

Thoughts on the erotic:

Erotic cloth is the sweep of silk across dry, warm skin, the almost touch of the caress. It is the awakening to myself and to the cloth through that touch at the surface of my skin.

CATHERINE DORMOR

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Caressing Cloth: The Warp and Weft as Site of Exchange

CATHERINE DORMOR

Skin moves against and towards, across and over skin. It is warm here. Within the intimacy of the moment, an infinitesimal space between opens out and becomes its own universe. Two bodies enfolded within the voluptuousness of that which emanates from within and between.

Entwined, entwining, interlaced, the bodies move and shift, against and alongside and yet do not merge into one. Held together with flexible threads, enabling each other to spill out and over, enabling exorbitance and excess. Movement together continually repeated as it reinforces each's individuality.

You-ness and I-ness spill out and over in their own extravagance

You surface at my skin and I at yours

I Love to You

I come close to you

Thinking of and from an attentive body, this chapter takes as its starting point the notion of the caress as a means of thinking that starts from bodily exchange with cloth. In this it positions warp and weft as a site of agency, production, and erotic exchange.

The interplay of warp and weft offers a means by which to think through the caress as a form of porous communication. Taken initially as an intimate relationship between two, the discussion here will be framed around the notion of the caress as a (re)awakening. This term draws upon Luce Irigaray's search for a language of the caress (2000) and aims to establish a generative space of, and for, bodies, cloths, and structures of cloths that moves from binary towards multiplicity. The caress enables this shift in its focus upon existing and producing within the space, rather than prioritizing notions of arrival, possession, and product.

For Irigaray, the caress is "a gesture between us," that is, "neither active nor passive . . . an awakening of gestures, of perceptions that are at the same time acts, intentions and emotions" (2000: 25). In this sense, then, the caress can be characterized as a gesture-word (*geste-parole*) (ibid.: 26), and thus establishes it as an intentional act that moves between the intimate and the intersubjective. Thus the caress operates both as an invitation to the other and to a return to the self. Such movement between self and other describes a site for the caress that binds together body and world: gesture-in-making and gesture-of-production (ibid.: 25–9). This is a subtle distinction, but one that is worth making here in that subtlety. Where gesture-in-making is the bodily action that expands touching and touched into the space of the caress, i.e., making the caress, gesture-of-production is that which the space of the caress produces, i.e., the awakening of both to that space and its dialogue. It is thus through the space of the caress, the gesture-space, that enables the intimate act to become a site of multiplicity.

In order to construct and explore this framework, three points of departure will be taken: *interlacing*, which explores the idea of the caressing cloth as stimulus between "skins" or bodies; *insertions*, which develops the idea of the caressing cloth as a gesture-space which enables the body to expand and enfold into/onto itself; and finally, an *itinerant* caressing cloth, which sets out in search of a space that can hold both anticipation and memory in repeated, restless relationship.

In thinking about the caress as an awakening to the self, to the other, and to the space generated between and around that gesture, there is the potential for thinking about intimacy and touch beyond the private, but without losing the intensity of that encounter. To this end three artists and artworks will be the focus for this thinking, all of which are monumental in scale, but all offer the caress of cloth as in intense and intimate relationship of openness and porosity: Ann Hamilton's *The Event of a Thread* (2012–13), Chiharu Shiota's *The Key in the Hand* (2015), and Susie MacMurray's *Promenade* (2010). All three artists work with textile, thread, and cloth specifically for its syntax, histories, and haptic potential, making them useful leaping-off points for thinking of cloth as gesture-space.

(Re)awakening

The caress is an awakening to you, to me, to us.

