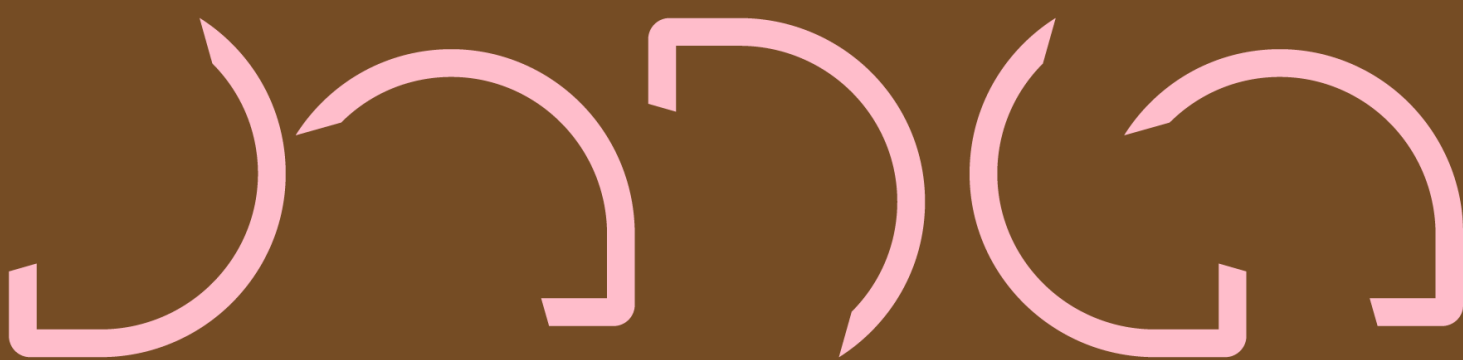


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A conceptual journey from skin to hapticality

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ABSTRACT

This article presents part of a master's research, which proposes a theoretical journey from the concepts of skin and touch to the concept of hapticity. In the work of authors Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, hapticity appears as a kind of “common feeling”, the ability to feel the other, to feel the other feeling. For this interdisciplinary research journey, the cartographic method was adopted and studies, practices and theoretical interlocutions were proposed in order to bring us closer to the concept of hapticity. Eutony, a somatic pedagogy that proposes studies of the skin and touch as a basis for caring for oneself and others, served as the fundamental ground for the journey. Especially in the pandemic context, in which social isolation was adopted as a measure to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus, the analysis of the experience aims to generate reflections on the relationship between touch, saúde and politics.

KEYWORDS Touch; Skin; Hapticity; Eutony; Art; Health.

A conceptual journey from skin to hapticality

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Introduction

This article is an excerpt from a master's research carried out between 2021 and 2023, which proposes a theoretical crossing of the concepts of skin and touch to the concept of hapticality. Through the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Health Sciences³, the research was carried out in a practical-theoretical way, developing as a cartography of attention on the subjective experiences lived in the physical, material, emotional, intellectual, sensory body, not only individual - in the body of the researcher - but *in relation*, since the research was permeated the COVID-19 virus pandemic, faced throughout the planet in the same period. In addition, analysis of results did not follow a standard procedure, but took place through the implication of those who research and the problem itself, which underwent transformations during the crossing.

The cartographic methodology invites the exercise of attention, which here gained the outline of the somatic approach of Eutony (1983). Eutony is the ground for this writing to happen, through the process of creation itself (of oneself), as it involves new discoveries at every moment, in addition to being a posture / intention before life: to be prepared for change, for a possibility of living the present with more awareness.

The importance of the perception of oneself and the world around was Gerda Alexander's main concern when creating Eutony, a method resulting from her work as an educator of the movement related to music, dance, and theater⁴. The driving idea of Eutony is

³ Located at the Health and Society Institute, in the Baixada Santista campus of Unifesp, the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Health Sciences (PPGICS) cultivates the interdisciplinary vision as a way of expanding the concept of health for an inventive performance within the academic areas. Linked to the Body and Art Laboratory, it proposes a shared, sensitive, and creative body education based on studies of presence, body arts and movement, among other practices with an educational and artistic basis as they involve the creation and production of personal experiences and collective exchanges through the artistic-body experience. The presence in Health is discussed and experienced in an embodied way, with skin, touch, dance, and movement.

⁴ Such activities were early stimulated by the family environment. And it was thanks to her deep bodily study, supported by curiosity and observation, but also on account of a rheumatic fever followed by endocarditis, which struck her at the age of 16 preventing her from dancing, that Alexander developed ways of moving using minimal effort, which was later called Eutony.

finding a tonic flexibility that allows us to move, stop, change position, walk, and that increases in the face of a dangerous situation, or decreases when there is need for rest (Gainza, 1997, p. 14).

In addition to an understanding of art as an interdisciplinary field, this ground proposed here also understands dance as a production of political knowledge. The body that dances, that moves, is not only an “eutonic,” healthy body, but a political, relational body. Eutony calls us to the best possible place one can be, to pay attention to something, which is in one’s own skin. In addition to being a means that makes it possible to embody the cartographic experience itself – through the exercise of attention; Eutony helps to develop tools to access the knowledge that is proper to the body, integrated with the mind, subjective experiences, and always in relation to reality.

