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MOVE AND REST IN PEACE

“Pathosformel” in *Mamootot*, A Dance Work by Ohad Naharin,
Batsheva Dance Company

In the middle of the dance, one dancer steps into the center of the stage and gets undressed (fig. 1). A female dancer lies with her back on the floor beneath him, and observes her hands. She wears an outfit resembling the one he wore a moment before: lusterless, pastel, and pale overalls with long sleeves. Her exposed body parts are dyed with grayish powder. His naked body is covered with the same material. Seven dancers are sitting among the audience and looking at the two dancers in the middle. Their outfits are similar, yet distinguished from one another by small nuances and tones.

In the described moment, the woman rests still, but before the man joined her in the center, she had moved there alone. In her solo, she looked as if she was unsuccessfully trying to hold on to last forces of movement and life. She slowly folded her body on the floor, pushing it, and collapsing again. When she was shoving her body away from the ground, she gained, for a short while, a floating state in her flesh, but then again these momentary somatic lifts disappeared into breakdowns. In her movements, it seemed as if traces of living forces began trickling inside her. Then she stood up while the living vibrations she had reached were still proceeding within her body. As she was slowly vibrating, her arms flung into the air in repetitive, sharp explosions. While doing so, her fingers became thick and folded, as if she was trying, repeatedly, to reach something beyond her scope. Then her hands, limbs, and face became soft. She appeared to be calmly defeated. She then became thick again and started to shake from her inside, finally to fall, trembling, to the floor and onto her back. Alone in the space, moving as if unwonted physical impacts controlled her actions, she looked suffering and overpowered. Therefore, in the moment the man stepped towards her, one expected that he was coming to help. He looked at her briefly, and took off his suit.

When the male dancer entered, the woman was folding her body like a baby at his feet. By the time he had gotten undressed, it seemed as if perhaps he



Fig. 1 *Mamootot* (Ohad Naharin, Batsheva Dance Company), He stands naked, she is folded like a baby towards his feet, Photo by Gadi Dagon.

was going to cover her, however, instead of touching her, he started to pose nakedly. The woman rolls on her back again. As he starts to move, she rests and stares at her empty hands. In his exhibition, he seems to completely ignore her existence, just as he ignores his audience. His attention is directed towards himself. Thus, he seems indifferent to every single gaze in the room. At the same time, his movements and postures express a sheer presentation. He shows off his muscles, his thickly powdered body gives the impression that he is made out of stone. Due to his positions and movements, his pale muscular body resembles a sculpture rather than a human being. His postures seem to copy an inanimate material which imitates the celebration of life. Subsequently, the artificiality of his positions protects him from the intimacy of the audience's stares; he is not Steffan Ferry (the dancer's name), but rather an aesthetic material that

captures the aura of the perfect male. His nudity ceases to be his own. However, since he is focused on his own moves, it looks as if he was aware of his own appearance. Consequently, he acquires a dialectic quality; as a human, admiring spectator and as his object of glorification. His dance turns into a narcissistic play. As if he was joyfully gaining alertness towards his own objectification in praise of the human body, he starts kissing his shoulders. When he kisses himself, the tension in his flesh converts into softness. By means of this new smoothness in his physicality, he appears to regain his exclusive quality as an individual human being; one who possesses feelings and vulnerability. Suddenly, he changes his attitude and spits onto his arms, strains his shoulder muscles again, and then returns to kissing his limbs. Kissing and spitting onto himself alternately, he transforms between a softening and a tensing of his skeleton and flesh. He sits down and almost lays himself next to the still female, but then he spits onto himself again, and comes back to the ritual of posing, spitting, and kissing. He observes himself; his gaze follows his own bodily positions as he transfers his stiff arms from side to side like a mobile statue.

After his performance, the female dancer rolls back towards him and stands up. He lifts her and carries her in his arms; her covered stomach touches his naked belly. They look at the audience and present themselves; her face is soft and tranquil, his face is stretched into a big smile from his mouth to his eyes, as if he was wearing a mask. She appears in front of us, covered, yet exposed in her simplicity and vulnerability. He stands there unclothed, yet protected by his heroic gestures.