IRIGARAY 2000: 25

Cloth surrounds us from the moment of birth, making it probably unsurprising that it constantly exceeds the cognitive, verbalized meanings, metaphors, and concepts that are applied to it. It is this excessive, exorbitance and overflowing of language that gives cloth its potency, but also makes talking about it complex and sometimes fraught. Textile practitioner and theorist Solveigh Goett describes the particular affinity that arises between skin and cloth as one that is self-evident (Goett in Jefferies et al. 2016: 122). For Goett, this intimate, self-evident relationship becomes the basis for a bodily understanding of cloth. Cultural theorist Sarat Maharaj refers to such overflowing of cognition and knowing as "boundaried boundarilessness" (1991: 94), as a means for thinking about the excessiveness of cloth that doesn't attempt to pin it down, to restrict its fluidity and multiplicity. Janis Jefferies (2016) refers to textiles' "ambivalence," which conjures up similar notions and flags up textiles' resistance to such bounding. Such ambivalence brings us back to Goett's "first and second skins," and the intimate, porous, and excessive relationship between cloth and body: "Textile knowledge emerges from experience involving all the senses—it touches the skin, enters through the nose, makes sounds and has taste . . . experience lived and felt by being, quite literally, in touch with textiles" (Goett in Jefferies et al. 2016: 130).

Body and cloth's caress is further interwoven by the caressing of warp and weft within the cloth itself. Cloth is produced through this intimacy, giving both warp and weft agency in the erotic charge, mirroring and expanding the exchange between body and cloth. Thus cloth and body produce together an intimate, caressing space of woven cloth, warp, weft, skin, and body, forming a supplementary perspective for knowing, making and activating: for thinking through cloth, which like the caress becomes a site of erotic exchange: of excessiveness and exorbitance.

Interlacing

As skin caresses skin, cloth caresses skin, skin caresses cloth, they exist in proximal relationship. To think of this as an interlacing between skin, cloth, and skin is to think of an intricate crisscrossing of threads that can be loosened or tightened accordingly.

the event of a thread is made of many crossings of the near at hand and the far away: it is a body crossing space, is a writer's hand crossing a sheet of paper, is a voice crossing a room in a paper bag, is a reader crossing with a page and with another reader, is listening crossing with speaking, is an inscription crossing a transmission, is a stylus crossing a groove, is a song crossing species, is the weightlessness of suspension crossing the calling of bell or bellows, is touch being touched in return. It is a flock of bird and a field of swings in motion. It is a particular point in space at an instant of time.¹

Installed in the Park Avenue Armory, New York, the work is complex and intricate, constructed from ropes, pulleys, swings, readers, writers, birds, and waves of white silk, 70 foot high and more than twice the hall's width.

The installation focuses around an immense, white silk cloth suspended across the center of the armory's 55,000 square foot Drill Hall. On either side, at intervals, are



Figure 42. Ann Hamilton, *The Event of a Thread*, 2012. Wade Thompson Drill Hall, Park Avenue Armory, New York, USA. Photographer: Al Foote III.

forty-two wood-plank swings, big enough for two adults, each suspended with heavy chains to both the ceiling beams and to the rope-and-pulley system supporting the cloth. The swings are for the viewers, and it is their swinging that animates the cloth, causing it to billow and swirl above the floor, as more viewers lie beneath.

Surrounding and embellishing the cloth and swings are further elements that intertwine with one another: a flock of homing pigeons that coo and peck in their cages; forty-two radios in paper bags that viewers can carry with them and listen to their broadcasts; broadcasts made by readers at one end of the hall reading from scroll-like texts (Charles Darwin, William James, Ann Lauterbach, Thomas Emerson); a scribe at the other end writing unscripted texts in response to the space and its inhabitants (letters, poems, short stories, disconnected scraps of thought). At the end of each day, the pigeons are released from their day cages, free to fly around the hall and trained during the timespan of the installation to return to their large homing cage, serenaded by a vocalist. Each day the song is cut into a record, ready to be played back during the following day.

The white cloth undulates and billows in response to the swings, while viewers lie and sit beneath, raising their hands upwards to feel its caress. The cloth moves backwards and forwards, sweeping up and down, capturing its audience within its folds—each apparently caught up in the intimacy of its caress within the public space and publicly in intimate caress.