In this sense, “crossing” is another word to describe the cartographic experience. Writing from personal experience as a dance artist and eutonist, the researcher places herself at the service of bringing this body, which writes and reads, in communion with other bodies, in contact through reading groups, workshops, collective studies, and inter-locutions to the concept of hapticality.

Originating in haptic perception, which, in turn, is highlighted in different areas of science, the concept of hapticality has been discussed in the field of cultural studies. In the works of authors Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, hapticality appears as a kind of “common feeling,” as the impossibility of separating practice from theory, skin from thought, but also as a feeling that cannot be felt individually; the ability to feel the other, to feel the other feeling (Harney; Moten, 2013). In this sharing exercise, addressing the concept of hapticality and the importance of touch for human existence⁵ takes place in itself as displacement—to be conceptually visible—and for which we call “crossing”: from the concept of “skin”

⁵ We emphasize here the importance of thinking about the “human” always in relation, not in isolation. When we talk about human health, we cannot fragment it, nor separate it from other beings: “It is from nature that we allow ourselves to be human, not separated from it, but crossed by all the physical force that crosses and transforms it” (Guzzo, 2020, p. 328).

to the experience of the skin; from a “haptic” body to a body that experiences hapticality.

This crossing, or learning, takes place through the cartographic method, or in a “cartographic attentional micro-politics,” as Virginia Kastrup suggests, referring to Depraz, Varela and Vermersch: “Attention is like a muscle that exercises itself. It configures, embodies and acquires tone with regular practice” (KASTRUP, 2019, p. 102). Through this methodology, theoretical studies as well as collective reading practices; reading and translation practices, and conversations with eutonists produced the body of research: theoretical-practical and interdisciplinary.

“Relearn” to feel, perceive vital impulses, and communicate, is not only a founding part of this research, but also it is much due to the choice of the cartographic method, because without it, it would not have been possible. At first, based on Kastrup’s model of cartographic attention, a base-tripod of the problematic-learning of the research was designed: 1) To pose the problem: what is hapticality?; 2) Sustain the problem (swim in the question, drink the question, dance the question); and 3) Redraw the problem field (ask again, check for new questions). An appropriation of the “attentional gestures” or “varieties of attention” proposed by Kastrup (2019) was also made: 1) “Field scanning gesture,” or opening by knowledge of the object through attention in suspension and clues, by empirical and/or theoretical experience; 2) “Touch,” or attention to the encounter; 3) “Landing,” or perceiving intensities, ruptures, deviations in the process; 4) “Attentive recognition,” or state of suspension, relationships and connection lines, recognizing data that are already there.

The tripod base helped to go through the actions initially proposed in the research, namely: bibliographic review, theoretical review of concepts (skin, touch, care and hapticality); thematic review; draft design; collective reading practices; reading and translation practices; tracking of interlocutors; conversations with eutonists about touch at a distance during the pandemic; translate the experiences into text format. Thus, at each action, the problem was re-positioned, sustained, the necessary times were reviewed, and the care regime was adopted at each moment. “Attentional

gestures,” in turn, were present in all research moments, integrating research stages, not as independent proposals or that occurred in different stages.

Finally, the research result is a cartography of experiences from an “eutonic” and attentive body, open and available for this crossing that starts from the skin and touch, from the studies of Eutony as a basis for the formulation of proposals that generate collective fields of forces, towards an approximation with the concept of hapticality.

Just as producing a sensitive and attentive body is the main intention of the cartographic methodology, we can say that the creator of Eutony, Gerda Alexander, teaches us in a similar way when she talks about the *flexibility of tone*. For her, it is important that we go through all the qualities of feelings and can return to the usual tone: “People in whom the tone remains fixed at an average level, without the capacity for emotional or artistic oscillations, are sick” (Alexander, 1983, p. 13).

For Alexander, learning to be in one’s own skin is in itself a method, the only possibility of relating to “the other.” And the other, here, is not the foreigner, the intruder, nor the one I should fear, as the colonial process taught us by a violent and exclusionary methodology. The other is everything that is external to the skin, but also the possibility of meeting the unknown on the inside of the skin. And, because it is permeable, the skin is constantly absorbing and expelling, relating to the external. The skin rebuilds itself at all times, just as it perceives the inside and the outside at the same time. In Eutony, becoming aware of one’s own contour - the skin - is the first step towards a path of tonal balance: “A field that is created “between” bodies, which makes us feel specific, singular sensations” (Luciana Gandolfo, excerpt from “Letter” carried out as part of the research).

We can also observe that the representation model that assumes two poles, two distinct and preconceived realities as subject and object, also does not talk to this attention methodology, in which, according to Kastrup, “we are never alone when we mobilize our attention or when we pay attention to something” (Kastrup, 2019, p. 102).

