

The Community according to Jean-Luc Nancy and Claire Denis

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The end of an era

In 2001, Jean-Luc Nancy was writing an essay (Nancy 2001a) about a film by Claire Denis (*Beau travail* 1999), while Claire Denis was reading Nancy's essay on his heart transplant, *L'Intrus* (Nancy 2000b). Denis also read the book Jacques Derrida had written about Nancy's work: *Le Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* (Derrida 2000). Denis felt that Nancy's thinking and writing opened new ways for her in filmmaking and she continued thinking of *L'Intrus* while she was working on *Trouble Every Day* (2001). Finally she decided to contact Nancy for an adaptation of *L'Intrus* (Denis 2001). Philosopher and filmmaker have been engaged in a dialogue ever since. Nancy has written several essays on her films, they made a film together (*Vers Nancy*, 2002), Denis adapted *L'Intrus* in 2004 and they published a book together (Nancy 2005a). Such a steady dialogue is an exception even in France where film and philosophy in general rhyme more easily than in other countries. Still, it elucidates in an exemplary way the sensibilities and preoccupations of a specific generation of philosophers and filmmakers: those born in the years 1937-48, just before and during the German occupation or in the liberated 'Empire éternel' still fully immersed in the Vichy trauma.

Jean-Luc Nancy, born in 1940, shares this historical background with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière (all born between 1937 and 1940). Claire Denis, born in 1948, is a coeval of Catherine Breillat, Patrice Chéreau, Jacques Doillon, Philippe Garrel, Benoît Jacquot and André Téchiné (all born between 1944 and 1948). Denis is seldom considered as belonging to this Post-Nouvelle Vague generation,

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because she started her career about twenty years later than her colleagues who made their first films mostly in the late sixties and the early seventies. Growing up in metropolitan France or in the French colonies (Badiou was born in Morocco, Rancière in Algeria and Claire Denis grew up in Cameroon, Djibouti and Burkina Faso), during the French colonial wars in Vietnam, Korea and Algeria, this generation witnessed in the fifties and sixties the constant degradation and disintegration of the glorious 'Grande Nation'. Born in the motherland of human rights they discovered, little by little, the crimes perpetrated in the name of their country, the collaboration and the anti-Semitism of the Vichy Regime, the widespread use of torture by French soldiers in Vietnam and Algeria, the racism in everyday life in the colonies or in the mainland, as the population there was confronted with more and more immigrants from the former colonies. As teens these philosophers and filmmakers witnessed or took part in the demonstrations against the Algerian war. As young adults the men were liable to military service in the French Algerian war. Later this generation witnessed or took part in the revolts of May 1968 and went through the disillusion and disorientation of the early seventies. There was no longer any refuge to be taken either in 'La Grande Nation' or in international communism. The post-poststructuralist philosophers, heirs of Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Althusser and Lacan, as well as the post-Nouvelle Vague filmmakers, heirs of Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer and Rivette, found themselves in a world that had lost its horizon. Their work, be it film or philosophy, is marked by the question of community. What are 'we'? How do we relate to each other and what is it that separates us? How can we manage to be together? What do we share and how? What is our common ground and what our isolation? What does it mean to touch one another? In the following two sections I will sketch out very briefly how, in Nancy's writing as well as in Denis's film-making, the questions of the community are linked to a confrontation with the mortal body. Then I will try to show how Nancy and Denis find a parallel for their concept of community in art, with the movement of a text or a film itself.

The inoperative community and the mortal body

The first lines of Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*, a development of an essay first published in 1983, describe the disillusion and resignation of the Seventies, expressed in

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so many of the early films of the post-Nouvelle Vague generation (e.g. Garrel's *Le Lit de la vierge* (1969), Téchiné's *Paulina s'en va* (1969), Doillon's *Les Doigts dans la tête* (1974), Jacquot's *L'assassin musicien* (1975)):

The gravest and most painful testimony of the modern world, the one that possibly involves all other testimonies to which this epoch must answer (...) is the testimony of the dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of community. Communism, as Sartre said, is 'the unsurpassable horizon of our time'... (Nancy 1991,1)

And Nancy continues, some pages further:

... if in fact it no longer is such a horizon, this is not because we have passed beyond any horizon. Rather, everything is inflected by resignation, as if the new unsurpassable horizon took form around the disappearance, the impossibility, or the condemnation of communism. (Nancy 1991, 8)

