetic of the haptic" in contemporary dance. Finally, at the end of the chapter, I directly address the relationship between weight and touch. I do so by examining how a lexicon of weight is interconnected with a lexicon of touch, following Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida. From there, considering Gerko Egert's contributions and his approach to Nancy's philosophy, I address how the sense of touch unfolds and is put in tension in contemporary dance.

Overall, this chapter argues that understanding the relationship between dance and touching, via the notion of weight, provides further steps towards apprehending the notion of *haptic presence*. We can understand it first as a *way of weighing*: a way in which dance weighs, thinks, and tenses the sense of touch. It is important to underline the intertwining between the different kinds of weights. One might ask what happens between the weight of dance and the weight of touch, and how this constitutes a different kind of weight, a way of weighing, of granting weight, of creating meaning, of putting in tension to build or deconstruct regarding a haptic dimension. These sorts of intertwining between one weight and another are what constitute a *haptic weighing* of the dancing bodies.

## 1. Weighing, thinking, dancing.

### 1.1 Between the (dancing) body and the weight of a thought.

#### Gravitational relationships between dance and philosophy.

In *Le poids d'une pensée* (*The weight of a thought*), Jean-Luc Nancy examines the etymological relationship between the French words “*penser*” (thinking) and “*peser*” (weigh). He points out that both words differ only by one single letter. The letter “n” marks here the proximity and distance between the two verbs, the differences and similarities that bring together weight and thought. In this sense, the connection between *penser* and *peser* is not only a play on words. It involves a deeper relationship “at least as a trace inscribed in language” that enables to access a “weighty/weighing property of thought” (Nancy, 1997: 76). This is not a metaphor, a discursive figure, or the opposition between “materiality” (weight) and “immateriality” (thought). Instead, these words indicate the “intimate co-appropriation of thinking and weighing” (Nancy, 1997:76). For Nancy, this co-appropriation means that thinking consists of “an actual weighing”, that thinking is “the very weighing of the world, of things, of the *real as meaning* [sense]” (Nancy, 1997: 76, italics in original). Due to this co-appropriation, the relationship between weight and thought could be recognized in different actions, like weighing, balancing, estimating, evaluating, etc. These actions point to a matter of distribution and redistribution of weight regarding sense or meaning. That is what Nancy describes as *partage* (partition) of weights concerning the different ways of weighing/thinking the weights of the world, in the sense that “Thought weighs

exactly the weight of meaning [sense]" (Nancy, 1997:77). This means that the weight of a thought is associated, thus, to the fact of having, being, or acquiring a certain weight and thickness (*épaisseur*) concerning a sense (meaning), to the extent that, as Nancy points out, "Meaning [Sense] needs a thickness, a density, a mass (...)" (Nancy, 1997: 79). It is essential to understand that the mass Nancy mentions is not metaphorical. For Nancy, thinking has a corporeal quality. In this sense, the co-appropriation of thinking and weighing involves physical or bodily properties.

In the prologue of the French edition of *Le poids d'une pensée* Nancy insists on the fact that although we tend to perceive thought as something volatile, non-tangible, suspended, or abstract, thought is inseparable from a sensitive, physical, material, and corporeal aspect.

"Just as one thinks with brain and nerves, arms and hands, veins and legs (the simplest test: it gets tired!), as we think, the content of our thoughts is material, physical, tangible, sensitive in every way, verifiable and proven –very often so demanding".

(Nancy, 2008b: 8, my translation).<sup>71</sup>

The matter of weight becomes, then, a matter of the body, of the densities of the masses of bodies, a matter of a *corpus* insofar as "[the] body *is* weight" (Nancy, 2008b: 7, my translation, italics in the original)<sup>72</sup>. The body is not only thoughtful and heavy matter, but it is also a place –a *local weight*– of inscription, incorporation, and creation of *sense*. This also means that thought is inseparable

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<sup>71</sup> Translated from French: "De même qu'on pense avec cerveau et nerfs, bras et mains, ventre et jambes (la preuve la plus simple: ça fatigue!), de même *cela* qu'on pense, le contenu de nos pensées est matériel, physique, tangible, sensible en tous sens, éprouvable et éprouvé – très souvent aussi éprouvant."

<sup>72</sup> Translated from French: "Le corps *est* la pesanteur."

from certain *experience of weight*, certain experience of gravity, from the experience of the heaviness of a thought:

We certainly do experience the weight of thought. Sometimes the heaviness, sometimes the gravity of a “thought” (“idea,” “image,” “judgment,” “volition”, “representation,” etc.) affects us with a perceptible pressure or inclination, a palpable curve –and even with the impact of a fall (if only the falling of one’s head into one’s hands).

(Nancy, 1997: 76).

Thus, Nancy interconnects the issue of the weight of a thought with a bodily experience of that weight, and with the matter of the weight of the body, the weight of its mass, its extension, its gravity, with the head that leans in a fall on the hands. Hands, indeed, help us to understand the bodily dimension of thinking. It is worth making a brief reference to the relationship between hands and thought addressed by Martin Heidegger, to clarify this point.

In the first lesson (*Vorlesung*) of the course “What does it mean to think?” (*Was heißt Denken?*), Martin Heidegger refers to thinking (*das Denken*) as a sort of work that is intimately related to the hand, or rather, as handiwork (*ein Hand-Werk*). Rather than being just a part of our organism, the hand has a force or craft that goes beyond what is commonly imagined. The movements and gestures of the hand, for instance, cannot be reduced to mere motor skills such as grasping and catching, pushing or pulling.<sup>73</sup> The hand opens multiple dimensions: “[the] hand

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<sup>73</sup> Heidegger distinguishes between the hand of man and the hand of the animal, which would not be properly a hand, but rather leg, claw, and so on. The hand of man, in this sense, does not only have a prehensile function (which would also be the gesture of the monkey, deprived of hand) but, above all, a function linked to language and thought. For a critique of this position see Derrida, Jacques. “Heidegger’s Hand (*Geschlecht II*)” in *Psyche. Inventions of the Other*. Volume II. Transl.

reaches and extends, receives and welcomes –and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hands of the others (...) The hand is all this, and this is the true handicraft” (Heidegger, 1968: 16).<sup>74</sup>

Above all, this craft or force of the hand, this “true handicraft”, thus, entails an inseparable connection with thought. For Heidegger, all work, gesture, and movement of the hand has its root in thought: “[every] motion of the hand in every one of its works carries itself through the element of thinking, every bearing of the hand bears itself in that element. All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking” (Heidegger, 1968: 16).

This connection between hand and thought is particularly apparent when we consider, for example, the relationship between writing and language enacted through the hand. The hand’s handicraft is emblematic of the deep relationship between body and thought. In an essay called “Heidegger’s Hand”, Jacques Derrida draws attention to the way thought ceases to be cerebral, disembodied, or disincarnated in Heidegger’s philosophy. Derrida specially underlines the fact that “Heidegger links thinking [*le penser*], and not only philosophy, to a thought [*une pensée*] or to a situation of the body (*Lieb*), of the body of man and of the human being (*Menschheit*)” (Derrida, 2008: 38, notes in the original).

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Highlighting here this *situation of the body* involved in the weight of a thought, one might ask what happens when the situation is dancing? The dancing body

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John P. Leavry Jr. and Elizabeth Rotenberg. Stanford University Press. Stanford, California. 2008. Pp. 27-62.

<sup>74</sup> The issue of the hand in Heidegger is also related to the issue of the gift, the shaking of the hand and the relationship with the other. This is closely related to Heidegger’s particular way of understanding thinking, and the way he proposes to think, to learn to think that is related to the issue of donation (Heidegger, 1968: 16-19).

involves the whole body, not just the hand, in thoughtful action. The connections between dance and thinking have already been explored and underlined both in the philosophy of dance and in Dance Studies. Their contributions do not only constitute philosophical reflections on dance but also consider the relationship between the practices of dance and philosophy themselves. In the following, I am going to comment briefly on some ideas and notions of three different philosophers –Marie Bardet, Veronique Fabbri, and Miriam Fischer-Geboers – that approach the relationship between dance and thinking, or dance as thinking, in terms of its relationship with the weight of the body to shed light on the notion of “weighing” in connection to dance.

In an article entitled “Extensión de un cuerpo pe(n)sando” (Extension of a thinking/weighing body), the Argentine philosopher Marie Bardet dedicates special attention to the relationship between thought, weight, and the dancing body. The author links the experience of the weight of the body in the context of dance with the experience of the weight of a thought, following Jean-Luc Nancy. Bardet suggests that both experiences are associated with gravity in terms of lightness and heaviness, introducing the issue of weight as a point of contact between dance and philosophy:

“(…) sometimes, for some philosophers (Nietzsche, Valéry, and here, Nancy, among others), approaching dance is thinking about other relationships of heaviness. (...) This approach to dance is for them an opportunity to think and rethink the distribution of the earth and the skies of thought, of the lightness and heaviness of acts, of the weights of the world. In all cases, gravity appears as a primary field of encounter between dance and philosophy”.

(Bardet, 2012a: 75, my translation). 75

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<sup>75</sup> Translated from Spanish: “(...) algunas veces, para algunos filósofos (Nietzsche, Valéry, y aquí, Nancy, entre otros), acercarse a la danza es pensar otras relaciones de pesantez. (...) Ese acercamiento a la danza constituye para ellos, una ocasión de pensar y repensar la repartición de

Being gravity a meeting point between dance and philosophy, Bardet examines how the issue of weight has been approached in connection to the dancing body (2012b: 31). The author highlights the philosophical tendency to associate dance and the dancer exclusively with lightness in opposition to heaviness. Dance, under this perspective, becomes a sort of metaphor for philosophical thought, for the abstraction of the idea. This dance-as-lightness, suggests the author, depicts the philosopher himself as a male figure who observes a dancer and sees a disembodied thought that defies the heaviness of the body (2012b: 53). In opposition to this metaphor, present in the philosophical thought –which the author calls “light metaphor”–, Bardet aims at questioning the multiplicity of gravitational relations between dance and philosophy (2012b: 53).<sup>76</sup> In this sense, the author insists on the importance of abandoning the binary opposition between light and heavy. Following Nancy, therefore, Bardet proposes to identify a place «between» lightness and heaviness. That means to consider the variability of experiences related to gravity that inhabit the dancing bodies, which involves weighing and thinking (Bardet 2012b: 52). This approach allows us to consider dance itself, insists Bardet, as a way of weighing and thinking. In other words, for Bardet, dance would no longer correspond to binary oppositions between lightness and heaviness of the bodies, but rather to a tension between them, which, at the same time, relates to the question about the tension of meaning (sense) regarding the weights of the world. That means that dance can be approached both from the question about the sense of weight and the question about the weight of (a) sense (meaning) (2012a: 80), that is, considering the different relationships between lightness and heaviness regarding the multiple and heterogeneous ways of weighing / thinking.

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la tierra y de los cielos del pensamiento, de lo leve y de lo pesado de los actos, de los pesos del mundo. En todos los casos, la gravedad aparece como un campo primordial de encuentro entre la danza y la filosofía.”

<sup>76</sup> Translated from Spanish: “metáfora de la ligera.”

In a similar direction, in *Danse et Philosophie, une pensée en construction* (*Dance and Philosophy, a thought in construction*), the French philosopher Veronique Fabbri argues that the tendency to position dance as a *metaphor* for thought prevents us from comprehending dance *as a thought itself* (2007: 125). For Fabbri, dance is not merely the physical execution of movement or the physical embodiment of an idea or a thought, but rather it is the realization of thought (*la pensée même réalisée*) (2007: 125). Dance is thought itself in the sense that it “puts into work [*met en oeuvre*] a thought that is itself an act” (2007: 122, my translation and note)<sup>77</sup>. In this sense, Fabbri utilizes the term “effectuation” (*effectuabilité*) to underline this dynamic and corporeal process. As well as the architectural construction, dance is understood as an act where the structures of thought and sensible forms are intertwined. In this sense, Fabbri insists, dance can be considered as realization or effectuation of thought.

The German theater and dance scholar Leoni Otto warns us not to restrict ourselves to “conceptual dance” (*Kozeptanz*) when considering “dance as thinking” (2016).<sup>78</sup> Otto also warns us that dancing-as-thinking is not just the translation of a thought, concept, or idea into dance. Otto echoes Fabbri when she emphasizes dance as a dynamic thoughtful process, a process of reflection (*ein Reflexionsprozess*), and not solely as the physical and choreographic expression of movement. Here Otto underlines the fact that this process of reflection should not be considered, however, as opposed to the sensible, to the body and movement, and it should be accompanied by a certain understanding of thought that demands an amplitude, which we could understand here as an *amplitude towards the body* (Otto, 2016: 380).

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<sup>77</sup> Translated from French: “met en oeuvre una pensée qui est elle-même acte”.

<sup>78</sup> See also: Schulze, Janine / Sussanne Traub (Eds.) *Moving thoughts - Tanzen ist Denken*. Vorwerk 8 Verlag. Berlin, 2003. For the relationship between knowledge and dance see: Gehem, Sabine et al (Eds.) *Wissen in Bewegung. Perspektiven der künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Forschung im Tanz*. Transcript Verlag. Bielefeld, 2007.

Thus, Bardet, Fabbri, and Otto agree that dance is not only the embodiment of an idea or a thought, but is also the effectuation of thought, a constant process of reflection, a way of weighing and thinking the weights of the world.

In her book *Denken in Körpern. Grundlegung einer Philosophie des Tanzes* (*Thinking in bodies. Foundation for a philosophy of dance*) (2010), Miriam Fischer-Geboers examines the consequences that this kind of approach involves, both for philosophy and for dance. She asks, for instance, if dance should be understood as a subject of study of philosophy (*ein Gegenstand der Philosophie*), as it could be in the case of a philosophy of dance. Alternatively, she asks whether dance itself could be considered a “sort of philosophy” (*eine Art Philosophie*) (Fischer-Geboers 2010: 316-317). Fischer-Geboers, therefore, asks:

Can dance then be considered as a “philosophy of the body” – as a “philosophy” in the strict sense, practised in or by a “thinking” body? What consequences would this have for the conception of philosophy in general?

(Fischer-Geboers 2010: 317, my translation).<sup>79</sup>

Fischer-Geboers draws on Alain Badiou’s proposal that art constitutes a “way of thinking” (*L'art est une pensée*). In *Petit Manuel d'inaesthétique* (*Handbook of inaesthetics*) Badiou argues that art and philosophy, as particular modes of thought, can activate truths; they each can offer a “local instance” (*instance locale*) of a truth (Badiou 2005: 12), that constitutes a “truth procedure” (*procédure de vérité*). Like Badiou, Fischer-Geboers argues that there is an intimate relationship

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<sup>79</sup> Translated from German: “Lässt sich der Tanz also als eine «Philosophie des Körpers» zu betrachten –genaugenommen als eine «Philosophie», die in bzw. von einem «denkenden» Körper ausgeübt wird? Welche Konsequenzen hätte dies für die Konzeption der Philosophie allgemein? “ (Fischer-Geboers, 2010: 317).

(*ein enges Verhältnis*) between philosophy and art, in terms of their capacity to reveal truths.

Using these key ideas of “way of thinking” and “truth procedure” Fischer-Geboers proposes a philosophy of dance “[...] in the sense of a philosophical reflection on dance, but also in the sense of an equitable encounter or even a superposition of both “ways of thought” [“Denkarten”].” (Fischer-Geboers, 2010: 351, my translation and note).<sup>80</sup> Thus, the author proposes:

[...] to consider dance (art) and philosophy as equivalent “ways of thinking” [“Denkarten”] (Badiou) or as “partners of thought” [«Partner im Denken»]. Which type of fellowship [«Partnerschaft»] between the “ways of thinking” is, whether and to what extent they touch each other, open to each other or even overlap, is decided by each philosophy (and each art).

(Fischer-Geboers, 2010: 349, my translation and notes)<sup>81</sup>

Following these ideas, Fischer-Geboers incorporates Nancy's notions of weight as she argues for the specific thoughtful capacities of dance. The author points out that it is precisely because of Nancy's understanding of thought in connection to weight that it is possible to describe dance as thought. She draws on the associations that Nancy makes between thought and body, mass, matter, and weight in order to propose the idea of philosophy and dance as “partners of thought” (Fischer-Geboers, 2010: 344). Bardet also draws on Nancy; in his work, she perceives a “gesture” that can link dance to philosophy, “a gesture betting on

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<sup>80</sup> Translated from German: “[...] eine Philosophie des Tanzes im Sinne einer philosophischen Reflexion des Tanzes, aber auch im Sinne einer gleichberechtigten Begegnung oder sogar Überlappung der beiden “Denkarten” (Fischer-Geboers, 2010: 351).

<sup>81</sup> Translated from German: “[...] Tanz (Kunst) und Philosophie als gleichwertige «Denkarten» (Badiou) oder auch als «Partner im Denken» zu betrachten. Welcherart die «Partnerschaft» zwischen den «Denkarten» ist, ob und inwieweit sie sich berühren, einander öffnen oder sogar überlappen, entscheidet jede Philosophie (und jede Kunst).”

the possible dialogue between different ways of weighing and thinking about the world" (2012a: 77, my translation). Philosophy can, thus, Fischer-Geboers points out, learn from dance, insofar as dance, and the sense of dance, is intimately linked to the body, to the dancing, weighing, and thinking body. Dance undermines dualisms between materiality and ideality, body and thought, as well as between the sensitive and the intelligible; in dance, they demonstrate their inseparable unity (*unhintergehbare Einheit*) (Fischer-Geboers, 2010: 352). Ultimately, limits and borders between these poles are blurred. So too are the limits and borders between forms of thought such as philosophy and dance.

This particular encounter between dance and philosophy, based on the notion of weight, allows us to consider dance as a way of «Weighing», «Denkarten» or «Denkweisen». Approaching dance, then, will not involve just the application of philosophical notions, for instance, but rather it would entail the different dialogues and tensions, as Bardet would say, regarding the different ways of weighing and thinking about the world.

## 1.2 Weight, separation and presence.

Another key notion that Jean-Luc Nancy examines when approaching the relationship between weight and thought is that of “separation”. This notion has several meanings in Nancy’s Philosophy and plays a special role when the author approaches dance. In the following, therefore, I will examine some main ideas regarding “separation” to shed light on the relationship between the notions of weight and presence.

The idea of separation is connected to the distinction of a singularity. To distinguish a singularity means to cut or trim. This means to separate something to be able to make a distinction, for example, when we distinguish or identify a fragment of the world, an area of our experience, a sensitive dimension, different arts, and so on. In this sense, the notion of separation is linked to the idea of the singular and the local, to what is separated and therefore, through its separation, acquires a certain singular weight and sense. The separation has to do, thus, with the partition (*partage*), with the distributions and redistributions of weights. The sense or meaning that something might have, suggests Nancy, is generated regarding a separation through which something acquires a certain weight (Nancy, 1997: 78).

Nevertheless, the separation will never be something absolute. This means that, at the same time, the separation and distributions of weights are never entirely complete or totally finished. The separation is always open as it is interconnected with the world. This is why Nancy relates the movement of separation both to that of the appropriation (when distinguishing a singularity) and of the impossibility of that appropriation, since there will be always something

inappropriable within any appropriation or weighing.<sup>82</sup> Nancy designates this as the “inappropriability of appropriation”, to underline the unfinished character of the appropriation because of the fact that the sense also weighs due to what escapes, subtracts, and, therefore, opens (Nancy, 1997: 80).<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the author insists that the separation is always related to the unfinished, the unclosed, the infinite, especially due to the multiple nature of the appropriation, which is also a place of the open. The author points out, indeed, that the separation is rather the event of opening that is, the taking place of an opening (Nancy, 1997: 79). Nancy understands this taking place as singularity and at the same time as plurality. As singularity because of the necessary separation for the distinction of a singularity, and as a plurality due to the unfinished or open character of the separation.

The separation, therefore, designates a spacing. That means a local space but at the same time plural, non-closed, multiple spaces. Jacques Derrida refers to this constant movement of separation in Nancy’s philosophy as “separation that spaces out” (Derrida, *Touching*: 129) to the extent that the separation is never complete, but expands in a multiplicity considering that what is separated remains interconnected as part of a world. This movement, thus, is essential to consider different ways of thinking/weighing, where different articulations and disarticulation of sense or meaning emerge, such as those that can be found in philosophy but also in dance, as we have seen in the previous section. As I will approach later, in the Fifth Chapter: Haptics, the notion of separation, is also essential for Nancy’s comprehension of arts. Nancy refers indeed to a “force of arts” linked to the singularity reached by the separation (Nancy, 1996: 36).

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<sup>82</sup> Nancy returns with this term to the Heideggerian idea of the appropriation of one's own, where the *Ereignis*, which designates the event of production of the self, is linked to a disappropriation or exappropriation, as Derrida calls it. See: Jean-Luc Nancy, “Dance as Image–Image as Dance” in Brandstetter, Gabriele, Holger Hartung (eds.) *Moving (Across) Borders*. Transcript Verlag, Germany, 2017.

<sup>83</sup> The notion of “finitude” is fundamental both regarding the notion of separation and the idea of the weight of a thought. The author points out that the weight of a thought as a local, separate, diverse, and open weight, is also what in another lexicon can be called finitude. Finitude, for the author, does not correspond to the deprivation of the infinite, but rather to the movement in which the singular and non-totalizing is kept available. That which totalizes, and therefore closes, comes precisely to seek to “infinite,” as Nancy says, meaning. For this reason, Nancy also names it non-finite, which due to its infinity resists the infinitization of totalization (Nancy, 1997: 75-84).

Approximately ten years after the first publication of *Le poids d'une pensée* in 1991, Nancy returns to the issue of weight and separation, but on this occasion concerning dance in "Séparation de la danse" (2001b).<sup>84</sup> This approach provides the notion of separation with another point of departure in comparison to the one developed in *Le poids d'une pensée*, opening the question about how to understand the idea of separation when we talk about the dancing body. As I will mention later in this section, it is in this relationship between the body and separation that Nancy continues to expand his notion of presence linked to the idea of weight.

Nancy develops further these ideas through the collaborative work with the choreographer Mathilde Monnier. From a lasting exchange of ideas over several years, Nancy and Monnier created a project called "Alliterations", that consisted both in the publication of a book and a performance, with the same title.<sup>85</sup> This text, "Allitérations", was part of the performance, being read live by Jean-Luc Nancy. As the writer and dramaturg Noémie Solomon points out, similarly as mentioned by Fischer-Geboers, "Allitérations" came to connect in a very particular way "the written and live event, the lecture and the performance, to interrogate and reinvent the ways in which dance and philosophy can cohabit on the page and on the stage" (Solomon, 2012: 595).

However, to approach the notion of separation in dance, Nancy refers to a heterogeneous aspect of dance. The author refers to the sun, the earth, the sky, to possession and trance, opening up an anthropological perspective, as Veronique Fabbri underlines (2004). The ideas of possession and trance led Nancy to the idea that the body also separates from itself. The body, Nancy suggests, departs from its own body, separating from itself to return to itself in the multiple, but always local and singular, experience of the weight (Nancy, 2001b: 292). The body, therefore, is crossed by its own dance (*traversé par sa danse*), possessed by the separation of itself. In other words, the dancing body separates from itself "to

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<sup>84</sup> This text was first published in the proceedings of the colloquium "*Dance: langage propre et métissage culturel*", in the framework of the Nouvelle Danse Festival in Montreal, and marks the beginning of a long process of exchange between Nancy's philosophy and dance.

