

Dancing Fingers: Moving Mimicry and Abstract Tactility

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Abstract

In the episode ‘Love Among the Ruins’ of Matthew Weiner’s *Mad Men* (AMC, S03xE02, 2009), Don Draper (John Hamm) is fascinated by Suzanne Farrell (Abigail Spencer): his fingers represent and caress the barefoot dance steps of this Flora of the sixties. I study this vicarious performance in light of the theories of empathy (Vischer, 1873) and ‘embodied simulation’ (Gallese, Freedberg, 2007). This haptic displacement of the male gaze is an erotic interplay between projection and incorporation, predatory aspirations and un-reflected imitation, the masculine and the feminine, leading to a hysterical embodiment akin to Aristotle’s tactile illusion and the reprise of scientific iconography by Max Ernst in *Au Premier Mot Limpide* (1923). Driven by the movement of the camera, our gaze leaves the dance and ends in foliage stirred by the wind. Watching this non-intentional ‘touch in nature’ (Ebisch, Perrucci, Ferretti, Del Gratta, Romani, Gallese, 2009), we are moved as if we mirrored a real moment of contact, both material and animistic. In discussing *A Day in the Country* (*Une Partie de Campagne*, Jean Renoir, 1936) and Jeff Wall’s *A Sudden Gust of Wind* (after *Hokusai*) (1993), I show how this visual phenomenon — an obsession of cinema — triggers an abstract and tactile empathy within us (Gallese, 2009).

TV Fiction with an Ancient Touch

I wish to discuss ‘Love Among the Ruins’, an episode of *Mad Men* (AMC, S03xE02, 2009) dramatized by Matthew Weiner and Cathryn Humphries and directed by Lesli Linka Glatter. The title itself suggests a kind of survival. Borrowed from Robert Browning’s ‘Sicilian’ pastoral poem (1855) and George Kukor’s television adaptation (ABC, 1975), it points to the ongoing relevance of the clash between male and female in the early 1960s, between ‘Earth’s returns’, i.e. the cyclical phases of nature, and the ruins of the City, i.e. the vanity of human society and culture.

I consider the brief dance *all’antica* of ‘Love Among the Ruins’ as a testing ground for the theory of ‘embodied simulation’ and tactile empathy, as applied to audiovisual images in movement. Whether seen live or in representation

— and whatever the medium: painting or sketches, sculpture, plays, films or photographs — the movement of a dancing body is the most powerful visual appeal to our attention and potentially to our kinetic mimicry.¹

I shall develop my hypothesis in two stages: first, through some visual examples (not by seeking out iconographic sources, but rather by suggesting comparative illustrations); I shall stress the polarity, already well defined under Robert Vischer's theory of *Einfühlung*, of the empathy of motion, as displaced in the male spectator's hand movements, both absorbed and proactive; I shall attempt to unveil, in the mimetic assimilation, a latent sexual identification and ambiguity. Then, while following the movement of the camera, but no longer taking into account the kinesthetic feedback between living beings, or between human bodies and similar moving objects, I shall propose a mimetic tactility that is more abstract and responsive to a contingent, non-intentional touch in nature. This haptic attraction for a self-replicating movement without a visible cause, and for a metonymic animation through contact between undifferentiated elements, haunts the spectator and the cinema itself.

Apparitions and Renewals

In the scene of the maypole school dance, a captivating, over-the-shoulder shot create the impression that we ourselves are mirroring bodies,² behaving *as if* we were actually there, perceiving and suffering everything, in the same way as the fictional character's body. In the case of Don Draper (John Hamm), we are not only consciously suspending our disbelief, but, to borrow the term used by nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars of *Einfühlung*,³ we are also experiencing an involuntary 'empathy of activities' [*Tätigkeitseinfühlung*], along with an 'inner mimicry' [*innere Nachahmung*], of the same dancing body that he observes and desires from afar.