Hamilton speaks of the many crossings as a particular point in space at an instant of time, a way of talking that captures the sense of the caress as an interlacing. Through these crossings or interlacings of the caress the partners exist together to surface at each other's skin.

To think of this work in terms of the caressing cloth calls to mind Hannah Arendt's summons to enlarged thinking: "To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting" (1978: 257).

For Arendt it is imagination that allows us to see the world from another's point of view. In this sense, then, Arendt's "visiting imagination" is the mechanism of interlacing by which we are able to gain another's vantage point or viewpoint. Visiting is "being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not" (Arendt 1966: 241). Thus the visiting imagination entails the preservation of one's own identity, while metaphorically or physically placing

ourselves alongside that other and allowing thinking to run "from place to place" (ibid.: 242).

To go visiting is to spend time in those places, with their residents, to be introduced through their eyes and bodies, rather than in place of them. Interlacing offers a mechanism or process for approaching, for coming into intimate proximity with others, with identities distinct from our own but to which we can relate through our own experiencing of them and through our enlarged imagination.

The event of a thread takes its viewer visiting, criss-crossing the voluminous space of Park Avenue Armory, to Anni Albers' reflection that all weaving traces back to "the event of a thread" (1965: 13), to the swingers moving to and fro, activating the excessive white cloth that bags and billows above the expectant bodies strewn below. The parts affect each other and yet retain their own individuality within the whole. *The event of a thread* lingers between solitary acts and communal field: there is an attendance, an enlargement towards the others along the crossings, threads and interlacings that make up this work.

T'ai Smith, in her essay "The Event of a Thread" (2015: 76–88) goes visiting Anni Albers and the Bauhaus to understand what the event Albers refers to is. Smith argues that Albers brings together the specificity of weaving cloth with other modes of thought (such as philosophy, economics, and poetry) in order to transform the ubiquitous and thus unspoken known into thought patterns that matter. In visiting, Smith approaches the event of a thread in dialogue with Albers and finds a mode for thinking that is not *about* weaving, but one that emerges *from* within its structures and processes, from the caresses.

Returning to Hamilton's *the event of a thread*, the caresses between warp and weft, cloth and skin affect and are affecting, touch and touched in reciprocal exchange. This interlaced space of the caress acts as a stimulus between that exceeds and spills over in exorbitant production: makes space for the erotic charge of the caress.

In this spilling over, the cloth and its interlacing together is exceeded. Like the caress, it awakens to the other and thus becomes Maharaj's "boundaried boundarilessness." In the intimacy of the caressing space, of body and cloth the exorbitance generated requires a supplementary approach, a means to enable and support the expansion and excess. This space needs to be expandable to work more closely to the body, but also to enable greater movement through the insertion of extra fabric sections. Such

insertions simultaneously stabilize the cloth structures and create greater fluidity and flexibility in relation to the body. In this sense they extend the work of interlacing, responding to the awakening stimulated, allowing the silk to move freely to and fro across the shoulder, giving space for the wool to drape down the leg.

Insertion

Where Hamilton presents the viewer with a voluptuous, excessive, caressing cloth, Chiharu Shiota's *The Key in the Hand* (2015) features dense webs of threads. Shiota's web or hyphology² entails themes of remembrance, home, and the loss of childhood and result in the production of quietly mysterious, disturbing, and poetic artworks. As the spider, she spins her webs, her tissue incorporating and enveloping her prey: keys, boats, photographs, videos, memories, children, and viewers. These thread secretions invade and insert themselves into the space, establishing a tensional field that holds the viewer between the familiar and unfamiliar, safety, and danger. The works threaten to entrap, while at the same time they promise of travel and movement. The web of threads and its entrapments appear to reach out towards that viewer, creating a gesture-space

that invites the viewer into the space: a point of erotic charge. The boundaries between threads, boats, keys, artist, and viewer become porous and each becomes enhanced and diffused in the touch of one upon the other. The caress as insertion suggests a gesture-space that hovers between invasion and refuge, parasitic and symbiotic, not quite either, always provisional.