This sequence is taken from Ohad Naharin's *Mamootot*, a dance he created for Batsheva Dance Company in 2003. In it, there are two solos that take place successively. At the end of this scene, a touch occurs between the dancers for the first time. The touch creates a connection between them, which was missing in their individual movements before. Accordingly, their performances require a reinterpretation as a duet that is divided into two parts. Furthermore, this split evokes a complexity of contrasting emotions in the viewer, which are combined in the final act into one ambivalent experience. While the solo of the female provokes empathy towards her, the solo of the male gives rise to a contemplative enjoyment of the aesthetics of the body. The final scene, in which the man carries the woman in his arms, keeps the difference of their situations articulated; the woman is an object of compassion, whereas the man presents himself as a glorified hero. This performance confronts the viewer with contradicting emotional impacts, in which pleasure deriving from the narcissistic act and compassion become mixed. As a result, the viewer identifies with the experience of him- or herself and the experience of the other at the same time. That is to say: he or she shares both intimacy with, and distance from, the image on stage.

This kind of emotional ambiguity between empathy and alienation in art was captured in Aby Warburg's "Pathosformel."¹ Warburg argued that expressions which are embodied in gestures evoke emotional arousal that is enclosed inside the artistic formula. Horst Bredekamp sees in Warburg's term the manifestation of the distanced, yet intimate quality in art. This aesthetic quality enables people to reflect upon themselves. As Bredekamp analyzes the "Pathosformel": "Mit ihren gegensätzlichen Bestandteilen stellte Warburg das 'Pathos' als momentan gesteigerte, körperliche Reaktion einer erschütterten Seele gegen das Ethos als beständiges Charakterelement, dem die Gefühlskontrolle als 'Formel' obliegt. Diese konfliktreiche Kreuzung bietet den Rahmen für immer neue Kombinationen, in denen beide, das Pathos wie auch die Formel, in sich gestört und damit die Reflexion erfordernd, auftreten können."²

Warburg stresses the influence of the physical gesture in art. Accordingly, when bodily gestures are captured in pictures, they function as a corporeal memory. The physical manner becomes a symbolic form that cannot be translated into language. It is a recollection of the form and the experiences that actualized it. The traces of memory contained in physical expression lead to an overwhelming and intense assemblage of emotions (Pathos) that are yet schematized inside an artistic order (Formula).

"Pathosformel" delineates *Mamootot*, since coexistence of alienation and empathy is the strongest impact this dance work bears on its audience. Moreover, dance, as such, is movement of the body in time and space. Therefore, each movement is an invitation for this effect. In *Mamootot*, however, the transformation between distance and intimacy becomes the essence of the work and its theme. This impact is created in each moment the work produces. This essay follows the arousal of emotions via the forms *Mamootot* creates. For this purpose, it examines the role of embodied feelings in dance works as such. The main point of departure of this investigation is Warburg's sensitivity to the body in the arts. Following this sensitivity, the analysis deals with the moving body and the different timing and spatial dynamics it enacts together with the other features of the dance work, such as music, spatial arrangements, and the other dancers on stage.

- 1 Aby Warburg: *Genese der Pathosformel*, in: id.: *Werke in einem Band*, ed. by Perdita Ladwig/Martin Treml/Siegrid Weigel, Berlin 2010, pp. 31–186.
- 2 Horst Bredekamp: *Theorie des Bildakts*, Berlin 2010, p. 298.

Life and Death

Mamootot is the first work Ohad Naharin has created after his wife and colleague, Mari Kajiwaru, died of cancer at the end of 2001. Because the work deals with essences of life and images of death, this biographical detail becomes important. Moreover, in Hebrew, the name Mamootot (ממוותות) contains the word death (מות) twice. One death embraces the other (ממותרות). Thus, it evokes a metaphoric meaning in which the loss of the other is incorporated in the loss of oneself. But the meaning of the word does not end here. Literally, Mamootot in Hebrew refers to mammoths, an ancient, strong species that does not exist anymore. Hence, the duality, between the distance from an unfamiliar existence and identification with the demise of the other is already incorporated in the name. The dynamics between the two contradicting meanings, the metaphorical and the literal, evokes an aesthetic tension. Thus, the name becomes much more than a denotation. As such, it becomes an integral part of the dance; the name acts like an image, by which a range of emotions is evoked, in one simple word that pictures much more than one object in the world.