Thanks to an alternating series of reverse camera angles, our point of view coincides with the on-screen focus of our delegated male viewer, who sits on a folding chair, lounging and still, as if it were a seat in a movie theatre, or in a laboratory of experimental psychology. A young dancing woman exercises a powerful attraction on his erotic attention, gripping our hermeneutic

¹ See Dee Reynolds, 'Kinesthetic Empathy and the Dance's Body: From Emotion to Affect', in *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds, Matthew Reason (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012), pp. 121–38, and Corinne Jola, 'Choreographed Science: Merging Dance and Cognitive Neuroscience', in *The Neurocognition of Dance: Mind, Movement and Motor Skills*, ed. by Bettina Bläsing, Martin Puttke and Thomas Schack (Abingdon: Routledge, 2nd edn, 2019), pp. 258–88.

² Vittorio Gallese, Corrado Sinigaglia, 'The Bodily Self as Power for Action', *Neuropsychologia*, 48.3 (2010), p. 752.

³ See Andrea Pinotti, 'Empathy', in *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics*, ed. by Hans Reiner Sepp, Lester Embree (Dordrecht, New York: Springer, 2010), pp. 94–95.

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interest about the unreflective movements of his hand in response to the movements of the body observed from afar. The effectiveness of this amateur performance, however, is due neither to the abilities of the dancer, nor to the cultural preparation of the spectator. No one in this small, fictional New York suburban neighbourhood knows or remembers the erudite meaning of the maypole school dance, or of 'Earth's returns' from the Browning poem, nor do they realise that the name of this young Flora reborn, Suzanne Farrell (played by Abigail Spencer), is that of the celebrated muse of Balanchine's New York City Ballet. It is worth mentioning that, when considering the Nymph⁴ in Renaissance dances and popular festivals, Warburg stressed that the female body is the 'living figure' that manages to merge everyday life, art and archaeology. The *Ninfa rediviva* of 'Love Among the Ruins', with her bare feet, flowing hair and head crowned with a wreath of wild flowers is also a manifestation in movement of the ancient rites, reprised and imitated in the daily choreographies of fashion and school recitals before being interpreted as an erudite iconographic motif.

The natural gaze of the male spectator of the maypole school dance responds to this amateur, popular choreography, extending beyond the sensorimotor economy of mere vision. As Robert Vischer⁵ once said, his vision becomes 'attentive sensation' and 'attentive feeling' [*Anempfindung, Anfühlung*], like that of a hunter stalking the prey. Hidden behind the dark lenses of his trendy aviator glasses — comparable to the *Kulturbrille*, or 'cultural lenses', criticised by Aby Warburg and Franz Boas because they blind us to the living force of ancient, or archaic and ritual, images — Don Draper's ignorant, avid gaze expresses itself in virtual actions performed in an intensified, indirect, condensed fashion: his hold on his drink loosens, freeing his fingers from their limited scope of action and the pragmatic completion of perception, at which point they stroke the grass below, mimicking the dance steps. In a rapid succession of reverse-angle shots, close-ups and details, heightened by a slow-motion effect, we see — and feel — *as if* they were ours: not the static body or the hidden gaze, but only the lazy, empty fingers of the spectator's hand, attentively and erotically entranced as they perform an immediate, unintentional corporeal imitation of the dance steps. The movements of these dancing fingers are a narrative focal point and an expressive hotbed, they are ultimately a vicarious, tactile, peripheral and symptomatic sensory adventure as well as an almost imperceptible endokinetic autoaffection.

⁴ Aby Warburg, 'The Theatrical Costumes for the Intermedi of 1589' (1895), in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, intr. by Kurt W. Forster and trans. by David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the Research of Arts and Humanities, 1999), p. 381.

⁵ Robert Vischer, 'On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics' (1873), in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893*, ed. and transl. by Harry Francis Mallgrave, Eleftherios Ikononou (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), p. 105, p. 107 and p. 109.