<sup>85</sup> The book, entitled *Allitérations. Conversations sur la danse* collects the exchange of emails between Nancy and Monnier during the years 2002 and 2003 and includes a new version of "Separation de la danse", also under the name of "Allitérations".

be nothing more than a return to the movement of the world (...) separating itself to reach itself" (Nancy, 2001b 295: my translation). In this sense, Nancy describes this movement of the separation of the body in terms of possession and trance, which would also be the movement of the spacing of a presence:

Body possessed by separation: here is the soul and here is the dance, the trance and the cadence of a separation.

The spacing of a presence: a presence that would present itself apart from itself. Space and spasm.

(Nancy, 2005: 145, my translation, italics in the original) <sup>86</sup>

Nancy understands this separation of the body and spacing of the presence in terms of self-reference and self-reflection of the dancing body. In other words, a self-observation is generated, connecting body and thought. This self-reference and self-reflection are intertwined with the faculty of the dancing body to disarticulate, decompose, deconstruct, and dispose of its own presence (*il se défait de sa propre présence*) and to return to it. In this sense, this departure and return to itself, this gravitational movement, establishes a particular and inseparable relationship with thought (Nancy, 2017: 45). In this sense, dance is not only connected with a body in the space, but also with a body in the space of thought (Nancy, 2005: 114).

In an e-mail exchange with Mathilde Monnier in *Alliterations*, Nancy suggests that it is the separation or spacing of the self, existent in the dancing body, what generates the conditions for a thinking body (Nancy, 2005: 33). Miriam Fischer-

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<sup>86</sup> Translated from French: "Corps possédé para la séparation: voilà l'âme et voilà la danse, la transe et la cadence d'un écart. L'écartement d'une présence: une présence qui se présenterait à l'écart d'elle-même. Espace et spasme."

Geboers, on several occasions (in *Denken in Körpern*, for example, or in “Mutation du sense de la danse”), insists on underlining this relationship between self-reference (*Selbstbezüglichkeit*) of the dancing body and thought, following Nancy:

The dancing body thus goes out of itself in the movement of itself-to-itself, which Nancy interprets as a sort of reflection, in order to come back to itself and thereby becomes another, coming, birthing body. This «reflecting» or «thinking» body also dances its own becoming: it is «devenir-corps».

(Fischer-Geboers, 2010: 336, my translation)<sup>87</sup>

The idea of becoming a body, together with this understanding of the separation and spacing of presence, is connected to the possibility of its reorganization. In other words, the presence of the body can be re-created, re-organized, separated from itself to return to itself in a new relationship with itself and with the world. Nancy, therefore, suggests that this movement rearticulates the presence of the body differently when referring to dance (Nancy, 2005: 141). That different way is related to the weight, to the multiple forms in which presence acquires a certain weight in dance, that is, how weight is being reorganized or rearticulated considering its own separation. Marie Bardet refers to this idea when she suggests, following Nancy, that “the presence of the body takes place through its relationship with weight” (Bardet, 2012a: 27-28, my translation).<sup>88</sup> Dance,

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<sup>87</sup> Translated from German: “Der tanzende Körper geht folglich in der Bewegung des Sich-zu sich, die Nancy als eine Art Reflexion deutet, aus sich heraus, um zu sich zurückzukommen, und wird dabei ein anderer, komender, sich gebärender Körper. Dieser „sich reflektierende“ bzw. „denkende“ Körper tanzt gleichermaßen sein eigenes Werden: Er sei „devenir-corps“.

<sup>88</sup> Translated from Spanish: “la presencia del cuerpo se da a través de su relación con el peso” (Bardet, *Pensar* 27-28).

therefore, following Nancy and Bardet, as an art that works with the weights of the body, sheds light on this particular relationship between weight and presence.

Summarizing, through the notion of separation linked to the body, presence, therefore, is related to the notion of weight, with the forms of weighing and thinking about the world, with how those weights are organized and re-distributed. In this sense, the “coming into presence” in the context of arts is intimately related to weight and thought, to weighings, as a reorganization of meaning and sense produced by the separation.

## 2. Dancing the weight (of touch).

### 2.1 The “poetic of weight” in contemporary dance.

The issue of weight, of the weight of the body, has always played an elementary role in dance. Nevertheless, as the dance historian Laurence Louppe highlights, weight became one of the most important articulation axes of contemporary dance (Louppe 2010: 65). In her *Poetics of contemporary dance*, the author dedicates indeed a chapter to the issue of weight.<sup>89</sup> Louppe identifies the importance of weight not just as an elemental factor of movement –as for instance, the displacement of the weight of the body, what this weight mobilizes and in turn symbolizes, builds, and deconstructs– but also, as an essential poetic element that would articulate a “poetics of weight” particularly in contemporary dance (Louppe, 2010: 65).

The matter of weight acquires, therefore, a certain weight that involves other forms of understanding and articulating the body in dance. The use of gravity regarding the weight of the body, the acceptance, and work with the body’s weight, became one of the foundational elements of this poetics of weight (Louppe, 2010: 65). The author identifies, for example, at least two figures of this poetics: the swing and the fall, as ways of approaching the gravity of the body. Numerous practices and aesthetics, Louppe points out, would have drawn upon these figures (Louppe, 2010: 65). In the case of the fall, for instance, it is not about an imitation of the fall but rather a “play of movement around the gravitational axis”, where the

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<sup>89</sup> This chapter on weight is called “The Four Factors: Weight.” In this chapter, which begins with a quote from Jean-Luc Nancy – “The body is not thought of except as something that weighs” – the author begins by pointing out the importance of weight in the four-factor system developed by Rudolf von Laban (weight, flow, space and time). Weight, in Laban’ system, would be the most fundamental element, since the transfer of weight is what defines all movement (Louppe 2010: 64).

use of the floor became one of the key elements of exploration and investigation with the body (Louppe, 2010: 66). In this context, the floor is not only understood in terms of a point of support for the body but also as a surface of contact, friction, sliding, displacement, transport, transfer, counterpoint, tension, recovery, release or abandonment of the weight of the body; a place where the weight of the body is approached in a way that opens up a new range of possibilities of movement. In this sense, Louppe points out that this attention to the weight considering the floor, generates other bodies and corporealities “where the body thinks and loses itself, lets itself go into a ground that in turn gives itself up to the body, provokes exceptional movement qualities” (Louppe, 2010: 66).

Therefore, from the work developed around this gravitational poetics in dance, the issue of weight –previously slightly perceived by the majority of the public, as Louppe suggests– became not only a different place of symbolic construction and artistic composition but also an aesthetic element in dance.<sup>90</sup> This separation of the weight of the body, therefore, created a certain sensitive gravitational regime in contemporary dance.

As Louppe suggests, in the work developed with the weight in these terms, the sense of touch began to be considered as a fundamental factor (2010: 65). Working with weight in dance generates a diversification of the different forms in which how touch can be approached and explored. In this sense, it could be suggested that it is a form of separation and weighing, in the sense of a reflection on the matter of the weight of the body linked to the matter of the sense of touch.

At the beginning of the book *Touching and being touched*, Gabriele Brandstetter Gerko Egert, and Sabine Zubarik indicate that touch is a fundamental element of dance that can be recognized throughout its history, both in a physical and affective sense (Brandstetter et al., 2013a: 3). The different configurations of touching, in terms of referentiality, self-referentiality, and interaction, but also in terms of configuration and tension regarding proximity and distance, can be as

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<sup>90</sup> In the case of the fall, for example, the symbolic place associated from a mimetic interpretation, as Laurence Louppe highlights, where the fall refers to a rather funereal place related to death in the performing arts (the body that falls lifeless to the ground, for example), fades into a series of new symbolisms, or loses its symbolic character (Louppe, 2010, 65-66).

diverse as the different dance practices. At the same time, dance has been immersed in different rules of contact and proximity, from classical ballet, for example, to the most contemporary proposals. As the authors point out, touch has been understood as a form of transmission and communication that can take on a multiplicity of forms regarding the different ways of touching and being touched (Brandstetter et al., 2013a: 4).

Nevertheless, despite the fact that touch has always been an essential element of dance throughout its history, which is important to recognize, it has not always had a weight in terms of the attention, reflection, and work surrounding gravity in the terms described above. Touch comes into focus precisely when it acquires weight, when it comes into presence. In other words, although it is necessary to recognize the elementary or essential role of touch in dance throughout its history, it is also necessary to recognize a particular attention, a particular situation of weight that touch acquires in contemporary dance. Laurence Louppe does not hesitate to point out that the sense of touch will be the most developed sense in contemporary dance (Louppe, 2010: 64). Moreover, the author stresses, regarding the relationship between weight and touch, that it is essentially towards the sense of touch that the mutations regarding the work with the weight of the body are orientated (Louppe, 2010: 65).

Perhaps one of the most emblematic examples of this attention to the matter of touch based on the matter of weight is that of *Contact Improvisation*, which came to define different tendencies in contemporary dance. Historically, this praxis of movement can be placed in the seventies regarding the bodily movements and explorations developed by Steve Paxton.<sup>91</sup> *Contact Improvisation* consists of working on and with weight, with the flow of weighing movement, and with the contact of the weight of the other's body.<sup>92</sup> In the improvisation that *Contact* proposes, at least two or more persons explore their possibilities of movement,

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<sup>91</sup> See, for instance, Brandstetter, Gabriele. "Listening. Kinesthetic awareness in Contemporary dance" in Brandstetter, Gabriele, Egert, Gerko and Zubarik, Sabine. *Touching and being touched. Kinesthesia and Empathy in dance and movement*. De Gruyter. Berlin/Boston, 2013.

<sup>92</sup> See, for instance, Novak, Cynthia J. *Sharing the dance. Contact Improvisation and American Culture*. The University of Wisconsin Press. London, England, 1990.

maintaining always points of physical contact with one another. As Louppe describes it:

Contact involves two partners. The idea is to move continually supporting one another, always keeping a point or plain of contact. The movement is invented, proposed, given and received out of broad waves of mutual support in an improvisation where the subject gives over all initiative to her/his own weight shifts in a gravitational touching of the other's body.

(Louppe, 2010: 68).

Louppe argues that in certain practices, such as *Contact Improvisation*, the elements of touch “can be *charged with a greater tactile value*” (2010: 84, my italics). This means that elements concerning the sense of touch are intensively brought together, giving rise to poetic and sensory relations and variations (Louppe, 2010: 84). Highlighting the use of the words “charged” and “value” in Louppe’s quote, one might recall the notions of separation and weighing in connection to touch and tactile dimensions. In this sense, it is pertinent to express the idea of a *separation of touch*, where touch comes to presence through the dancing bodies being in contact. This generates, as already indicated, a wide range of qualities of movements, relationships, and particular corporealities connected with the weight of touch. Louppe also refers to this *charged tactile value* in terms of the “power to feel the skin of things” (2010: 84). And this power can spread out over the whole body, generating a “dance of the skin” (Louppe, 2010: 84). In this sense, the author suggests that:

The dancer's body becomes a tactile organ, where every fold or crease possesses the sensitivity of the most perceptive of the phalanges or the most attentive lips. Small or large movements then fold and refold sensations according to multiple prisms across all sections, all sides of the kinesphere.<sup>93</sup>

(Louppe, 2010: 84).

Summarizing, and incorporating the vocabulary that has been discussed in the previous sections, it can be established that touch, from its separation, acquires a certain weight. Touch is separated and spaced out in dance, which means that touch comes to presence. This generates a reorganization of the ways in which the body is perceived and thought, as it is thought of as a tactile organ, as a body charged with tactile value. The poetics of weight, therefore, also generates a poetics of touch; a way of dancing the weight of touch.

This intimate relationship between the issue of weight and the issue of touch, between a lexicon of weight and a lexicon of touch, is what I am going to address in the following subchapter, deepening and expanding the relationships between touch, weight, and presence.

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<sup>93</sup> The notion of "kinesphere" or "gestural sphere" is used by Rudolf von Laban to indicate "the space of proximity whose edges the limbs can touch" (Louppe, 2010: 43).

## 2.2 «Corpus of tact».

### Towards a haptic weighing in dance.

In his book *On Touching– Jean-Luc Nancy*, Jacques Derrida underlines the interconnection of a lexicon of the word weight and a lexicon of the word touch. The author refers to this especially considering the “corpus of tact” that Nancy displays in his book *Corpus*, in which the words weight and weighing appear to be intertwined with the notion of touch. This corpus of tact is right at the beginning of a chapter with the title “weighing” and constitutes a sort of listing, or a sequence of words, specifically of verbs, that configures certain lexicon or semantic touch. Derrida, therefore, underlines the fact that the last word of this corpus of tact corresponds to the verb “weight” (Derrida, 2005: 70).

#### Weighing

Corpus of tact: skimming, grazing, squeezing, thrusting, pressing, smoothing, scraping, rubbing, caressing, palpating, fingering, kneading, massaging, entwining, hugging, striking, pinching, biting, sucking, moistening, taking, releasing, licking, jerking off, looking, listening, smelling, tasting, ducking, fucking, rocking, balancing, carrying, weighing...

(Nancy, 2008a: 93)<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> It is interesting to note that the words change with each translation, which expands even more this “corpus of tact”. For instance, the French word “baiser” means both to kiss and to have intercourse depending on the context. In the english translation, nevertheless, the word is translated

The ellipses were written by Nancy and are part of this listing. The enumeration or list is characteristic of Nancy's work, and it points towards an infinite account that always ends with three points or with etcetera. The function of the list is not to name only different attributes, its purpose is rather to indicate a plurality without unity, the dislocation and fracture of unity and origin, since the elements or verbs on the list would not initially correspond to a common ground, as well as “releasing” and “smelling.” In this sense, the list also relates to multiplicity, to the multiple nature of touch. This does not mean that the set of verbs that Nancy chooses for this corpus is not important in itself, but rather that this set is characterized by plurality.

It is important to note that all of these words on the list are rather verbs that indicate action, movement, especially body movements. Conforming this multiplicity of verbs, it is possible to identify at least three different spheres. The first corresponds to the sensible or the senses in which Nancy includes verbs such as listen, look, smell, and taste. The second corresponds to verbs that are frequently associated with touch or that can easily refer to what is commonly understood as contact, such as rubbing, grabbing, caressing, massaging, biting, etc. And the third, one that Derrida highlights, corresponds to those verbs that are not so easily associated with the idea of contact, or that tend to mean the opposite, such as “releasing” and “ducking” (*éviter*) (Derrida, 2005: 70). The inclusion of these verbs provides a particular way of understanding the issue of touch, since Nancy is precisely thinking about the interruption within all contact, or as Derrida underlines:

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as “fucking”. I leave, therefore, the original in French in this footnote: “Corpus du tact: effleurer, frôler, presser, enfoncer, serrer, lisser, gratter, froter, caresser, palper, tâter, pétrir, masser, enlacer, étreindre, frapper, pincer, mordre, sucer, mouiller, tenir, lâcher, lécher, branler, regarder, écouter, flairer, goûter, éviter, baiser, bercer, balancer, porter, peser ...” (Nancy, 2008a: 92).

The inclusion of verbal expressions such as “letting” go or “avoiding”, which rather than touching seem, on the contrary, literally to signify noncontact, interruption, spacing, a hiatus at the core of contact – tact, precisely! And the heartbeat, with its syncopal interruptions, which gives its rhythm to pulse, pulsion, or even haptical compulsion, the *cum* of con-tact, coming to link or conjoin only where disconnection remains at work, as well as possible disjunction.

(Derrida, 2005: 70).

In this sense, with this rhythm and interruption, points out Derrida, Nancy is both following and challenging the traditional understanding of touch at the same time: touch as the sense that encompasses all the senses and touch as defined only by proximity and immediacy (2005: 70).

However, in addition to this infinite plurality and the inclusion of verbs initially contradictory to the notion of touch, the “last” word of the list (weighing) seems to play a different role. Derrida suggests that the term “weighing” seems to be rather a kind of transcendental of other concepts so that this multiplicity ends up having a point of convergence (2005: 71). That is, the verb weighing, the last verb on the list, would come to play a decisive role when referring to what would constitute – and what would not – such a “corpus of touch”. Weighing, then, becomes in itself the measure of this corpus. In other words, the relationship with weight, or with weighing, is what makes something belong to this list or not. This corresponds to the transcendental aspect of weighing, highlights Derrida, in relation to the verbs that constitute a corpus of touch. In this sense, Derrida points out that:

This is another way of saying that, in this tactile corpus, one is dealing less with a categorial list of operations that consist in touching than with thinking, which is to say pondering, weighing that which gives

itself over to tact in a thousand ways, namely, the body, the corpus, inasmuch as it weighs – and therefore, in a certain way thinks [...] as well as the weight of thought.

(Derrida, 2005: 71).

In fact, after this “corpus of tact”, this list, Nancy argues that everything comes to be related to the issue of weight, and the weight of the body. (Nancy, 2008a: 93). The issue of the weight of the bodies becomes, in turn, a matter of touch: a body weighs and presses against other bodies (Nancy, 2008a: 93). The body would then be this local, plural and relational weighing that allows the encounter between touch, dance and thought.

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Nancy's “corpus of tact” is one of the starting points of the book *Moving Relation. Touch in contemporary dance* by the dance scholar Gerko Egert. The author refers to this corpus primarily to highlight two issues regarding touch in contemporary dance. The first consists in the multiplicity or plurality of touch, and the second in the interruption within every contact. In this sense, Gerko aims at addressing not just the multiplicity of touch in contemporary dance but also how the interruption of touch is addressed in the nowadays dance practices, considering the movements “coming closer” but also of “pulling away”.

In this sense, at the beginning of his book, the author examines the dance performance *is maybe* by Angela Schubot and Jared Gradinger, where touch is explored in different forms during the performance. Egert describes different movements and instances of touch, mentioning how it becomes rather difficult to

identify while they mutate and transform, for instance, from pulling away to getting closer to each other. The author mentions that the performance “is full of touch. However, none of the touches can be clearly determined” (Egert, 2020: 1). In this sense, Egert is considering both the movements of intimacy and immediacy and those also of distance and differences:

“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 slowness of the arm’s movement conjures hitting, it occurs in the dynamic of movement. In approaching, in striking or stroking, but also in withdrawing, relations arise, and touch transpires as a configuration of movements.”

(Egert, 2020: 1).

In this sense, following Nancy’s “corpus of tact”, Egert suggests that in contemporary dance “touch cannot be reduced to a momentary immediate proximity. In the movement, in the approaching and the withdrawing, it is clear that touch also contains an inherent distance. Touch is a rhythm of relation and difference” (Egert, 2020: 12).

It is interesting to note that one can also identify a “corpus of tact” in the context of contemporary dance. As mentioned in the Second Chapter, the choreographer Francisca Morand identifies some “materialities of movements” that she interestingly also expresses in the form of a list, a list containing verbs related to touch. These materialities, explains the choreographer, resulted from the dance explorations regarding the notions of invisible, touch, and the untouchable for the dance performance *Invisible*:

Caress, rub, hug, massage, trace, scrub, lick, probe, squeeze, tickle, stretch, smash, press, knead, handle, scrape, rub, compress, take, twist, push, hit, prick, manipulate, hold, squeeze, release, shake, fit, scratch, crush, penetrate, finger, chafe, stick, fold, pinch...

(Morand, 2014: 37, my translation).<sup>95</sup>

In this list, Morand also identifies verbs that can be easily connected to touch, like caress, rub, or hug. Nevertheless, as well as in Nancy's list, the verb "release" comes to form part of this list. Morand's list, therefore, points both towards the multiplicity of touch and to the interruption within all contact.

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Just as weight – an elemental factor in dance– became a poetic element, articulating a poetics of weight in contemporary dance (as Louppe suggests), touch –also an elemental factor in dance– becomes a poetic element that creates a haptic aesthetic in contemporary dance.

In other words, touch becomes a matter of weight in contemporary dance, a matter of heaviness, of a certain thickness of touch, since dance is also connected with ways of weighing/thinking touch, which means the multiple ways in which dance tenses the sense and meaning of touch. Touch not only becomes spaced

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<sup>95</sup> Translated from Spanish: "Acariciar, rozar, abrazar, masajear, trazar, sobar, lengüetear, tantear, apretar, hacer cosquillas, estirar, aplastar, presionar, restregar, manosear, raspar, frotar, comprimir, tomar, torcer, empujar, golpear, pinchar, manipular, coger, estrujar, soltar, sacudir, encajar, rascar, machacar, calar, digitar, friccionar, pegar, doblar, pellizcar..."

out, but it also becomes a thickens, in the sense that it acquires a weight, a dancing and thinking weight, an embodied thought of touch.

To that weight, to that weighing/thinking of touch, that separation of touch in dance, to that *haptic weighing*, is what I am proposing here as *haptic presence*: coming into the presence of touch. Presence: a matter of weight, a matter of body, a matter of touch.

## CHAPTER 4:

### **Dancing the haptic II: Thermal dimension.**

#### Haptic luminescence in *Chaleur Humaine*.

It is colour, and the relations between colours, that form this haptic world and haptic sense, in accordance with relations of warm and cool, expansion and contraction.

(Giles Deleuze, 2003: 138).

It is not the softness, or the warmth of the hand given in contact that the caress seeks. The seeking of the caress constitutes its essence by the fact that the caress does not know what it seeks. This “not knowing”, this fundamental disorder, is the essential. It is like a game with something slipping away, a game absolutely without project or plan, not with what can become ours or us, but with something other, always other, always inaccessible, and always still to come [a venir].

(Levinas, 1987:89).

## Introduction

The present chapter focuses especially on the dance performance *Chaleur Humaine* by the Canadian choreographer Stephan Gladyszewski. Using a "thermal-video" projection system, the performance creates a thermal dimension of touch, where the invisible traces of temperature that are involved in the tactile experience of the dancers acquire a certain weight through the movements of the colourful waves that are projected on the bodies. The combination of these elements generates a thermal dimension of touch.

To examine this dimension, I first draw on Jane Bennett's notion of "vibrant matter", understanding materialities and things as vital or animated entities. That vitalism is related to forces, forces of things, that can be captured by the artist's eye. In this sense, I refer to Deleuze's notion of vibration in connection to the arts. From there, I refer to the notions of light and colour in terms of vibration, going back to Loïe Fuller's *Serpentine Dance* and *danses lumineuses*. I address the observations of some authors, like Ann Cooper Albright, who approach the relationship between lights and colour in Fuller's work to later discuss the synthesis of colour, light, and touch in *Chaleur Humaine*

I also approach in this chapter the idea of "emergence from colour" from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, regarding his analysis of Paul Cezanne's paintings, where the author examines a vibrant constitution of the appearance of the object and its relationship with the world of sensations

Finally, I draw on Emanuel Levinas's thoughts about the caress to further develop the relationship between presence and touch involved in the display of a thermal dimension.

## 1. **Stephan Gladyzewski:** *Chaleur Humaine.*

From the beginning of the performance, the hall is particularly dark, hermetically obscure. The dancers Emmanuel Proulx and Elise Bergeron also accompany this darkness with their eyes closed. In this dark atmosphere, *Chaleur Humaine* begins with her standing, nude, wrapped in a piece of white transparent fabric. He is at her side, nude as well, kneeling, breathing heavily at the height of her legs.



**Image 9.**

Stephan Gladyzewski:  
*Chaleur Humaine.*

His breath comes out of his mouth, which is drawn on her body, as a thermal trace. Small, red-coloured waves appear, coming out of his mouth. Her skin shines in the form of blue, yellow, and green stains that signalize lower temperature levels. He slowly begins to touch her with his left hand. The hand travels carefully over the legs towards the stomach, leaving a red mark behind, a luminescent trace of heat. They begin to touch each other, receiving at the same time, projected on their own bodies, the light and colours of their own intimacy. The luminescent colours of the traces of touch constantly change, creating a colourful atmosphere. From the darkness, one observes the intensity of this proximity, the temperature, and the affection of this erotic closeness that emerges from the increasing contact of skin. One observes it through the vibration of a haptic and colourful light, where the invisible traces of the intensity of touching and its temperature acquire a luminescent materiality.