Space

Tension between the two emotional states of empathy and alienation is evoked in the audience the moment it enters the space, even before the movement begins. The original and main location of the work is the working studio of Batshava Dance Company, in which the dancers practice daily.³ This feature allows the spectators to take a glimpse into the intimate sphere of the company. Thus, before the dancers come in, closeness between them and the viewers is established. The space, however, is reorganized for the performance, and the dancers enter the studio only after the audience is already seated and the lights have been dimmed. The differentiation between the everyday life of the company (and the audience) and the aesthetic sphere is kept clear. Moreover, the spectators choose their seats in one of four corners of the studio, in which the seats have been arranged in three lines. This feature creates proximity of each spectator to the center. Furthermore, since the spectators surround the dancing area, during the entire performance each viewer is able to observe the others in the room. Nevertheless, the viewer is not only able to easily watch the others, but is also exposed to the sight of both the other spectators and the dancers. The lighting supports this feeling as well; it provides the whole studio with the same amount of exposure. Thus, the audience does not feel protected in the dark. In addition,

3 Outside of Tel-Aviv and Israel, the dance is performed in other locations, but never on a frontal stage.

among the audience, eight places are reserved for the dancers. When they are not performing in the center, they sit in the first row, between the viewers, two dancers in each corner. This sitting arrangement declares the audience area an integral part of the work. On the one hand, the physical closeness serves as a means to increase intimacy, but on the other hand, the exposure of the audience during the performance also evokes self-awareness, and therefore dialectically increases distance⁴ (fig. 2).⁵



Fig. 2 Dancer and audience, Photo by Gadi Dagon.

4 See Edward Bullough: "Psychical Distance" as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle, in: *British Journal of Psychology* 5 (1912), pp. 87–117.

5 The body language of the viewer in the picture illustrates the coexistence of distance and intimacy among the audience. While her face is open to the dancer, her body is closed and protected from the dancer's movement, and distinguishes her from the performing sphere.

Body

Since dance is movement of bodies in time and space, meanings and emotions are delivered in it first and foremost physically. Dances might create a system of codifying their basic elements, through conventions of positions, gestures, and movements. Nevertheless, dance's powerful expression is not based on artificial symbolism (such as the denotation of language), but rather on the natural expression of the living body in time and space. That is to say: the impact of the symbols is a sheer meaning, which is precisely articulated, and yet heightened in its expressive complexity and infinity of signification. Mary Douglas writes: "[T]he living body furnishes a system of natural symbols."⁶ According to Douglas, even though the body is individual, it occurs only in communities. Because the personal body is also cultural, bodily movements convey symbolic meaning. John Michael Krois interprets and enriches Douglas' claim when he argues that according to this understanding, "the 'medium' of symbols is life itself."⁷ Bodily movements directly form ideas and emotions concerning life because human beings live, experience, and interact with their surroundings through their bodies. Therefore, the living body in dance becomes an exclusive, vital form of communication. Moreover, this vitality of the living body, which performs its movements here and now, creates in dance a special tension between a formulated idea and its natural expression. This tension constructs a special relationship between the artistic semblance and the actual directness of expression. As Frank Thiess remarked: "the body [of a ballerina] is supposed to appear weightless, and thus, from artistic point of view to be so."⁸ Therefore, in dance, there is a chance for the "Pathosformel" to appear in various layers. It is evoked in a complex way inside the images the bodies produce and in their physical actuality.

The delivery of meaning through movement starts after the audience has been seated, and when the dance begins. The prologue of the dance creates intimacy due to the simplicity of expressions. A single dancer enters the center of the stage in silence; no music is played. She stands in front of one side of the audience, looks at the spectators, bends her knees, folds her arms, and bends her neck. In result, her gaze moves from the audience towards herself. She moves her arms and jumps close to the floor repetitively. Between her leaps, she takes short breaks. Her movements look as if each jump was another attempt to gain force, but this energy is not enough to supply her movements with vibrancy.

