

## **Relative Proximity: Reaching towards an ethics of touch in cross-generational dance practice**

*...touch, the first sense to develop in the human fetus, is 'an expression of love that cannot tell it'... (Levinas in David Williams, 1996, 32)*

This paper looks at the potential of touch and contact as a way of relating between dancers of different generations both within and beyond a choreographic setting. The focus encompasses both the dance practice of contact improvisation and the notion of contact as a mode of communication. Both ideas of contact are investigated through an auto-ethnographic lens and a discussion of Emmanuel Levinas' phenomenological ethics. The quotation above taken from David Williams' *Dancing (in) the In-between* (1996) introduced me to the idea of contact improvisation as an ethical practice and demonstrates the poetics of Levinas' philosophy, making it so compelling to use in an arts research context. I also chose to include this quote as a point of departure because I am writing from a position of proximity. I borrow the term proximity from Levinas to mean, according to Donna Orange: 'both the nearness and the distance of our relation to the other' (2010, 93), as I weave together the scholarly voice of critique with an auto-ethnographic approach that refers to my subjective experience as dancer and mother. I have experienced this feotal touch from the inside out and as such it was the starting point of this paper.

In writing myself into this work I am reaching towards you - dear reader - invoking the very notions of relationality, vulnerability, and ethics that this paper discusses. I expose aspects of my own experience because I perceive it as vital to constructing a meaningful analysis. As Ruth Behar states: 'The exposure of the self who is also a spectator has to take us somewhere we couldn't otherwise get to. It has to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake.' (Behar, in Spry, 2001 13-14) This auto-ethnographic way of writing also

acknowledges what Andre Lepecki describes as ‘...the new landscape [in which] the critical distance has been collapsed meaning that in today’s dance studies the choreographer claims a theoretical voice, the critic emerges as producer, the agent writes dance reviews, [and] the philosopher tries some steps...’ (2001, online, no pagination). As a choreographer claiming my theoretical voice then, this paper revolves around three practical examples – two of which are taken from my own practice based research. The case studies are as follows:

- Case Study One: My embodied relationship to my young daughter notably in *Baby Jam*<sup>1</sup> a group set up to explore the principles of contact improvisation with parents and young children
- Case Study Two: *Where you end?* A devised duet with an adult mother and daughter (Paula and Alex) performed in 2011.
- Case Study Three: *Parkin’son*: Italian choreographer Giulio D’Anna’s duet with his father Stefano D’Anna touring the United Kingdom at the time of writing.

These case studies can all be seen as instances of ‘cross-generational dance practice’, a term that I have come to see as a necessary foe in defining the field of my research. Evolving from my work with Cecilia Macfarlane and *Crossover Intergenerational Dance Company*<sup>2</sup> my PhD looks at methods of choreographing work with mixed age groups and the way this may - or may not - create communities. The research focuses particularly on the qualitative aspect of the relationships that are formed in making choreography and what being different ages contributes to this

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Jam’ is a term – appropriated from Jazz music improvisation- that describes the event of a group of dancers coming together to practice contact improvisation and is used throughout the paper to refer to this type of event.

<sup>2</sup>Crossover vacillates between using the term intergenerational and simply being ‘*Crossover Dance Company*’. Many of the original members of the company from 2009 are no longer dancing regularly with them but they continue to exist through projects and events that involve people of all ages as ‘*Crossover Dance Projects*’ in which dancers old and new take part. See [crossoverdance.co.uk](http://crossoverdance.co.uk) for more information.

process. The subject of my investigation took on a whole new meaning when I became pregnant and made my own generational shift. My relationships to those I work with have always been central to my practice as a dance artist but it has been hard to find a way to include this in my scholarly praxis before now. With the arrival of my daughter Romilly, I found an opportunity to do so because the shift in my lived experience was so profound that it could not help but permeate such divides. Auto-ethnography became a way – as Spry puts it – ‘to reveal the fractures, sutures and seams of self interacting with others in the context of researching lived experience’ (Spry, 2001, 712). In this paper particularly, the lived experience of motherhood - and in the context of my current research - what it meant to be crossing into another generation.