On the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

One cannot measure how much the pandemic directly and indirectly impacted the course of this research, as well as how much the pandemic affected and continues to affect, in general terms, any and all human subjectivity.⁶

In the case of the Brazilian territory, where the management of the health crisis was insufficient to prevent the country from reaching the position of second country with more deaths from COVID-19 in mid-2021, some authors even named the political conjuncture as a “necroliberalism,” uniting the dangerous concepts of neoliberalism, authoritarianism, protofascism, necropolitics and structural racism, all in the same government (Melo; Rodrigues, 2020).

The pandemic deepened the hole of inequality and aggravated the economic and social fragility of a large portion of the black and poor population. In contexts of greater vulnerability, the pandemic has become an even more accurate killing machine than that engendered by the armed wing of the State. Research shows that the coronavirus is more lethal among the black population due to several factors such as lack of access to health and low expectations of life. Recent data from IPEA - Institute of Applied Economic Research (2021) - show how inequalities related to gender, race/color were affected by the 2020 pandemic crisis (SILVA, 2021, p. 32).

Also within the most vulnerable populations, it was possible, once again, to observe organized movements of popular struggle, in direct actions and usually led by black women, moving solidarity networks in support of victims, through food donations, making and distribution of masks, among other actions and crucial and transformative collective care practices (Silva; Saunderd; Ohmer, 2021).

In the pandemic context, social isolation, as an essential protocol to prevent the spread of the virus, proved to be one of the factors that cause great concern and indication for the emergence

⁶ The research project that initiated this academic master's degree was sent for approval in March 2021, the month in which Brazil surpassed 2,000 daily deaths from COVID-19. On March 10, 2,349 deaths were recorded, according to data from the Butantan Institute (2023).

of mental health care. It is important to note that since 2020, Brazil was already one of the countries with the highest global rates of anxiety disorder, according to the WHO (2020). Such disorders were further aggravated by the pandemic (Pereira *et al.*, 2021).

Interpersonal relationships were deeply transformed by the need for social isolation, as well as the stress load generated in this period, due to the effect of confinement and various fears, especially in the Brazilian context in which the value of life was already being brutally neglected through harmful and austere policies (Almeida, 2019).

The exchange and coexistence with the other through screens and the brutal reduction of contact through touch fatally aggravate the condition of what is considered health and require new tools to deal with it (Katz, 2020).

On the other hand, the Nobel Prize in Medicine (2021) was awarded to a discovery related to temperature and touch receptors. Thanks to this discovery, science today can better understand how sensations of heat and cold, as well as mechanical force and its functioning in the brain, are related to how we adapt to and perceive the environment.

Even in the midst of the health crisis, which changed the agenda of global science and medicine, and whose context also accelerated the discovery of new vaccines and mobilized thousands of studies on a new virus, which directly and indirectly affected everything and everyone, still, the main research award was directed to this phenomenon, drawing attention to the importance of touch in our lives, describing a new problem within the controversial idea of “health.”

Art and Health (situating the research)

The choice of the environment to compose this study goes together with the search to break with a disciplined, compartmentalized, fragmented, and hegemonic view of the body

and health. Problematizing these axes to create active ways of building an understanding of what is alive, and how to restore life in its maximum diversity and power, is the foundation of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Health Sciences, which deals with several fields between the areas of Health, Education and Art, prevailing, in addition to one or the other, the different interfaces between the areas, as well as different ways of acting and living.

This study intends to strengthen a broader idea of health, which also means to perceive the need to decolonize the understanding of health, guided and organized by colonial domination, which suppressed, excluded, plundered, based on racism and genocide, knowledge from local, originating cultures. As stated, in an approach to “Good Living – despite presenting a Utopian philosophical viewpoint more than a proposal for concrete changes; more inspiration than a revolution in the way of thinking; more dream than reality, they undoubtedly demonstrate a possibility of resistance to the predominant questionable way of life of society, proposing a new cultural framework, centered on balance, well-being and sustainability” (Alcântara; Sampaio, 2017, p. 240).

This interdisciplinary experience, which is the basis of the field of studies, combined with the training of researchers through the production of sensitive writing, challenges the health field to a broader view. In the context of this program, the body and art, through the exercise of sensitivity, presence, self-writing and listening to the other, are foundations for an “affective-intellectual” mode of research still quite uncommon in university environments.

In the field of health, the clinic is understood as a space for welcoming, dialogue, sharing emotions, unexpected situations, listening to the story and the subject as a co-participant of their treatment, not denying diseases, but considering health problems (situations that increase people’s risk or vulnerability) as embodied in subjects, in people. The purpose of the clinic becomes the production of health, contributing to the expansion of the subjects’ autonomy when dealing with their own network and sociocultural context (Guzzo *et al.*, 2018, p. 3).

It is important to point out that the movement of this crossing, from the skin to hapticality, points beyond the paradox of

contemporary studies on the skin, which can bring limitations, such as the skin as something that “contains,” or retains the body, the individual, or something that separates it from the external environment (Ferraz, 2014).