Loving Hands

The pirouettes *sur place* performed by the fingers of the on-screen spectator, and potentially by our own fingers, embody what Robert Vischer termed ‘kinaesthetic responsive feeling’ [*motorische Nachfühlung*] triggered by a visual and ‘sensory immediate feeling’ [*sensitive Zufühlung*].⁶ Such peripheral and aimless movements personify the ‘mimicking, acting or affective empathy of a truly or apparently moved object’.⁷

What are Don Draper’s fingers doing? Such organic miniaturisations and synecdoches of the desire of the hidden gaze and the inactive body of the spectator generate a two-fold embodiment, at one and the same time an ‘incorporation’ and a ‘projection’. The lightly implied movements of our spectator’s wandering, almost autonomous fingers are both concrete and abstract gestures, both iconic and metaphorical, pantomimic and expressive, rhythmic and non-representational.⁸ They are not only a schematic imitation of the movements of the female body viewed from afar, but also a performative manifestation of the autoaffection of the spectatorial body. They are both *mimémata* and *pathémata* in action, an endokinetic resonance of the body of the Other and a crypto-prensive pulsation that wishes to touch it. They are both echo and caress.⁹

The spectator’s fingers, while doing their cross-step, embody an *undecidability* between imitation and sensory appropriation, emulation and tactile usurpation. The molecular movements of the male spectator’s fingers hold the two opposites together: a passive, centripetal incorporation of the expressive qualities of the object in movement and an active, centrifugal projection of actions, or the equivalent of actions. Both poles are iconic, i.e. mimetic, and loving, i.e. acting: as they move ‘in and with the forms’,¹⁰ they repeat the sinuous movements of the woman’s legs and feet, while figuratively stroking her moving contours and fleshy substance. This is a true haptic reversibility: the hand of our spectator gauges the body in movement and adapts to what is seen from afar, ultimately becoming one with it. The male spectator’s hand touches and is touched, it is transferred and transformed by the Other: the dancing female legs.

In order to arrive at an initial assessment of this reversibility and potential sexual inversion in kinetic and tactile empathy, before relating it first to an

⁶ Ivi, p. 92.

⁷ Ivi, p. 105; see Vittorio Gallese, ‘Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience’, *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 4.4 (2005), 34–36.

⁸ According to David McNeill, *Hand and Mind: What Gestures Reveal about Thought* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), pp. 104–34 and pp. 145–81.

⁹ As regards ‘responsive sensation’ as ‘a successive enveloping, embracing, and caressing of the object’, see Vischer, ‘On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics’, p. 106.

¹⁰ Ivi, p. 101. The original text states: ‘Wir bewegen uns in und an den Formen. Allen Raumveränderungen tasten wir mit liebenden Händen nach.’ I quote Robert Vischer, *Über das optische Formgefühl: Ein Beitrag zur Ästhetik* (Leipzig: Hermann Credner, 1873), p. 15.

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unambiguous male desire, and subsequently to a pantheistic empathy with nature and movements per se, I feel that a brief reference is in order to two visual examples.

First, I wish to discuss Max Ernst's *Au Premier Mot Limpide*.¹¹ The source of this painting, executed with the techniques of Pompeian frescoes, was an illustration found in an anonymous scientific article on the Aristotelian 'illusion du tact'.¹² Ernst places the two elements described by Aristotle side by side:¹³ an insect, perhaps a mantis, sits next to a window, while a right hand with its index and middle fingers crossed, holding a bead between them, extends out from a second, larger window. There is no indication of the gender of the hand, isolated as it is from the rest of the body, so that the overall vision, which normally dissolves the tactile illusion, is of no help. The surrealist painter, hearkening back to stereoscopic and cinematic pornographic images, uses repetition to amplify the haptic inversion.¹⁴ The isolated hand is detached from a hysterical body, while the vertical, tapering shapes of the fingers are like those of a woman's crossed legs, forming an X, the symbol of the mystery of Eros and the intertwining of sexual genders;¹⁵ just like the fingers, both mimicking and loving, of the man who observes and repeats the agile choreography of a re-enacted Flora in an American Yankee park.