#### Touch/contact/act/ouch/tact/touch

Using the words ‘touch’ and ‘contact’ as I do in this paper, somewhat inter-changeably, whilst potentially problematic is an opportunity to reflect on the difference between these two terms and to allow possibilities to spring up in the interstice between them. Touch is undoubtedly one aspect of making contact, while contact encompasses much more than touch alone. Touch however can also be seen in broader terms than its simple practical application. I will not attempt here a definitive distinction or interpretation of either – which is perhaps the subject of another debate entirely. For my purposes it can be seen that to ‘make contact’, as in common parlance, refers to a purposeful mode of communication. It is a way of reaching towards others in space and in social relations - a way of relating no less. As Erin Manning puts it ‘touch as not just the laying of hands but the act of reaching towards’ (2007, xv). The act of reaching towards also denotes intentionality, a process rather than a final destination, touch does not end when contact is made and is never static. In the same way this paper poses questions for further

consideration and reaches towards the notion of an ethics of touch, rather than fixing its meaning.

As stated in the introduction, I also use ‘contact’ as the short hand for the movement practice ‘Contact Improvisation’. This form of contact evolved in the 1970s and is based on the idea of exploring movement improvisation whilst in physical contact with others. The starting point for the improvisation may be maintaining a particular point of contact, or exploring a shared axis of weight between bodies – these are just two of an infinite number of corporeal investigations that may occur in contact improvisation. It has been described by Sally Banes as ‘a democratic duet incorporating elements of martial arts, social dancing, sports and child’s play’ (1987, 57); while Steve Paxton - whose name is synonymous with its development as a form- states that each dancer tries to find the ‘easiest pathways available to their mutually moving masses’ (Banes, 1987, 65). In order to achieve this Susan Foster writes that: ‘Dancers...are encouraged to ‘listen’ to the body, to be sensitive to its weight and inclinations and to allow new possibilities of movement to unfold spontaneously by attending to the shifting network of ongoing interactions’ (Foster, 1992, 491). The nature of Contact Improvisation as an amorphous and improvisatory practice means that all of the above definitions seem incomplete. However for the purposes of my discussion the inclusion of ‘child’s play’ in Banes’ definition and Foster’s description of ‘listening’ to the body are both significant in that it makes Contact Improvisation suitable as a mode of dancing that can be inclusive of people from diverse age groups. What is more, the notion of exploring new possibilities of movement is resonant with watching a baby learn and practice their evolving physical skills. Baby Jam<sup>3</sup> was in part inspired by witnessing my daughters un-self conscious physical evolution, I wanted

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Baby Jam’ is not the first group to explore the principles of contact with young children. I first came across it through an article in the Contact Improvisation newsletter (vol 36, no 1) on Baby Contact by Olga Zotova, based in Russia with whom I had an email exchange before setting up my own sessions.



to get into a dance studio and see how this might inform my own physicality as a dancer in my changed, post-natal body. I found that through precisely imitating and copying the movements of my young daughter I invoked a way of moving in which I re-learnt my own anatomy, as Olga Zotova states in her description of Baby Contact: ‘There is so much to learn from the babies in terms of developmental movement, freedom and softness of movements, and an easy attitude about mistakes...the idea is this: just continue dancing when you have babies around, and use their presence as an inspiration.’ (2010) Taking this as a premise then, I learnt from watching Romilly’s flexibility, her open hips, the ability to sit with a perfectly straight spine and to fall softly, almost in slow motion. I noticed how her body would organize itself to protect her head when she fell. Falling safely, with her blissful ignorance and bodily intelligence is a skill I would welcome in an adult contact jam. In addition to these qualities, the size and weight of her body with mine held many movement possibilities for us to improvise with. The responsibility for what these possibilities were however remained mine, as the next section discusses further.

Insert Fig 1

### Contacting Vulnerability

In addition to the movement possibilities of contact, Baby Jam was a response to the non-verbal relationship I had with my daughter. In the early weeks and months of motherhood I spent so much time focusing on what her physical sensations might be – guessing at what she couldn’t articulate in language - that I forgot my own physicality. I felt absent from my own body, beside myself, particularly after the ‘hyper-somatic’ experience of pregnancy in which I was aware of every tiny shift and change my body went through. Judith Butler’s statement that we are ‘by virtue of being a bodily being, already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own’ (2004, 28) rings true for me now as my notion of myself as a separate individual was corporeally called