The issue of touch also covers a huge universe that can unfold in subjects—such as care, affection, sexuality and violence—especially when we look at touch as subjectivity. In this research, there is no intention to define “touch,” but rather to define a theoretical field that facilitates living and experiencing touch in the living and moving body, that is, in the body politic, as Erin Manning (2007) says in *Politics of Touch*:

When I touch you, I confuse the codes of our encounter by altering the space-time between you and me. I also change something else, a quality that is difficult to delineate. Touch is first and foremost a sensation, a way of incorporating the world, of embodying the reality (and virtuality) of another. Whether I touch my body to yours or the contrary, I am reaching out to you beyond a language of understanding (Manning, 2007, p. 57).

Erin Manning (2007, p. 57) reinforces the importance of the senses, when she places the focus on the body as a political force: “As we cannot firmly place our body in a pre-cognitive system, we cannot know what can be done politically.” She points out that there are some ways of knowing that make it difficult for the body and politics to find each other (Manning, 2007).

This necessary approximation between body and politics is added to the methodological movement of this research, which proposes a cartography of the skin, that is, how to speak from the skin and approach touch through the senses, but bringing it closer to thought and politics.

It is also from the skin, in contact with other skins, in touch or at a distance, that something can be formulated. In this sense, Eutony brings tools to sensitize the sense of touch, for a practice attentive to the skin, bones and inner space of the body, and to establish a healthy relationship with the world around.

The English anthropologist Montagu (1988) is often cited as a fundamental bibliography that deepens the importance of the skin in the perception of the external environment, as well as of the first tactile experiences in the physical and psychological development of the subject. The issue of skin related to mother-infant physical contact was explored in works by Winnicott (1969) and in the definition of the term *holding*, which revisits the importance of primitive care techniques, bringing great contribution to psychoanalysis and other fields of health.

In the area of philosophy, "...the deepest in man is the skin" by Paul Valery (1960) has become a classic, and is related to Winnicott's vision, echoing in the works of psychoanalyst Anzieu (1989) who, discussing the concept "I-skin," explores the skin as a constituent limit of the relations between the self and the other.

Also in the field of philosophy, José Gil, a scholar of the body and dance, (1997) refers not only to the skin but also to the orifices related to the sense organs—eyes, mouth, ears—as explicit parts of the depth and complexity of the body. "As if, walking through the gaze, entering through the eyes of the other, we suddenly found ourselves in an indefinite space (relative to the objective space of the head), much 'greater' than that which can be assumed from the outside." (Gil, 1997)

Haptic

The word "haptic" comes from the Greek term *haptikos*, which means "that which is relative to touch." According to Montagu (1986, p. 33), "the term haptic is used to describe the sense of touch in its mental extension, triggered by the total experience of living and acting in space. Both the skin and the nervous system originate from the outermost of the three layers of embryonic cells—the ectoderm."

The ectoderm also differentiates in hair, teeth and in the sense organs of smell, taste, hearing, vision and touch, that is, in everything that happens outside the body. The central nervous system, whose main function is to keep the organism informed of what is happening outside it, develops as

the portion of the general surface of the embryonic body that turns inward (Montagu, 1986, p. 22).

In physiological terms, studies on haptic perception explain the inseparability of the senses and demonstrate that the skin and the brain develop from a fold of the same tissue, as if the nervous system were the inversion of the skin inwards, and the skin, the exposed part of the nervous system (Montagu, 1986, p. 23).

Cutaneous information on temperature, texture, vibration, and strength is not separated from kinesthetic (movement) information such as location, speed, and shape. Haptic perception works with the motor control system, related to motor coordination, as well as with vision, smell, hearing, taste, touch, and proprioception.

This system of perception is not the privilege of humans. It is related to the perception of the environment and the set of sensations that this brings, for example, to a mammalian baby, whose mother represents for him something that surrounds him, a rounded, warm surface, a sweet and soft smell, which brings the feeling of comfort (Gibson, 1966).

Also called social touch, this haptic apparatus is considered largely responsible for the interaction with the environment and for the construction of the memory of the senses, of what is considered painful or pleasurable, safe, or dangerous by the central nervous system, and this intelligence of the senses has as its fundamental basis: the touch. In this sense, touch acts as an intermediary for all the senses.

The haptic system has an imaginative function, transporting us to places, objects that once, often in remote times, in early childhood, we smell, lick, listen to. Some expressions of the language such as “I am in contact with this person,” or even when we see a work of art that “touches us,” show that it is possible to conclude that it is not a simple metaphor, but qualities related to our subjectivity, which carry at their base this haptic perception that, in turn, is totally implicated in affectivity.

BJÖRK: Yes. I think it's amazing that we are here, sitting in this room, and that I know the taste of all the objects present here. And we do this during the first year of our lives. I haven't licked any objects in a long time, but I have the memory. Perhaps this reminds me of my childhood (Obrist, 2011, p. 74).

Despite its root in the term “haptic”⁷, which is widely studied in the area of cognitive sciences and tangent studies, the concept of hapticality brings us a breadth of discussion on the issue of affection, of subjectivity towards the other.