**Image 10.**

Stephan Gladyszewski:

*Chaleur Humaine.*

*Chaleur Humaine*, created by Canadian image and movement artist Stéphane Gladyszewski, was presented at the International Festival for contemporary dance, DANCE, in Munich in 2017.<sup>96</sup> With two dancers on the stage, a thermal camera, and a video projector, the performance explores the relationship between the sense of touch and eroticism, desire, and pleasure. Gladyszewski explores and creates a space of intimacy that materializes in colourful zones of the human body that glow in motion and that are invisible to the human eye.

A thermal camera (also known as an infrared camera) is able to capture the different levels of temperature of things and creatures that are being recorded. These types of cameras are able to detect different levels of electromagnetic radiation, indivisible to the human eye, and produce images of that radiation. The

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<sup>96</sup> The work was first created in 2011 and presented in different places. In 2017, it was performed in Munich, where I had the opportunity to assist. A description of *Chaleur Humaine* will be found at: <https://www.danielleveilledanse.org/en-chaleur-humaine>.

amount of radiation emitted by an object increases with temperature. For this reason, a thermal camera produces images depending on the variations in temperature.<sup>97</sup> In this sense, the thermal camera used in *Chaleur Humaine* captures both the movement of the dancers and their interaction through touch regarding its electromagnetic radiation. The camera is placed in the same room in which the performance takes place and coupled with a video projector and an optical system, so that the thermal images of bodies captured by the camera can be re-projected live onto those same bodies. The spectator observes, therefore, the invisible phenomenon of the thermal changes occurring on the surface of the bodies, with each colour referring to a specific thermal area (See Img. 10).<sup>98</sup>

In this sense, the performance transforms or translates the sensitive tactile experiences into a visual body surface through a thermal-video projection system, where the zones of higher temperature, movement, and contact between the dancers begin to shine in a sort of “skin of light,” as the author describes it (Busch-Frank, 2017: 13).<sup>99</sup> The invisible processes related to touch, eroticism, desire, and pleasure in terms of its warmth, materializes, therefore, in coloured waves of light.

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<sup>97</sup> See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermography>

<sup>98</sup> See: <https://vimeo.com/60292952>

<sup>99</sup> I wrote two articles about the performance *Chaleur Humaine*. See: Muñoz Carneiro, Sofia. “Dancing Colours. Haptic Materiality of light in *Chaleur Humaine*” in *Tanz der Dinge / Things that dance*. Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2019 and “Huellas de Luz. Texturas de la transparencia en la danza contemporánea”. *Journal Cuadernos de Arte* N°23, Universidad Católica Press, Santiago de Chile, 2019.

## 2. Vibrant Materialities.

### Colour, light, and sensation.

In her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, the political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett describes matter as “vital, energetic, lively, quivering, vibratory, evanescent, and effluescent” (Bennett 2010: 112). The author suggests that we tend to “ignore the vitality of matter and the lively powers of material formations” (Bennett 2010: vii, italics in the original). In this sense, Bennett describes a certain “capacity of things” considering the idea of “agency” to indicate the different forces involved in diverse kinds of materialities (Bennett 2010: viii). Following an interdisciplinary approach – especially by considering a non-dualistic perspective between life and matter, organic and inorganic, among other distinctions – the author aims to develop an ontology of what she calls “vibrant matter” (Bennett 2010: x).<sup>100</sup> She considers, for instance, the notion of “material vitalism” developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1978), in order to examine how objects have their own vitality as an immanent matter-energy (Bennett 2010: x).<sup>101</sup> The notion of vibration or “vibrant” appears here as a key notion for understanding materialities and things as vital or animated entities able to produce different dramatic or subtle effects and affects (Bennett 2010: 5).<sup>102</sup> In

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<sup>100</sup> Jane Bennett aims to theorize a “vital materiality” that runs through and across bodies, both human and nonhuman, to address how political theory should recognize the active participation of nonhuman bodies and the web of forces involved in different events to generate a more responsible, ecologically, sound politics.

<sup>101</sup> In *A Thousand Plateaus*, and their chapter “Treatise on Nomadology” – on which Bennett focuses – Deleuze and Guattari develop the idea of a “life proper to matter” (1987: 411) through the analysis of metal and metallurgy. There the authors identify a “vital state of matter” that would exist everywhere within all matters and operations.

<sup>102</sup> Jane Bennett explains that the idea of “vibrant matter” has a long philosophical history. The author addresses these discussions in her book, particularly considering the positions of Baruch

this sense, Bennett underlines that this vibration is related to the capacity of things: how they move or are moved, how they have an effect and an affect on us, around us and in us, opening the question not solely about how things are made by complex collections of vital materials but also how the agencies of human, nonhuman and not-quite-human things, their tendencies, trajectories, constellations, and forces of materialization are shaped (Bennett 2010: 11). I am referring to Jane Bennet to introduce this idea of a vibrant quality of matter because that vitalism is what can be understood in terms of forces, forces of things, that are captured by the artist's eye.

Giles Deleuze refers to the notion of vibration in connection to arts, especially in his book *Logic of Sensation*. The author describes vibration as the action of forces, as an invisible pulsation. The artist, therefore, is able to capture the world while vibrating by attending to the action of those forces and generating a form in which they can be presented in their vibrational nature. In this sense, the artists aim at "capturing forces" (Deleuze, 2003: 57) to make invisible forces visible. Forces, for instance, of weight, pressure, or contraction (Deleuze, 2003: 57). In this sense, Deleuze states that:

This is a problem of which painters are very conscious. When pious critics criticized Millet for painting peasants who were carrying an offertory like a sack of potatoes, Millet responded by saying that the weight common to the two objects was more profound than their figurative distinction. As a painter, he was striving to paint the force of that weight, and not the offertory or the sack of potatoes. And was it not Cezanne's genius to have subordinated all the techniques of painting to this task: rendering visible the folding force of mountains, the germinative force of a seed, the thermic force of a landscape, and so on?

(Deleuze, 2003: 57).

Deleuze describes how some painters, like Paul Cézanne and Francis Bacon, pay particular attention to the use of colour to capture those forces. I am going to return to Cézanne in the next subchapter, but I wanted to underline the relationship between colour and vibration.

Following these perspectives, my aim is to locate the relationship between colour and vibration (in terms of the action of forces) in dance and specifically in *Chaleur Humaine*. Considering *Chaleur Humaine*, one might ask what forces or tensions vibrate from these dancing lights and colours in the performance. In other words, one could ask about what comes to presence in this synthesis of colour, light, and touch and how that has an implication for the dancing bodies. I say implication here because it is not only about lights and colours that vibrate but also about bodies, movements, and dance in a certain space. I mention these questions with the aim of pointing towards a thermal dimension in *Chaleur Humaine* and asking what it consists of, beyond the fact that we see undulating traces of light related to temperature.

To address these ideas, I will first refer to the issue of colour and light in dance, taking as an example Loïe Fuller's *Serpentine Dance* and *danses lumineuses*, created at the end of the nineteenth century, where the dancer developed an innovative type of dance, with wide movements combining the use of light and colours. Wearing a very long dress as a costume that she used as a projection surface, Fuller was illuminated with different colours while she danced.<sup>103</sup> As the dance scholar Johannes Birringer suggests, following Rhonda Garelick, the result was the development of specific and innovative sorts of movements of the body, merging her own body and her costume as a screen for

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<sup>103</sup> Fuller used different technologies to create her performances (sound, lighting effects, film projections). Ann Cooper Albright suggests that her performances “help us recognize the historical lineage of dance and technology and the way that bodies and machines have long been in conversation with one other” (Albright, 2007: xv).

the lighting technologies involved, which made her one of the pioneers of the modern dance and stage technologies (2017: 127).<sup>104</sup>



**Image 11.**  
Loïe Fuller:  
*Serpentine Dance.*



**Image 12.**  
Loïe Fuller:  
*Serpentine Dance.*

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<sup>104</sup> Birringer mentions Fuller's experiments in the context of his reflections on the synaesthetic experience in choreography, especially regarding sound, and the listening perception of choreography. In this sense, he refers to choreographic objects that are created regarding the audible an inaudible experience in choreography, considering the dance practice and creative process of his DAP-Lab (Design and Performance Lab).

One of the particularities of this luminescent design and this dramaturgy of colours was the specific way in which Fuller created different figures or forms in space, and how this process was related to the issue of colour. As the scholar Sabine Gottgetreu points out, this sort of performance, which involved a serpentine dance and illuminated cloth, marked “the narrow path between recognizability and the dissolution of form” (2012: 38; my translation). It is not just about the instability of the continuously changing figures that Fuller created (sometimes interpreted as butterflies or insects) but also the body itself, the body as a figure or as a form, that was deconstructed. In this regard, the scholar Rhonda Garelick even suggests that “overall, Fuller’s inventions tended to dissolve the shape of her body into a whirl of fabric and light” (2007: 34) while she mutated into different ephemeral forms, reached by the interaction of light and colour. The specific work with lights and colours, form and outline, resulted in a singular kind of materiality and corporeality, which generated a luminescent and colourful expansion of the dancer’s movements.

As the dancer and scholar Ann Cooper Albright proposes in *Traces of Light*, these innovations concerning form and contour in Fuller’s work coincide with similar art experiments, principally with the Impressionists in painting. With them, colours began to have a sort of autonomy regarding a liberal use of it in relation to the tension between colour and line (2007: 67-68). Because the question of the line was crucial in the nineteenth-century ballet as well, as Albright remarks, Fuller increasingly avoids using lines, similarly to the Impressionists, “favouring instead the play of colour and light across the space” (2007: 68). In this attempt, Fuller combines different types of vibrations – those of light, space, music, motion, and colours – to create a harmonized and interconnected vibrating world. Similarly to Jane Bennett, Cooper refers to the idea of “vibration” to signalize Fuller’s aesthetic inclination, awareness, and active engagement with the use of colours and lights. The author refers to certain sort of agency, especially regarding what lights and colours are able to move or mobilize. The specific use of lights and colour in Fuller’s work, suggests Cooper, was also imbricated with an emotional and

affective aspect. In this direction and by analysing the different aspects of the use of light and vibration of colours in Fuller's performances, Cooper indicates that the "sophisticated use of theatrical lighting was tied to her awareness of the affective emotional qualities of colour and light" (2007: 66). Thus, gathering these different vibrations and working with them, Fuller "opens up an intertextual space in which she materializes what has often been left invisible" (2007: 82).

I mention Fuller's performances to underline two principal points: on the one hand, I wanted to underline the relationship between form and the emerging and shifting of the form and materiality through colour and lights. That is, considering colour and light not just as a filling of the form, but rather as the form itself, its own unstable materiality, to approach its vibrations or forces of materialization. On the other hand, I emphasize the relationship between this emerging materiality and an affective, and emotional dimension, while it emerges from colours.

### 3. Emerging from Colour.

I would like to comment on the idea of “*émerge de la couleur*” (“emerging from the color”), an expression used by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his essay “Cézanne’s Doubt” (1971: 15). It is worth considering Merleau-Ponty’s approach to Cézanne’s paintings, particularly his idea of a vibrant constitution of the appearance of the object and its relationship with the world of sensations, developed in this essay.

Merleau-Ponty points out that the suppression of precise contours or the prevalence of colour over the outline does not serve the same purpose in Cézanne as in the Impressionists. Without following the contour, and with no outline to enclose the colour, the object “seems subtly illuminated from within, light emanates from it” (1971: 12). This would be the result of Cézanne’s intention to capture the emergence of the object, the shifting way in which an object appears to perception: “he wanted to depict matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organization” (1971: 13). It is interesting to note that Merleau-Ponty uses the notion of “birth” to describe this process in a similarly, I would suggest, as Nancy uses the notion of “birth” to describe the “coming into presence”. As I mentioned in the First Chapter, Nancy identifies presence as “nativeness”, as an endless birth that implies a coming and a going away. Birth, therefore, implies this movement, the movement of passage through which everything comes into presence (Nancy, 1993:4). In this sense, one can infer that Cézanne was attempting to depict matter while it comes into presence using colour in a specific form. The painter recreated the volume of the object with chromatic modulations and just marked some outlines with blue colour. The contour or outline, therefore, should be a result of the colours involved so that finally the gaze would be able to

capture an emerging shape, the coming into presence, as it would happen in perception.

In this sense, Merleau-Ponty examines how Cézanne captured the world of perception while paying particular attention to colour:

That is why Cézanne follows the swelling of the object in modulated colours and indicates several outlines in blue. Rebounding among these, one's glance captures a shape that emerges from among them all, just as it does in perception (...) The outline should therefore be a result of the colours if the world is to be given in its true density. For the world is a mass without gaps, a system of colours across which the receding perspective, the outlines, angles, and curves are inscribed like lines of force: the spatial structure vibrates as it is formed.

(Merleau-Ponty, 1971: 12).

For Cézanne, as Merleau-Ponty underlines, the world and the perception respond to an organism made of colours (or to a chaos of colours) where lines and forms vibrate as the object or matter is formed, and where colour and outline are no longer different from each other. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty underlines that “perspectival distortions” that one can identify in Cézanne’s paintings “contribute, as they do in natural vision, to the impression of an emerging order, of an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes” (1971: 14).

Therefore, Merleau-Ponty states that “Nor did Cézanne neglect the physiognomy of objects and faces: he simply wanted to capture it *emerging from the color*” (1971: 15, my italics). This point is crucial because it would allow one to consider colour if not as a materiality in itself, at least as a *vibrant matter* or force of materialization, as a force that brings something into the intensity of its emerging, into its coming into presence, forming its process of appearing.

**Image 13.**

Paul Cézanne.

*Mont Sainte-Victoire*

As one can see in the image above, the use of the colours and the abandonment of the outline generates movement in Cezanne's painting, making different elements vibrate on the canvas. In his book *La couleur et la parole*, Hadrien France-Lanord refers to this vibration as a tonal and respiratory dimension that Cezanne makes possible while aiming at achieving a certain chromatic depth. Referring to one of Cézanne's *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire*, France-Lanord suggests that:

(...) blue is no longer simply one colour among others, it becomes the ferment of the harmony of all tones and the lung of the surface, it constitutes the atmosphere, it that is to say a dimension both tonal and respiratory which makes life possible. It is he who makes the canvas breathe with a vibrating, chromatic and non-illusory depth. It is he who puts painting in tune with the world and who makes it the living and true

space to appear, (...) blue is set in vibration of the lung of the surface and fundamental tone of frank finitude.

(France-Lanord, 2018: 186, my translation).<sup>105</sup>

For Cézanne, as the German philosopher Günter Figal points out, to paint means to compose colours, to work with them in a way that colours would not solely shape the things of the world, but they would also become those things: “The colours, their tones and nuances, form lines; they become things, rocks, trees [...]” (2010: 38). I mention this idea of emerging from colour and colours becoming things to underline the possibility of approaching colours as a vibrant matter, emphasizing the intertwining between colours and materiality.

On the other hand, this vibrating constitution through the emergence from colour responds as well to other vibrations. Parallel to the chaos of colours, as Merleau-Ponty describes it, a chaos of sensations arises. Figal suggests that, when abandoning the outline, Cézanne was approaching a chaos of sensations (2010: 13). Following Merleau-Ponty, Figal emphasizes that Cézanne’s painting has to do with a process of translation, of “translating the sensations to the canvas” (2010: 35), and this process is related to colours. Accordingly, suggests Figal, that what concretely emerges in Cézanne’s canvas is this translation (2010: 38).

France-Lanord also refers to this idea of translation when referring to Cézanne. The author approaches Heidegger’s observations about the motive behind Cézanne’s intention.

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<sup>105</sup> Translated from: “(...) le bleu n’est donc plus simplement une couleur parmi d’autres, il devient il devient le ferment de l’harmonie de tous les tons et le poumon de la surface, il constitue l’atmosphère, c’est-à-dire une dimension à la fois tonale et respiratoire qui rend possible la vie. C’est lui qui fait respirer la toile d’une profondeur vibratile chromatique et non illusoire. C’est lui qui met la peinture au diapason du monde et qui en fait l’espace vivant et vrai de l’apparaître, (...), le bleu de Cézanne est mise en vibration du poumon de la surface et tonalité fondamentale de franche finitude ».

« The motif : the “movement” of what speaks to me by addressing me [*anspricht*] and not what produces an effect. One could have said of the painter Cézanne: he goes to his motive. The mountain he paints is not the cause of his painting ». From Heidegger's phenomenological point of view, the motif is the source of make-appear [*erscheinen lassen*], it is there where the painter turns to address the words of which he becomes the translator.<sup>106</sup>

(France-Lanord, 2018: 33, italics in the original, my translation).<sup>107</sup>

Returning to *Chaleur Humaine*, I earlier suggested that the performance translates the sensitive tactile experiences into a visual, luminescent body surface. It is not only about the vibrant constitution of the appearance of an object that comes about in colour, like in Cézanne's paintings. It is the vibrant and coloured emergence of a sense – the sense of touch – that arises in a way that it could not be constituted by itself without the interaction of the dancers with the technologies involved in real time. On the other hand, both in Fuller's performances, Cézanne's paintings, and *Chaleur Humaine*, one can find a path from an emotional or affective dimension – or from a chaos of sensations – to colours or a chaos of colours. This path could be identified as a translation of different processes of materialization. In the performance, this translation would form the process of appearing of touching: its emergence from colours. Nonetheless, it is not solely the emergence of an

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<sup>106</sup> In this fragment, Hadrien France-Lanord is quoting and referring to Martin Heidegger's *Zollikoner Seminaire*, p.262; *Seminaires de Zurich*, p.288.

<sup>107</sup> Translated from: « Le Motif : le “mouvement” de ce qui me parle en me requérant [*anspricht*], et non pas ce qui produit un effet. On aurait pu dire du peintre Cézanne : el va à son motif. La montagne qu'il peint n'est pas la cause de sa peinture ». Du point de vue de phénoménologique de Heidegger, le motif est la source du laisser-apparaître [*erscheinen lassen*], c'est à lui que va la peintre pour se laisser adresser la parole dont il se fait le *traducteur*.

object, or a sense, as we know it, it is the abstraction of the warmth of touch produced by colourful traces of light.

Nevertheless, at the same time, another translation takes place in *Chaleur Humaine*: colours *emerge from touching*. In other words, as well as touch emerges from colours, colours also come to presence through touching. This is not a play on words, it is exactly through this *emergence from touching* that colours become vibrant matters, vital or animated things. They acquire their own agency through a haptic materiality of light. In this intertwining, both colours and touching emerge from each other through different bodily movements. Touch emerges from the visual colourful components, and colours emerge from the zones in which touch is implied. This mutual emergence creates a coloured haptic constellation, where the dancing-tactile experiences and the affective intensity of the caress shine in the skin of the dancers, creating multiple ongoing chromatic and pictorial relations.

As well as in the performances of Fuller, we would find in Gladyszewski's *Chaleur Humaine* an abstract configuration of light and colour, where the shifting forms of tactile traces emerge through the agency of vibrating lighting colours. But what vibrates is also the intensity of the contact, where the human warmth becomes more than just information about temperature. The traces of light and colour would correspond, therefore, to a deep dimension of the caress that travels next to the warmth of dancing contacts. I will address the issue of the caress in the next subchapter.

By capturing touch emerging from colour, Gladyszewski gives touch a pictorial quality. Pictorial in the sense that it "paints" touch, which can only be painted in terms of a trace, in this case, a thermal trace. This emerging from touching is also a form of colouring touch.

## 4. The luminic-haptic

The idea of the “luminous-haptic” arises from the observation of another moment in the performance *Chaleur Humaine*. In this scene, the gloom and darkness remain, despite the light from the projections that falls on the bodies. The dancers become a beam of light in the shadow. In this gloom of light, touching exceeds itself. It is a zone of indeterminacy of caress and eroticism.



**Image 14.**

Stephan Gladyzewski:

*Chaleur Humaine.*

Standing and turning, the bodies intertwine without stopping to touch and caress each other with their hands, with their heads, with their bodies. They touch each other at different speeds. They do not cease to search for each other through the skin. In this second moment of the performance, the audio-visual projection confuses us, it shows us different times of that touch, one on top of the other. The bodies intertwine, we no longer know where the bodies begin or where they end, or who touches who. The time of one touch intertwines with the time of the other. In this disorder of the skin, the video-projections become increasingly confusing as they are projected on the bodies that do not abandon this haptic dance. We see images of wet hands, hands that touch, that penetrate the body, that enter the mouth, that play with the tongue. The images are projected as a transparent texture on the bodies and are confused in this light play on the skin that is intertwined with the dancing bodies. The projected images become a transparent texture that merges with the bodies in this luminic play of colours in the skin. Touch is projected beyond itself in this coming and going of images and light while the bodies hug, caress, rub, cling to each other, and move undulatingly without stopping to touch each other, without separating. The undulating movement of the torso unfolds into the movement of the arms and hands. The bodies are crossed by the light that undulates with the bodies, acquiring a texture. The hands move, undulating over the body while leaving behind a coloured light trace.

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In *Time and the Other*, Emmanuel Levinas points out that what is caressed is not properly touch. This does not mean that there is no tactile experience in the

caress, but rather that the caress does not end or begin in that experience of touch. I want to underline this point, considering the relationship between the caress and human warmth, specifically when Levinas suggests:

It is not the softness, or the warmth of the hand given in contact that the caress seeks. The seeking of the caress constitutes its essence by the fact that the caress does not know what it seeks. This “not knowing”, this fundamental disorder, is the essential. It is like a game with something slipping away, a game absolutely without project or plan, not with what can become ours or us, but with something other, always other, always inaccessible, and always still to come [a venir].

(Levinas, 1987: 89).

What the caress looks for is something indeterminate, in the sense that the caress does not know what it seeks. And this constant seeking of the caress would constitute its essence. In this sense, the sensory experience of touch concerning the caress implies an excess in terms of something that exceeds that sensory experience. In other words, the sensory experience of the caress already implies that excess which deepens the sensitive experience. In this sense, Levinas suggests that “the caress is a mode of the subject’s being, where the subject who is in contact with another goes beyond this contact” (Levinas, 1987: 89).

It is not that caressing is not related to sensitivity. The caress, for Levinas, is rather a sensitivity, although, at the same time, it transcends the sensible. The author suggests that “it is not that it would feel beyond the felt, further than the senses” but it rather deepens the senses (Levinas, 1979: 257). It is about what is exceeded, what is exorbitant. In his “phenomenology of voluptuousness”, Levinas refers to this excess insofar as the caress does not consist in solitary pleasure (Levinas, 1987: 89). The caress consists rather of a pleasure where, in contact with another, the subject goes beyond that contact (Levinas, 1987: 89). In other words,

when Lévinas mentions that what is caressed is not touched properly speaking, he does not mean that there is no tactile experience in the caress, but rather that the caress does not end or begin in that experience of touch. The touch of the caress, therefore, exceeds the tactile experience. That is to say, what motivates the caress is always an “indetermination”, a search without guidance that goes beyond the hand, beyond what is understood as the sensible and tactile experience of contact. In the caress, that sensible experience already implies that excess.