6 Mary Douglas: *Natural Symbols. Exploration in Cosmology*, New York 1973, p. 12.

7 John Michael Krois: *Cassirer's "Prototype and Model" of Symbolism. Its Sources and Significance*, in: Horst Bredekamp/Marion Lauschke (eds.): *Bildkörper und Körperschema*, Berlin 2011 (*Actus et Imago II*), p. 52.

8 Frank Thiess: *Der Tanz als Kunstwerk: Studien zu einer Ästhetik der Tanzkunst*, München 1920, p. 63.

She proceeds with circular motions that are broken over again. Then, at once, she moves fluently, her movements becoming explosive and big. Suddenly however, a small float passes through her body, and she melts into herself. Then she poses again, her gestures are simple. She bends her knees as before, curves her arms, and comes back to her first position. Now her body seems to melt, and she folds herself together like a baby on the floor. Only after her prologue do the other eight dancers enter the room and take their seats among the audience.

This description follows the dancer's actions. Their dynamics are literal, because the dancer performs them concretely. However, at the same time, within the dance work, they are enriched with metaphoric meanings. As Edgar Wind wrote echoing Aby Warburg: "Aller Ausdruck durch Muskelbewegung ist metaphorisch."⁹ The body evokes metaphoric expressions, and these expressions transmit emotional content. Accordingly, the repetitive movements, which are broken by pauses, and the physical search for a fluent energy of movement express an ongoing struggle to gain a force of life. The dancer actually feels, because she produces genuine sensations with her body. Nevertheless, these sensual feelings evoke emotional feelings which are not necessarily her emotions at the time she moves. Nonetheless, her artistically performed movements contain these emotions in their expressions. William James was the first philosopher to link the effects of emotions to the expressions of the body.¹⁰ But while James saw emotions as the origin of bodily expressions, the point of view adopted by art historians like Warburg, Wind, and nowadays Bredekamp, departs from the gestures' expressions and moves towards the feelings they convey. Nonetheless, these perspectives are complementary; emotions are the content of the body's movement, just as different feelings lead to different physical behaviors. In this sense, the emotional meaning of a sensual float might be a metaphor of pleasure, if it is combined, for instance, with a relation to the space outside and a stretched body. In contrast, the same sensuality might evoke a feeling of suffering when it combines, as in this solo, with a folded body. In any case, the sensation arouses a feeling of exceptional movement in a sensitive human being. The human viewer, who can recognize his own potential for emotional qualities in these expressions, can identify with it.

The physical training of the dancers in Batsheva Dance Company seems to realize this connection between sensation and expression. Alongside his work as a choreographer, Naharin has been developing a method of movement research which he named Gaga. It is the main training method of the company

9 Edgar Wind: Warburgs Begriff der Kulturwissenschaft und seine Bedeutung für die Ästhetik, in: Vierter Kongress für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft, Hamburg, 7.–9. Oktober 1930, Beilagenheft zur Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft 25 (1931), p. 175.

10 William James: *What is an Emotion?*, Radford, VA 2007.

and lays an emphasis on bodily sensations as the origin of movement. In order to articulate expressions in dance, Gaga focuses on sensations as a source for movements and forms. Furthermore, the dancers' practice includes imbuing their movements with a multi-layered quality by cultivating different sensations at the same time, as well as their connection to varied embodied states of mind. This practice helps them improve the ability of the body to move freely and yet to be precisely articulated. Likewise, instructions as "pull your bones outside of your flesh," "have a float in your body," and "connect the pleasure of the body with its effort," enrich the dancers' performance with distinguished expressions. In this respect, the explosive power of the dancer in the first solo (as in others parts of the dance) and the way in which her body seems to be melting into itself are direct results of these physical feelings. Sensations provide her body with its directness of intricate expression.