Haptic is not just a matter of physical touch. It is the link between touch and feeling, as well as the multiple mediations we build to allow or prevent our access to these affective relationships. These tactile relationships happen in multiple temporalities, and the hands are only one of the routes of their touches (Camp, 2017, p. 99-100).⁸

Hapticality, a concept put into play by Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2013) in their work *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, seeks to allow the release of a feeling that cannot be felt individually; such as the ability to feel the other and to feel the other feeling. The authors refer to the ideas of “*flesh memory*” by Hortense Spillers; and “*rasanblaj*” by Gina Athena Ulysse.

According to Moten, in a conversation broadcast via YouTube by NEP/ECO/UFRJ in 2020⁸, the term “*rasemblaj*”⁹, a decolonial gesture proposed by Haitian-American artist and anthropologist Gina Athena Ulysse, was one of the main sources of

⁷ “(1) tangible refers to the relationship between the body and the materiality of the world in general, (2) haptic points to the interaction between perception and action and, through the interaction of the senses, connects the body with the surrounding physical environment, (3) tactile refers to contact against the skin and the various skills of the hands, (4) tactile emphasizes the intentionality and intersubjectivity of tangible actions.” (GIBSON, 1966, p. 19).

⁸ Conversation held in the Open Windows program, with Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, and transmitted via YouTube (no longer available) through the NEP channel - Experimental Performance Center, coordinated by professors Adriana Schneider and Eleonora Fabião, from the Theater Direction course and the Graduate Program in Performing Arts, from the UFRJ School of Communication, in 2020.

⁹ *Rasenblaj*, or *rassembler* or *rassemblement*: on the correct translation of the term, Ulysse replies: “Non, *rasanblaj en Créole*,” that is, in the Criolla language, the term “*rasanblaj*,” means “a meeting, a compilation, a grouping (of ideas, of things, people, minds). For example, *fè yon rasanblaj*, having a meeting, a ceremony, a demonstration.”

inspiration that led them to propose the term hapticality in the context of the *Undercommons*.

It is also important to note that, although in dialogue with these cultural studies mentioned, authors such as Erin Manning and Tina Campt use the term “*hapticity*” to refer to or name a type of feeling felt in the relationship with the other.

This capture, which included a touch of vision prior to the actual touch, was made possible by hapticity in visual perception, which provided, before the actual touch, a sense of what the apple might look like, a feeling that is probably also beginning to include a preconscious tasting. Their mouth is already watering (Manning, 2016, p. 144).

Hapticity

Hapticity, the touch of undercommons, the interiority of feeling, the feeling that what is to come is here. Happiness, the ability to feel others, to feel others through you, to feel them feeling you, this sense of dispatch is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem (Harney; Moten, 2013, p. 98).

Deleuze (1989) had suggested the use of the term hapticity to refer to the sensation of sensory immediacy produced by cinema, in its specificity in the time-image relationship. By this perception, vision would discover “in itself a touch function that belongs only to it and that is independent of the optical function” (BABINI, 2005, p. 47).

In developing the idea of the *Undercommons*, Moten and Harney (2013) will recreate the term hapticity from radical and exceptional moments, in which authoritarian systems generate oppression and confinement of human life. It is the feeling of feeling the other through the other, from a situation of vulnerability or violence common to a group of people. The approach with a forced way of being in contact with the other is elaborated by the authors as a capacity to feel of subordinate individuals or who are underneath the processes of individuation. That is, in the clipping of the common, or the “subcommon,” hapticity is a term that belongs to the sense of touch. It’s the language of touch. And that lives on the edges of authoritarian systems, it is in social movements, even if it may also escape from them, as it is “a sensation that cannot be

fixed in a territory, state, nation, history” (Moten; Harney, 2013, p. 97).

The concept of *hapticality*, highlighted at the end of chapter 6 of Moten & Harney’s work, addresses the sense of touch beyond the physiology of the senses and enters politics and subjectivities of the meaning of touch and encounter. The authors speak of *hapticality*, or *love*, as an ability to feel together. It is through the skin, touch and love that something common is built, a kind of solidarity, “a way of feeling through others, a sense of feeling others feeling you” (Moten; Harney, 2013, p. 98).

Still in *The Undercommons*, the authors will work with the idea of a set of common relations and resources, which takes place from the situation of denial of any feeling or anything that produces feeling. These resources—or a common feeling of “touching each other,” that is, *hapticality*—are compared by urban planner Kike España (2020) with the situation of seclusion, or enclosure caused by the pandemic, in which touch between individuals has become something prohibited.

However, the author suggests that, in this context, feeling “for one another,” or “through the other,” has become very present, and adds that the “daily life of the state of exception,” the result of capitalist commands, in which exclusion, violence, murder of the vulnerable and the extermination of planetary ecosystems tend, to some extent, to multiply *hapticality*, in the sense of the constant search for resources of solidarity and invention by “new devices of mutual care” (Reina Sofia, 2020, not paginated).

For the anthropologist Ingold (2017), *hapticality* is what fills the void of the tacit: while the tacit walks into the depths of existence, the haptic is open and alive to others and to the world. In this sense, the author will explore the differences between “speaking” and “telling” from the concept of attention that occurs not stagnantly, but like the image of a fish in the water, “of a rotating world of spiral movements that collide: of thought spiraling into sound vortices” (Ingold, 2020, p. 25).