Regarding this idea of excess in the tactile experience of the caress, then, the *emergence from touching* in *Chaleur Humaine* is always related to its untouchable dimension. That is to say, the tactile experience linked to temperature emerges connected to that which goes beyond it, and which refers to an affective, intimate, and erotic dimension of the caress as an experience with the other. This would create a singular process of materialization where the colours begin to dance this vibration of the intertwining of the touchable and the untouchable over the bodies, the vibration of the excess, giving place to different types of haptic movements of the dancers. In this sense, it is not only about a thermal trace of touch that is suddenly revealed by light but also the unveiling of the trace of what goes beyond the thermic experience, a trace of a depth that cannot be completely revealed. In other words, the fact that touch is related to temperature is something we all know. This is not what *Chaleur Humaine* is showing us. What *Chaleur Humaine* allows us to see through shining and colourful traces of temperature corresponds to that which goes beyond the thermal trace: the space of intimacy, of a depth of touch. The corporal, haptic, and luminic work in *Chaleur Humaine* exposes, therefore, the trace not only of the warmth of contact but also the trace of the exuberance that is glimpsed in that luminic warmth.

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Emmanuel Levinas underlines that light has been associated with vision and knowledge as light reveals things, bringing them out of darkness (1978: 47-49). However, in his analysis of the feminine and eroticism, the author refers to a different logic of light. The author suggests that there is always something that remains in the shadows regarding what is apparently revealed: “The discovered does not lose its mystery in the discovery, the hidden is not disclosed, the night is not dispersed” (Levinas, 1979: 260).

Levinas discusses the Nietzschean critique of the optical metaphor as a dominant metaphor in the philosophical tradition that privileges vision and light (and their derivatives such as illumination, clarity, day, evidence, clairvoyance, etc.), establishing a correlative system between vision and knowledge. Levinas refers to this as heliocentrism considering the sun (Helios), in which what remains in the “shadow” of the gaze that “illuminates” the object would have been neglected by philosophy. In this sense, the author proposes to think about vision and light outside the dualistic system of light/shadow, day/night, etc. (Levinas, 1978: 47).

Cathryn Vasseleu, in *Textures of Light* (1998), refers to this metaphor of light regarding the notion of touch. Vasseleu relates the idea of texture with that of light to question two main issues. First, Vasseleu questions how the senses have been separated and hierarchized. Second, the author interrogates the privilege of sight associated with knowledge, which would correspond to a metaphor of light, particularly in Western philosophical thought.<sup>108</sup> The idea of *textures of light* allows you to open up several ways to approach this question.<sup>109</sup> Texture is linked, in the first place, to a tactile experience (as well as certain qualities of certain objects that are exposed to touch), that is, it would not correspond entirely to a visual experience. But by placing the notion of texture next to that of light, touch is implied

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<sup>108</sup> The author refers to Jacques Derrida's criticism of the metaphor of light in Western philosophy, which the author calls photology. When Derrida describes the history of philosophy as photology, he emphasizes the development of a metaphor of light as constitutive of metaphysics, where not only the order of visibility is privileged, but also the relationship between light and knowledge (Vasseleu, 1998: 5).

<sup>109</sup> The author examines the notion of light with respect to the relationship between vision and touch in authors such as Luce Irigaray, Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Vasseleu, 1998).

in vision. In this gesture, Vasseleu underlines a trace of the haptic in the optic. By highlighting this trace, the author, then, proposes other fields of relationships between knowledge and the senses. In this way, the author suggests that “a significant aspect of light’s texture is that it implicates touch in vision in ways that challenge the traditional differentiation of these senses within the sensible/intelligible binarism of photology” (Vasseleu, 1998: 12). Therefore, tactility becomes, for Vasseleu, an essential path to rethink different aspects of light through the notion of texture.

In the context of dance, Ann Cooper Albright refers to this understanding of light as that which makes vision possible regarding a hegemonic paradigm that connects light with vision and knowledge (2007: 55). Nevertheless, in her analysis of Loïe Fuller’s performances mentioned in the previous section, the author addresses the importance of another understanding of light when approaching performing arts. In this direction, the author underlines that “we can recognize that light moves between the visible and invisible” (Cooper, 2007: 55). Light, therefore, plays a different role, opening a different understanding of the relationship between light and vision, that takes light in another direction.

This is especially important in the theater, where lighting can either obscure or reveal, veil or unveil. Sometimes theatrical lighting can focus the audience’s attention on the figures on stage without implicating itself or revealing its source [...] At other times, theatrical lighting can create thick, opaque-seeming beams that take on a separate sense of theatrical presence on stage.

(Cooper, 2007:55)

In this sense, Cooper also mentions that, nevertheless, Fuller used light “not only to both reveal and conceal her body but also as a dynamic partner of onstage” (Cooper, 2007: 55).

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Just as light for Levinas not only illuminates but is full of shadows, in *Chaleur Humaine* light and darkness merge in the deepness of the sensible excess. The luminic-haptic, therefore, does not abandon its darkness. The luminic traces of touch are not completely revealed, they neither lose their mystery nor their night.

The traces of light in *Chaleur Humaine* can be understood, therefore, as haptic traces of the exuberant. In *Chaleur Humaine*, touch is illuminated, but not to apprehend it. It is illuminated rather to connect with its zone of indetermination, with its aspect of trace and depth. It is not only that the traces of touch are being illuminated, but also to underline touch itself as a trace, as a trace that at the same time exceeds itself in the movements of indetermination, proper to caress and eroticism. Touch, in *Chaleur Humaine* acquires luminous character and the light acquires a certain texture. Light becomes, thus, in turn, haptic. The light and touch as thermal traces, then, become haptic traces of exuberance.

## CHAPTER 5:

### Haptics

Only a separate body on its own is able to touch. On its own, it can also entirely separate its touch from its other senses, which is to say, constitute as an autonomous sense that nonetheless traverses all the senses, differentiating itself within them while distinguishing itself as a kind of common reason. Reason or passion, impulsion, motion.

(Nancy, 2013: 14)

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.

(Brandstetter, 2013: 166).

## Introduction

In the present chapter, I follow the idea of “separation” and “local” from Jean-Luc Nancy to identify a “separation of touch” in contemporary dance. From these conceptions, I identify a “local instance of touch” as a useful notion to approach the relationship between dance and touch in terms of the multiple and singular configurations, reconfigurations, or creation of a sensitive regime, in which different elements intertwine (for instance, the relationship between touch and sound, temperature, colour, smell, etc.). Following these points, I further identify the notion of *haptic presence* as a local instance of touch.

Considering the above, I examine how an aesthetic function of the haptic has been defined considering especially the ideas of “close vision” and a “haptic function of the eye”, following Alöis Riegel and Deleuze and Guattari. From there, I argue that this aesthetic function can be reconsidered in light of an expanded notion of the haptic, following particularly Mark Paterson’s inclusion of the somatic senses within the haptic. I also consider perspectives concerning contemporary dance, as well as Marie Bardet and Gabrielle Brandstetter, who include the kinaesthetic senses in the notion of haptic in the context of dance.

In this context, I analyse particular moments of the performance *Low Pieces* by Xavier Le Roy, to approach the scope of localities of touch that produce the emergence of a “*haptic-animal-dimension*”.

## 1. The haptic as a local instance of touch.

### 1.1 Separation of touch.

In “Separation de la danse” Nancy refers to the complex and changing nature of the relationship between art and the field of the sensible, underlining the impossibility of categorically associating, for example, an art with a particular sensible sense (sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste) (Nancy, 2001b: 200). The author, therefore, addresses the idea of a “sensitive regime [*régime sensible*]” (Nancy, 2001b: 199, 200, my translation) or also, later on, he will refer to a “register of the sensitive” (Nancy, 2017: 45), to discuss this mobility and complexity of the relationship between arts and the field of the sensible experience. This sensitive regime, or singular sensitivity, therefore, not only refers, Nancy points out, to the five canonical senses, but also, for example, to the sense of distance, the sense of tonality, texture, humidity, etc. And while a shade of red is not a drumbeat, Nancy points out, this red may well scream as a colour. (Nancy, 2001b: 200). Nevertheless, the author indicates, this is not a common synaesthesia, but rather another synaesthetic field that emerges in a singular way in each sensitive regime or register, so that the red, for instance, can be heard. In this sense, works of art or artistic propositions generate a separation, a particular partition [*partage*] of a certain area, generating and shaping a singular sensitive register. (Nancy, 2001b: 199-200). This idea of cut or isolation is what Nancy also calls “separation,” through which it is possible, for example, to distinguish or select an area of experience, a set of singular sensibilities, or an aspect of a sense. In this direction,

the author points out that each work of art or artistic preposition “separates [détache] and shapes a singular sensibility on its own, and perhaps we should even say that each art, each work, creates its own sensible regime” (Nancy, 2001b: 200, my translation).<sup>110</sup>

In the Third Chapter (Weighings), I approached the notion of “separation” – related to the identification of a singularity– developed by Jean-Luc Nancy in connection to the notions of weight and presence. I mentioned that “separation” is linked to the distinction of certain features in terms of identifying a fragment of the world, an area of our experience, a sensitive dimension, or an aspect of a sense. To make that distinction means to separate, to identify a singularity. I explained, therefore, how, according to Nancy, the notion of separation is linked to the idea of the singular and the local, to what is separated and therefore, through its separation, acquires a certain singular weight and sense. I commented that this notion of “separation” is also essential for Nancy’s comprehension of arts. Some years before his text “Separation de la danse” –discussed in more detail in the Third Chapter– Nancy already identified, in *The Muses*, the idea of “separation” as one of the ‘forces of the arts’ (of the muses). The author points it out in the following way: “This is the force of the Muses: it is at once a force of separation, isolation, intensification, and metamorphosis.” (Nancy, 1996: 36). These four forces, starting from the force of separation, generate “another instance of unity,” that is: separation produces a transformation of that which was separated, generating a particular distribution [*partage*] or sensible regime (Nancy, 1996: 21). In other words, art:

[...] isolates what we call a “sense,” or a part or feature of this sense; it isolates it so as to force it to be only what it is outside of signifying and useful perception. Art forces a sense to touch itself, to be this sense that it is. But in this way, it does not become simply what we

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<sup>110</sup> Translated from French: “qui détache et qui modèle pour son compte une sensibilité singulière, et peut-être même faut-il dire que chaque art, dans chaque œuvre, crée son propre régime sensible”.

call “a sense,” for example, sight or hearing: by leaving behind the integration of the “lived,” it also becomes something else, another instance of unity, which exposes another world, not a “visual” or “sonorous” world but a “pictorial” or “musical” one.

(Nancy, 1996: 21).

I would like to draw attention to this idea of “another instance of unity” in the quote, that can be generated in the context of arts. It is not about something that could be just visual or sonorous, it is also about something that acquires another quality that has to do with a sensitive separation. Probably departing from Nancy’s vocabulary, one might suggest that this idea of “another instance of unity” has to do with certain aesthetics linked to arts, because it involves the relationship with the senses in terms of a composition or creation that generates a transformation. That is why Nancy indicates that it is not just visual or sonorous, but it becomes pictorial or musical. One can also quote once more Nancy when he writes that art “out of something that was part of a unity of signification and representation, it makes something else” (Nancy, 1996: 22). This is one of the other forces of the Muses, mentioned before, the force of metamorphosis. (Nancy, 1996: 36).

If the visual can be understood in its “another instance of unity” as, for instance, pictorial, how could we describe this movement regarding the sense of touch? In other words: How can we think about “another instance of unity” of touch?

When Nancy refers to this other “instance of unity” he also connects it with the idea of “locality” (1996: 20-21). He refers to art as “a technique of the detail, that is, of difference and discreteness, that makes visible *local* colour or that makes visible the fact that colour *is only local*” (Nancy, 1996: 20, italics in the original). That means, that there is nothing as ‘the colour’ as such, but rather a locality of that colour, a specificity of colour in a certain context and place. ‘Local’, therefore, is also connected to the idea of space, of a certain spatiality of a singularity linked to the notion of technique. Nancy refers to this in terms of “techniques of the local”

that implies the generation or the work with certain local values (Nancy, 1996: 20). In this sense, the author underlines that “each local value it combines heterogeneous sensuous values without homogenizing them: *this* red is also a thickness, a fluidity, a figure, a movement, a flash of sound, a taste, or an odor” (Nancy, 1996: 21, italics in the original).

Summarizing, this “another instance of unity” is ultimately, we could say, a ‘local instance’ that combines other heterogeneous local values. This idea might be useful when addressing the question mentioned above about “another instance of unity” concerning touch. I would suggest, therefore, the idea of a “local instance of touch” as a useful notion to approach the relationship between dance and touch in terms of the multiple and singular configurations, reconfigurations, or creation of a sensitive regime. The “local instance of touch”, therefore, involves the ‘creation of localities’ of touch, where touch can become, or be combined with, a sound, a temperature, a colour, a smell, a figure, etc., as we have seen in the previous chapters. This constellation of heterogeneous local values gravitating in connection to touch, therefore, is what prompts us to consider a haptic regime or register that generates particular dimensions of touch such as, for instance, a sound or a thermal dimension. The dimensions of touch, therefore, consist of a locality of touch that expands toward others or multiple heterogeneous local values, making touch come into presence in a specific way.

As I mentioned several times throughout this writing, touch has always played a fundamental role in dance throughout its history. Nevertheless, and this is the idea that I am trying to suggest, not as a local instance. In connection with what has been discussed in the previous chapters, one might conclude that contemporary dance creates ‘local instances of touch’ considering different performances, movement practices, and techniques. Using Nancy's terminology, I suggest that in the context of contemporary dance, therefore, dance makes visible a local touch or creates localities of touch. Touch, thus, acquires a certain weight as a local instance.

In this sense, “local instance of touch” is another way of referring to the coming into the presence of touch. In other words, a “local instance of touch” is

another way of saying “haptic presence”: a haptic weighing where touch comes to presence as local weight. The notion of *haptic presence* was identified as a “haptic coming into presence” and a “haptic weighing” in the First and Third Chapters respectively. In this chapter, therefore, I am describing the *haptic presence* as a “local instance of touch” to underline the idea of separation of touch, and its combination with heterogenous local values, that prompts us to think about a haptic regime, register, or a haptic dimension. In the following, therefore, I am deepening the idea of a haptic register by referring to the notion of haptic in the context of arts, identifying an aesthetic function of the haptic in contemporary dance.

## 1.2 Aesthetic function of the haptic

In *Late Roman art Industry*, published in 1901, the Austrian art historian Alöis Riegel introduced the distinction between forms of perception related to the 'haptic' and 'optic' in Greek and late Roman Art, especially in sculpture and painting. The author underlines the role of touch in terms of proximity and closeness to develop a system that explains different forms of vision. Riegel identifies a 'close-range' or 'close-up' vision (*Nahsicht*), related to the tactile experience, and a 'distant view' (*Fernsicht*), related to the optical experience. (Riegel, 1985: 24). That is to say, he distinguishes a tactile-near vision (*taktish*) from a distant-optic vision, to describe and analyse both Arts in different historical periods and the experience of the viewer. Between both of these forms (*Nahsicht* and *Fernsicht*), Riegel identifies what he calls 'normal vision' (*Normalsicht*). The author gives several examples, from Egyptian low-relief artwork –characterized by a haptic close-range vision– to late Roman Art, –characterized by parting from tactile elements and going towards a distant-optic vision– (Riegel, 1985: 24-25). Riegel describes, therefore, a transition in art history from a haptic period based on tactility, closeness, and proximity to an optic period, based on a distant form of seeing.

Considering Riegel's ideas, Deleuze and Guattari (1987), dedicate a chapter in *A thousand plateaus –“Smooth and the striated”–*, to develop further the notion of haptic. The authors underline that one of Riegel's essential contributions is that he gave the haptic a fundamental aesthetic dimension, where the eye can acquire a haptic function (492-493). Although Deleuze and Guattari also consider the haptic as related to closeness and proximity, the authors underline that they are not opposing two different organs of the senses, but rather adding another function to the eye, a non-optical one, a haptic function. And this possibility is granted by

the word haptic: ““Haptic” is a better word than “tactile”, since it does not establish an opposition between two sense organs but rather invites the assumption that the eye itself may fulfil this non-optical function” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 492). This function would be characterized by a close-vision, as distinguished from a distant-vision, creating a haptic space – “which may be as much visual or auditory as tactile”, the authors suggest–, as distinguished from an optical space. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 493).

In *Logic of sensation*, Deleuze returns to the notion of haptic and further develops this concept in connection with colours, especially in the works of Francis Bacon and Paul Cézanne. Deleuze analyses how in certain forms of working with colours, arrangements of colours and relations of tonality can produce a haptic space (different from an optical space), generating, in turn, a close-vision:

If it is true that relations of value, modelling in chiaroscuro, or the modulation of light appeal to a purely optical function of distant vision, the modulation of colour, on the contrary, recreates a properly *haptic* function, in which the juxtaposition of pure tones arranged gradually on the flat surface forms a progression and a regression that culminates in a close vision.

(Deleuze, 2003: 133, italics in the original).

The author argues that the optical space can be identified by the oppositions of bright and dark, light and shadow. The haptic space, on the contrary, can be identified by the “relative opposition of warm and cool, and the corresponding eccentric or concentric movement of expansion or contraction” (Deleuze, 2003:

133). A way of understanding this could be to address the vocabulary of colour as related to a haptic constellation due to its proximity to temperature: warm and cold.

Despite Deleuze's notable contributions to the notion of haptic, his notion has been criticized, since the notion of haptic appears as to be dependable on proximity and closeness, even considering the relationship between haptic and colours. Mark Paterson, for instance, the use of the notion of haptic would designate an aesthetic function of the haptic related to a sort of sensibility, characterized by certain proximity, and so forth (199-215). As the sociologist Mark Paterson underlines, "From Riegel's art history through Deleuze and Guattari, the haptic is consistently formulated in terms of closeness, of proximity" (Paterson, 2007: 20). Paterson argues that the haptic also can be approached by considering the notion of distance and its movements.

In this direction, Derrida also points toward a valorisation of a close presence as that which will, ultimately, define the notion of haptic in Deleuze and Guattari approach of the close vision and haptic space.

"Because of the proximity value, because this vector of close presence finally determines the concept and term "haptic," because the haptic virtually covers all the senses wherever they appropriate a proximity, Deleuze and Guattari preferred the world «haptic» to the world «tactile»."

(Derrida, 2005: 124, italics in the original).

Nevertheless, as I will approach in the following, the notion of haptic has been understood in a wider sense, that is, not exclusively as connected to a "close vision" and to a "haptic function of the eye", do not appropriate a proximity, although proximity is an important factor to take into consideration. As I mentioned

in the First and Third Chapters, these ideas have been approached in connection to dance, in which interruption and separation become an essential part of the understanding of touch and the haptic. I will come to this idea in the next chapter when approaching the issue of touch in the context of the pandemic in connection to the dance performance *Skin Hunger*. In the following, nevertheless, I will refer to the wider definition of haptic, considering different contributions coming from philosophy and dance studies.

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As mentioned in the First Chapter, Mark Paterson approaches the etymological links of the notion of haptic to propose a wider definition in connection to the somatic senses. The author comments on the Aristotelian notion of *haptesthai* (haptic), and Edmund Husserl's and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's analysis of kinaesthesia, to propose and expand the notion in connection to contemporary psychology.<sup>111</sup> As mentioned in the First Chapter, in this movement, the author includes somatic senses in the definition of haptic, that is: proprioception, vestibular sense, and kinaesthetic sense (Paterson, 2007: 20). In other words, Paterson identifies as haptic what corresponds to the sense of touch in all its forms, including the senses and perceptions related to: proprioception, vestibular sense, kinaesthetic sense, cutaneous, and tactile sense (Paterson, 2007: 4).<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> As mentioned in a footnote in the First Chapter, Mark Paterson focuses on the notion of kinaesthesia in Edmund Husserl's *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970) and *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy* (1989) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's conception of touching and of 'body-schema' in *The Primacy of Perception* (1964) and *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992) to include the notion of kinaesthesia within the definition of the haptic (Paterson, 2007:15-35).

<sup>112</sup> Based on different sources, Mark Paterson develops a Glossary, in which he lists the terms contained in the notion of haptic. See: Paterson, Mark. *The senses of touch: haptics, affects, and technologies*. Berg, Oxford International Publishers. Oxford and New York, 2007, p. ix.

Proprioception, explains Paterson, refers to the awareness of our body's position in space and includes the operation of the other somatic senses, listed above, like the vestibular and kinaesthetic senses. Proprioception, therefore, includes an awareness of movement through the kinaesthetic sense, as well as a sense of gravitational orientation through the vestibular sense, that corresponds to the perception of balance (Paterson, 2007: 20-21). Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of a 'synergic totality', Paterson, therefore, points out that these "three bodily senses are therefore interrelated and co-dependent" (Paterson, 2007: 21). These somatic senses of proprioception, kinaesthesia, and the vestibular sense, the author underlines work "synergistically, as the inwardly-oriented sensations necessary for feelings of embodiment" (Paterson, 2007: 4). Fundamentally, for Mark Paterson, the notion of haptic "could therefore effectively encompass these somatic senses of touch" (Paterson, 2007: 4). As to cutaneous and tactile senses, the author describes the first one as concerning the skin itself or the skin as a sense organ, and the second one, pertaining to the cutaneous sense, more specifically as the sensation of pressure. Nevertheless, Paterson argues that cutaneous contact unfolds into other forms of touch, such as the somatic senses. The brushing of an object against the skin, for example, can imply not only cutaneous receptivity but also a spatial awareness (Paterson, 2007: 2). Basically, the different senses and perceptions of touch are included in the notion of haptic, so that the cutaneous sense can be related to the bodily position, movement, and balance. Into this constellation, the author takes into account the affective and emotional aspects of touch when defining the haptic, considering touch not just as feeling but also as feeling-with (Paterson, 2007: 13).

This relationship between touch and the somatic senses has been already identified as a key element of contemporary dance. I mentioned in the Third Chapter (Weighings), for instance, a "poetic of weight" –acknowledged by Laurence Louppe–, in which touch is an elemental factor for generating movement and approaching the weight and gravity of the dancing body (Louppe 2010: 65). These ideas elucidate how the close relationship between touch and the senses of

proprioception, kinaesthetic and vestibular sense generate a sensitive regime or poetic of weight related to touch.

This relationship between the haptic and the somatic senses in the context of dance has been characterized by some authors and artists in terms of “listening”, especially considering improvisation, where an expanded attention and awareness of the position of the body, movement in space, and the relationship with others are considered essential for the development of movement.

In a presentation entitled “Entre tocar y mirar: relaciones y límites”, the philosopher Marie Bardet, reflects on contemporary dance referring to elements of gravity and proprioception as components of a “haptic corporeality” (which is also called seismographic corporeality) where a “proprioceptive paradigm” emerges. This idea is linked to the perception of different vibrations, where visual senses, proprioceptive senses, and touch are connected to each other:

The shift from a visual paradigm to a proprioceptive paradigm does not cancel the gaze, it does not suppress the gaze, but rather inserts it and transmits it through proprioception and touch. Making us haptic corporeality would be another characterization of seismographic corporeality. These haptic corporalities intensify spatiality and thickens duration.