Touch, and thus the caress, has a physical manifestation and process that is useful here in locating cloth as a site of erotic and creative exchange. The two upper layers of the skin, the epidermis and the dermis, are the organs of touch only when acting reciprocally and in tandem with one another. The epidermis is the upper surface of the skin, the outermost, protective layer; this is the layer we see. Beneath this lies the dermis, the thickest layer and home to the sense receptors for most forms of touch, pressure, and pain.

In the act of touching and caressing, the epidermis is what is felt and it is the dermis that feels. As the one lover caresses the other, so both partners are active, meaning-making participants, both feeling and felt, dermis and epidermis, simultaneously reversing and connecting. Thus to feel is to be felt as the activity of dermis and epidermis of both partners come together at the site of the skin.

The shape of such an exchange can be thought of in terms of cloth insertions. By this I mean the sort of



Figure 43 Chiharu Shiota, *The Key in the Hand*, 2015. Installation for the Japan Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennale.

insertion found in tailoring, whereby extra fabric is inserted to expand, shape, and extend the flow and fit of the garment: godets, gussets, and gores.³ The insertion is thus a supplement to the main body of the garment.

For Jacques Derrida, the supplement as an addition functions as an extra or surplus that enriches and completes, so that the original elements that have been supplemented can be recognized fully (1976: 144–6). In this way the garment without a gusset, godet, or gore sits against the body, but once the extra fabric piece has been added, it moves and flows *with* that body—the supplement recognizes the body and completes the both garment and body. In this sense, then, the insertion resists a supporting role, establishing itself as necessary and vital to both garment and body.

To think of the caress in terms of an insertion or supplement to the relationship between body and cloth is to think of it in terms of a gesture-space within which both partners act as insertions to one another, neither penetrating nor submitting to one another. Here skin and cloth are mutable and undulating. Here Goett's "first and second skins" slip and slide against each other, touching and being touched in reciprocal and simultaneous exchange.

Returning to Shiota's work, *The Key in the Hand* comprises multiple insertions. The elements of the work constantly move and shift against, toward and with one another, supplementing one another. Within the delicate and yet enveloping mesh of threads, Shiota scripts their multiple stories: stories of journeys planned and taken, planned and abandoned, unplanned, imagined, forced. Wool, keys, boats, screens, and images become epidermis and dermis by turns. Their surfaces approach the skin and in so doing bring the whole body into play as a site of, and for, the caress—body, thread, image, and skin—the caress completed through one another.

Philosopher Edith Wyschogrod describes the caress as a "feeling-act through which a self grasps the affective act of another through an affective act of its own" (1981: 28) Such a feeling-act is a necessarily repetitive and time-laden activity, the to and fro, dermis and epidermis, crucial to its transformative and generative potential. The caress as insertion emphasizes its potential as a site of erotic awakening and creative expansion.

In spinning passageways and webs, Shiota describes the intimacy of being in relationship. Shiota's work derives from a form of intercultural experience and as such is redolent of fluid meaning and fertile paradoxes. With multiple

and layered readings she extends and supplements the interwoven, ethical, political, and aesthetic issues evident within her practice. This work, while undeniably powerful, also maintains a subtle dialect, a caressing.

The Key in the Hand draws attention to notions of safety and intimacy that the action of holding and feeling a key in the hand offer. Keys have the potential to protect and give entry to their bearer: our houses, our belongings, our personal safety. We hold them safely in our hands, they warm to our touch, we feel their weight and form, and we turn the lock to open. Keys are given as coming-of-age symbols; they stand as a symbol of privilege and safety for many. This multilayered narrative inserts closeness into distance, openness into protection: supplementing and completing.