Unlike conceptions of “corporeality,” in which the mind is “within the body” and “occupies the world,” thought is the movement of the mind that “moves and is moved by the sounds and feelings of the environment” within the scope of hapticality (Ingold, 2020, p. 13). The anthropologist comments on the advance of an understanding of the body, mind, and world layers, implicit in the concept of *habitus* elaborated by Bourdieu (Csordas, 2008, p. 109-110), beyond conscious perception, but for a different consciousness, a sensory consciousness; hapticality, according to him, would be the consciousness of feeling others feeling you.

There is something within the scope of sensation, of feeling, that Harney and Moten’s work awakens in the cut of cultural and social studies, which passes through poetic and language analyses, and which necessarily passes through the body. It touches the body of the reader: Ingold describes that when he picks up his cello and feels the contact of the bow with the strings, its vibrations under his fingers and, at the same time, he feels the breath and the unison gesture with wood, air and metal.

The master in clinical psychology Tarcisio Almeida, in turn, evokes the term hapticality from the work of Moten and Harney, in order to claim the “right to know-feeling.” In his article “Politics of touch,” the author will, through an account of experiences based on an artistic, philosophical, and clinical learning process, defend the refusal of the normative for a “cognitive freedom” that starts from the break: “In order to cohabit the subcommon (*undercommons*) of touch, no longer as an abandoned space, it will be necessary to consider that what is broken will remain broken and that it cannot be repaired” (Almeida, 2021, p. 99).

For Almeida, this rejection by normative borders is part of a political territory that is not yet socially recognized, a phenomenon that he describes as “the appearance of a language that takes place in a space of learning (an existential territory) that requires a full-body listening (of the present body)” (Almeida, 2021, p. 106).

The different explorations of this concept seem to really take shape, or to be inevitably immersed in the context of the *Undercommons*, that is, there is no way to think about the concept without starting from the idea of a fugitive thought, as proposed by the immense (not in the sense of size, but in the sense of rupture) work of Moten & Harney.

This movement towards the concept of hapticality, proposed by Moten and Harney's fugitive thinking, can also be understood as the refusal of the opposition between thinking and feeling; or the refusal of the opposition between theory and practice; or a "sensual or sensitive intellectuality." Cartography, proposed here, seeks to reveal the meaning of touch beyond physiology, and entering policies and subjectivities related to touch and encounter. The crossing takes place in the attention to the skin, the touch and the vulnerability of the space destined to the feeling. Just as we approach the sensitive without the intention of defining it, but rather, seeking tools to feel, we adopt here "hapticality" as a fugitive concept¹⁰.

The *Undercommons* and the Black Radical Tradition

The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study is a tribute to the radical black tradition, and draws radical black thinking in theory and practice. The book was published in 2013 by Minor Compositions, but had some of its essays previously published by Duke University Press, Social Text, South Atlantic Quarterly and E-flux. The 2013 edition has free access, as well as all the publisher's publications, and is available on the web, in PDF¹¹. According to

¹⁰ The fugitive can be considered a grammar of black thought, a cognitive refusal to the state of stillness of subjects who claim an inner state of dignity, in a persistent effort towards the future. (Campt, 2017, p. 11) In the proposal of the *Undercommons*, the fugitive comes combined with *planning* to escape from the attempts at control and prediction to which we are subjected. A way out to see and think about the future, a breath. A breath looking forward, a speculative breath, which seeks to escape from the current economic policies of command, from the policies of state incarceration subjected to strategic wars.

¹¹ Available at:

<https://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/undercommons-web.pdf>.

Access on: July 23rd. 2023.

Denise Ferreira da Silva, in a fourth cover text, the work brings a type of “affected” writing, i.e., “a writing that is always another, with the other—Harney and Moten challenge us to fall.” She adds: “Next, feeling, another possible way to live together, or as we could say with Glissant—to be ‘born into the world,’ which is destiny and the gift of blackness.” And still on the fugitive as a plan, or the only possibility, Silva adds: “Otherwise, living, as in the quilombos created by enslaved Brazilians, is the promise that is the escape!”

The work brings strategic knowledge and elaborates concepts such as *study*, *planning*, *politics*, *debt*, *queer*, *logistics*, *general antagonism*, *governance*, which, according to the authors, emerge from a “terrain of struggle” long before their own arrival, concepts already used, land occupied by others by the radical black tradition. According to them, what they call *undercommons* has been theorized and planned for a long time, especially by black women, “those who thought and fought this struggle and led us to the place we continuously vacate with our hospitality.” This place, the undercommons, “where we can no longer be ourselves, and where we have never been. Its planning is our *queer debt*, our black debt, our trans debt, which is certainly not ours.” (Harney; Moten, 2016, not paginated).

This continuous experience with the informal, carried out by and on the means of social reproduction, such as the becoming of forms of life, is what we mean by planning; planning in *undercommons* is not an activity, it is not fishing or dancing or teaching or loving, but rather the incessant experience with the futuristic presence of the forms of life that make such activities possible. (Moten; Harney, 2013, p. 74-75)

The authors add, when asked about the terms ‘*the shipped*’ and ‘*the hold*’, specifically related to the transport of enslaved people on ships, that they are not operated in the same way as other concepts in the work, but must be “constantly removed so that the general antagonism of our history in the present is not a mere agonism” (Harney; Moten, 2016, not paginated).