(Bardet, 2018: 23:00, my translation). 113

This process, the author points out, also has to do with “listening”, with the attentiveness towards proprioceptive feedback through each gesture. This idea of “listening” is related to the idea of “paying attention” to the pressures of the

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<sup>113</sup> See: “Entre tocar y mirar: relaciones y límites” [Video/lecture]. Facultad de Artes, Universidad de Chile. Santiago de Chile. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MunGHU2KJoE>

environment, to spatial awareness. As I mentioned in the First Chapter, Jean-Luc Nancy also refers to this distinction when addressing the idea of listening as an attentive hearing, identifying “the simple nature and its tense state” corresponding to each sensory order (Nancy, 2007: 17). The “tense sense”, indicates the author, would be discernible by an intensification or attention (Nancy, 2007: 17). Jean-Luc Nancy addresses the verb “listening” with reference to the verb “escultare” to underline the relationship between the use of a sensory organ and certain particular attention that would constitute its tense state:

[...] that kernel of meaning where the use of a sensory organ (hearing, the ear, *auris*, a word that gives the first part of the verb *auscultare*, “to lend an ear,” “to listen attentively,” from which *ecouter*, “to listen,” comes) and a tension, an intention, and an attention, which the second part of the term marks, are combined. To listen is *tendre l’oreille*—literally, to stretch the ear—an expression that evokes a singular mobility, among the sensory apparatuses, of the pinna of the ear—it is an intensification and a concern, a curiosity or an anxiety.

(Nancy, 2007: 5).

That is to say, on the one hand, listening has to do with paying attention to the sensory apparatus of the ear but, on the other hand, it involves awakening a state of attention to our environment. In this direction, Gabriele Brandstetter analyses how ‘listening’ became a fundamental element of dance practices, as that of contact improvisation, connecting, therefore, that awareness to the sense of touch. The author explains that ‘listening’ here refers to an accentuated attention and perception of space and movement. Listen in this context means: “listening to the movement, hearing the body-space movement, means that the seeing receives a different, an additional sensory (kinaesthetic) quality” (Brandstetter, 2013b: 164). In this sense, echoing what has been mentioned regarding Nancy, Brandstetter

underlines that 'listening' is not just an experience related to the realm of acoustics, but also "a synaesthetic network of experiences of the body, of its internal and external states at rest and in movement" (Brandstetter, 2013b: 164). In this context, the author identifies 'listening' as a term that belongs to the vocabulary of contact improvisation. As I mentioned in the Third Chapter (Weighings), contact improvisation consists of a dance practice in which at least two or more persons explore their possibilities of movement, maintaining always points of physical contact with one another. As I already discussed, in the context of contact improvisation, thus, touch became essential for the generation of movement and approaching weight and the gravity of the body. This constellation, therefore, understood from the idea of 'listening' becomes revealing of how the somatic senses in dance intertwine with the matter of touch. Brandstetter quotes an enlightening remark made by the dancer and author Cheryl Pallant, who explains the role of "listening" in contact improvisation in the following way: "paying attention to all sensory occurrences arising from touch, from the play of weight as partners move through space, and from the event of one body encountering the presence of another" (Pallant in Brandstetter: 2013b, 164).

This connection to the idea of 'listening' as that which stresses the idea of proprioception and kinaesthetic awareness can also be understood in terms of the cutaneous and tactile sense, described at the beginning. The dancer and choreographer Cynthia J. Novack also refers to the idea of 'listening' in contact improvisation as a form of "listening through the skin" that makes reference to this kind of awareness of the body and the relationship with another body, including the relationship between touch and the somatic senses in the context of improvisation (Novack, 1990: 189).

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Therefore, considering all the points discussed in this chapter so far, it is important to underline some considerations or conclusions in the following.

First, it is important to underline the idea of “separation of touch” in connection to a regime or register of the sensible, which leads us to the idea of a “local instance of touch”, that is, a specific regime or register of touch. As discussed, when something is separated implies a transformation of that which is separated, generating a local instance. This movement opens a particular sensitive regime that is displayed in each art or each work of art. I suggested, therefore, that contemporary dance generates local instances of touch. In other words, dance does not just approach the issue of touch but creates different localities of touch in each of its artistic dispositions. As I mentioned on different occasions, touch has always been an essential aspect of dance throughout its history, in all its forms, but not always as a local instance. Because touch is separated in different contemporary dance performances, it generates a sensitive regime or register of touch proper to each event. In this sense, touch acquires an aesthetic character in contemporary dance as a locality of touch that generates a singular sensitive regime or register.

This idea is crucial for understanding what I am suggesting as *haptic presence*. I already identified the haptic presence as “haptic coming into presence” and as “haptic weighing”. Another way of referring to this notion is as “local instance of touch”. The *haptic presence*, therefore, also means local instances of touch. I identify, therefore, the haptic presence as these three categories: “haptic coming into presence”, “haptic weighing”, and “local instance of touch”.

As to the idea of an aesthetic function of the haptic, it has been identified in this chapter not just considering the ideas of proximity and closeness, but also considering the idea of distance. It is not my intention to discard the idea of proximity, especially because it has a fundamental scope for approaching the relationship between dance and touch. Nevertheless, it is also important to consider an integrated approach that includes the movements of separation, interruption, and distance. I am not considering these notions as exclusionary categories. The haptic, therefore, understood considering the amplifications of the notion, leads us to understand the notion of presence and touch in a broader sense, also considering its necessary interruption and distance.

Another movement that amplifies the notion of haptic is the inclusion of the somatic senses at the heart of this concept. The inclusion of the somatic in the notion of the haptic makes it possible to propose a certain aesthetics of touching in dance, where an artistic discourse is generated around touching and the haptic. Certain poetics are also generated, such as the poetics of weight, which could also be understood as a poetics of touch or haptics. This brings together a multiplicity of elements that are related in different ways to touch, as well as the elements regarding weight and gravity. If one includes, therefore, the idea of the somatic senses within the haptic and its relationship with touching, an aesthetic function of the haptic can be proposed. There is an assembly of elements that are related to contemporary dance and that make visible this relationship between playing and the somatic senses, as well as the work with gravity, weight, movement, awareness of space, etc. In this constellation, *Contact improvisation* became key to understanding this work with weight and gravity, which is also a work of proprioception, vestibular, and kinaesthetic related to touch. The relationship between the somatic senses and touch becomes not only evident but inseparable when approaching dance. These elements, therefore, become aesthetic elements, as we saw in the First Chapter regarding the performance *I need a man to perform this duet*.

Therefore, the idea of “local instance of touch” also implicates the somatic senses and can be as varied as the different artistic practices and works of art. Local instances of the somatic, therefore, can be created. The way in which the locality of touch takes place and transforms touch itself can be as diverse as the practices itself. In this constellation, unexpected dimensions of touch can emerge. An aesthetic function of the haptic in dance, then, could be considered as the creation of local instances of touch.

In the following, I am going to focus on the performance *Low Pieces* by the choreographer Xavier Le Roy to explore the scope of those transformations and creations of localities of touch that produce the emergence of a *haptic-animal*-dimension.

## 2. Limitrophies of touch.

### 2.1 Xavier Le Roy: *Low pieces*.

A group of naked dancers moves slowly through the ground. Sometimes they just lie, quietly, naked, somewhere on the floor of the room. Other times, they roll to one side, recline, or remain seated, staring straight forward. And on some occasions, all of them decide to raise an arm or a leg, and they stay there in that position, surrendering for a moment to the weight of the body.



**Image 15.**

Xavier Le Roy:

*Low Pieces*

Occasionally they come closer to each other, they touch each other and touch themselves, and their proxemics change. They caress the other's body with their hands, with their heads, with their faces, almost accidentally. Then they start moving from one place to another, always maintaining a low position like some sorts of animals would do. This constellation is alternately interrupted by moments of conversation between the dancers and the audience. The previously adopted behaviour stops, the proxemics changes again into "human" behaviour, and each performer starts a spoken interaction with one or more of the persons in the audience based on a dynamic of asking and answering questions.<sup>114</sup>



**Image 16.**

Xavier Le Roy.

*Low Pieces*

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<sup>114</sup> This description is based on my own experience at Tanzplattform 2018 in Essen, Germany. The performance was presented as an installation under the title *Temporary Title, 2015*. Different parts of the performance as *Low Pieces* vary when presented as a one-hour presentation, like the constant blackouts signaling different changes of constellations and the structure of the performance as a whole. I am here, however, focusing on the work of Xavier Le Roy regarding the issue of the animal, which one can appreciate both in *Low Pieces* and *Temporary Title, 2015*. See <https://www.tanzplattform2018.de/programm/temporary-title-2015>.

In this landscape of interferences between speech and animal behaviours, the choreographer Xavier Leroy explores the borderlines of what a human body can do and what it can become in the performance *Low Pieces*. This possibility of becoming other than human is approached in the performance as an exploration of what goes beyond the boundaries between what is considered to be animal and what to be human. In this search, the dancers embodied some undefined animal behaviours. The dancers adopt non-human forms of movements, relationalities, proximities, actions, and ways of touching. “Other” means here those forms of being that one could identify as non-human or rather as animal forms of being.

In these transformations and interferences, the somatic senses metamorphose from one order to the other. The type of awareness of the body’s position in space and the awareness of movement transforms depending on whether a moment of speech or of animal behaviours takes place. The interferences or interruptions bring to light how proprioception is profoundly transformed towards the limitrophies of human and animal touch, generating a particular proprioceptive dimension of touch and haptic aesthetics.

## 2.2 Haptic animality.

As the dance scholar Gabriele Brandstetter suggests, there has been a growing interest in the subject of animal and animality in the last years in contemporary dance (2017: 24). Many choreographies and performances, the author argues, deal with the issue of the animal or take choreographic models from the animal kingdom. Brandstetter refers to choreographers like Martin Nachbar and his *Animal Dances*, Antonia Baehr and her *ABeCedarium Bestiarium*, or Xavier Le Roy's *Low Pieces*, among others, to confront us with the question: "Whence all this interest? Have the debates on "human-animal studies" been extended to the field of dance and choreography?" (Brandstetter, 2017: 24). There is no doubt that the animal has always been a fundamental topic and has been present throughout the history of dance and performance practices (Orozco & Parker-Starbuck, 2015: 2). Nevertheless, these new approaches and perspectives in the context of contemporary dance seem to have developed new forms of relating to the issues involving the animal.

One of these forms is related, as André Lepecki suggests, to the idea of "limitrophies of the human" (2016: 91). The author describes this as diverse adaptations, transformations, or mutations of "monstrous nature" that the human being is able to achieve (Lepecki, 2016: 91). This means that humans can transform and combine different "modes of being (being animal, being machine, being divine)" (Lepecki: 2016: 94-95). This monstrosity is what Lepecki calls an "event of becoming" and becoming-animal (Lepecki, 2016: 104). Referring to Derrida's *The animal that therefore I am*, Lepecki understands this becoming-animal as a moment of "limitrophy" regarding experiments concerning "border-crossing" between human and animal (Lepecki, 2016: 91).

In his analysis of the performance *Low Pieces* (described above), Lepecki also refers to a diverse range of mutations and transformations of the body, from “the machine, the plant, the mineral” to the “non-human animal” (Lepecki, 2016: 104). In this sense, the author describes how *Low Pieces* exposes and materializes these transformations or monstrosities through “heaps of dancers, the careful floral-like arrangements of flesh, the machinic assemblages, the feline serious yet indifferent intent” (Lepecki, 2016: 104).

In a similar direction, Brandstetter refers to “strategies of transformation into animal” and “boundary-shifting encounters” in terms of a “concrete encounter with the materiality of the body” (Brandstetter, 2017:32). In this sense, the author suggests that *Low Pieces* is not about animal imitation, but rather, one could say, a becoming. Referring to *Low Pieces*, therefore, Brandstetter mentions that:

“It is not an imitation, but rather a movement study that seems to arise out of the perception/re-spicere of animals: Cats? Wild cats? A special way of yielding to weight, gravity, creeping, lying, sitting down in groups without any other pacemaker than the “companion” movement of the others”.

(Brandstetter, 2017:34).

In this description, one finds words that can be rapidly associated with touch and the haptic (considering the somatic senses), such as weight, gravity, lying, and sitting. All these elements related to touch shape the diverse forms of corporeality. In this sense, the strategies of that transformation into an animal in the context of a boundary-shifting encounter –or event of becoming something else than human–, is connected to the multiple “local instances of touch” that are being generated. In other words, this metamorphosis regarding a non-human animal involves the

relationship with local values of touch that are intertwined with the issue of the animal. The performance offers, therefore, a constellation related both to the animal and to the haptic, generating what one could designate as haptic animality.

Returning to Brandstetter's quote, it is worth underlining the reference to Donna Haraway. Brandstetter, especially considering Haraway's *When Species Meet*, focuses on the question of the look, that is, the question of the possibility of "looking back" regarding the relationship with the/an animal. The issue of the look is at the heart of what Haraway calls "companion species" (Haraway, 2008:16). This means an active looking-at or an exchange of looks, where a form of co-existence or a becoming-with between species can take place (Haraway, 2008: 38). By species, Haraway means both animal and human as categories. The type of encounter between the species, suggests Haraway, would constantly shape these categories, that is, would shape each of the species. In this sense, the author mentions the idea of "companion species" regarding the relationship between species as a "co-shaping" (Haraway, 2008: 38). Following these ideas, Brandstetter describes how the bodies in Xavier Le Roy's *Low Pieces* are "just lying there", approaching that form of look and looking back, enabled by the study of animal movements. That means that they are just there, in a moment of "companion situation" with each other and with the audience. "Just there" would mean here: just there, lying there like a pride of lions accompanying each other, in an event of becoming.

Considering Brandstetter's observations about *Low Pieces* one could ask what role does touch play in this "companion situation"? When the dancers simply lie there, they actually embody a constellation of movements based on studies of the behaviour of different animals. To lie there implies working with the weight of the body, with the ways of weighing in space, of inhabiting the territory, of developing an active listening between them. Lying there implies a transformation regarding closeness and distance, regarding diverse forms of proximity, of looking and looking back, of rubbing, palpating, caressing, and avoiding. To lie there entails a metamorphosis through which different elements, resonances, and dimensions of the relationship between touch and the issue of the animal arise. In

other words, there is an observation of the animal and animal behaviour that rests on a multiplicity of haptic elements in order to address this animality within a human, or human-animal, or human/non-human corporeality. This constellation, created from careful observation and located in this “companion situation”, prompts us to think about an aesthetics of haptic animality. With this aesthetics, therefore, *Low Pieces* offers local instances of touch that are combined with instances of locality of animality. The combination of multiple heterogeneous values generates a particular regime or dimension of touch related to the issue of animal.

The dance scholar Gerko Egert also analyses the performance *Low Pieces* considering particularly the sense of touch. As mentioned in the Third Chapter, Egert points out that touch in contemporary dance always implicates a modulation, an intensification, and a dramatization, in the sense of actualization and differentiation of touching (Egert, 2020: 3). I mentioned that tactile relationships, therefore, are approached in all their intensities, considering what they have from darkness, sensuality, eroticism, intimacy, resonances, confusions, violence, its tangible and intangible, quotidian and not quotidian forms. To this tentative list, one could add its animality. Regarding *Low Pieces*, however, Egert mentions “diverse bodies and touches” that arise within this animal constellation:

[...] like animals, they move their arms and legs, their necks and heads. Are they lions or cheetahs? Maybe even apes, portly gorillas? They stray about and form a herd, they rub their heads on one another and come together. They lazily lie in two piles, the movements of the lions disappear, as do the shapes of their bodies. A tangle of manifold bodies and movements from which only individual parts protrude. Legs, arms, and feet are recognizable.

(Egert, 2020 :59)

In this description, Gerko Egert identifies the multiplicity in the relationship between animality and touch displayed in *Low Pieces*. Diverse bodies and forms of touching build what Egert calls a “complex machine: a machine of movements and touches” (Egert, 2016: 60). This machine of touch shapes different constellations of bodies that do not last for very long. They constantly change, adopting undefined animal movements and behaviours. It is not about the animal in the plural, but rather the multiple mutations and transformations into different and unspecified animal behaviours. In this sense, as Gerko suggests, these bodies are not individual either: “These bodies are never one, never individual, they are always already many: manifold, relational bodies that cannot be delimited and encompassed” (Egert, 2020:61). In this multiplicity, touching also becomes multiple and undetermined. That is why Egert uses the term “assemblage” from José Gil to refer to how this multiplicity is being connected in *Low Pieces*. In this sense, the author refers to the multiple animal bodies and the several forms of touching in the performance as different dynamics and intensities of movement, such as rising, retreating, or hesitant sort of movements. The coming together of these multiplicities through the dancer’s bodies is what Egert calls “body-assemblage” (*Körper-Assemblage*) (Egert, 2020: 62). What these bodies assemble, correspond to the relationships, to the differences (*Differenzen*), and ways of touching.

Summarizing, the idea of assemblage can also be understood as a condensation of multiple bodies and touches. Through the condensation of transformations of the body in *Low Pieces*, touch also mutates towards something borderline between human and non-human. In this sense, these condensations emphasize the idea of animality in this context as something limnophy that involves a plurality of bodies, a plurality of touches, and a plurality of localities of touch. A haptic constellation involving the animal arises through the “body assemblage”, generating a *haptic-animal* dimension.

The exploration of the boundaries between human and non-human in *Low Pieces*, brings to presence the figure of an undefined animal through the dancers’ bodies. It is not the animal or an animal. It is an animal resonance. It is a creature of the borderline, a liminal creature. It is this animality, this “monstrous nature” of

the human being (their ability to transform, to mutate, to become other than human) that also transforms the human haptic dimension into something limitrophy. It is not a human touch anymore. It is not animal touch, either. Rather than a representation of an animal's proxemics, it is about a *modulation* of touch, considering the issue of the animal and becoming. *Haptic animality*, therefore, refers to this particular way in which the haptic comes into presence when the issue of the animal is approached.

## CHAPTER 6:

### Dancing the haptic III. Hyperbolic dimension.

*Skin Hunger* and haptic excesses in times of social distancing.

And just as we saw that sight is in a sense concerned with both visible and invisible, and the other senses similarly with opposite objects, so touch is concerned with both tangible and intangible; by intangible we mean what has the quality of the tangible to an extremely small extent, as is the case with air, and also those tangibles which show excess, such as those which are destructive.

(Aristotle, 1957a: 135).

Liberties and limits, options and taboos of touch give us insight into the aesthesis of different forms of dance, their dynamics, and communicative structure, as well as into the production and regulation of affects. However, the configurations of touch in the interaction of touching and being touched are as different and varied as the practices of dance themselves.

(Brandstetter et al, 2013: 3)

## Introduction

The present chapter focuses particularly on the dance performance *Skin Hunger* by the choreographer Jasmine Ellis and the artist Johnny Spencer, mentioned in the introduction of this writing. Presented (live) in 2021, *Skin Hunger* explores the repercussions of the lack of touch during the coronavirus pandemic, throughout the dance performance. As I briefly mentioned in the introduction, the pandemic produced a rising awareness of touch as one of the means by which the virus is transmitted, generating, therefore, a significant shift in the way of experiencing the relationship with our environment. Since the beginning in 2020, different policies and measures across the globe have aimed at regulating and limiting touch and physical presence. These regulations configured a scenario both of hyperawareness and of deprivation of touch. Beginning with the performance *Skin Hunger*, therefore, the chapter aims at identifying another dimension of touch in contemporary dance linked to certain events of the pandemic. This dimension consists of how touch comes to presence in the context of a new condition of touch during times of social distancing, in which touch was considered and experienced as an issue of risk in an expansive way.

To this end, the chapter explores recent perspectives on the matter, like those of the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (2022), the Cultural Studies researchers Henriette Steiner and Kristin Veel (2021), and the sociologists Gabriele Klein and Katharina Liebsch (2022). The ideas of “proliferations” (Nancy 2022: 79), “massive reconfigurations of relationships” (Steiner/Veel 2021: 1) and “crisis of the touch-regime” (Klein/Liebsch 2022: 136), for instance, give important insights about how the pandemic made us rethink both the notions of presence and touch.

To deepen these ideas, I am considering the notions of limit and excess, related to the general circumstances of touch. I am considering the perspectives of Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida to approach how this issue of the limit regarding touch sheds interesting light on the present discussions about touch and the pandemic. In this context, I especially draw on Jacques Derrida's thoughts about an element of risk at the heart of the issue of touch itself. The author refers to an "excessive intensity of touch" that he describes as a "hyperbole of the tangible" (*L'hyperbole du tangible*) capable of destroying, as it occurs in some threatening contacts. I borrow this idea of hyperbole to identify a hyperbolic dimension of touch not only in the context of the pandemic but also in *Skin Hunger*, in which a "not being touched" is addressed throughout the performance, bringing touch into presence through its absence. Through these notions and ideas, another dimension of touch in contemporary dance is identified: a hyperbolic dimension.

## 1. Jasmine Ellis: *Skin Hunger*

Four dancers move through the almost empty stage executing different actions like running, going down to the ground, stretching on the floor, and rising up again, without touching each other. Nevertheless, touch is all over the space. Touch comes to presence through the tension of its intermittence. It is a touch that constantly escapes the sight.



**Image 17.**

Jasmine Ellis:

*Skin Hunger*

Breeanne Saxton, David Pallant, Gabriel Lawton, and Kim Kohlmann dance different sequences and phrases while the spectator hears the audio of recorded interviews from different persons talking about touch and their experiences regarding the deprivation of touch during the pandemic. The four dancers interact with the sound of the voices and meanings of the stories, exploring different forms of proximity and distance while they move and synchronize the movements of their mouths with those of the words that are being said by others in the interviews. They comment or convert the audible texts, generating a complex sound dimension of touch, while they embody the different voices that are being heard. With these words, the dancers are together in the space, but a sense of loneliness spreads along with the lack of contact.

One of the actions that the dancers repeat from the beginning of the performance is that of running. It is a particular sort of jogging that generates a constant rhythm. Sometimes one of them runs. Other times, two dancers are running while another one synchronizes the movements of the mouth with that of the voices that are being heard from the interviews and the other one starts to move her or his body more slowly. The running occurs mostly in the same place, that is, not moving forward. The way in which they run changes. Sometimes it acquires a sort of balancing to the sides: one foot to the left and the other one to the right, producing a certain pulse. The different forms of running maintain, nevertheless, a constant rhythm. The pace of the running generates a sound, a pulse. This sound, the sound of the weight of the body, of the steps reaching the ground repeatedly, was recorded and reproduced in the performance as beats composed of grave sounds. Thus, one hears this insistent rhythm throughout the performance, even when the dancers are not running anymore.

These elements generate a tension, the tension of a running that goes nowhere. It creates a feeling of resistance and circularity that opens up the whole problem of the lack of touch in the context of the pandemic, especially because it takes place while we hear the interviews about the deprivation of touch. In other words, the physical tension of the bodies that do not touch each other and the

tension produced by the sound of running is accentuated by the voices and texts that are being heard. One of the phrases that is repeated at different moments of the performance and reflects the spirit of the work of *Skin Hunger* is the following:

I feel like the lack of touch this past year is like a hunger, like a pain.  
It is physical because touch is physical. So the absence of it also is.

(Fragment of an interview in the performance *Skin Hunger*).

The physical pain produced by the absence of touch makes reference to a sort of physicality of both presence and absence of touch. This phrase, therefore, prompts us to think not only about the consequence of the lack of contact in the pandemic but also what it means, or rather, what it feels like not to be touched: a pain, a hunger. And it is precisely this feeling, produced by the lack of touch, one of the dimensions that the performance *Skin Hunger* explores. Developing these feelings and sensations, the performance aims at addressing this physicality of the absence of touch throughout the different elements displayed in the room, making touch come into presence.

This tense atmosphere shifts towards the end of the performance, where another quality of movement emerges. At one moment, a certain sort of proximity and intimacy appears. The caress. After a moment of agitation, two dancers are lying on the floor, face down. Her head rests in his hands. She caresses his face while he leans his face on hers. They both caress each other's faces. The skin comes to presence through the sweat of the bodies and faces. The skin is heated and therefore blushed, it is red, and it is wet. Touch becomes wet, thermic, and slippery. Touch entangles with the fluid of the bodies. In the context of the pandemic, it becomes an absolutely contagious touch. This scene was particularly suggestive because watching people touch each other in the public sphere has

taken on a new meaning and therefore sharpens the gaze regarding touch and being touched. Touch acquires a different weight. On the one hand, it acquires the weight of rediscovering and re-experiencing touch as a place of connections and affections. On the other hand, it acquires the weight of identifying touch as a place of fears and tensions, a place that carries the weight of a hyperbolic touch.