The disappearance of a sense of community reveals, as Nancy argues further on, the true advent that awaits the individual:

Generations of citizens and militants, of workers and servants of the States have imagined their death reabsorbed or sublated in a community, yet to come, that would attain immanence. But by now we have nothing more than the bitter consciousness of the increasing remoteness of such a community, be it the people, the nation, or the society of producers. However, this consciousness, like that of the 'loss' of community, is superficial. In truth death is not sublated. The communion to come does not grow distant, it is not deferred: it was never to come; it would be incapable of coming about or forming a future. What forms a future, and consequently what truly comes about, is always the singular death ... (Nancy 1991, 13)

In Nancy's first developed reflection on the question of community one can observe how the argument moves with renewed awareness from the observation of a dissolution of community to the individual body that inevitably dies and confronts each and everyone to the senses and senselessness of physical existence. Jacques Derrida, in his study of Nancy's work (Derrida 2000), has followed and commented on every curve and serpentine move Nancy takes to make his philosophical thinking touch the body. In his reading Derrida makes palpable to what extent the thinking of touch constitutes the specificity of the body

of Nancy's writing. In *The Inoperative Community* the move from an unphysical or metaphysical concept of community to the mortal body is very clear and very touching. When I first read it, some years ago, while writing a study of the films of Jacques Doillon (Streiter 2006) it allowed me to understand the new, bitter and desperate tone in the films of the post-Nouvelle Vague generation, their almost physical confrontation with isolation and separateness that prevails even within the 'community of lovers' ('la communauté des amants', a term coined by Blanchot in *La Communauté inavouable* (1983), his written answer to Nancy's essay.)

The body, in Nancy's philosophy, is not the realm of regained communion with oneself or someone else, it is not a presence one can rely on when things fall apart. Its status is highly ambivalent. For Nancy the body is not a font of sense. Instead it is interruption of sense, in the sense of being an obstacle for meaningfulness. Yet all we can do in order to experience what humanity is about is to feel this interruption, to touch it, to be in contact with this loss of sense:

Every day we can put our finger on the fact that in a certain sense, there is no sense left for us: no spoken, pronounced, enunciated, non-physical sense, that would make sense of all the rest. We come to touch a certain interruption of sense that has to do with the body, which is the body. And it is no accident, that with the body this interruption has to do/has to come to terms with the sense in the other sense, with the sense in the sense of feeling, in the sense of touching. To touch the interruption of sense, that is what for me is interesting in the affair of the body. (Nancy 2000a, 112)

This interruption of sense is not altogether negative. It is the space and time that Nancy uninterruptedly thinks. It is the limit, the excess, and the openness where we can experience what is common to us: our being singular and our being mortal. This is what community is about. Community, in the sense Nancy gives it, makes no sense. Rather it makes palpable the interruption of sense. Community is no enterprise to heal the wound of mortality and finitude. Instead it is confrontation with this senselessness. In that sense it realises itself in the sharing of its limits, of its impossibility.

The genuine community of mortal beings, or death as community, establishes their impossible communion. Community therefore occupies a singular place: it assumes the impossibility of its own immanence, the impossibility of a communitarian being in the form of a subject. In a certain sense community

acknowledges and inscribes – this is its peculiar gesture – the impossibility of community. A community is not a project of fusion, or in some general way a productive or operative project – nor is it a project at all (...). A community is the presentation to its members of their mortal truth (...). It is the presentation of the finitude and the irredeemable excess that make up finite being: its death, but also its birth, and only the community can present me my birth, and along with it the impossibility of my reliving it, as well as the impossibility of my crossing over into my death. (Nancy 1991, 15)

Nancy conceives of community as a ‘presentation’, that is as symbolic form. This form presents what is absent. It shows to the living their beginning and their end, alpha and omega. Community in Nancy’s definition functions much like a post-Christian icon: it presents the absence of another world still to come, paradise or heaven. It shows that this world, as it is, this life, as it is, is what God has become when he came down to earth. There is no God left beyond the world. This world is the becoming of God and this becoming has no end, no closure. It is movement and mutation (cf. Nancy 2000a).