into question through the experience of pregnancy, birth and motherhood. In the same way when we dance in contact there can be a blurring of the sense of where one body ends and another begins. As Philipa Rothfield says, in contact improvisation, ‘movement happens. It’s unplanned, between bodies and continually open. So how many bodies are there here?...what bodily boundaries exist and where do they exist?’ (1994, p83). I am familiar with this feeling she refers to, however when exploring contact improvisation in *Baby Jam* I found I couldn’t entirely ‘give myself over’ in the way that I could in an adult jam as there was a profound sense of inequality in the giving and taking of weight - it was (still is) physically impossible for Romilly to take mine. Although it can appear to be impossible in an adult jam situation, through a process of non-verbal negotiation it is usually achievable in some shape or form to engage in an exchange of weight. Despite the impracticality of trying such a thing with a baby, I experimented with laying my head in Romilly’s lap or letting my arm rest heavy on her shoulders, something she seemed to find quite disconcerting! I began to question whether my idea was even possible given that contact improvisation was formed on an ideology that includes the democracy and mutuality that Banes (ibid) described. I found too that I became increasingly anxious about what Butler describes as our ‘primary vulnerability’ (ibid), referring to the absolute reliance humans have on other humans in early life – a seemingly obvious yet often overlooked fact. I felt powerful, not only because of my size and weight compared to Romilly’s but because I was necessary to sustain her life. This ultimate responsibility was not always a comfortable feeling. As Rachel Cusk puts it in her memoir on motherhood *A Life’s Work*: ‘love... lies close to the power to destroy, having never before remotely felt myself to possess that power I am now as haunted by it as if it were a gun in a nearby drawer.’ (2001, 91). Cusk’s awareness of her potential to do harm to her vulnerable newborn baby is a taboo subject amongst popular discourses on motherhood.

However it may be a surprisingly familiar experience to many new mothers as they come *face to face* - to use Levinas' terminology - with the embodied being that is their child and the urgency of the responsibility they now have. Butler states:

The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch and to violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well.

Butler, 2004, 26

It is perhaps the latter that is the harder idea to accept, not only for mothers. As Levinas would have it though, it is the choice we make not to commit this violence that makes us human and provides the basis of an a-priori ethical relationship with others. For Levinas when we are '*face to face*' with another person, ethics is the foundation of that encounter. To paraphrase Orange, this encounter transcends all concepts representations or ideas of who or what the other might be (2010, 80); Levinas states: 'The face, still a thing among things, breaks through the form that nevertheless delimits it' (Levinas in Moran, 2002, 518). At once a material encounter grounded in the body then, the face speaks without recourse to language - as Orange goes on to say: 'The face says: you shall not kill' (ibid) hence why Cusk's metaphorical gun stays in its drawer. Such dramatic language abounds in Levinas' philosophy making it seem only to deal with extremes in the human condition and circumstance. This is not the case however as he demonstrates through his own example of how the ethical encounter can be seen in the simple everyday '*after you*'. This 'being for the other before oneself' can also be seen in the mothers ability to put an infants needs before her own, while Williams uses Levinas' notion to describe an 'axis of co-operation' (1996, 30) that contact improvisation sets up between moving bodies.

### The ties that bind

In case study two I worked with mother and daughter Paula and Alex Hocking to create a duet. As they were both adults (Alex had just returned home after university) the choreographic process explored the changing state of their relationship and the interplay of power and vulnerability this brought. During one rehearsal I enforced a point of contact by binding them together with a rope. Choreographically I was interested in externalizing the relational ties that bound them together. The task then involved exploring the movement possibilities that this restriction created. The first time we did the task Alex commented that: “I was surprised at how aware of my mum’s fragility I’ve become. It made me think about the times I may have been clumsy with her heart and maybe her body.” Here, Alex reveals her own agency to hurt her mother, while Paula said that working with Alex in this way made her feel vulnerable “in an ageing woman sort of way” referring to the strength and capability of her daughter’s body when compared with her own – if Alex chose to engage in a tug of war she could pull her mother over and they were both aware of this fact. There was a lot of tension as they created this section because Alex was moving faster and remembering the material with more consistency, she struggled to slow down and be patient with her mother. Because they were tied together with a rope, Paula had little choice but to go at Alex’s pace– at times she would get angry with Alex in response and force her to stop by standing her ground.