**Image 18.**

Jasmine Ellis:  
*Skin Hunger*

What happens when no one touches? This was one of the leading questions approached in the dance performance *Skin Hunger*, presented (live) in the HochX Theater in Munich, in September 2021. The choreographer Jasmine Ellis and the musician, radio-, and podcast-composer Johnny Spencer created a dance performance to explore the repercussions of the lack of touch in the pandemic. In an interview with the editor and broadcaster Lisa Bögl, Ellis explains that they were not only interested in the absence of touch but in the side effects of touch

deprivation as well, and how this is affecting people in different ways.<sup>115</sup> To collect information, they conducted a series of interviews, gathering stories from a variety of persons having different experiences regarding touch in the pandemic, like a nurse, a social worker, scientists, researchers, and different artists, among others, who were experiencing touch in different forms during the pandemic. The interviews, in podcast format, became one of the key elements of *Skin Hunger*. These allowed the artists not just to think about touch in times of social distancing, but also to consider it as a materiality of the performance as such. In this sense, fragments of the interviews would later be shared on the stage. The four dancers interact with the sound and meaning of the interviews.

*Skin Hunger*, as a live dance performance, opens a particular space to approach the issue of touch during the pandemic, since for a long period of time theatres were shut down. Maintaining social distancing and using masks, a reduced audience was allowed to sit in the same closed space shared with the dancers and artists. This sharing takes place while the audience experiences both the separation through the social distancing in the room and the connection with the multiple experiences regarding touch that are constantly being heard and embodied throughout the performance.

Moreover, in *Skin Hunger* touch is approached not just in terms of proximity, but also in terms of distance and absence. Similarly, touch became a focus of attention during the pandemic due to its absence. The form in which touch is approached in the performance, also allows us to appreciate the complexity of a haptic coming into presence, always intertwined with the movements of absence.

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<sup>115</sup> See “It’s okay to want a hug”, interview with Jasmine Ellis/Lisa Bögl in <https://www.m945.de/audio/its-okay-to-wanna-hug/> (18/05/2022).

## 2. Proliferations.

Referring to the deprivation of touch in the pandemic, Nicolas Duent poses the following question to Nancy: “How do you respond, as a philosopher, to this period in which, even if it is still thinkable, touching has become almost impossible? Doesn’t this deprivation leave us, in part, in a state of numbness?” (Nancy 2022: 79). To this question, Nancy answers the following:

I would say no. First, if in one respect we feel numb, we have also been stimulated, awakened, altered and mobilized in many other respects. In any case, what is lacking is not touching, since what is taking place, on the contrary, is a properly viral proliferations of contacts, messages, calls, suggestions, inventions... From my neighbors across the hall to my friends or to stranger in the furthest-flung countries, this proliferation is teeming... or is writhing, like in a hive.

Certainly there is deprivation but, like always, deprivation brings to light the features of that of which we are deprived. We can’t touch one another, which means that we touch this separation all the more and all the better [...] separation is never only what we touch. Touching entails minimal distance. Worrying about the lockdown is of course a natural reaction, and it is important to look forward to rediscovering contacts and presences.

(Nancy, 2022: 79-81).

In his response, Nancy refers both to the possibility of feeling numb in times of the pandemic, and the fact that there has also been stimulation, awakening, and mobilization in multiple ways. It is interesting to note, that the author refers to the latest as a “proliferation” of different forms of contacts and interactions during the pandemic (Nancy 2022: 79). He uses the term “proliferation” to signalize an always changing movement of propagation, multiplication, and expansion regarding touch; a movement that never rests, always swarming, twisting, and turning. In a somewhat provocative way, Nancy suggests at the beginning of his response that “what is lacking is not touching, since is what is taking place, on the contrary, is a properly viral proliferation of contacts, messages, calls, suggestions, inventions [...] this proliferation is teeming... or is writhing, like in a hive” (Nancy 2022: 80). Nevertheless, with this statement, Nancy is not denying the existence of deprivation of touch during the pandemic either. Indeed, he underlines this double movement of both proliferation and deprivation. In this sense, Nancy explains that the deprivation of touch has also brought to light what we have been deprived of. We cannot touch each other, he writes, “which means that we touch this separation all the more and all the better” (Nancy 2022: 80). The proliferation is there, in what the separation prompts us to re-think, to move, to share, to mobilize, to create. In other words, the deprivation of touch can also generate an abundance of different innovative ways of touching and thinking about human contact. The proliferation is, therefore, these other ways of rediscovering forms of contacts and presences, as Nancy expresses in a positive affirmation.

Nancy’s response to this question is of particular interest when we think about how dance has found different forms of managing, confronting, and reinventing relationships between touch, sharing, and social distancing during the pandemic. Another way to approach this could be to suggest that the deprivation of touch generates not just an awareness but also a hunger for touch. This hunger is what urges the proliferation or multiplications of different forms of contact, opening at the same time a path for new perspectives on the issue of touch in the context of

the pandemic. In this sense, I am approaching the dance performance *Skin Hunger* (2021) in this chapter, precisely because the artists aim at rethinking the role of touch in times of the pandemic in a creative and artistic way. They start, indeed, from the idea of the deprivation of physical contact to approach its side effects in different spheres of society, and therefore, this hunger for the skin, this hunger for touch. *Skin Hunger*, therefore, can also be seen as one of the proliferations that brings to light what different people have been deprived of, deepening how the hunger for the skin, for touch, emerges.

The Cultural Studies scholars Henriette Steiner and Kristin Veel (2021) approach this always changing multiplication of new forms of contact in the pandemic in a recent publication, that echoes both Nancy's concerns and the motivations of the dance performance *Skin Hunger*. The authors explain this "proliferation" in terms of "massive reconfiguration of relationships":

COVID-19, the coronavirus infection that caused the global pandemic, has entailed a massive reconfiguration of relationships; with oneself, with other people, with places, with things. These reconfigurations are not only part of a temporary state of emergency, but will continue to affect the people and societies that are currently living through the pandemic. Simple tasks such as opening a door, speaking to someone on the street, or going shopping can now be seen as challenges fraught with the risk of infection".

(Steiner/Veel 2021: 1).

These reconfigurations, produced by the increasing awareness of touch as one of the means by which the virus is transmitted, generated, therefore, a significant shift in the way of experiencing the relationship with our environment. Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, the authors remind us, different policies, regulations, and measures across the globe have aimed at limiting physical proximity, and therefore, also human contact through touch. The pandemic has certainly changed how we experience and perceive touch, especially considering that “even the gentlest and most caring touch can spread the disease” (Steiner/Veel 2021: 1). In this sense, it is important to underline, as Steiner and Veel suggest, that a wide range of activities that involve touch, beginning with the simplest tasks, such as opening a door, were still experienced as potential risks of infection during the pandemic. Accordingly, the authors suggest that “A heightened awareness of health risks and hygiene gives rise to haptic considerations in even mundane decisions” (Steiner/Veel 2021: 10).

As expected, this situation regarding bodily contact has physical, affective, and emotional effects. Steiner and Veel include feelings of anxiety, solitude, sorrow, numbness, uncertainty, as well as those of compassion, solidarity, or excitement in a list of sometimes contradictory categories through which the pandemic is being experienced (Steiner/Veel 2021: 2). The constant reconfigurations of touching and being touched in times of social distancing, consequently, are understood as a result of a physical and affective crisis that urges us to search for other ways of contact, as the authors underline. In this sense, Steiner and Veel suggest that: “Hugs, handshakes, kisses, and physical proximity are all commonplace forms of interaction that are asked to avoid during the pandemic, prompting us to find other ways of touch and being touched by others” (Steiner/Veel 2021: 3). Behind this prompting lies the hunger for the skin, for touch, for contact.

Following the above, it is important to focus on the notion of ‘risk’ regarding forms of contact, especially in connection to touch. I will argue that the fact that commonplace forms of contact became a risk during the pandemic is a key element for understanding what had shifted regarding touch during that time. On

that understanding lies the idea of a hyperbolic dimension of touch, as I will discuss in the following subchapter.

However, touch has always had an element of risk, even of threat. It is worth asking, thus, what has specifically shifted during the time of the pandemic. It seems that what has shifted is related to the issue of the limit of touch, always connected to a certain untouchability, to a certain 'do not touch', to a certain risk contained as a possibility in every contact. Furthermore, it seems that the limit of touch in connection to this element of risk expanded to new directions, in which the most common forms of contact could become a risk. The philosophers Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida approach this issue of the limit regarding touch from different but similar positions that can shed interesting light on the present discussions about touch, its limit, and the pandemic. I am going to refer to each of them to be able to address this idea of 'hyperbole' and the expansion of the limits of touch.

### 3. The hyperbolic dimension of touch

Jean-Luc Nancy points out that touch has always to do with a limit; it is related to certain conditions, conventions, and what is permissible concerning the bodies coming into contact (Nancy 2013:19). This limit is usually crossed through the different forms of caress or violence, like a hug or a punch, and therefore, different forms of proximity could become a source of risk (Nancy 2013:19). This has to do with the well-known idea of the taboo of touch. In *No li me tangere*, Nancy (2008: 84) mentions that in the context of any action of touching, the limit is crossed or exposed. But in certain circumstances, this transgression can entail a certain sort of violence. The warning in the phrase “do not touch me”, which someone could pronounce or express through a gesture, for instance, entails a sort of violence and threat: “Do not touch me, do not try to touch me, or I beat you up” (Nancy, 2006: 84).

Certain ways of crossing this limit have to do with the idea of excess, that is, an excess of touching that could potentially become destructive. In his treatise *On the Soul*, Aristotle already pointed out that the senses have to do with a matter of proportion, that is, with a measure in which certain limits should not be exceeded because excesses, Aristotle points out, produce pain or destruction (Aristotle, 1935: 151). This pain or destruction can occur at the level of the sensitive organ, which can be destroyed by excess. For example: the excess of a high or low pitch, the author clarifies, can destroy hearing, the excess of flavours can destroy taste, what is excessively bright or dark can destroy sight, and the same is true for smell (Aristotle, 1935: 151). In the case of touch, however, something different happens. While the destruction concerns the annihilation of the sensitive organ, in the case

of touch it can also implicate the destruction of life. For Aristotle, touch is the most basic and fundamental sense to sustain life. That is, without the sense of touch, no animal could survive. Nevertheless, its excess can also become a threat to its existence (Aristotle, 1935: 203). Considering, therefore, the extremes concerning the deficiency of touch and the excess of touch, Aristotle points out the following:

For excess in any sensible quality destroys the organ; and so the tangible also destroys touch. But this is the distinguishing characteristic of life, for it has been shown that without touch an animal cannot exist. Hence excess in tangible qualities destroys not only the sense organ, but also the animal, because touch is the one sense which the animal must possess.

(Aristotle, 1935: 203).

Jacques Derrida refers to this destructive aspect of touch in Aristotle, underlining the idea of “excess” that the tangible might entail. In this sense, Derrida suggests that touch could become a threat when it turns into an excess. The author calls this a “tangible excess” (Derrida 2000: 47). It is associated with an “excessive intensity of touch” that is capable of destroying (Derrida 2000: 47). It is about, for instance, a concrete physical intensity, capable to exerting a dangerous pressure over another body. In other words, it has to do with the possibility of the extermination of another being. This is what Derrida refers to as a “hyperbole”, the “hyperbole of the tangible” (*L’hyperbole du tangible*) (2000: 47). In this sense, what this excessive intensity or this hyperbolic dimension of touch can destroy is life. This is why touch is related, the author explains, to a measure, a moderation, at the service of life. Before any religion, tabu, or neurosis of touch, Derrida suggests,

there is this measure at the beginning, this limit, a vital untouchability: do not touch, not too much:

A certain tact, a “thou shalt not touch too much,” “thou shalt not let yourself be touched too much,” or even “thou shalt not touch yourself,” would thus be inscribed a priori, like a first commandment, the law of originary prohibition, in the Destiny of tactile experience. Ritual prohibitions would then come to be determined, afterward, and only on the background of an untouchability as initial as it is vital, on the backward of this “thou shalt not touch, not too much,” which wouldn’t have awaited any religion, ritual cult, or neurosis of touch. In the beginning, there is abstinence. And without delay, unforgivingly, touching commits perjury.

(Derrida, 2005: 47).

It is not just the element of risk or threat that has drastically been transformed during the pandemic, but also the limits, the law of touch. As I already mentioned, the different forms of touch, including the gentle, intimate, or even minimal touch, have become a risk of infection and even a death threat too. In this sense, new limits began to be established. In this sense, the idea of the “hyperbole” and of “hyperbole of the tangible” can be useful to explain this shift that has disrupted the limits of touch, its law. It can be suggested, therefore, that what has dramatically shifted is this hyperbole of the tangible. If we consider the “hyperbole of the tangible” as the destructive aspect of touching –as Derrida describes it– it is precisely this aspect that was exceeded and expanded in the context of the pandemic. The slightest touch became, thus, a threat, a touch that did not previously represent a destructive character, that did not carry within this hyperbole of the tangible. In this sense, it could suggest that one of the

consequences is that touch during the pandemic became hyperbolic in itself in a generalized way, in all its commonplace forms. This is why the limit of touch has expanded up to the minimal touch, which was not a threat before, as the simple action of opening a door or receiving an object in the hand. And by acquiring a risk status, a hyperbolic expansion regarding the limits of touch occurs. One could even propose a “hyperbolic phase of touch”, characterized by an exaggeration or excess in terms of a hyperawareness of touch as a risk when touch becomes a threat in all its ordinary, quotidian, and familiar forms.<sup>116</sup> It is in this context of untouchability, of constant surveillance of touch, of extreme vulnerability and fragility generated by touch, of policies of distance and separation, that viral proliferations of alternative forms of contact, of re-thinking touching and being touched, have come to the forefront of the public thought. And it is in this context of untouchability where the hunger for touch emerges.

In the performance *Skin Hunger* what we see is this expansion of the limit of touch in terms of a risk and the consequences of that expansion. *Skin Hunger*, hunger for physical contact, hunger for the skin of the other, shed new light on the issue of touch, bringing together in the same space the re-embodied voices of different experiences and perceptions regarding touch and the lack of touch during the pandemic. The performance addresses this hunger for the skin as a consequence of the shift regarding the expansion of the limits of touch, that is, it responds to the fact that the commonplace forms of touch have turned into a risk, into a hyperbolic touch. The performance addresses this proliferation, the crisis of touch, and this multiple reconfiguration of the forms of touch and contact, turning at the same time into a proliferation itself.

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<sup>116</sup> In any case, it should be considered that the notion of contagion comes from the Latin *contāgĭo* or *contagĭum*, which means “contact”. And *contagĭum* is derived from *tangĕre*, which means “to touch”. In different times in history, touch has been considered one of the means by which a disease is being spread. In this sense, one could speak of different periods in history when society is confronted with a critical phase of hyperbolic touch. For a comparison between the Covid19 pandemic and other pandemics in history, see De Graaf et al. (2021) “Dancing with death. A historical perspective on coping with Covid 19”. Wiley Periodicals. In: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/rhc3.12225> (20.01.2022). See also Goldman, Danielle (2021): “A Radically Unfinished Dance: Contact Improvisation in a Time of Social Distance”. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 65 (1), 62-78. Online publication: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S105420432000009X> (03.02.2022) for a comparison between Covid19 and the situation with HIV/AIDS in dance in the 1980 and ‘90s.

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Following the idea of hyperbole, in the following I will briefly refer to this notion from an etymological point of view, considering how this figure of excess is related to arts in order to address different hyperbolic dimensions of touch.

Claudia Claridge mentions, in her book about the relationship between hyperbole and language, that the notion of 'hyperbole' has a long tradition, and it was already used in classical Greece in the sense of 'exaggeration' (Claridge, 2011: 1).<sup>117</sup> Likewise, in the entry of 'hyperbole' of the *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, Elizabeth Patnoe also mentions the ancient relationship between hyperbole and exaggeration and refers to the Greek etymological meaning of the word as "overshooting" (Patnoe, 2010: 334). The prefix 'hyper' means "over", "above", "beyond", "overmuch", or "above measure" and the word "bole" means "throw" (Hoad, 1996: 224). In this sense, the etymological meaning of 'hyper-bole' refers to 'throwing something beyond', which in its rhetorical use is linked to the idea of excess or exaggeration. Elizabeth Patnoe also refers to Aristotle as the first author to identify 'hyperbole' as a figure of speech. Patnoe mentions an interesting remark that Aristotle made in his *Rhetoric* about the use of hyperboles in speech that is worth mentioning here. Aristotle mentions that "There is something adolescent about hyperboles, for they express things violently" (Aristotle, quoted in Patnoe, 2010: 334). It is interesting that Aristotle refers to this possibility of violence in expressions in which hyperboles are used. This violence is also connected with the idea that the hyperbole, in its excess and exaggeration, transgresses the plausibility of reality. In this sense, the notion of hyperbole related to rhetoric has often been described, as Heinrich F. Plett does, as a "semantic figure of

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<sup>117</sup> See Claridge, Claudia. Introduction and Chapter 2: "Characteristics of hyperbole", pp. 1-37 in Claridge, Claudia. *Hyperbole in English. A Corpus-based Study of Exaggeration*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge/New York, 2011

exaggeration or overstatement that exceeds the truth and reality of things” (Plett, 2006: 380).

In their book about rhetoric in painting, Alberto Carrere and José Saborit, describe the notion of hyperbole in the context of arts.<sup>118</sup> The authors also refer to the hyperbole represented both by the idea of ‘excess’ and by the idea of excess of the limits of verisimilitude (Carrere/Saborit, 2000: 443). Nevertheless, Carrere and Saborit introduce another movement within the notion of excess to describe a “visual hyperbole” (Carrere/Saborit, 2000: 443). They identify this excess as related to the ideas of increase (magnification) or decrease (diminution) regarding the artistic object. Carrere and Saborit refer to the first one as “monumentalism” (*monumentalismo*) characterized, for instance, by scale extensions (or scale-ups), repetitions, or continued accumulations that produce a hyperbolic-overflow (Carrere/Saborit, 2000: 443). With regard to the second one, in its turn, is characterized by the scale of extensions and continued accumulation but in terms of movements of suppression, diminution, and absence. (Carrere/Saborit, 2000: 453). The authors give several examples of these extremes of the hyperbolic figure in arts, from the Land Arts of Walter de Maria – in the case of Monumentalism – to the minimalism of Kasimir Malevich and Donald Judd, among others – in the case of decree, or diminution. In both cases, one could therefore say, a ‘hyperbolized field’ is produced either by the gesture of magnification or the gesture of reduction.

Considering these perspectives, the hyperboles of touch in the context of the pandemic can also be approached considering the movements of magnification and diminution. Nevertheless, these movements get intertwined in the context of the pandemic. In other words, since there is deprivation of touching in the pandemic, since there is a regulation of touching, a hyperawareness or hypervigilance of touching is generated, which is a way of perceiving touching in an expanded, magnified way. In other words, in this reduction of touch to its minimum, therefore, touch becomes hyperbolic. And then touch comes to presence with all its force. This is an excess that takes place in connection with the movements of

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<sup>118</sup> See: Carrere, Alberto and Saborit, José. *Retórica de la pintura*. Ediciones Cátedra. Madrid, 2000, pp. 443-454.

reduction or even of absence. This same interweaving of different hyperbolic movements is present not only in the pandemic but also in the performance *Skin Hunger*. This is where this intertwining of decrease or reduction and magnification occurs in connection with the notion of excess. In *Skin Hunger*, therefore, there is a work of reduction of touch that unfolds in the figures of suppression and absence. As we have seen, these figures can also be considered figures of the hyperbolic. The reduction of touch in *Skin Hunger*, therefore, can also be understood as a 'haptic hyperbole of silence', in which the body expresses this silence regarding the absence of touch. As mentioned in the beginning, one of the motivations of *Skin Hunger* was to work with the physicality of the deprivation of touch. This becomes clear if we remember the phrase that is constantly repeated during the performance: "I feel like the lack of touch this past year is like a hunger, like a pain. It is physical because touch is physical. So the absence of it also is". This silence, this absence, therefore, takes place in the body; it is a silence of touch that takes place in the dancing bodies. This reduction or absence of physical contact generates, nevertheless, an amplification of touch. In *Skin Hunger*, therefore, touch comes to presence through its absence or movement of reduction. In this movement, therefore, touch also acquires the characteristics of monumentalism. This monumentalism is composed by sound, by the continued accumulations of fragments of interviews about touch and the deprivation of touch, running repetitions, etc.

In *Skin Hunger*, therefore, there is this hyperbolic overflow of touch due to the different types of materials and interventions that are present in the performance. In this way, both the sense of a reduction and an amplitude are interwoven, hyperbolically making touch come into presence and acquiring a certain weight through its separation.

#### 4. The hyperbolic-haptic.

Gabriele Klein and Katharina Liebsch refer to this situation of touch in the context of social distancing as a crisis of the touch regime (*Berührungsordnung in der Krise*) linked to a crisis of the body's regime itself (*Körperordnung in der Krise*) and a subsequent transformation of the interaction's regime (*Transformation der Interaktionsordnung*). The authors explain that “when bodies are kept at a distance, when touch becomes a threat, and when health-endangering infections become a possible consequence of touch, structures that are of great importance for subjectivity begin to shake” (Klein/Liebsch 2022: 136, my translation). Touch, the authors remind us from an Aristotelian perspective, describes a relationship to the world in which contact and interaction are nothing but essential. As I mentioned in the last subchapter, Aristotle understands the sense of touch as the one sense that is essential for the existence of all animals (Aristotle, 1953: 203). In this sense, the crisis of social distancing has left its mark precisely at the heart of this relationship with the world. In this context, Klein and Liebsch highlight the fact that theatre and arts, in general, are “places of touch”, places of co-presence and shared experiences, perceptions, and interactions, that have drastically been shaken by these multiple crises (Klein/Liebsch 2022: 137-138). Not differently, dance has also been shaken by these crises in a profound manner, since dance is also a “place of touch”. In this sense, one can suggest that the crisis of the regime of touch is also a crisis of the regime of presence.

Dance, as an art and a practice that involves corporeality and present interaction, and as an art that has a particular relationship with touch, has been facing, as Danielle Goldman similarly underlines, not just artistic or pragmatic but

existential challenges (2021:66). The author gives an example that is worth mentioning here. She approaches different dance practices that were confronted with social distancing in the time of the pandemic, highlighting particularly that of contact improvisation. Given that movements in the context of this practice are generated by means of touch, it posed a dramatic problem during the pandemic. In this regard, the author explains the following:

The intimacy of contact improvisation and other postmodern dance practices in the time of the novel coronavirus has rekindled anxiety regarding the body's permeability and the unpredictability of shared physical practices, especially those that embrace improvisation – the most unpredictable mode of embodied exploration [...]. Both “contact” and “improvisation” seemed untenable given what we knew about Covid transmission. Too “risky.”

(Goldman 2021: 68).