In contrast, as an example of the unambiguous tactile intensification of the sexual desire of the male gaze, I wish to cite *A Day in the Country* (*Une Partie de Campagne*, Jean Renoir, 1936).¹⁶ Rodolphe (Jacques Borel, a.k.a. Jacques Brunius) looks out a window and strokes his moustache, twisting its tips between the thumb and index finger of his right hand. During this autoerotic game, he stares at Henriette Dufour (Sylvia Bataille), ecstatically absorbed by the movements of a swing that pushes her figure upwards, against the empty blue backdrop of the sky, and then, on the other side, against the dense foliage

¹¹ Max Ernst, *Au Premier Mot Limpide*, 1923, oil on plaster transferred to canvas, 232×167 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

¹² *La Nature: Revue des Sciences et de leurs Applications aux Arts et à l'Industrie*, n. 415, 14 May 1881, p. 384; the illustrator is Louis Poyet. See Charlotte Stokes's 'The Scientific Methods of Max Ernst: His Use of Scientific Subjects from *La Nature*', *The Art Bulletin*, 62.3 (1980), 453–65, and Volkmar Mühlreis, *Kunst im Sehverlust* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005), pp. 29–35.

¹³ *Met.* IV, 1011a, *Probl.* XXXI, 11, 958b ss.

¹⁴ See Trotter David, 'Stereoscopy: Modernism and the "Haptic"', *Critical Quarterly*, 46.4 (special issue *Low Modernism*, Winter 2004), 38–58, and Abigail Susik, 'The Man of These Infinite Possibilities': Max Ernst's Cinematic Collages', *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture*, 1 (2011), 86–87.

¹⁵ The scientific iconography of a bodiless hand is taken up in ... *Et la Troisième Fois Manquée*, the fourth plate of the 1929 narrative-collage *La Femme 100 Têtes* (Paris: Éditions du Carrefour, 1929). See Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA, London: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 76–80, and Emmanuelle André, *Le Choc du Sujet: De l'Hystérie au Cinéma (XIX–XXI siècle)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011), pp. 118–21.

¹⁶ The film is available on DVD with unpublished material and the documentary *Un Tournage à la Campagne* by Alain Fleischer (CNC Images de la Culture, 1994); see Dominique Chateau, 'Diégèse et Enonciation', *Communications*, 38 (1983), 143–45.

of trees stirred by the invisible motion of the breeze. In another scene, Henriette reveals a kind of tenderness for everything, for grass, water and trees, a sort of vague desire above and beyond the separation between subject and object, as if possessed by an impersonal empathy that touches and unites living beings and things, all moving phenomena. While she expresses this, something happens, in the form of a random, natural, moving entity that breaks into the scene and crosses the line between profilmic and filmic, between life and fiction: namely, a butterfly that comes and goes, returns, touches down, flies away and then comes back again. The spectator is moved less by Henriette's emotional realism than by this touch of reality in motion, by this incidental *punctum* and material point of contact with the film itself. The apparition is less pathetic than Dreyer's fly on Joan of Arc's sweating face, and less striking than the creeping black tarantula on James Bond's masculine chest in *Dr. No* (Terence Young, 1962), quoted as an opening example in an experimental study on 'touching sight'.¹⁷

The effect on the spectator of a similarly contingent, minimal and repetitive tactility could perhaps be measured empirically; in any case, my hypothesis considers an index of a more abstract, mimetic, motor empathy between living beings, things and movements.

An Abstract Tactility, an Obsession

After following the man's gaze in 'Love Among the Ruins', and the way in which he touches the dancing woman from afar, depicted in a fetishistic manner, with a focus on anatomical details and expressive accessories, the camera leaves the body the moment it stops moving. As soon as the centripetal, clockwise curve of the dance around the wooden maypole ends, our gaze — no longer entrusted to the over-the-shoulder shot, but, as several recent studies have shown,¹⁸ still driven by the impersonal movement of the camera — gently ends its centrifugal movement in the top-right portion of the frame, amidst the densely packed leaves stirred by the wind.

As we know from many experimental papers on embodied simulation, the responsiveness of the visuotactile mirroring mechanism also applies when we watch movements and contacts between living beings, whether animal or human, as well as between inanimate objects and phenomena. The space that surrounds us is full of entities which touch each other without any 'human [or] animate involvement', due to 'accidental-animate' or 'non-intentional contact'.¹⁹

¹⁷ Christian Keysers, Bruno Wicker, Valeria Gazzola and others, 'A Touching Sight: SII/PV Activation During the Observation and Experience of Touch', *Neuron*, 42.2 (2004), 335–46.

¹⁸ See Katrin Heimann, Sebo Uithol, Marta Calbi and others, 'Embodying the Camera: An EEG Study on the Effect of Camera Movements on Film Spectators' Sensorimotor Cortex Activation', *PLOS ONE*, 14.3 (2019), 1–18.