Butler talks of the ethics that Levinas proposes saying that it ‘does not come from a peaceful place, but rather from a constant tension between the fear of undergoing violence and the fear of inflicting violence’ (2004, 137). This condition of fearfulness is influenced no doubt by his own life experiences as a prisoner of war, however the tension he describes - and

Paula and Alex's experience of this task - indicate the necessary asymmetry of the ethical relationship in which they were forced to take note of each others difference. Orange states that Levinas saw 'every reduction of the other to the same as murderous...' (2010, 81) So when we move together in contact is there a risk of performing this violence through the very axis of co-operation that Williams speaks of? A risk of totalizing our dancing partner through melding with them, through trying to become one; through - as Jaques Derrida puts it - contact becoming the 'death of between' (Derrida, 2005, 2); if 'contact' is defined as something that always intervenes between two objects. Derrida is referring here to Jean Luc Nancy's philosophy in his 2008 work *Corpus*. As the title of the book suggests '*On Touching: Jean Luc Nancy*' (2005), Derrida's investigation of the sense of touch centers on Nancy's writing. In relying on another's reading of Derrida's work - I refer to Donald Landes who states that "the value of Derrida's text is his emphasis on exteriority (without interiority)" (2007, 88). Rather than, than the melding of bodies to become a unified sensing mass, through maintaining this exteriority Nancy would have it that: 'Touching one another with their mutual weights, bodies do not become undone, nor do they dissolve into other bodies, nor do they fuse with a spirit – this is what makes them, properly speaking, bodies' (Nancy in Manning, 1994, 28). In maintaining the exteriority of bodies, surfaces against surfaces - entities that remain separate in order to come together - Nancy refuses a body of identity or one that becomes an essence. As Landes puts it, in so doing Nancy suggests "the possibility of an open ontology that is always in motion" (2007, 87) – a useful concept then for a dance practice that involves moving bodies. One of the first activities I did in the studio with Paula and Alex was to place their hands on one another with their eyes closed, before using other surfaces – thighs, heads, backs - as a way to give and receive weight and to explore each other's bodies. I asked them to imagine them as a new discovery and to let this task evolve into a moving

dialogue that travelled through the space; an exercise that will sound familiar to contact improvisers. After the task I asked them an open question to reflect on their experience: Alex commented that Paula had a tendency to pre-empt her movement and as a result she found it hard not to do what was expected of her rather than following her own spontaneous pathways. She said that this reflected the fact that there were things she felt that her mum doesn't know about her, or hasn't taken on board, due to the fact that she is still growing and changing all the time. Paula noticed this too, saying: "I realized that Alex knew that I didn't know her very well and this was a grief for her...." Paula also commented on how for a long time you are just seen as in your role as 'mum' by the other members of your family and then as the children become adults this changes and they get to know you for who you are again, without that role. Dancing together in this duet Paula and Alex came to know each other in the here and now of dancing in contact; reflecting Nancy's notion of an unfixated ontological status. What is more, Nancy's notion of Being Singular Plural (2000), like Levinas' ethics, also relies on an asymmetrical relationship whereby the 'other' or more specifically for Nancy *others* plural are irreducible - absolutely other and singular. Furthermore, harder to conceptualise in the duet form though no less present is the fact that for Nancy, subjectivity exists only in a network of relations to others *plural* rather than as isolated individuals or an indeterminate mass of society, culture, age or community. The ethical implications of this are for an expansive conception of others rather than reductive notions of identity based on age, 'being mum' or any other taxonomy. Touching one another in practices such as contact improvisation can be seen as a gateway to an embodied understanding of such an ethics.

In my own case (study one), I found that in Baby Jam by touching my daughter with different intent, other than the mother's caress and

instrumental nappy changing hands I came to believe in her existence as a separate being and was less afraid of the potential power that I wielded, coming to understand that she too has the power to destroy me through the simple fact of her existence and the intensity of my love for her. The fact that she is distinct from me - and singular - was key to this understanding and becomes more and more apparent as she grows into a toddler and her touch becomes more purposeful. She is now able to push me, pull me and indicate her will in terms of energy and direction in the dance studio. No doubt I will one day face what Paula did as her strength begins to overtake my own.

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Insert Fig 2

In my third and final case study, Italian choreographer Giulio D'Anna explored similar concerns in his duet with his father Stefano. Their shifting roles were not only as a result of age, but also of Stefano's Parkinson's disease, a progressive and changeable condition. I spoke with him about his choreographic process and use of touch - he said:

...I feel I cannot hug my father...I will do that with an unknown 64 year old man but I cannot do it with my father, why? ...I worked with the idea of breaking ...these personal taboos...so we went through everything, we went through screaming, hitting, being naked, grabbing each other in all possible parts, spitting at each other, slapping...I was really trying to see if it was possible to erase this uncomfortable feeling.