What happens to dance when touch, in general, becomes too risky? As I mentioned several times, touch has played a fundamental role in dance throughout its history, both in a physical and affective sense, as Gabriele Brandstetter underlines (2013:3-4). I also mentioned, that in the context of contemporary dance, touch came into focus and began to be approached reflexively as a theme in itself, as some authors like Gabriele Brandstetter (2013), Laurence Louppe (2010), and Gerko Egert (2020) underline, especially concerning different reconfigurations of touch and new possibilities of movement. This means that touch has been explored in different dance practices, projects, and performances, creating several new forms of movements, interactions, and relations. I already quoted Gerko Egert in this regard, but it is important to remember that in contemporary dance

performances, touch can implicate different forms of quotidian touch, as well as modulations, intensifications, and dramatizations, in the sense of actualization and differentiation (Egert, 2020: 3).

Therefore, on the one hand, there is no doubt that the crisis of the touch's regime is a crisis faced by dance, especially by contemporary dance practices and performances that approach touch in its 'locality'.<sup>119</sup> But on the other hand, as far as possible, dance has also been approached and reinvented in the context of the pandemic, opening further unexpected reconfigurations as alternative forms of sharing dance and generating a critical understanding of social distancing and the deprivation of touch. As the meaning of touch is constantly changing in different directions –as we saw regarding Nancy's "proliferations", Steiner and Veel's idea of a "massive reconfiguration", and Klein and Liebsch's "crisis of the touch regime"—touch is also being constantly re-thought and re-embodied in dance during this crisis. The ways in which this has impacted dance around the world are extremely diverse. As Gabrielle Brandstetter, Gerko Egert, and Sabine Zubarik mention, both liberties and limits regarding touch "give us insight into the aesthesis of different forms of dance, their dynamics, and communicative structure, as well as into the production and regulation of affects" (2013: 3). The authors underline that the different configurations of touch can be as varied as the different dance practices (Gabriele Brandstetter et al., 2013: 3)

The performance *Skin Hunger*, therefore, can be considered, as one of the proliferations caused by the multiple crises of touch and the shifts regarding the limits and liberties of touch, generating its own aesthetics, its own sensitive regime in correspondence with the deprivation of touch during the pandemic. This is where the idea of a "hyperbolic dimension" of touch emerges as a local instance of touch that is combined with the heterogenous elements regarding touch in times of the pandemic, where the liberties and limits of touch were going through a crisis.

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<sup>119</sup> For the idea of 'locality' and the 'local instance of touch', see Fifth Chapter: Haptics: 5.1 The haptic as a local instance of touch.

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This hyperbolic dimension of touch refers to the different levels in which an excess or a multiplicity of touch comes to presence. This is what I am referring to here as “hyperbolic-haptic”: a *multiple-local instance* of touch, where touch acquires a particular weight connected to that multiplicity. It is worth recalling that in the Fifth Chapter, I identify the *haptic presence* as a “local instance of touch” in terms of the multiple and singular configurations and reconfigurations of touch regarding the creation of a sensitive (haptic) regime. These local instances, therefore, together, generate a “local multiplicity of touch”.

The hyperbolic-haptic, therefore, can be related to two main points, considering what has been discussed regarding the notion of excess. On the one hand, it refers to a multiplicity of situations, variations, and proliferations that express the idea of touching or the haptic. This level of the hyperbolic can be found in the different variations of the performance *Skin Hunger*, where an *immersive multiplicity* of touch takes place. This immersion occurs through the numerous elements that are connected to touch in the performance simultaneously: the interviews that are heard and that reflect the perspectives of different people on touch, the corporealities of the dancers who barely touch each other, the insistence of the sound of running, of their weighing, etc. In this immersion, therefore, touch is everywhere, all over the place. In this sense, *Skin Hunger* offers us condensations and displacements, an assembly of different ways of touch and not being touched, and of different voices that express the lack of touch, of the embodiment of the absence of touch.

On the other hand, the hyperbolic-haptic or hyperbolic dimension of touch is connected to the idea of risk or threat. This level of the hyperbolic is related to the idea of limit in connection to the notion of excess, that is, the excess of touch that could potentially become destructive. In this sense, as I have mentioned through

Derrida and his idea of a "hyperbole of the tangible", it corresponds to a certain excessive intensity of touch capable of destroying. In this sense, touch comes into presence through a 'hyperbolic dimension' that arises as an excess of the tangible.

Finally, the hyperbolic-haptic refers to touch in a particular context, such as in the case of the recent pandemic, where touching itself became hyperbolic even in its simplest and most everyday forms, such as opening a door, touching something in a supermarket, receiving an object from another person, etc. These actions, which could be considered as everyday actions in which an active awareness of touch is not necessarily displayed, acquired suddenly in this context an unexpected hyperbolic dimension, due to a hyperawareness and surveillance of touch. This level of the hyperbolic-haptic is to be found in the dance performance *Skin Hunger*, in the atmosphere of a hyperbolic dimension of touch that the performance produces and offers: the excess of excess, the hyperbole of the hyperbole of touch.

These different levels, which entail numerous variations of the idea of excess and multiplicity of touch, contribute to identifying another dimension of touch in contemporary dance. In this sense, the idea of a hyperbolic dimension of touch is another way of understanding how a *haptic presence* emerges, that is, how the multiple forms of touching, including the absence of touch, come into presence. It is important to note that it is not only that touch comes into presence through its absence, but also that the absence of touching comes to presence in a hyperbolic-haptic dimension.

## CHAPTER 7:

### Conclusions.

Perspectives on the haptic presence in contemporary dance.

Based on different dance performances, the notions of touch and presence have been examined in this thesis from an interdisciplinary perspective –including Dance and Theatre Studies, and Philosophy– to introduce the notion of *haptic presence* and to identify different dimensions of touch in contemporary dance.

Some of the questions that this research is based upon were: How does touch come into presence in contemporary dance? In which forms? Which dimensions are being opened? How does this become a significant aspect of contemporary dance?

To approach these questions, this thesis has been configured following two main paths. One of them corresponds to the definition of *haptic presence*, which was introduced considering both the dance performances mentioned throughout this research and the relationships between the notion of presence and touch. I identify, therefore, the notion of *haptic presence* throughout this writing as “haptic coming into presence”, as “haptic weighing”, and as “local instance of touch”. The other path refers to the recognition of different dimensions of touch in contemporary dance. I distinguished three main dimensions: sound dimension, thermal dimension, and hyperbolic dimension. Nonetheless, further dimensions are also described throughout this writing, like an olfactory dimension, a proprioceptive dimension, a weighing dimension, and an animal dimension.

## 1. *Haptic Presence.*

Beginning with the first path, I first identify the notion of presence as “coming into presence” and as “exposition”, following Jean-Luc Nancy, who aims at rethinking presence out of the metaphysical tradition. With regard to the idea of “coming into presence”, Nancy understands presence not as a substance or as a quality of a thing but rather as a movement, as the movement of passage, of coming and withdrawing. I mention how this understanding of presence has common grounds with that of touching, considering it as a trace. I explain how this comprehension of touch leads to identifying touch taking into account its interruption and distance. Following Gerko Egert, I take into account how touch can be addressed in those terms regarding contemporary dance. From there, in connection with Lia Rodrigues’s dance performance *For the sky not to fall*, I introduce the idea of “haptic coming into presence” –which involves the understanding of presence as coming and withdrawing in connection with the notion of touch–. Touch comes to presence, therefore, through the different materialities displayed in the performance, through the proximity and distancing of the dancers, through the smell of coffee and powders on the skin. At this point, I refer to an olfactive dimension of touch in the performance.

With regard to the notion of “exposition”, Nancy refers to a relational quality of the being-exposed, of the being outside, on the outside, with others in the world. Considering the presence of the body as the ex-position, the author includes a “*peau*” which gives the word the same sound as “exposition” in French but introduces an additional meaning: the exposition of the skin (*expeausition*). Nancy connects this comprehension of presence as ex-position and *expeausition* – including the movement towards an exteriority and the reference to the skin–in connection to the notion of production linked to arts. This opens the possibility to

examine the notion of touch in the context of dance, considering different ways and strategies of that ex-position. I suggest that these notions have interesting points of contact with the notion of haptic, considering an expanded definition that includes the idea of an awareness of presence. As authors like James Gibson, Paul Rodaway, and Mark Paterson argue, the notion of haptic is understood including the relationship to the skin, the movements regarding proximity and distance, and the somatic senses— like proprioception and vestibular and kinaesthetic senses. I refer to how this understanding of the haptic can be connected to that of exposition, especially considering Nancy's addition of the skin as *expeausition* when referring to the body. From there, in connection with the opening of Ceren Oran's performance *I need a man to perform this duet*, I address the idea of being exposed as touchable. By depriving herself of vision and therefore intensifying her somatic senses, Ceren opens a "haptic geography". The notions of ex-position and *expeausition*, in connection to an expanded notion of haptic that includes an awareness of presence, therefore, allow us to associate presence with the idea of a haptic exposition when approaching Ceren Oran's performance. Regarding the idea of production, one can suggest that this haptic exposition can be produced in the context of artistic practices. That is, it can turn out to be an element of artistic composition. The *haptic presence*, therefore, is identified as a "haptic coming into presence" and as a "haptic exposition".

Following this path, I secondly introduce the notion of *haptic presence* as a "haptic weighing". I use the etymological imbrication of the French words "peser" (weighing) and "penser" (thinking), illuminated by Jean Luc Nancy, in order to draw attention to the physical, sensitive, tangible, and, above all, bodily aspect of thought. From there, following the philosophers Marie Bardet, Veronique Fabbri, and Miriam Fischer-Geboers, I approach the relationship between dance and thinking, or dance as thinking, in terms of its relationship with the weight of the body to shed light on the notion of "weighing" in connection to dance. I also approach the notion of "separation" in Nancy's understanding of weighing to connect the notions of weight and presence. The idea of separation is linked to the distinction of a singularity, to what is separated and therefore, through its

separation, acquires a certain singular weight and sense, although the separation will never be something absolute. The idea of “coming into presence”, therefore, is also understood regarding how something acquires a certain weight. This notion of separation is also approached specifically in connection to dance and the dancing body. As authors like Marie Bardet and Miriam Fischer-Geboers underline, following Nancy, it is through the relationship between body and separation in connection to dance, that the notion of presence, and of presence of the body, is linked to the idea of weight. As Bardet suggests, the presence of the body takes place through its relationship with weight. Presence, therefore, is related to forms of weighing and thinking about the world, with how those weights are organized and re-distributed. In this sense, the “coming into presence” in the context of arts is intimately related to weight and thought, to weighings, as a reorganization of meaning and sense produced by the separation.

From there I approach the notion of weight in the context of contemporary dance, following Laurence Louppe. The author identifies a “poetics of weight” characterized by the attention toward the notion of weight and work with the weight of the body in contemporary dance. The use of gravity regarding the weight of the body, the acceptance, and work with the body’s weight, became one of the foundational elements of this poetics of weight. In this direction, the author underlines that the work with the weight of the body in dance generates a diversification of the different forms in which touch is approached and explored. In this sense, the author suggests that in certain dance practices, such as *Contact Improvisation*, the elements of touch can be charged with a greater tactile value. In this context, I introduce the idea of a “separation of touch”, where touch comes to presence and acquires a certain weight through the dancing bodies. Though this separation, contemporary dance explores, interrogates, and reconfigures touch, considering the relationship between the weight of a thought and the weight of the body.

Considering the above, I further address the relationship between weight and touch examining the interconnections between a lexicon of weight and a lexicon of touch, following Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida. I analyse how

Nancy's "corpus of tact" is intrinsically related to the notions of weight and weighing. The different verbs listed in the "corpus of touch" refer to the multiplicity of touch. This multiple nature includes: the relationship with the senses, actions that can be associated with touch (like rubbing and caressing), and actions that, as Derrida underlines, cannot be so rapidly associated with contact, or that tend to mean the opposite (as releasing and avoiding). The inclusion of these verbs provides a particular way of understanding the issue of touch, since Nancy is precisely thinking about the interruption within all contact. In addition, as the last word of this "corpus" corresponds to "weighing", Nancy argues that everything comes to be related to the issue of weight, and the weight of the body. From there, I mention how Gerko Egert considers this "corpus of tact" regarding contemporary dance, addressing not just the multiplicity but also the interruption of touch.

In summary, through the connections between weight, touch, and presence, I further develop the notion of *haptic presence* as "haptic weighing": a way in which dance weighs, thinks, and tenses the sense of touch.

In the third place, I introduce the notion of *haptic presence* as a "local instance of touch". Following this time Jean-Luc Nancy's comprehension of the "sensitive regime [*régimen sensible*]" in connection to arts, I further explore the idea of a "separation of touch" identified before. As mentioned, the notion of separation is linked to the idea of the singular and the local, to what is separated and therefore, through its separation, acquires a certain singular weight and sense. The author suggests, therefore, that each work of art or artistic proposal separates [*détache*] and shapes a singular sensibility, creating its own sensible regime. This sensitive regime, or singular sensitivity not only refers, Nancy points out, to the five canonical senses, but also, for example, to the sense of distance, the sense of tonality, of texture, of humidity, etc. In this sense, Nancy identifies separation as one of the four forces of arts: separation, isolation, intensification, and metamorphosis. These four forces, starting from the force of separation, generate "another instance of unity," that is: separation produces a transformation of that which was separated, generating a particular distribution [*partage*] or sensible regime. This other "instance of unity" is connected with the idea of "locality" and

“techniques of the local” that imply the generation or the work with certain local values. Each local value is, in its turn, combined with heterogeneous values so that, for instance, the colour red can become a thickness, a fluidity, a figure, a movement, a flash of sound, etc. in a process of metamorphosis. Considering this perspective, I suggest understanding this “another instance of unity” in connection to touch as a “local instance of touch” as a useful notion to approach the relationship between dance and touch in terms of the multiple and singular configurations, reconfigurations, or creation of a sensitive (haptic) regime. The *haptic presence* is related, therefore, to the “creation of localities of touch” where touch can become, or be combined with, a sound, a temperature, a colour, a smell, a figure, etc. This constellation of heterogeneous local values gravitating in connection to touch, therefore, is what prompts us to consider a haptic regime or register that generates particular dimensions of touch, for instance, a sound, thermal, or hyperbolic dimension. The dimensions of touch, therefore, consist of a locality of touch that expands toward others or multiple heterogeneous local values, making touch come into presence and acquire a certain weight in a specific way. In this sense, I suggest that although touch has always played a fundamental role in dance throughout its history, that role was not displayed as a local instance of touch.

Following this path, I examine how an aesthetic function of the haptic has been defined regarding the ideas of “close vision” and a “haptic function of the eye”, following Alöis Riegel and Deleuze and Guattari. From there, I argue that this aesthetic function can be reconsidered in light of an expanded notion of the haptic. In this sense, I return to Mark Paterson’s examination of the notion of haptic regarding the somatic senses. This allows me to describe this expansion of the notion of the haptic not exclusively as related to the idea of “close vision” or as a “haptic function of the eye”, but rather as related to the whole body. To approach this idea in connection with contemporary dance, I return to the notions of weight and gravity to illustrate how the interconnections between touch and the senses of proprioception, kinaesthetic, and vestibular sense generate a sensitive regime within a poetics of weight related to touch. I also approach this idea considering the

notion of “listening”, following Marie Bardet and Gabrielle Brandstetter, as an attentive hearing linked to an awareness of touch.

In light of these discussions, I address Xavier Leroy’s performance *Low Pieces* to identify “local instances” of touch that are connected with “instances of locality” of animality, where the combination of multiple heterogeneous values generate a regime or dimension of touch related to the issue of the animal. Following André Lepecki, Gabrielle Brandstetter, and Gerko Egert’s observations and analysis of the performance, I approach the condensation of transformations of the body in *Low Pieces*, in which touch also mutates towards something borderline between human and non-human. The idea of an animal dimension of touch, therefore, refers to this particular way in which the haptic comes into presence when the issue of the animal is approached. The interferences or interruptions between the different forms of behaviour in the performance (between animal and human), bring to light how proprioception is profoundly transformed towards the limitrophies of human and animal touch, generating a particular proprioceptive haptic dimension and aesthetics.

## 2. Dimensions of touch in contemporary dance.

Considering gradually the notions, discussions, and ideas concerning the *haptic presence*, I identify through this research three main dimensions of touch: a sound dimension, a thermal dimension, and a hyperbolic dimension.

Beginning with the sound dimension, I focus especially on the dance performance *Invisible, danza que explota los sentidos* by the Chilean choreographers and dancers Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio. I approach how the performance, using technological devices, opens a complex sound dimension of touch, where touch comes to presence throughout different sound combinations connected to the movements of the dancers. Considering the idea of “coming into presence” I identify how touch comes to presence through a choreography of sounds.

As the choreographers draw heavily on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion of invisible to explore, through dance, the field of what we cannot see but is nevertheless present in our reality, I start by highlighting this notion. In doing so, I also underline the points of contact between the notion of invisible and presence. For Merleau Ponty, the invisible corresponds to an “interior armature” that at the same time manifests and conceals and whose presence counts in the sensible as a cavity or an absence, in the sense, for example, of what leaves a mark. For the author, everything visible is at the same time invisible, since seeing is always seeing more than what is seen. The author identifies this logic as an indeterminate reverse of things, also including the untouchable of the touchable. In this direction, Merleau-Ponty refers to this as the “other dimensionality” of things, which adds another layer to the idea of dimensions considered here as a sound dimension. Francisca Morand explains how that other dimensionality of the experience related

to touch in dance was approached in terms of expanding the invisible or untouchable through sound. Through this expansion, therefore, the performance *Invisible* approaches what is not currently seen, creating a new fold between touch and sound, and opening a sound and audible dimension of touch.

From there, I explain how the performance generates a multimodality of touch, considering a path from Aristotle's understanding of the medium to the notion of interface in the context of the digital procedures of the new media. I explain how the multiplication of the medium comes to transfigure the nature of the sensitive (of touching) due to a pre-existence produced digitally (sound) that stimulates other logics. Discussing different perspectives on the matter, like those of Fred Ritchin, Lev Manovich, Anne Cauquelin, Kerstin Evert, and Alejandra Ceriani, I refer to how the body becomes an active element of the interface generating "techo-bodies" and "resonant bodies". Considering Giles Deleuze's notion of resonance in connection with the notion of invisible, the performance *Invisible* creates couplings of sensation, where different levels or zones of sensation enter into communication while the dancers interact with each other. This creates both a complex tactile dimension of sound and a sound dimension of touch.

The thermal dimension focuses especially on the dance performance *Chaleur Humaine* by the Canadian choreographer Stephan Gladyzewski. Using a "thermo-video" projection system, the performance creates a thermal dimension of touch in which the invisible traces of temperature, involved in the tactile experience of the dancers, acquire a certain weight through the movements of the colourful waves that are projected on the bodies. To examine this dimension, I first draw on Jane Bennett's notion of "vibrant matter", understanding materialities and things as vital or animated entities. That vitalism is related to forces, forces of things, that can be captured by the artist's eye. In this sense, I refer to Deleuze's notion of vibration in connection to the arts. The author describes vibration as the action of forces, as an invisible pulsation, and the artist, therefore, is able to capture the world while vibrating. Following these perspectives, I refer to the notions of light

and colour in terms of vibration, going back to Loïe Fuller's *Serpentine Dance* and *danses lumineuses* I address the observations of some authors, as well as those from Ann Cooper Albright, who approaches the relationship between lights and colour in Fuller's work to later discuss the synthesis of colour, light, and touch in *Chaleur Humaine*. With that aim, I also address Merleau-Ponty's expression of "emerging from the colour" regarding Paul Cezanne's paintings, where the author analyses a vibrant constitution of the appearance of the object and its relationship with the world of sensations. This idea allows me to identify how touch comes to presence and acquires a certain weight through colour, becoming a vibrant materiality in terms of haptic and thermal materiality of light. From there I approach Emmanuel Levinas's notion of caress, to clarify what is vibrating within those lights and colours. I explain how for Levinas, the caress exceeds the tactile experience in terms of going beyond and deepening the sensitive experience. Through these ideas, I explain how *Chaleur Humaine* allows us to see, through shining and colourful traces of temperature, what goes beyond the thermal trace: the space of intimacy, of a depth of touch. The corporal, haptic, and luminic work in *Chaleur Humaine* exposes, therefore, the trace not only of the warmth of contact but also the trace of the exuberance that is glimpsed in that luminic warmth.

The hyperbolic dimension focuses particularly on the dance performance *Skin Hunger* by the choreographer Jasmine Ellis and the artist Johnny Spencer. The performance explores the repercussions of the lack of touch during the coronavirus pandemic, throughout the dance performance. To explore this dimension, I address how, in the context of the pandemic, an increasing awareness of touch as one of the means by which the virus is transmitted was produced, generating, therefore, a significant shift in the way of experiencing the relationship with our environment. Since the beginning of the pandemic, in 2020, different policies and measures across the globe have aimed at regulating and limiting touch and physical presence. These regulations configured a scenario both of hyperawareness and of deprivation of touch. This dimension consists of how touch

comes to presence in the context of a new condition of touch during times of social distancing, in which touch was considered and experienced as an issue of risk in an expansive way. I address these ideas following Nancy's notion of "proliferations", Steiner and Veel's idea of a "massive reconfiguration", and Klein and Liebisch's "crisis of the touch regime". As to the notion of hyperbole, I draw especially on Jacques Derrida's thoughts about an element of risk at the heart of the issue of touch itself. The author refers to an "excessive intensity of touch" that he describes as a "hyperbole of the tangible" (*L'hyperbole du tangible*) capable of destroying, as it occurs in some threatening contacts. I borrow this idea of hyperbole to identify a hyperbolic dimension of touch not only in the context of the pandemic but also in *Skin Hunger*, in which a "not being touched" is addressed throughout the performance, bringing touch into presence through its absence. Through these notions and ideas, another dimension of touch in contemporary dance is identified: a hyperbolic dimension.

Due to the significant role of touch in contemporary dance, I will argue that the notion of *haptic presence* can be fruitful to analyse contemporary dance performances that deal, to a higher or lesser degree, with the issue of touch. Through the different dimensions, it was possible to identify how the ideas of "haptic coming into presence", "haptic weighing", and "local instances of touch" can be useful for identifying different dimensions of touch that are being opened in contemporary dance. One could ask: how is touch coming into presence? How touch acquires a certain weight? Or which local instances of touch are being opened? These questions are crucial both for understanding a certain role of touch in contemporary dance and how that role changes and transforms the definition of touch itself.

## Appendix

### 1. Summay 1 (Spanish).

Resumen.

*La presencia háptica.*

Dimensiones del tocar en la danza contemporánea.

A partir de diferentes performances de danza, la presente tesis examina las relaciones entre las nociones de presencia y tocar desde una perspectiva interdisciplinaria –incluyendo los estudios de la danza y del teatro, y la filosofía– para proponer la noción de *presencia háptica* e identificar diferentes dimensiones del tocar en la danza contemporánea.

En este contexto, comienzo por introducir la idea de "venida a presencia" del filósofo Jean-Luc Nancy (1993), quien busca repensar la noción de presencia al interior de la filosofía contemporánea. Nancy comprende la presencia como venida, como la acción de ir y venir. Esto significa que la presencia es más bien un proceso de constante llegada y retirada, de constante venida a presencia. Esta noción es la primera idea fundamental que permite describir la noción de *presencia háptica* como una "venida háptica". Una segunda idea principal se encuentra conectada a la noción de "pesar", en la que Jean-Luc Nancy (1997) vincula peso y pensamiento en términos de "el peso de un pensamiento",

considerando la relación inextricable entre el cuerpo y el pensamiento. Las nociones de peso y de pesaje permiten comprender cómo algo viene presencia en términos de adquirir un cierto peso. En este sentido, la idea de *presencia háptica*, por tanto, puede ser abarcada en términos de un “pesaje háptico”. Una tercera idea fundamental corresponde a la noción de “instancia local del tocar”, siguiendo las nociones de “separación” y de lo “local” de Nancy (1996), en la que se combinan diferentes valores locales heterogéneos (como, por ejemplo, el tacto y el sonido), generando un régimen sensitivo particular. De este modo, por tanto, se identifica aquí la *presencia háptica* en tanto “instancia local del tocar”, a partir de lo cual se genera un régimen o registro sensible de lo háptico. En este contexto, se especifica cómo la danza contemporánea genera o crea “instancias locales del tocar” a través de las distintas performances, prácticas y técnicas de movimiento. Así, el tocar viene a presencia y adquiere un cierto peso como instancia local.