¹⁹ Sjoerg J.H. Ebisch, Mauro Gianni Perrucci, Antonio Ferretti and others, 'The Sense of Touch: Embodied Simulation in a Visuotactile Mirroring Mechanism for Observed Animate or Inanimate

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What we witness is ‘a touch in nature’, when we observe and are emotionally moved: i.e. when we move with, and are touched by, not merely the falling of a pine tree in a park — erect and individual like our bodies — but also by the rain piercing the quiet surface of a river or dripping from leaves, or by leaves moved by the wind — in short, by moving shapes that are barely discernible from one another, whose contact does not consist of a singular, precise physical touching.

In adopting the two principles of Fraser’s magical logic, I believe we are not just dealing, in this case, with analogy or corporeal similarity as the basis for metaphors, symbols and meanings, but also with metonymy, i.e. contact, contagion and confusion. On the other hand, Freedberg and Gallese, in addressing dynamic empathy in response to images, prefer the law of similarities. A discussion of this problematic point is well served by the following example, also meant to provide further support for my concluding hypothesis on the subject of abstract tactile empathy.

When considering Jeff Wall’s *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, a lightbox at the Tate Modern, Freedberg states that our bodies do not ‘twist and turn’ merely in response to those of others of our species, but also find themselves ‘almost in a complete physical *sintonia*’ with the trees, upright and bent over, as if they were ‘a twisted Romanesque column’.²⁰ Wall’s monumental work (250×397×34 cm), and Hokusai’s view of Mount Fuji (25.4×37.1 cm),²¹ also reveal something further. Together with the winter scene of two tall trees, overarching and bare, and the four men who are struggling against the invisible gusts of the wind, there are bits of paper that are scattered in the air and almost indistinguishable. Freedberg insists, on the one hand, that mimicry and motor empathy are not limited to human actions and gestures, but also encompass movements and contacts in nature without any visible causes, though he points only to plant forms, described as if they were inorganic and lifeless. The architectural analogy is an epistemological symptom of the desire to distance oneself from the abstract and animistic connotation of motor and tactile empathy, from its conversion into sympathy with all moving beings and elements in nature, with their touching and being touched. Moreover, the comparison to a Doric column, already made by Lipps and others, and later put forth in modernist dance theory,²² denotes a preference for the constructed and

Touch’, *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 20.9 (2008), 1621; see Vittorio Gallese, ‘Motor Abstraction: A Neuroscientific Account of How Action Goals and Intentions Are Mapped and Understood’, *Psychological Research*, 73.4 (2009), 486–98, and Matthew Ratcliffe, ‘Touch and the Sense of Reality’, in *The Hand, an Organ of the Mind: What the Manual Tells the Mental*, ed. by Zdravko Radman (Cambridge MA, London: MIT Press, 2013), pp. 144–45.

²⁰ David Freedberg, ‘Movement, Embodiment, Emotion’, in *Wie sich Gefühle Ausdruck verschaffen: Emotionen in Nabsicht*, ed. by Klaus Herding and Antje Krause-Wahl (Tausenstein: Driesen, 2007), p. 61, and David Freedberg, Vittorio Gallese, ‘Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Aesthetic Experience’, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11.5 (2007), p. 197.

²¹ Katsushika Hokusai, *Ejiri in Suruga Province (Sunshū Ejiri)*, 1830–1833, polychrome woodblock print, ink and colour on paper, 25.4×37.1 cm, MFA, Boston.

²² See Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (New York:

artistic rather than the natural and incidental, ultimately betraying a removal of pantheistic empathic feeling.