Being in touch: Nancy and Denis

The philosophical work of Jean-Luc Nancy and the films of Claire Denis resemble each other strikingly in the way both of them link the question of community, of the impossibilities and necessities of being together, to the body and to touch. For both the philosopher and the filmmaker touch is a terrain where being together and being separate meet, where the bond includes and expresses isolation and vice versa. There is no representation of belonging or homecoming in the work of Nancy and Denis. Things fall apart: concepts of identity, community and immunity as well as of the body, the couple, the family. But over the years both, the philosopher and the filmmaker have created a style of thinking and filmmaking that seems to turn the writing and the filming into the form of the community they think about, they ask questions about. Their writing and filming has become the moment and form of ex-istence, as Nancy puts it, where they expose themselves to questions they have no answers for. They expose themselves as well as the reader and viewer to pain they cannot sooth, to beauty that makes no sense and to a pleasure of writing and filming that never comes to terms with what it explores. Reading *L’Intrus*, Nancy’s essay about the heart transplant he underwent in 1991 and the disastrous

consequences of this operation, I got the feeling that Nancy somehow died in the process and survived only in his writing, in the texture of his thinking, interweaving elements of a philosophical discourse with elements of a horror movie and those of a Catholic liturgy.

Denis's *L'Intrus*, inspired by Nancy's essay, is a film about destruction, violent intrusion and disruption of emotional bonds. People are killed without mercy, hearts are taken out of bodies, and loved ones are all of a sudden left behind. And yet the film ends with a rapturous movement through a winter landscape, with the heavy breathing of dogs and of the woman leading the dog sled. It's a movement out of joy. There is no other purpose than moving the body, feeling the heart pounding, pumping the blood through the veins. This final breathing echoes and transforms all the heavy breathing one has heard during the film. The breathing of a man who is in pain, of a couple about to make love, of dogs waiting for their food, of a man walking up a hill. Breathing that turns into moaning, whispering, crying, howling. Here, in the end, the breathing is that of life, it is the pulsing of the film itself, a movement surviving the images of death it has brought about. For Nancy, Denis's film is not about ideas but about movement, about passages, about rhythm. There is an overall gliding, running, passing, travelling that in the end becomes pure movement. There is no conclusion; instead there is 'movement of movements, sensations of movement', the 'jubilation of a filmmaker', 'filming the film and speeding along with it' (Nancy 2005b).

L'Areligion

Jean-Luc Nancy first commented on a film by Claire Denis in an essay entitled 'L'areligion', published in 2001. The essay refers to *Beau travail*, Denis's study about the French Foreign Legion. Nancy underlines that Hermann Melville's *Billy Budd*, a novella strongly marked by Christian allegory, inspired Denis's film.

Melville's tale is a tale of a Christic passion whose iniquity leads to no salvation, other than the salvation of sailor's poetry, which at the end of the story makes the writing self-referential (Melville was a poet as well). A ship called the *Athée* (the *Atheist*) leaves no room for doubt: the tragedy of Billy is that of Christ in a world without God (Nancy 2004, 15)

In his reading Nancy points to the fact that Denis is consciously working on the underlying theme of a Christian passion, pushing Melville's novel over the edge, in the sense that it is not the protagonist who lives the tragedy of a Christ in a world without God, but the film itself. As Denis will do later with Nancy's essay *L'Intrus*, she works on giving the images such a splendour, such a beauty that instead of representing characters the actors present the film in its force, in its beauty, in its powerful movement.

Image signifies itself in its prestige, in its power, to the extent that it proposes a cult of itself to the point of turning the film into a kind of an icon of the image and of cinema: an icon in the strong sense of the term – in other words an image which in itself gives birth to the image it represents. Everything in the film indicates something of a non-representational, non-figurative affirmation of the image: the power, the intensity, the fire even of a self-presentation. (Nancy 2004, 16-17)

And it is this power of the film that Denis puts into question. She makes it lead nowhere; she pushes it into an abyss. In Nancy's reading the self-presentation of the image in Denis's film is not what it has been accused of being: fascination with fascism. It is not affirmation of a 'sacred power, the sacrality of power and the power of the sacred making up a full, autonomous and exclusive order' (Nancy 2004, 17). Rather it is a reflection upon what could be called Melville's religion. Denis is asking: Can art be a salvation? 'Can beauty save itself? Should it not, rather, save itself from itself? [...] Or, also, if art finds itself in charge of something which is none other than the escheating of the theologico-political order, what does "art" then mean?' (Nancy, 2004, 17). In all of his following essays on Denis's films Nancy stresses the 'areligion' (a term first used by Bataille) of her cinema. It means that her cinema exposes itself to the absence of God, of completeness, of integrity. All of Denis's protagonists move through a world without God. They find no shelter. There is nothing that holds them, not even the film they traverse. Denis's cinema is not a container. It does not close itself upon itself. It is in itself travelling, passing, flirting, plunging, exploring life and death.