Considerando estos diferentes vínculos con respecto a la noción de presencia, se sugiere a lo largo de la investigación esta noción como fructífera para examinar el tocar en la danza contemporánea, a pesar de las críticas que la noción de presencia ha recibido tanto en filosofía como en los estudios del teatro y de la danza.

El tocar siempre ha desempeñado un papel fundamental en la danza a lo largo de su historia. Sin embargo, en el contexto de la danza contemporánea, el tocar adquiere otras dimensiones y es abordado reflexivamente como un tema en sí mismo en la praxis artística. Este renovado interés por el tocar también se encuentra en el contexto de las humanidades, las ciencias sociales y las artes en general, así como también en los estudios de la danza y la filosofía contemporánea. Considero, por tanto, las distintas contribuciones al respecto para abordar la relación entre el tocar y la danza contemporánea con el objetivo de desarrollar la idea de *presencia háptica* y explorar diferentes dimensiones del tocar.

A base de mi experiencia como espectadora, se han considerado las obras de distintos coreógrafos, así como Francisca Morand, Stéphane Gladyzewski, Lia Rodrigues, Ceren Oran y Jasmine Ellis, entre otros, para identificar una amplia

gama de dimensiones y relaciones en torno a la cuestión del tocar en la danza que pueden comprenderse como parte de diferentes exploraciones artísticas.

Considerando lo anterior, me baso en las siguientes preguntas a lo largo de la investigación: ¿Cómo viene a presencia el tocar en la danza contemporánea? ¿En qué formas? ¿Qué dimensiones se abren? ¿Cómo se convierte esto en un aspecto significativo de la danza contemporánea?

A partir de estas preguntas propongo como hipótesis la idea de que a través de una *presencia háptica* en la danza contemporánea emergen diferentes dimensiones del tocar que configuran la manera en que el tocar viene a presencia. Estas dimensiones son diversas y consisten en múltiples relaciones o entrelazamientos entre el tocar y otros valores heterogéneos en un contexto determinado. En este sentido, la idea de *presencia háptica* viene aquí a ampliar la noción de tocar, dando lugar a un régimen o estética háptica en la danza contemporánea.

Para abordar estas cuestiones e hipótesis, esta tesis se ha configurado siguiendo dos caminos principales. Uno de ellos corresponde a la definición de la *presencia háptica*. La otra se refiere a la identificación de las diferentes dimensiones del tocar. En cuanto al primer camino, identifico la *presencia háptica* a lo largo de este escrito como "venida háptica a presencia", como "pesaje háptico" y como "instancia local del tocar", como mencioné al principio. Cada una de estas nociones se explica en un capítulo propio: en los capítulos uno, tres y cinco respectivamente. Los capítulos intermedios (capítulo dos, cuatro y seis) están dedicados a la identificación de las diferentes dimensiones hápticas que abren estas categorías: dimensión sonora, dimensión térmica y dimensión hiperbólica. He dividido, por lo tanto, este escrito en seis capítulos principales. Se incluye un séptimo capítulo como conclusiones de esta investigación.

## Capítulos.

En el primer capítulo, "Presencia, tocar y háptico", se introduce una primera definición de la *presencia háptica* en tanto "venida háptica a presencia". Para ello, la atención se centra en la noción de "venida a presencia", desarrollada por Jean-Luc Nancy en varias de sus obras. Siguiendo a Martin Heidegger (1968), Nancy intenta redefinir la presencia fuera del ámbito de la tradición metafísica, entendiéndola como un pasaje, como el movimiento de venida y retirada. En este contexto, entonces, se explora cómo estas ideas sobre la presencia están conectadas con perspectivas provenientes de los estudios del teatro y de la danza, especialmente considerando la idea de evanescencia y efimeridad. A continuación, el capítulo abarca la comprensión que Nancy (2008 a, 2008c) desarrolla sobre la noción de tocar, en la cual se abren nuevas perspectivas vinculadas a las nociones de interrupción y distancia. En este sentido, se discute la recepción de estas ideas en los estudios de la danza, contemplando especialmente las contribuciones de Gerko Egert (2020). Considerando estas interconexiones se aborda, en lo siguiente, la noción de háptico siguiendo las reflexiones de diferentes autores, como Paul Rodaway (2002) y Mark Paterson (2007), para hacer referencia a una definición ampliada de esta noción. Conjuntamente, a lo largo del capítulo, analizo momentos concretos de las performances *For the Sky not to fall* de Lia Rodrigues y *I need a man to perform this duet* de Ceren Oran, para explicar cómo el tocar viene a presencia y cómo se puede generar una constelación háptica.

El segundo capítulo –"Danzando lo háptico I: dimensión sonora"– se centra especialmente en la performance de danza *Invisible, danza que explota los sentidos* de los coreógrafos e intérpretes chilenos Francisca Morand y Eduardo Osorio. Aquí se aborda cómo la performance, utilizando dispositivos tecnológicos,

abre una compleja dimensión sonora del tocar en la cual el tacto viene a presencia a través de diferentes combinaciones sonoras conectadas a los movimientos de los intérpretes. En esta dirección, se consideran algunas perspectivas filosóficas sobre la sensación y la resonancia, como la de Giles Deleuze (2003), en combinación con algunas perspectivas sobre la relación entre las artes y la tecnología, como las de Anne Cauquelin (2006) y Kerstin Evert (2002). También se aborda en este capítulo las nociones de presencia y el tocar considerando especialmente la noción de invisible de Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968), noción que también dio nombre a la performance de danza: *Invisible*.

En el tercer capítulo –"Pesajes"– la atención se centra en la noción de peso como punto fundamental de contacto entre las nociones de presencia y tocar en relación con el cuerpo danzante. Como punto de partida se considera la relación etimológica de las palabras francesas "*peser*" (pesar) y "*penser*" (pensar) destacada por Jean-Luc Nancy en *El peso de un pensamiento* (2008b), y las contribuciones de filósofas como Marie Bardet (2012) y Miriam Fischer-Geboers (2010) sobre este asunto en relación con la danza. A partir de ahí, y siguiendo especialmente a la científica de la danza Laurence Louppe –que identifica una "poética del peso" en la danza contemporánea (2010)–, se discute cómo diversas prácticas de danza, así como la improvisación de contacto, exploran, interrogan y rearticulan ideas sobre el tocar y el peso del cuerpo. La idea de la *presencia háptica* se desarrolla aquí como *pesaje háptico* en tanto constitutivo de la emergencia de una dimensión del tocar en la danza contemporánea.

El cuarto capítulo –"Danzando lo háptico II: dimensión térmica"– se centra especialmente en la performance de danza *Chaleur Humaine* del coreógrafo canadiense Stephan Gladyzewski. Mediante un sistema de proyección "video-térmica", la performance crea una dimensión del tocar relacionada a la temperatura en la que sus huellas invisibles que intervienen en la experiencia táctil de los bailarines, adquieren cierto peso a través de los movimientos y vibraciones de las ondas de colores que se proyectan sobre los cuerpos. Aquí se considera especialmente la noción de "vibración" siguiendo a Jane Bennett (2010) y Giles Deleuze (2003) en combinación con perspectivas relacionadas a la historia de la

danza –particularmente relacionadas al trabajo con la luz y el color de Loïe Fuller– donde se pone en relación las nociones de vibración y de color. Para profundizar esta relación, se abarcan la idea de "emerger del color" de Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1971) y las reflexiones de Emanuel Lévinas (1979) sobre la caricia para analizar la performance *Chaleur Humaine* y continuar el desarrollo de la relación entre la presencia y el tocar implicados en el despliegue de una dimensión térmica del tocar en la danza contemporánea.

En el quinto capítulo –"Hápticos"–, por un lado, se sigue la idea de "separación" y de lo "local" de Jean-Luc Nancy (1996) para identificar una "separación del tocar" en la danza contemporánea. A partir de estas nociones, se identifica, entonces, una "instancia local del tocar" como una noción útil para abordar la relación entre la danza y el tocar en términos de las múltiples y singulares configuraciones, reconfiguraciones o creaciones de regímenes sensibles, en los que se entrelazan diferentes elementos (por ejemplo, la relación entre el tacto y el sonido, la temperatura, el color, el olor, etc.). Por otro lado, se siguen en este capítulo las ideas de los filósofos Gilles Deleuze y Félix Guattari (1987) para identificar una función estética de lo háptico, así como también una ampliación de la noción, propuesta por autores como Mark Paterson (2007). En esta dirección, las contribuciones de científicos de la danza también se consideran como claves para considerar la expansión de la noción de háptico. Gabrielle Brandstetter (2013), por ejemplo, añade una dimensión somática a esta noción ligada a la danza, que permite identificar una estética singular de lo háptico en la danza contemporánea comprendida como "instancia local del tocar". En este contexto, analizo momentos particulares de la performance *Low Pieces* de Xavier Le Roy, para aproximarme al ámbito de ciertas localidades del tocar que producen la emergencia de una "dimensión háptico-animal".

El sexto capítulo –"Danzando lo háptico III: dimensión hiperbólica"– se centra especialmente en la performance de danza *Skin Hunger* de la coreógrafa Jasmine Ellis y el artista Johnny Spencer. En esta performance se aborda el asunto de la privación del tocar en el contexto de la pandemia. Si bien los intérpretes no se tocan hasta hacia el final de la performance, el tocar se

encuentra por todos lados, abriendo una dimensión hiperbólica. En este sentido, el capítulo pretende acercarse a una nueva condición del tocar durante la pandemia, basada en el hecho de que el tocar pasó a considerarse y experimentarse como una cuestión de riesgo de forma expansiva. En combinación con perspectivas recientes sobre el asunto, recorro a las reflexiones de Jacques Derrida (2005) sobre ese elemento de riesgo en el corazón de la cuestión del tocar. El autor hace referencia a una "intensidad excesiva del tocar" descrita como una "hipérbole de lo tangible" (*L'hyperbole du tangible*) capaz de destruir, como ocurre en algunos contactos amenazantes. En este sentido, se relacionan estas ideas con la cuestión del tocar en el contexto de la pandemia para proponer una dimensión hiperbólica del tocar que surge en la performance *Skin Hunger*.

El séptimo capítulo –“*Presencia háptica*”– corresponde a la conclusión de la presente tesis. En este capítulo se examina la noción de *presencia háptica* a la luz de lo que se ha abordado y discutido en los capítulos anteriores. En esta dirección, se proporciona una definición de la noción de *presencia háptica* en términos de "venida háptica a la presencia", "pesaje háptico" e "instancia local del tocar" para mostrar cómo emergen diferentes dimensiones del tocar en la danza contemporánea. También se examinan aquí las dimensiones del tocar que se han mencionado a lo largo de este escrito para explicar cómo el tocar viene a presencia y adquiere cierto peso como instancia local conectada a diferentes elementos como el sonido, el color, la luz, la oscuridad, la gravedad, la temperatura, etcétera. De este modo, también se consideran las relaciones de cercanía y distancia de los cuerpos, sus proximidades e interrupciones, o las interconexiones entre lo tocable y lo intocable, donde aparecen múltiples figuras o desfiguraciones del tocar, como aquellas relacionadas con la caricia, el golpe, el erotismo, y las emociones. Por último, teniendo en cuenta los resultados de esta investigación, se subraya la importancia de la noción de *presencia háptica* como noción fructífera para analizar el tocar y lo háptico en la danza contemporánea.

## 1. Summary 2 (English).

### Summary

#### The Haptic Presence

#### Dimensions of touch in contemporary dance.

Based on different dance performances, this thesis examines the relationships between the notions of *presence* and *touch* from an interdisciplinary perspective –including dance and theatre studies, and philosophy– to propose the notion of *haptic presence* and to identify different dimensions of touch in contemporary dance.

I begin by introducing the idea of “coming into presence” by the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (1993), who seeks to re-think presence in contemporary philosophy. Nancy understands presence as coming, as the action of coming and going. This means to understand presence as a process of constant arriving and withdrawing, of constant coming into presence. This notion is the first key idea that will describe the notion of *haptic presence* as a “haptic coming”. A second main idea corresponds to the notion of “weighing”, in which Jean-Luc Nancy (1997) connects weight and thinking in terms of “the weight of a thought”, considering the inextricable relationship with the body. Regarding the notion of weighing, I am considering how something comes into presence in terms of acquiring a certain

weight. I explain how the idea of *haptic presence*, therefore, can be understood as a haptic weighing. A third fundamental idea corresponds to the notion of “local instance of touch”. I draw on Nancy’s (1996) notion of “separation and “local”, in which different heterogeneous local values are combined (for instance, touch and sound), generating a particular sensitive regime. I identify, therefore, the *haptic presence* as a “local instance of touch” which generates a regime or register of the haptic. I specify how contemporary dance creates “local instances of touch” considering different performances, practices, and techniques. Touch, thus, acquires a certain weight as a local instance.

Considering these different links to the notion of presence, I suggest presence as a fruitful notion to examine touch in contemporary dance, despite the criticism that the notion of presence has received both in philosophy and in theatre and dance studies.

Touch has always played a fundamental role in dance throughout its history. Nevertheless, in the context of contemporary dance, touch came into focus and began to be approached reflexively as a theme in itself in the artistic praxis. This renewed interest in touch is also to be found in the context of humanities, social and art sciences, including dance studies and contemporary philosophy. I consider, therefore, their contributions to approach the relationship between touch and contemporary dance to further develop the idea of haptic presence and explore different dimensions of touch.

Based on my experience as a spectator, I am considering the works of choreographers such as Francisca Morand, Stéphane Gladyzewski, Lia Rodrigues, Ceren Oran, and Jasmine Ellis, among others, to identify a wide range of dimensions and relationships regarding the issue of touch that can be identified as being part of different artistic explorations.

Considering this, I draw on the following questions throughout the research: How does touch come into presence in contemporary dance? In which forms? Which dimensions are being opened? How does this become a significant aspect of contemporary dance?

From these questions, I propose as a hypothesis the idea that through a *haptic presence* in contemporary dance, different dimensions of touching emerge, configuring how touch comes into presence. These dimensions are diverse and consist of multiple relationships or interweaving between touching and other heterogeneous values in a given context. In this sense, the idea of *haptic presence* comes here to expand the notion of touch, giving rise to a haptic regime or aesthetics in contemporary dance.

To approach these questions and this hypothesis, this thesis has been configured following two main paths. One of them corresponds to the definition the *haptic presence*. The other one refers to the identification of the different dimensions of touch. Regarding the first path, I identify the *haptic presence* throughout this writing as “haptic coming into presence”, as “haptic weighing”, and as “local instance of touch”, as I mentioned at the beginning. Each of these notions is explained in a chapter of its own, in the First, Third, and Fifth Chapter, respectively. The chapters in between (Second, Fourth, and Sixth) are dedicated to the identification of different haptic dimensions that these categories open: sound dimension, thermal dimension, and hyperbolic dimension. I divided, therefore, this writing into six main chapters. A Seventh Chapter is included as the conclusions of this research.

## Chapters.

In the First Chapter – “Presence, touch, and haptic”, I introduce a first definition of haptic presence as a “haptic coming into presence”. I start by drawing on the notion of “coming into presence”, developed by Jean-Luc Nancy in several of his works. Following Martin Heidegger (1968), Nancy attempts to redefine presence out of the scope of the metaphysical tradition, understanding it as a passage, as the movement of coming and withdrawing. I explore how these ideas about presence are connected to perspectives from theatre and dance studies, especially considering the idea of evanescence and ephemerality. Afterwards, I refer to Nancy’s (2008a, 2008c) comprehension of the notion of touch, which has opened new perspectives regarding touch linked to the notions of interruption and distance. In this sense, I discuss the reception of these ideas in Dance Studies, considering especially Gerko Egert’s contributions (2020). With regard to these interconnections, I approach, thereafter, the notion of haptic following the thoughts of different authors, like Paul Rodaway (2002) and Mark Paterson (2007), to refer to an expanded definition of the notion. Throughout the chapter, I analyze specific moments of the performances *For the Sky not to fall* by Lia Rodrigues and *I need a man to perform this duet* by Ceren Oran, to explain how touch comes into presence and how a haptic constellation can be generated.

The Second Chapter – “Dancing the haptic I: sound dimension”– focuses especially on the dance performance *Invisible, danza que explota los sentidos* by the Chilean choreographers and dancers Francisca Morand and Eduardo Osorio. I approach how the performance, using technological devices, opens a complex sound dimension of touch where touch comes to presence throughout different sound combinations connected to the movements of the dancers. I consider some

philosophical perspectives on sensation and resonance, like that of Giles Deleuze (2003), in combination with some observations about the relationship between arts and technology, as well as those developed by Anne Cauquelin (2006) and Kerstin Evert (2002). Likewise, I also approach further in this chapter the notions of presence and touch considering especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of "invisible" (1968), which also gave the name to the dance performance.

In the Third Chapter –“Weighings”– the focus lies on the notion of weight as a fundamental point of contact between the notions of presence and touch regarding the dancing body. As a starting point I take the etymological relationship of the French words “*peser*” (weighing) and “*penser*” (thinking) highlighted by Jean-Luc Nancy in *The weight of a thought* (2008b), and the contributions of philosophers like Marie Bardet (2012) and Miriam Fischer-Geboers (2010) about this matter regarding dance. From there, I follow especially the dance scholar Laurence Loupe, who identifies a “poetic of weight” in contemporary dance (2010) to discuss how various reflexive dance practices, such as contact improvisation, explore, interrogate, and re-articulate ideas about touch and the weight of the body. The idea of *haptic presence* is further developed in this chapter as *haptic weighing* as constitutive for the emergence of a dimension of touch in contemporary dance.

The Fourth Chapter –“Dancing the haptic II: thermal dimension”– focuses especially on the dance performance *Chaleur Humaine* by the Canadian choreographer Stephan Gladyzewski. Using a "thermal-video" projection system, the performance creates a thermal dimension of touch, where the invisible traces of temperature that are involved in the tactile experience of the dancers acquire a certain weight through the movements and vibrations of the colourful waves that are projected on the bodies. Here, the notion of "vibration" is especially approached following Jane Bennett (2010) and Giles Deleuze (2003) in combination with perspectives related to the history of dance –particularly related to Loïe Fuller's work with light and colour– that connect the notions of vibration and colour. To deepen this relationship, I also consider Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1971) idea of "emerging from colour" and Emanuel Levinas's (1979) reflections on the caress to

analyse the performance *Chaleur Humaine* and to further develop the relationship between presence and touch displayed in a thermal dimension of touch in contemporary dance.

In the Fifth Chapter – “Haptics”–, on the one hand, I follow the idea of “separation” and “local” by Jean-Luc Nancy (1996) to identify a “separation of touch” in contemporary dance. From these notions, I identify a “local instance of touch” as a useful notion to approach the relationship between dance and touch in terms of the multiple and singular configurations, reconfigurations, or creation of a sensitive regime, in which different elements are intertwined (for instance, the relationship between touch and sound, temperature, a colour, a smell, etc.). On the other hand, I follow the ideas of the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) to identify an aesthetic function of the haptic, and the expansion of the notion proposed by authors like Mark Paterson (2007) and dance scholars like Gabrielle Brandstetter (2013). The latest, for instance, adds a somatic dimension to the notion, which allows us to identify a singular aesthetics of the haptic in contemporary dance. I describe this haptic coming into presence in connection with a haptic aesthetics as a “local instance of touch”. In this context, I analyse particular moments of the performance *Low Pieces* by Xavier Le Roy, to approach the scope of localities of touch that produce the emergence of a “*haptic-animal-dimension*”.

The Sixth Chapter –“Dancing the haptic III: hyperbolic dimension”– focuses particularly on the dance performance *Skin Hunger* by the choreographer Jasmine Ellis and the artist Johnny Spencer. The performance addresses the issue of the deprivation of touch in the context of the pandemic. Although the performers do not touch each other until towards the end of the performance, touch is all over the place, opening up a hyperbolic dimension. In this sense, this chapter aims to approach a new condition of touch during the pandemic, based on the fact that touch had come to be considered and experienced as an issue of risk in an expansive way. In combination with recent perspectives on the matter, I draw on Jacques Derrida’s (2005) thoughts about that element of risk at the heart of the issue of touch itself. The author refers to an “excessive intensity of touch”

described as a “hyperbole of the tangible” (*L’hyperbole du tangible*) capable of destroying, as it occurs in some threatening contacts. I relate those ideas to the issue of touch in the context of the pandemic to propose a hyperbolic dimension of touch that arises in the performance *Skin Hunger*.

The Seventh Chapter –Haptic Presence– corresponds to the conclusion of this thesis. I examine here the notion of *haptic presence* in light of what has been approached and discussed in the previous chapters. In this direction, I provide a definition of the notion in terms of “haptic coming into presence”, “haptic weighing”, and “local instance of touch” to show how different dimensions of touch emerge in contemporary dance. I also examine here the dimensions of touch that have been mentioned throughout this writing to explain how touch comes to presence and acquires a certain weight as a local instance connected to different elements such as sound, colour, light, darkness, gravity, temperature, etcetera. I also take into account the relationships of closeness and distance of the bodies, their proximities, and interruptions, or the interconnections between the touchable and untouchable, where multiple figures or disfigurations of touch appear, as those related to the caress, the hit, the eroticism, and the emotions. Finally, considering the findings of this research, I underline the importance of the notion of *haptic presence* as a fruitful notion for analysing touch and the haptic in contemporary dance.

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Source: <https://mitsp.org/2017/para-que-o-ceu-nao-caia/> (7/12/2020).

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Photography: Sammi Landweer, 2017

Source: <https://mitsp.org/2017/para-que-o-ceu-nao-caia/> (7/12/2020).

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## Short biography

Sofia Muñoz Carneiro is an anthropologist and dance scholar. She has worked on different research projects and as an assistant professor in Chile and Germany, in the fields of anthropology, philosophy, and history of performing arts. She has published several articles about contemporary dance both in Chile and in Germany. Currently, she is working as a documentarian/archivist at Tanztendenz München in Germany and is also a co-researcher of the research project “Desenfoque” about Dance and Photography at the beginning of the twentieth century, focused on the exchanges between Chile and Germany. Her doctoral research, *The Haptic Presence. Dimensions of touch in contemporary dance* (Universidad de Chile/Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München) approaches the relationship between the notions of touch and presence in contemporary dance.

## Breve Reseña Curricular

Sofía Muñoz Carneiro es antropóloga e investigadora de la danza. Ha trabajado en diferentes proyectos de investigación y como profesora asistente en Chile y Alemania, en los campos de la antropología, la filosofía y la historia de las artes escénicas. Ha publicado varios artículos sobre danza contemporánea tanto en Chile como en Alemania. Actualmente trabaja como documentalista/archivista en Tanztendenz München en Alemania y es co-investigadora del proyecto de investigación "Desenfoque" sobre Danza y Fotografía a principios del siglo XX, centrado en los intercambios entre Chile y Alemania. Su investigación doctoral *La presencia háptica. Dimensiones del tocar en la danza contemporánea* (Universidad de Chile/Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München) aborda la relación entre las nociones de presencia y tocar en la danza contemporánea.