We are, therefore, more than just eyewitnesses: we are also tactile witnesses of the invisible but material force that touches and drives the myriad tiny objects in movement in Hokusai's print and in its subsequent variations. The countless pieces of paper flying in the air are both metaphors and metonymies of our individual bodies. When our visual attention is attracted by their upward movement away from us, i.e. by a motion without visible cause, produced and reproduced by a non-intentional and contingent contact, what happens to us? Paul Valéry perfectly described this amorphous and autogenerated movement as a generalized imitation without models, like an expanded kinetic and tactile analogy without terms of comparison, producing itself by contact and through differentiation and repetition: 'This tree, whose leaves are so agile, confounding my gaze, entangling, self-replicating, infinitely changing, defying my thought, visible and non-imaginable, this is not something of mine'.²³ Like Valéry, we too imitate the natural and material mimicry that is the movement of the leaves stroked by the wind or beaten by rain drops; we replicate and repeat it with our corporeal schemas and motor responsive feelings or actions, just as we do when we move our fingers to emulate the woman dancing in 'Love Among the Ruins', virtually twisting and turning our bodies, like the bending trees of Hokusai and Wall. But looking at the leaves touched by the rain or moved by the wind, or at the material whirlwind of countless sheets of paper — or of plastic envelopes²⁴ — scattered in the air, we respond with a mimetic, empathic and kinaesthetic sense of touch that is no longer limited to our hands, but more abstract: an 'abstract' that, once again, should not be considered conceptual or general, but rather embodied and pre-linguistic, sensitive and pre-categorical.

Such challenging movements, with no apparent cause or direction, constitute a haunting topic for filmmakers, cinephiles and scholars.²⁵ In the short sequence

Routledge, 2010), pp. 252–53, and Robin Curtis, 'Is the Movement of the Filmic Image a Sign of Vitality?', in *Touching and Being Touched: Kinesthesia and Empathy in Dance and Movement*, ed. by Gabriele Brandstetter, Gerko Egert and Sabine Zubarik (Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), pp. 257–58.

²³ Paul Valéry, *Cabiers/Notebooks 5*, trans. and ed. by Brian Stimpson, Paul Gifford, Robert Pickering and others (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Brussels, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 193.

²⁴ I am thinking, in particular, of *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999), as well as of Igor and Svetlana Kopystiansky Igor and Svetlana Kopystiansky in *Incidents* (14' and 49", 2007, Tate Modern, London), an extraordinary video that covers one year, from 1996 to 1997, and shows the dance of myriad discarded objects and waste blown by the wind in the outer boroughs of Manhattan.

²⁵ See Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 29–53; Nico Baumbach, 'Nature Caught in the Act: On the Transformation of an Idea of Art in Early Cinema', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 6.3 (2009), 373–83, and Jordan Schonig, 'Contingent Motion: Rethinking the "Wind in the Trees" in Early Cinema and CGI', *Discourse*, 40.1 (2018), 30–61.

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of 'Love Among the Ruins' that I have set out to analyse, I have pointed to three aspects of this haptic obsession.

At first, I showed how our gaze does not cast itself off from indirect motor affection, but is triggered by our embodied belief in the point of view of the on-screen spectator, i.e. by Don Draper's erotic perspective. Our sense of tactile sight shifts between the aimless actions of the beauty in motion of the female dancer and the visual-motor imitation of the spectator's fingers, at one and the same time displaced, projective and incorporating, but ultimately embodying an ambivalent tactile and erotic self-affection, as exemplified by Max Ernst's painting and the scene from Renoir's movie. I then assessed the camera movements and their effects on our tactile eye as spectators. After leaving the dancing body, or some other inanimate object that is similar to our own body and is moved by an external cause, our gaze is drawn to the most unstable and ephemeral aspects of the visual — like the butterfly of *A Day in the Country*, or the sheets of paper shifting in the wind in Jeff Wall's *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)* — at which point it is touched by that which, in an absolutely contingent, material manner, also touches the very body of the film. Finally, I have attempted to show how our vision dissolves itself in an impersonal, unintentional visual field, like the foliage blown by the wind evoked by Valéry, and how the empathic feeling-in and feeling-with this raw and material movement transports us ecstatically out of ourselves, into the very texture of the film.

At the end of this lengthy empty-handed visual journey, when our eyes and hands, as both spectators and readers, once again have to deal with everyday life, we may murmur to ourselves something to the effect of: 'I was in thee, O movement — outside all things [...]'.²⁶

²⁶ Paul Valéry, 'The Soul and Dance' (1924), in *An Anthology*, ed. by Jackson Matthews (London, Henley: Routledge-Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 326.