D'Anna, 2012

Whether seen as socially constructed or uniquely personal, D'Anna illustrates how particular ways of touching others are acceptable in certain contexts and relationships and others not. Giulio and his father made a consensual agreement to engage in an artistic process (as did Paula and Alex), which meant they were happy to test their limits whilst

also being aware of how they were crossing culturally sanctioned boundaries. Similarly, in contact improvisation the rules of engagement differ from those in other social interactions. From my proximal position I would suggest that the touch you give and receive in a contact improvisation jam may be by turns pleasurable, surprising, un-nerving disturbing, or downright painful. In the context of cross-generational dance practice what this allows is an interruption in the taken for granted nature of relationships that we are born into such as mother and father or daughter/son. As Paula and Alex demonstrated, perceptions of others are then based on the here and now of moving together rather than preconceived roles. As Williams puts it, contact can become a ‘continuous re-membering and re-making in relation.’ (1996,30).

#### Touching on the absence of contact

Whilst this enquiry deals with touch in its materiality, one of the questions that emerge is to ask whether contact necessarily requires contact in the sense of touching each other? Williams points out for example that - in contact ‘tactility can become another seeing and listening, peripheral vision an-other touch’ (1996, 26). My ambiguous definition of touch therefore can lend itself to Erin Manning’s notion of relational movement whereby *potential* as well as actual physical points of contact are included in what she refers to as the ‘present-to-come’. Not only vision but kinesthetic sense becomes a way of touching. Manning’s idea is antithetical to Derrida’s ‘death of the between’ (ibid) as it highlights the in-between spaces that moving bodies create; something that is implicit in the craft of choreography and pertinent to my first case study. As a mother to a now toddler I am often engaged in the ‘about to be’ as my daughter navigates her sense of balance and moving through the world. I see potential accidents everywhere as she has infinite near misses, her body teetering on the brink of an accident or fall. I judge when to intervene or not through sensing her body and mine in relation to



each other and the potential trajectories we could take. Similarly, Edmund Husserl's phenomenology suggests that our making sense of the world 'includes memories as well as anticipations, possible as well as actual experiences' (in Weiss, 1999, 42). Likewise, in a contact jam I spontaneously - and for the most part pre-reflectively - anticipate when to enter, hold another's weight a moment longer or to let go into the floor. Hovering in the about-to-be, a dancer of contact has a myriad of possibilities - of which these are just a few. These moments of suspension or balance that relational movement highlights— 'the micro movements...that are alive...where a particular shape has not yet taken hold' (2010, online, no pagination) also creates a 'space-time' – as Manning puts it – of vulnerability. It is not enough to make contact in the sense of touching one another; rather to 'make contact' in this about-to-be moment often requires an implicit trust in those you are dancing with, as well as your own bodily knowledge. At times because of a very real physical risk, or the disorientation of hanging upside down, or simply because of being in the unknown as improvisation in all its forms calls for. Levinas' face in this case perhaps says '*I couldn't do this without you*'. Contact improvisation as a practice is at very least a duet, its very ontology is relational *and* therefore it could be argued, ethical. Judith Hamera describes such an ethics in the choreography of Hae Kyung Lee in which 'dancers jump and roll over one another so quickly that they must initiate a move by anticipating, not actually seeing, where another dancer will be [as] requiring a strong sense of responsibility, both for ones own body and those of others with whom one shares the space' (Hamera, 2007, 184). She goes on to say that this results in 'an ethics of obligation, an ethics of presence to others as bodies rooted in these dancers' physical interdependence...it is corporeal, rooted in physical *proximity*, in touch" (2007, 185 [my italics]). The obligation herein is what Kelly Oliver (in Hamera) describes as being "obligated to respond to our environment and other people in ways that open up rather than close off

the possibility of response.” (2007, 185) Similarly, according to Levinas ‘the face’ demands a response. Reaching towards contact in the jam is not closed in on itself in a solipsistic somatic experience but also demands action and response from others without which it does not exist.