Denis – Finding a place

Denis is one of the rare filmmakers of her generation to have studied at the national film school, the IDHEC (Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques, today renamed and

reorganised as 'La Fémis') and the only one to have chosen a very long apprenticeship of fifteen years as an assistant of renowned filmmakers such as Jarmusch, Wenders and Rivette. It took her several years to piece together the production of her first long feature film, situated in the former French colonies in Africa, a rather untypical setting for a first feature film, compared to the constrained spaces of French bedrooms, apartments, houses, and hotels of the early films by her coevals. It is as if, like the protagonist of her film, Denis could only find her place by going back from metropolitan present to French colonial past. In *Chocolat* (1988) a young white French woman returns to Cameroon, where she grew up. The first name Denis gives her protagonist, France, obviously opens the personal quest of identity to a fundamental questioning of a French national identity. France is trying to cope with a feeling of both belonging and separateness in regard to Cameroon, the landscapes and the people of her childhood. During her voyage she remembers herself as a child when she was living there with her parents, a colonial official and his wife. A series of flashbacks reveal that then France was closer to the young black house servant, Protée, than to her parents. Spending much time with Protée, young France clearly perceives the perversity of the colonial system. Nevertheless she remains part of it and is about to adopt the colonial demeanour. This includes objectifying the servant, treating him as a thing that one can look at and talk about, but who is not allowed to talk or to look in return. Yet, there is still some kind of intimacy between France and Protée, a friendship and a willingness to trust on the side of France. One day, this trust is violently destroyed. Protée, refusing sexual advances by France's mother, is humiliated and relegated to the outside of the house. While he is working in a garage on the generator, still upset by what has happened, France, fearing to lose her friend, approaches the garage. She first watches Protée working, then steps closer, asking whether the pipe of the generator is hot. Without a word Protée lays his hand on the pipe. Trustingly the girl does the same only to discover that the pipe is very hot and that Protée willingly burnt the palm of his hand and hers. What they share from now on is this wound that will transform into a scar that inscribes into the body the impossibility to touch, to be with, to share and at the same time the necessity and the burning desire to do so, to relate to the other. This episode marks the traumatic end of France's childhood and a standstill in the personal history. Instead of forming lines telling about the future and the past of each of them,

Protée's and France's palms have formed a blank unchanging scar tissue. The separateness has been burnt into their bodies in the moment they shared pain, grief and loss. After remembering this scene, France gives up her quest for identity in Cameroon. There is no home for her in Africa.

But the filmmaker Denis, with this film, finally found her place. All of her future protagonists stem from a gloomy and troublesome past they cannot return to. They are in a transit, movement, travel, gliding and drifting being the only country they belong to. The protagonists in Denis's films are strangers, immigrants and passers-by, suspended in a no-man's land. The encounter between protagonists might be tenderly or violently erotic, it might be about attraction or repulsion, love or hate, it might be a moment of freedom or surrender to compulsion; the outcome is never a stable composition of forces, a formation of a new couple, a new family, or the finding of a home. These films are like a crossing, an intersection of different routes, different worlds. People in Denis's films are like planets, each one a compact and impenetrable composition of forces and elements. Each one has a drive, a rhythm of existence, an individual way of traversing time and space. They collide, destruct or turn around each other. Their communication lies in the dance of their encounter, in the play of the forces, in the deviation from their respective paths.

A desire to touch is dwelling and swelling in all of Denis's films. It lingers beneath the surface of the images and it underlies the gazing, looking and glancing of the protagonists. There is always a sort of wildness and disruptiveness about it, an unconscious drive that briefly connects people to each other, often against their defensive mind. An unspeakable homecoming waits in the encounter with a stranger, a homecoming that menaces the very home they have constructed so far. The protagonists are overtaken by a staggering appeal to penetrate and to reach the mysteries of the other, to plunge into fusion in order to leave the prison of their isolated existences. But a line has to be crossed, a border to be trespassed, a law to be broken. There is always excess and danger, a threat of simply losing the ground under one's feet or of transgression into madness and murder. More often than not these lines are crossed, the skin is damaged, the bodies opened, the blood shed.