Joint attention

Apart from these internal connections, symbols in dance are vitalized through the relation of the moving body to its surroundings. A dance work consists of the living body in relation to the other features of the dance, such as music, compositions, outfits, lighting, and dynamics between the movements of the dancers as a group. Likewise, one of the vital symbols that *Mamootot* produced is observation. The double perspective of a reflection on the other and on oneself is shaped in each moment of the work. *Mamootot* is a dance for nine dancers; four men and five women. Each one of them represents an equal member of the group and receives an opportunity for individual expression, in a solo or duet. Moreover, when the dance was created in 2003, there were exactly eighteen dancers in the company: eight male and ten female. Thus, the dance has a double cast. This detail is important, since the dance was the first work of Batsheva Dance Company in which the dancers were able to observe and learn their roles both from within, as performers, and from without, as spectators. According to an interview with Ohad Naharin, this choice was a conscious decision.¹¹ Alongside the physical involvement of the audience, the spectacle of the dancers is an integral element of the dance, and it was already stressed in its process of creation. Thus, in addition to the spatial arrangement of the dance, in which the dancers sit among the audience and follow the moving dancers in the center with their eyes, the double cast marks the observation of oneself and the other as an essential feature of the work.

11 A review of the work, including an interview with Naharin (in Hebrew), at Ynet: <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-2466535,00.html> (03.03.2003).

When the other eight dancers take their seats among the audience, they support the first soloist with their gazes. They stand in front of their seats, so as to mark their presence. When they sit down, the music sets in, for the first time with a promise; a short phrase from a “The Velvet Underground”-song is played saying: “We’re gonna have a real good time together.” At the same time the soloist lies on the floor while the other eight dancers sit still. A contradiction between the simplicity of the prologue together with the current situation in the studio and the pretentious promise of the music is evoked. The groovy music builds up anticipation of fun, but at the same time it also creates a lack of understanding and confusion. The song is melted into an electronic sound, the tones of which seem to be played backwards. The lying dancer stands up quickly, and poses in one of her gestures from her previous solo. Due to the combination of



Fig. 3 Imitation of gestures, Photo by Gadi Dagon.

her movement of sudden recovery with the music, it seems as if she was moving rearward as well, and coming back to life. The other eight dancers stand up, step towards the center and imitate her position. The imitation provides the composition with a sense of physical empathy and support. The nine dancers start to move in unison. The music sounds like someone was carefully strumming strings. There are pauses between the notes, silent moments, in which the dancers move jointly. Their forms are shaped; they move from one position to another. The qualities of their movements are reminiscent of the solo in the prologue; therefore, it seems as if the promise given by the music for appreciating something “together,” even though not yet for “fun,” is fulfilled. The dancer is not alone anymore in her experience (fig. 3).

Graceful harmony

With time, the gap between the notes becomes filled by more continuous transformations between positions. A sound like a clock ticking, or another time-measuring instrument, is added to the strings. In result, the music conveys both the feeling of having plenty of time and of a measurement that evokes the feeling of having to rush. In their united movements, the dancers appear mechanic on the one hand, and yet they appear as individual, attentive human beings on the other. Their facial expressions are simple, their movements organic, and therefore individual and filled with personal grace. They seem attentive to the codes of the music, and they are coordinated with the movements of the others. In this sense, the articulation of their movement is clearly shaped.

Articulation in dance can be defined as the ability of a dancer to perceive her movements' relations with regard to timing, efforts, shapes, and spatiality.¹² In mastering these elements through her body harmoniously, the dancer obtains gracefulness. In this scene, the unification of the group seems harmonic, effortless, and therefore the dancers appear both individual and well-trained as a group. Gracefulness of movement was defined by Heinrich von Kleist in his essay *On the Marionette Theater (Über das Marionettentheater)* from 1810.¹³ In this essay, he describes a conversation with a (fictional) famous ballet dancer who sees in movements of puppets a model for his own performance. The gracefulness of these movements, as he expresses it, is gained through their lack of consciousness and subjectivity. “Grace,” he claims, “appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness. That is, in the puppet or in the god.”