Working with contact as a dance practice in a mixed age group, I find that dancers do not experience themselves as melding together in an ageless mass of indeterminate bodies - as Rothfield suggested - but also that age is not foregrounded. Dancers relate to each other in the immediacy of negotiating their materiality. The physical risks they are taking together are of more immediate concern than any concept of age. Yet the explicit distinction of differently aged bodies is central to the practice of making contact function safely and effectively and directly affects the possible movement trajectories as I experienced with Romilly in Baby Jam. So this notion of making contact requires an embodied quality of attention towards others which might be seen in Levinas’ terms as the ‘readiness to respond’ (Orange, *ibid*) - as I am constantly to Romilly in daily life and in dancing. If touch as the laying of hands is not necessarily necessary, then proximity is - a proximity that is a somatic attending to both our nearness and our distance to others. Furthermore, perhaps it is only through making contact in the material ‘hands on’ sense that we can sense its absence, generate this somatic attention - the ethics of presence that Hamera describes - and thereby create an in-between space that is at once uncertain and full of possibilities.

### An Ethics of Touch

To return to my last case study example Giulio D’Anna here articulates one such possibility; how working in contact and breaking their personal taboos qualitatively changed his relationship to his father:

I have this feeling that I am a friend with my father sometimes, like we are in a train...or an aeroplane and then I turn and I am not

speaking with my 64 year old father I am speaking with Stefano, he's the soul that is beside me, and it's very beautiful then it is just about communicating, it is not necessarily about playing with the interface of the role...but when you are really free and connected, I think that this is just possible through dance. The moment that physically you have been slapping each other, you have been laughing, you have been naked, fighting and swallowing each others sweat...like physically it changes things... I guess what happens is that for a moment, the social...what has been given us from society disappears and what is saved is the reality of our selves together,

D'Anna, in interview, 2012

This quotation indicates that whilst entirely embedded in the physical, dancing in contact also refers to a mode of communication that goes beyond reductive definitions of either touch *or* contact. By including modes of touch that might be considered to transgress the social codes of their father/son relationship they also question the socially sanctioned versions of those roles and how they personally inhabit them. Contact Improvisation has the potential to remind us of the ethical not as a moral code of should's and should-not's, of 'safe zones' and taboos, but as an embodied experience of response-ability - as described in the previous section. Similarly Brian Massumi, states that ethics is relational (as it is for Levinas), contingent on its situation and furthermore that 'it happens between people, in the social gaps...The ethical value of an action is what it brings out in the situation...how it breaks sociality open. Ethics is about how we inhabit uncertainty, together.' (2002)

Working with touch in cross-generational dance in today's climate requires that a dance artist is 'safeguarded'. There are necessary policies in place that, whilst shrouded in bureaucracy, exist in order to protect vulnerable young people and adults. To a large extent these policies may try to rule out the 'uncertainty' that Massumi speaks of and whilst protecting those at risk of harm can also lead to dance artists practicing in a climate of fear and compromising the potential of the artistic process.

My vision in writing this paper is in part to help break the taboos around working with contact in this way by acknowledging that touch does not necessarily mean care and support as we might presume it to in the dance context – Williams’ ‘axis of co-operation’ does not always function in contact improvisation which can also be uncomfortable and insensitive as much as it can create a sense of joyful community; however the fundamental vulnerability implicit in this fact is also that which makes us human, embodied and relational.

As this article has indicated through these cross-generational examples, corporeal proximity has a vital role to play in ethical relationships within the dance studio. Through proximity as a method of scholarship and reflection, auto-ethnography has allowed me to include some of the more surprising and difficult experiences of motherhood in my writing adding to the singular voices such as Cusks’ which question - and contribute to - the maternal metanarrative. Similarly, the complex asymmetrical ethics that can exist between ages in making contact need not be denied or turned away from for fear of alienating those who see cross-generational dance as a way to promote understanding between different ages. Instead, it is possible to imagine an ethics of touch that becomes a way of ‘being together’ in our singular plurality; an ethical ontology - rooted in the body - that can permeate beyond the dance studio as it did for Giulio and his father, Paula and Alex and myself with Romilly. An ethics of touch relies on a response-ability that I experienced in Romilly’s first foetal touch, a response that is in fact, as Oliver puts it, “an obligation to life itself” (185, 2007).

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### Interviews

D'Anna, G. 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013, Interview

Hocking, A. 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011 Interview

Hocking, P . 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011, Interview



Fig 2 Giulio and Stefano D'Anna in Parkin'Son