The work also seems to suggest an attention to rhythms. Not only because of the numerous musical references and the

particularity of the essayistic writings that make up different rhythms of writing, but also for proposing an attention to the “algorithmic” rhythms, present in the control of brain operations in postcolonial regimes. Although not published as part of the book, the article, “Hapticality in the Undercommons, or from Operation Management to Black Ops,” seems fundamental to understanding the rhythms proposed by *Undercommons*, which was named by Moten as *Black Ops*. It reinforces a critique of the work rhythm imposed by the European model, a rhythm that captures the brain and kills (Harney, 2015).

The anti-colonial critique of the radical black tradition celebrated in *The Undercommons* is a critique that proposes practices of resistance and autonomy, carried out by those who are not out of capture, but those who are in a way on the run, in other rhythms, in rhythms outside the production line. Moten and Harney’s invitation is to perceive these subcommon rhythmic works, those that invite us to feel our surroundings and, in this sense, reference artistic works that produce this movement, this escape.

When writing about the movie *Yellow Patch*, by Indian-Ugandan artist Zarina Bhimji, Harney emphasizes that its images, which portray fields, buildings, and rooms that are “empty, but not vacant,” are like memories that are not created for preserving, for nostalgia, for making us forget the struggles, but, on the contrary, he thinks “the movie suggests the subcommon is never somewhere else, its touch is also a reach. Its touch is a rest, a caress. Hapticity occupies these rooms with a beat, a striking rhythm of love” (Harney, 2015, not paginated).

From skin to hapticality, or love

The political movement of this crossing is intrinsic to the choice of the cartographic method, since we start from the skin, i.e.,

from the activation of sensitivity, towards a concept that addresses a common plane, a common feeling and, also, “access the plane of the common and, also, build a common and, at the same time, heterogeneous world” (Kastrup & Passos, 2013, p. 264). It is for the attention indicated as the path of cartographic practice, an open attention to the encounter and toned by the musculature of Eutony, that this crossing happens, from the skin to hapticality.

Faced with the challenge of mapping the passage from touch to hapticality, it was essential to create a practice of collective study of *undercommons*. In the midst of the pandemic, these studies took place through an online platform, anchored through the Body and Art Laboratory of Unifesp Baixada Santista. The practices carried out—the reading group, as well as other workshops that had been held in different collective contexts since 2019, through Eutony, and in order to facilitate the rest and translation of the text “Hapticality, or love”—were intended to tune our bodies, rhythms, frequencies, the hapticality of the *undercommons*, or rather, to look for the subcommons of our rhythms, of our bodies.

[...] it is not a search for information yet, it is a reflection, a glimpse that happens at the level of sensations, which can have different degrees of intensities, rhythms and senses, and which should not be overlooked, because it is in this process that we improve the selection and that the criteria become clearer (Rosário; Coca, 2018, p. 43).

On the other hand, adopting “hapticality” as a fugitive concept, as Moten and Harney suggest, also implies penetrating the quicksilver and more than human mud, an “inherited caress,” of a skin that is undone and remade every day, in a fractal way and that affects others, the invisible, what is not alone, the rest of the *abajocomunes*, those who insist on not being one, those who dance, those who speak through music, fugitives, what melts and that is imposed not by affinity and not by institution, but that is given by communion, without copy and without glamor.

In addition to supporting the question of what hapticality is, this research is a cartography that talks about this issue from the physicality where it comes from: the skin. And I’m sure it doesn’t end here.

Thus, without end, the need for this research, that is, the way we choose to make this journey to the concept of hapticality, through the skin (touching), through the proposed practices (group readings, workshops, and interlocutions with eutonists), produces an affected body.

In addition, attention to touch and skin, as the center of the vital condition, especially at a time when social isolation was the main way to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus and its variants, seems, perhaps, to indicate clues to think about the contemporary world, with the adversities brought about by the pandemic context. And I dare say that it is still early to cognitively understand what these clues are.

For this research to happen, it was fundamental to demonstrate how caring for oneself and the other are fundamental for a more human notion of health, as it is fundamental to perceive, and for this there are many publications on the subject, as touch is also basic to our existence. But the biggest challenge is still to inhabit the concept of hapticality, as well as to formulate a cartography that could talk about this issue from the experience of being in one's own skin.

In this sense, most likely, understanding the importance of touch in a collective dimension, and the skin in a social extension, may be essential to think about health in its multidisciplinary aspects and also formulate other dramaturgies to think about the present and, consequently, the future

It may be that the subcommon is less a set of common capacities or an imagined common space—as the term common often denotes—and therefore less about collective life than about the collective being, or better yet, continuing (Harney; Moten, 2016, not paginated).