As multiple and moving elements drift to and fro across Shiota's images/screen, so they become spaces of supplementarity, separation, reconnection, and completion. The dermal layers are caught up in the action of touching: the outer, sensed epidermis and the inner, sensing dermis, surface and resurface throughout *The Key in the Hand*. Skin and thread are brought into contact with the viewer as the dermis and epidermis of Shiota, the children, their memories, the boats, the red glow from the threads cutting across the gallery spaces, the physicality of the passageways formed, the hands holding keys, and the revealing and concealing of thoughts and spaces. The insertions complete the form: identity and alterity emerge on the surface, the skin, of the work.

To think of the caressing cloth in terms of insertions—as godets, gussets, and gores that supplement and complete both body and cloth—acts as a reminder that the caress is not a static, once and forever moment of touch. Instead, it moves, shifts, turns, and repeats. It is itinerant, nomadic, and homeless. Like the insertion, it sits within the seam, as an extra-dermal layer, within the site of the skin. This leads to the third point of departure: an *itinerant* caressing cloth, a cloth that passes to and fro repeatedly awakening and reawakening the skin it touches.

An Itinerant, Caressing Cloth

The caress as gesture-space that expands the distance of the intimate requires an attentiveness to the other with whom the space is being formed. In this sense it expands presuppositions of intimate here and distance there in favor of attentiveness toward that other.

With such attentiveness at the heart of the site of the caress, there is already an anticipation of movement and openness. To think of the caress as an itinerant relationship is to think of it as one in which mind and body together experience and negotiate the landscape. To be itinerant means to move from place to place, habitually, and often following a particular circuit or route, typically to work. Irigaray suggests that to move in this way is to move, “through the world, across the universe of dancing [to] construct more of a dwelling for myself” (1984: 175) For Deleuze and Guattari, the nomad is an agent taken up with unfinished business, who draws upon settled and sedentary ideas, to unsettle them within the gaps between (1980: 380)

Taking these as starting points for thinking of an itinerant, caressing cloth, sets it as a traveling cloth, one that knows and is known through repeated movement and through doing rather than by looking. The lovers’ caresses, then, can be thought of as an itinerant form of touch that is performative, repetitive, and active.

Progress within the caress is intense and all-consuming, holding within itself a sense of infinity, a repeating without return, each moment of and for itself. At the same time as the caress awakens, so too it authors its own demise. Itinerant, the caress moves away, leaving the memory of the touch, perhaps a temporary hotness in the skin. But unless revitalized with further caresses, the heat soon cools and dissipates. So, the caress relies on the repeated visit: skin returning to skin, silk falling against thigh, wool settling against arm. Movement repeated is necessary to (re)awaken the caress.

When I first encountered one of Susie MacMurray’s installations at Pallant House, Chichester, my immediate response to the shell and velvet “wallpaper” of *Shell* (2006) was a bodily attentiveness to the materials, an awareness of their pulsating rhythms up and down the stairwell into which this site-specific work had been installed. Here 20,000 or more shiny black mussel shells, each stuffed with blood red velvet lined the walls in serried ranks, ordered and yet disorderly with the velvet pieces escaping the mussel lips: each shell like its neighbors, but withholding its individuality in its markings, the length of its opening and its openness. At once both foodstuff and yet there is no hiding from the notes of erotica, bodiliness, menstruation, and female sexuality, MacMurray’s shells roam between intensity and sterility, order and chaos, the monumental and the intimate.

In the massed forms of MacMurray’s broader work, the imprints of small elements build to monumental scale and meaning. There is a logic of production which mimics and mirrors the bodily, referencing it both directly and obliquely. In this sense, the notion of an itinerant practice cuts between that of site-specific art installation, performance, obsession, and time-laden repetitive production.