12 See Rudolf Laban, F. C. Lawrence: Effort, London 1947.

13 Heinrich von Kleist: *Über das Marionettentheater*, Heilbronn 2007 (Kleist-Archiv Sembdner).

Dancers are neither puppets nor gods, they are human beings. As such, they reach their gracefulness through physical training. The training in unification of movements and in forming clear shapes provides them with the mechanism of the puppets. Due to training, their movements become unconscious and automatic. Nevertheless, gracefulness in a dancer is first and foremost an achievement of the harmony of the body. It is reached through physical intelligence. What distinguishes one dancer from another is not their technique, but their intelligence with regard to embodied reflection;¹⁴ how well they perceive sensations, spatiality, timing, and harmony of these elements in their mindful bodies. In this respect, the exceptional experience of a dancer brings his performance closer to the divine.

Contrasts

Mamootot combines personal movements with a coordination of the group. The individual does not once appear to be alone in his or her experience. At the same time, these singular moments are dissolved into the apparent mechanism or the ostensibly human support of the ensemble. Likewise, in the middle of the dance, another dancer moves alone. The group supports him by observation and imitation of several gestures from his solo. He moves, poses, and the other eight dancers join the center a few times to emulate a single posture from his movement. In the end of his solo, he rests on the floor, like a dead body. The other dancers come up from their seats in the audience and look at him. Then, they interpret his position by presenting diverse postures of dead bodies. The stage resembles a battlefield. The experience is shared and the pathos is increased. However, owing to the different positions, each person at the same time also expresses a singular death, one that can be empathized with. Eight dancers stand up; the four men take a seat in the audience, four women stand in front of the audience, each one in front of a different line. One woman remains on the floor. An energetic Japanese pop song is played. The woman on the floor starts to crawl. Her movements are contracted and curved. This sensation takes place in each part of her body; from the tips of her toes, through her limbs and torso, up to her neck, head, and fingers. It seems as if each single molecule of her body was imbued with its own life. Her thick crawl looks organic, and makes her appear like a suffering worm. The other four females start to move in big and explosive shapes. They jump and turn in perfect coordination, while facing different corners of the room and ignoring each other with their gazes while the

14 See Varela Francisco, Evan Thompson, Eleanor Rosch: *The Embodied Mind*, Cambridge, MA 1991.

woman is crawling in the middle. A few times during their energetic movement they take their seats in the audience and observe, for a short while, the crawling woman, before returning to their energetic ritual.

This moment is full of contradictions. The energetic music sometimes sounds like a scream, but also very alive. The organic movement of the woman on the floor seems full of suffering. The explosive dance of the four women is perceived as an emotional explosion; maybe anger, maybe a physical scream, but it also expresses a powerful force and pleasure of life. Yet because of the coordination, the dance seems formulated and detached. When they sit down, the obviously exhausted dancers, whose actual sensual feelings derive from the catching of their breath after their physical effort, appear sorrowful, and therefore as if they were identifying with the woman on the floor. These contrasts capture the pathos and the dynamic diversity of life: energy, pleasure, agony, suffering, and pain appear alongside each other.

Detachment and Intimacy

During the entire dance work, until the final scene, there is only one physical touch: the one between the suffering woman and the naked glorified man. Empathy and joint attention are expressed through imitations, gazes, and harmonic coordination of the dancers' movements. These features provide the mentioned empathic gestures with a coexisting feeling of distance. However, towards the end of the work something changes and first moments of pure intimacy arise. The first intimate gesture of touch is created between the performers and the audience. After an energetic performance of the four men, the whole group comes up and faces the audience on the four sides of the space. The dancers surround the audience area, walk slowly, and create personal eye contacts with the spectators. Then each of the dancers gives his hand to one member of the audience, and simply looks into his eyes. They repeat this gesture several times with different viewers. Culturally, the gesture carries a symbolic meaning: it is a sign for consolation and sympathy in Judaism after a person has lost his close relative. In the context of the dance, it also acquires a meaning of recognition in the other, and of a connection between the audience and the dancers. However, this moment of intimacy is not developed into a sheer familiarity and closeness. It remains neutral and well-formed. Moreover, in a conversation with one of the dancers after a show, it was revealed to me that, according to an instruction by Naharin, the dancers avoid to shake hands with people they know in the audience. Perhaps to ensure that the formality will not be breached by a psychological intimacy that transcends the aesthetic formula. Furthermore, the personal moment is broken when the dancers slowly step back from the audience. They suddenly break the eye contact and abruptly start to dance by circling around

themselves. At the same time, their hands are close to their faces and block their gazes.