There is still a lot to formulate about the experience of researching touch without being able to touch other people, due to the pandemic that was faced during this crossing, but this issue did not seem to me to be something that really opened up at this time. On the contrary, it could be seen that there are a number of

possibilities and technologies that humans have created to relate at a distance, in addition to those that were used during the COVID-19 pandemic, but that may have been with us for centuries. It is not difficult to have information like this, a quick search on the internet would suffice, about how humans have dealt with coping with other pandemics. Anyway, I think this would be a discussion for another work.

Without a doubt, social isolation was not a phenomenon that began or ended with the COVID-19 pandemic, if we think about the social barriers that affect a population whose condition of vulnerability became even more dystopian during the pandemic, but who already had their basic rights such as housing, piped water, access to health, and food, deprived.

How to wash hands without running water? How to make social isolation for those who live on the streets? How will the poor population have access to preventive information? How will populations in isolated locations access the health system? Death from COVID-19 tends to be selective, affecting differently by gender, ethnicity and class (Silva; Saunders; Ohmer, 2021, p. 382).

On the other hand, the fact that social isolation produced an entrapment to the situation of domestic violence, exponentially increasing cases of sexual violence in Brazil, significantly exposed that being at home is not necessarily safe for a very large group of the population. Distance education and the overload of domestic work also left evidence that in the pandemic context there was an unquestionable aggravation of the unequal sexual division of labor in the Brazilian context, not to mention “digital servitude,” a contemporary term for “modern servitude,” which further aggravated the exploitation of human labor (Melo; Borges; Júnior, 2020).

There is still much to understand regarding the consequences of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of the population and, if we take into account that, in Brazil, social isolation was not even correctly applied¹², the discussion enters an

¹² In addition to the fact that the most vulnerable layers of the population did not have the basic material conditions to carry out the isolation, considered the main guidance of WHO to avoid contagion by the virus, there was in Brazil the phenomenon called “denialism,”

even more complex level. But there is no doubt that the pandemic has generated a society traumatized by “isolation, surveillance and fatigue.” (Melo; Borges; Júnior, 2020, p. 43).

Rest became a privilege of few. Resting, with others or with oneself, as a common space, on the floor of the house or on the land, under the trees, should not be a privilege or a place for the homeless, but a right for all.

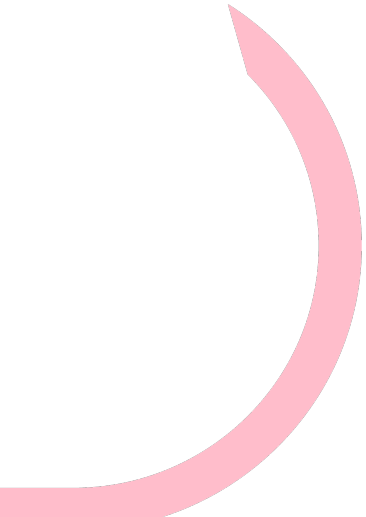
Hapticality can be a way of trying to say that the history of feeling has been dominated by what we can feel, but a counter-history has necessarily been concerned with what things feel. Given how brutal the condition of this counter-history is, as Hortense Spillers recounts it so chillingly in her account of what she called, long before us, empathy, it is unlikely that we can ever forget what it feels like (Harney; Moten, 2016, unpagged).

This counter-history to which Harney and Moten draw attention, the history of violence, will also be pointed out by Saidija Hartman (1997), when she emphasizes the risk of identifying with the suffering of those who are the focus of violence. She draws attention to the narcissistic, “very easy intimacy” of whiteness, of the desire to exist in the place of the other. She calls this the “erasure of otherness”: feeling ourselves in those we imagine as ourselves.

In a society marked for so many centuries by violence, in which violence becomes music, film, the horror of slavery is for so long treated as something superfluous, “inevitable,” the violence of identification, which often takes the form of “empathy,” and is seen as the effort to bring those who have suffered or still suffer from injustices closer together, it is possible to take on the suffering of others as a movement of power over the other.

That is why the defense of the field of feeling, as a counterpoint to the field of violence. Hence the defense of rest.

disseminated by a vast number of public figures, including the president of the republic himself, Jair Bolsonaro, who publicly questioned the severity of the pandemic and positioned himself against the measures to reduce the contagion, which produced a very significant impact on the adherence of part of the population to isolation.



Rest, in this research, in addition to being a defense of rest with the other, comes along with the need to talk to the trees, the land, the dirt. It is not here, but it is, in conversation with the floor of the University, even if accessed virtually, with classmates, collective study groups, in research under guidance, as well as with the professors of this interdisciplinary program who believe in the utopia of another health, of a way of writing that is between art and health and that is between, too, or on the floor.

Or rather, there is no better place, or possible place, to be than in one's own skin and that is why I was throughout the crossing in search of a eutonic writing, which could refer to this place. Perhaps there is still a lot to move in this direction, even actually moving the tectonic plates from the gym floor.

Bringing the eutonic knowledge of the skin to writing, and hapticality to talk about dance, is a challenge that does not end here. As Harney and Moten say, it's about "going on." No wonder they finish the letter "Hapticality, or love," signing as philosophers of feeling (2013). No wonder it's a letter, and it ends with love.

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