Denis's films are about transgression, pain, disruption and death as intrinsic elements of family links, erotic desires, desires of fusion and communion. Clearly all these

desires are at work in the making of the films as well. It is as if Denis could not stop watching her actors, wanting to be close to them and to explore them further and further. But her films are about presence. That means they are not about understanding protagonists from the inside. Denis's *mise-en-scène* makes it impossible to subordinate the appearance of an actor to reflection about the motivations of the character. Rather that appearance confronts us with individual forms of existence, individual features, gestures, ways of moving, looking, speaking. Denis's films are about the texture of that which is, there, in front of the camera, the impenetrable thickness of it. They are circling around the actors, lingering at the surface of their skin, watching the muscles underneath moving, the blood pulsing. The desire to get beyond perception from the outside, to trespass the border of the skin and to intrude into the interior is palpable. Even more so, as information about the characters, about their history and their motivation is scarce. Denis gives away just what is absolutely indispensable for the viewer to get a rough idea about these things. Much of it remains unspoken. One has to guess or to deduce, one has to follow dispersed signs and recurring motifs that are woven into the fabric of the sequences like a watermark. Excess of sensual impressions in combination with the reduced possibility of rational understanding conveys wildness to the sensual presence of the characters, half erotic, half uncanny. Something about them always remains unfathomable, unreachable. This is why Denis can work with Grégoire Colin, Alex Descas, Béatrice Dalle, Vincent Gallo, Katerina Golubeva, Alice Houri and Michel Subor over and over again. There is something dark, intense and unyielding about them all. They all have a secret core they bring to the film and Denis, together with her camerawoman Agnès Godard, captures the emanation of that core without ever trying to reveal it as such. Intrusion happens only on the level of the narrative of the films whereas the camera never steals the emotions or gestures of an actor out of control. Everything is given by consent and it is the confidence in which the actors can work that makes them give so much of themselves. This is the community that lies within Denis's filmmaking itself, a collective filmmaking that relies on intensive exchange with long standing collaborators like Jean-Pol Fargeau (screenwriting), Nelly Quettier (editing), Jean-Louis Ughetto (sound), Tindersticks and Abdulla Ibrahim (music score). They all contribute to films that circle around the absence of a cosy, closed communion and yet they form another community, inscribing 'the impossibility of community' into the films

they create together. Their project is not about creating a community, but, to put it in Nancy's terms, to face the 'mortal truth' of each of them, to face 'the finitude and the irredeemable excess that make up finite being' (Nancy 1991, 15). There are very few texts that expose the reader so violently and in such a surprising way to the 'mortal truth' of our 'finite being' as Nancy's *L'Intrus*. That makes this essay an almost perfect script for a film by Claire Denis.

The Intruder according to Denis

Nancy's essay on his heart transplant is a horrific account of a disintegrating process in which he not only loses his own failing heart, but subsequently his confidence in his body, his immune identity, his integrity, finally becoming a stranger to himself, an alien, a living-dead man. The text is an intrusion itself, opening with a citation of Antonin Artaud violently insulting the heart as 'the most dirty means' that could possibly be invented 'to pump life into me' (Nancy 2000b, 6). And Nancy continues: 'The Intruder intrudes with violence ...' (Nancy 2000b, 6). There must always be something of an intruder within the stranger, because something of what a stranger brings with him or her can never fully be accepted, remains a violation or a threat. If he or she is fully accepted, if nothing of the stranger has to be kept outside of his or her new environment, then the stranger is no stranger anymore. Any stranger is an intruder.