MacMurray plays with these themes, producing work that is both temporary and permanent, but with her main preoccupation on histories, biographies, site-sensitivity, and the evocative language of her materials. It is in, and through, the repetitive, repeated, and persistent form of her materials that she seduces and entices the bodily viewer into her works. Like the caress, these works are not about possession, for that is to reach out too quickly and to prioritize arrival over the journey. As Catherine Harper writes of MacMurray’s practice: “Each material is carefully considered to find its emotional pitch and to activate its internal content” (2006).

It is this notion of an emotional pitch emanating from the repeated and repeating form in the materials that resonates with the caress: the potency, the vibrancy and the erotic charge: awakening and reawakening—itinerant and traveling. Harper continues, this time referring to MacMurray’s use of hair in *Maidenhair* (2001): “I was electrified by the perfect pitch of the moment when my body entered is affective arena, and the human thread knotted itself around the intangible, ephemeral, essential parts of my soul” (2006). In her powerful and yet often physically delicate works, the imprint of MacMurray’s presence and labor is evident: it is as if they are continually in the process of growing, expanding, and producing.

Taken as itinerant, the caressing cloth can be characterized as an ecology, an ecology of materials, making, and affect. To approach MacMurray’s work in this way brings into focus the artist’s labor and agency of production. Like the caress itself, there is a precarity to the ecology. As the lover caresses and is caressed, self must give way to the other, but remain caressing that other. As she plays with the language of the heroic sculptor and the monumental, so she subverts it through her modes of production, materials, sites, and histories. In this way her practice caresses and seduces the viewer onto the surfaces, into the installations, and into the labor, agency, and materiality of her work.

In a another installation *Promenade* (2010), MacMurray warped 105 miles of gold embroidery thread between the

neoclassical columns in the Marble Hall at Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire. As MacMurray's golden thread wound its way to and fro between the columns, their delicacy and luminescence were bathed in a wash of light from above, creating a sense of volume and capaciousness from within their fineness. The threads shimmered against the alabaster, each held in careful tension: taught enough to remain in place, but not so tight as to weaken and thus break. The whole glistened between the huge columns, each thread contributing to the one before in creating a translucent screen. As itinerant, repeated action, the caress creates meaning in the present and awakens memory of the past. At its core is the (re)awakened relationship between: as one opens out to, and onto, the other, so a reciprocal rather than reversible relational interplay occurs.

In MacMurray's work the caress as itinerant gesture offers a reading that brings artist, artwork, installers, and viewers into proximal and intimate relationship. In the timespan and tensioning of their caressing, both lovers exist on both sides of the skin's boundaries—boundaries collapse at the level of bodily encounter. As the hand comes into contact with the thread and winds it around the column, surface, and volume emerge, bringing *Promenade* into being. MacMurray places the labor of her work within the register of the visceral body, stretching and expanding across that body, her materials and the sites towards and beyond each other. Such knowing through the body transcends language without eradicating language and the search for an appropriate language. To know in this way is not through the fusion of object and subject, but rather through the itinerant caressing between subjects.

Reawakening

The caress, defined as the gentle touch or gesture of fondness, comprises the mutual touch between two subjects. To consider the interplay between body and cloth as the caress is to establish a form of thinking-with-cloth from an attentive body. In (re)awakening that body-cloth relationship the reciprocal nature of the caress becomes foregrounded as one of openness, mutuality, and production. In the intimacies of the caress each participant enables the dynamic exchange of action and reception, in a mirroring or replication of the warp-weft exchange within woven cloth. Here the agency of each creates openness toward the other and reception of

their touch, carrying in that moment the erotic charge that moves touching into caressing. Thought of in this way establishes the body-cloth caress as doubly awakening in the sense that as warp is caught up in caress with weft, so warp and weft together become caught up in caress with the body.

In this way the caress moves beyond touching and being touched, its erotic charge secreted through its generative and productive aspirations. This erotic charge between cloth and body circulates and repeats, growing and expanding. In this sense, then, the themes of interlacing, insertion and itinerancy become here staging points from which to approach this interplay between body and cloth.