The aesthetic intimacy reaches its peak in the following, final scene. There, a second-long contact is formed between two dancers. However, whereas the first touch in the former duet defined a division between the different experiences of the dancers, the naked male and the silent woman, the second contact outlines for the first time a direct communication. After the collective dance of the ensemble, the one that began with the separation from the viewers, eight dancers fall to the ground repeating the image of the battlefield. One female dancer who had been backstage enters the space. She walks slowly in relevé, on the tips of her toes, crossing the battlefield diagonally. The other dancers take their seats in the audience and move their hands quickly, as if they were obsessively applauding. It seems as if, for them, the show was over.

The woman returns to cross the room from the other side and starts to move. Her movements are long and fluid. She balances on one leg and stretches her limbs in different directions. It seems as if she had overcome the necessity to be supported by the group; now she can easily balance on her own. Another dancer enters the space, moving with the same quality. Their movements differ, and yet perform the same amount of flow and energy. At a certain point, the second dancer starts to mimic the movements of the first. However, unlike the sense of empathy conveyed by the imitations at the beginning, her motions seem like an imprecise memory of the other's movement. For instance, the first dancer bends her knees, and stretches her upper body and her hands upwards. At the same time, the second dancer folds her knees as well, but leaves her arms close to her torso. Afterwards, the second dancer threatens to fall on her back in the direction of the first, to which the first dancer quickly responds by holding her. The second touch is established. Unlike in the former duet, their movements are now synchronized. They move together in the harmony of a fluent correspondence, performing long movements with stretched limbs, balancing moments, springs, and flows in unison. Then they separate their phrases again, and come back to a coordinated movement, mirroring each other. Their movement pauses, they stand still, and wait calmly. In this moment, the other seven dancers leave their seats and exit the room. Now the show is truly over for them.

The two women are left alone, without the observation of the group. Therefore, it seems as if they were offered a chance for developing intimacy with each other. They continue to move. Their movements have the appearance of a vital conversation. They hold each other, and round slowly when they are hugged. They remain united for a long phase. An intimate connection exists between them now. They carry on with their dance, in contact with one another. Towards the end, they pose shortly in close positions that resemble a hug, without a touch. Then they move away, the first dancer offering her elbow to the



Fig. 4 Intimate connection is established, Photo by Gadi Dagon.



Fig. 5 Intimacy in a gesture of a hug, Photo by Gadi Dagon (Tafel XIII).

second, the second dancer reaching for her fellow's elbow with her mouth. They change locations quickly when the second dancer, whose mouth is connected to the other's elbow, follows the first. Then it becomes dark. The dance is over now (fig. 4 and 5).¹⁵

Move and Rest in Peace

This epilogue marks the ability for a genuine human connection, in which one can remain oneself, and yet be involved with the other. The possibilities of human connection are various; they involve intimacy, imitation, support, groove, flow, pleasure, and pain, and even a hint of aggression and dependency as is demonstrated by the ambiguity of the final image of the elbow in the mouth. Due to images such as suffering, battlefield, and sympathy for the bereaved, it becomes clear that death is an integral part of these vital life experiences. *Mamootot* delivers coexistence of life and death, pain and pleasure, alienation and empathy, and of community and individualism, that move and rest together. It acts upon the viewers without words and without a storyline, but rather through natural expressions and aesthetic dynamics. Its images are filled with layers and contradiction, as they show how the extensive ranges of human existence encompass diverse moments. Moreover, in their rich forms, the images demonstrate that no single moment in life is one-dimensional. Recollections of varied relations towards the other and oneself are evoked by physical gestures and dynamics. An overall potential of varied life forms and emotions (the pathos) is formulated.

15 For excerpts from *Mamootot* you can watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP4L9hHrBG4> or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sz8MtEriXyQ> (30. 11. 2011).