Since Nancy's operation the heart of a stranger lives inside his body. It is pumping life into him while being rejected by his 'own' body that without this foreign heart would be a corpse. Something is living inside of Nancy that brings about life and death. It causes dangerous immune reactions. The treatment of these reactions causes the outbreak of different viral infections and finally a cancer. Nancy's body is constantly opened, connected to machines, screened, filled with medicine, transformed, controlled. There is something of an *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* about Nancy's account of his voyage through modern medicine and the work of the philosopher consists in trying to reject nothing of this nightmare. Nancy becomes the stranger himself, he has not been invaded, he thinks himself as the process of intrusion, of mutation. He opens his existence to this existence, to this living in the outside of his inside. In the end, his text sounds like the monologue of a space-traveller, projected into the unknown and unlimited universe. Yet,

this piece of autobiographical science fiction is full of echoes and references to the Catholic liturgy, the Genesis and the Apocalypse. Almost like Christ, Son of God, Nancy, presenting his body to the reader, seems to say: *Hoc est enim corpus meum* (these are the opening words of *Corpus*). He concludes his text with a reference to the Apocalypse, talking about himself as the man that is 'capable of the beginning and the end' (Nancy 2000, 48), alpha and omega.

As she did with Melville's *Billy Budd*, Denis picks up the Christian allegory already partly deconstructed and deviated by Nancy and gives it a final twist. Making the relationship between father and son the core of her film she attacks the constitutive element of Christian community: male lineage. She does so by questioning its naturalness. Trébor, the central character played by Michel Subor, is a patriarchal figure, a dark and silent man, maybe a former secret agent, transgressing laws, giving life and death and being in jeopardy of his own life. He has a French son (Grégoire Colin) and two grandsons but shows no interest in his descendants. He is preoccupied. His heart is failing and a mysterious Russian woman (Katerina Golubeva) that follows him like an angel of death is watching him. He feels spied on, menaced. When he hears someone nearby his house in the mountains, he goes out into the dark with a knife and slits the throat of a man with Asian features. Immediately after the murder Trébor orders a new heart. He specifies: 'I don't want the heart of a woman or of an old person. I want to preserve my character. I'm a man.' He pays for the operation with illegal money he has stored in a safe deposit box in a Swiss bank. He also plans a voyage to the southern half of the globe, to reconcile himself to another son he addresses in a letter as the 'beloved son'. This is a son he had with a woman from the Marquesa Islands, a son he never took care of. Without a word he leaves behind his French son to get his heart transplant somewhere, maybe in Russia, maybe in Korea. The operation leaves a scar designed like an unfinished cross marking his chest. He meets a Korean ship-builder to order a ship for the illegitimate son he has never seen but whom all of a sudden he considers to be his heir. He wants him to be like him, an adventurer, sailing across the ocean. He travels to the birthplace of that son. But this son has disappeared. In my reading he was killed by his own father, in the beginning of the film, when Trébor slit the throat of someone prowling about near his house. On the Islands the village people organise a kind of casting to find a symbolic son for Trébor in order to

heel his aching heart. The mysterious woman appears like the angel of annunciation: a body has been found. It is that of his French son. His chest has been opened, as if someone had taken out his heart. It seems that Trébor is living with the heart of his dead son, who, by giving his heart to his father, is resurrected. Somehow Trébor's second life is based on the death of his two sons. In one of the last sequences of the film Trébor is lying on the deck of a ship adrift in the ocean. He rests beside the coffin with his dead French son and his new, symbolic son, a stranger, an immigrant, not a sailor but a surfer, a son Trébor is too weak to reject. This is how Denis takes 'charge of something which is none other than the escheating of the theologico-political order' (Nancy 2004, 17). She is pushing Nancy's essay over the edge, eliminating along with the genealogy the last heroic resorts of Nancy's story, that of the male adventurer, the space traveller, the Son of God. She replaces it with the joyful movement of the only character whose life has been left intact throughout the film: the woman with the sledge, the one living with dogs (Béatrice Dalle). She is the one who, early in the film, when Trébor reaches out to touch her skin pronounces the words of Jesus Christ resuscitated: 'Noli me tangere.' 'Don't touch me.' Nancy writes about Jesus pronouncing these words:

He speaks in order to say that he is there and that he will leave immediately. He speaks in order to tell the other that he is not there where one believes him to be, that he is already elsewhere, but being nevertheless present... (Nancy 2003, 21)

In her withdrawal as well as in her final movement, 'movement of movements', the woman with the dogs represents the movement of the film itself. The conclusion of this movement is, as Nancy writes, 'suspended amidst the verve of the dog sledge and the whip of its woman conductor' (Nancy 2005b).

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