Where interlacing foreground crossings, re-crossings and expansion, Hamilton's white, caressing cloth envelops and undulates around, above and beyond the viewers' bodies, returning again and again. Here the body and cloth go visiting, enlarging each other's sense of self in bounded boundarilessness. This interlaced space becomes here a series of events of threads, operating together and in sequence with each other: as warp and weft pass between and around each other in the process of forming the cloth, each event or passing affects those that precede and those that succeed while being themselves affected in turn. In this way, the interlaced space is not so much concerned with beginnings and endings of those threads and actions, but rather about the pliability and expandability that such a way of being in relation enables.

Inserting a godet, gusset, or gore into a garment supplements the cloth and completes the body. At this site of exchange, both body and cloth are in reciprocal relationship: touched and touching. It is through the reciprocation that the erotic charge is sparked. Shiota's thread secretions invade and insert and complete both viewer and artwork. In the intimacy and exorbitance created by the caressing threads, this work recognizes the multiple bodies and completes them, making them possible as the caress makes each partner possible.

The caress relies upon repeated, itinerant visiting to awaken and reawaken the erotic charge between. Here MacMurray's *Promenade* sets its wandering between the alabaster pillars, creating capaciousness within their delicacy. As the itinerant traveler moves within the space of the threads, so both are brought together again, reawakened by one another, and so increasingly eroticized in the space of the everyday. Boundaries collapse between body and thread. The itinerant nature of the caress becomes a circle

of touched, touching and sharing between body and cloth. Each caresses the other; they are temporarily, mutually, eroticized in the one space and yet remain resolutely two. To engage itinerant caress is to “go visiting,” to see alongside another’s skin, which is to unsettle and thus expand. The itinerant traveler knows and understands the landscapes, experience its shifts and changes. To travel in this way is to exist in an unfinished state of exchange which, like the caressing cloth, needs to be unfinished in order to retain its agency of movement, its very itinerant nature.

At the outset of this chapter I referenced the caress through thinking and caressing Irigaray’s text *To Be Two* (2000). Within that same book she continues, here allowing breath to caress rather than cloth, but which resonates loudly with the caressing cloth:

Who will allow me to remain two: the one, the other and the air between us? . . . Each one, therefore, trains the breath in order to be, to be and to become: divided between us, perhaps, but together at the same time. Distance by our difference, but present to each other.

IBID.: 11

In a relationship of mutual exchange and erotic charge, what is the thing that distinguishes one from, at the same time as uniting one with, another? What enables me to touch and be touched in equal measure? The caressing cloth, as Goett’s “second skin” offers a site at which warp and weft, together with cloth and skin, awaken to each other and to themselves.

Within the body–cloth space, arises the spring of mutual caress, of both otherness and unity. Through interlacing with one another, acting as insertions for one another and so supplementing, the parties are enabled to go visiting. At this site, otherness and unity together spark erotic charge where cloth finds skin, skin finds cloth, skin finds skin, and cloth finds cloth. Warp and weft are brought together as a site of agency, exorbitance, and erotic charge.

Notes

- 1 Artist’s statement: <http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/armory.html> (accessed July 12, 2016).
- 2 For Roland Barthes, all text is a perpetual weaving and unweaving and is thus a fundamental undoing. In this he considers the theory of the text as a *hyphology*, where *hyphus* is the tissue and the spider’s web (1975: 64).

- 3 A gusset is an extra piece of fabric inserted into a seam to shape or expand the garment; gussets are most commonly found in the underarms and the crotch of clothing and form the side or bottom panels in bags. A godet is also an inserted piece of fabric, but this time it is a circular sector and most usually set into the lower part of a dress or skirt to add width and volume. A gore is in many ways similar to the godet, but usually runs from the waistband down to the hem. The overall effect is a more gentle fullness than with a godet.

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