illuminates the stakes in Mercer's larger project by emphasizing the value of diasporic perspectives and art practices for all audiences.

In addition to these particular essays, the real strength of Mercer's volume lies in his use of alternative, non-spatial forms of exile to suggest future areas of research. In his contribution "Adrian Piper, 1970-1975: Exiled on Main Street," Mercer frames the artist's marginality not in relation to her racial and gender identities, but to her adherence to a Kantian philosophy that metaphorically exiles her from the major trends in poststructuralist theory and contemporary art.[18] By examining Piper's philosophical practice in relation to her *Mythic Being* performances, Mercer seizes an opportunity to, in his words, "re-examine the break-up of modernism as a historical moment of crisis in which certain outcomes gained precedence over others" (148). In doing so, Mercer charts unexpected relationships between Piper's famous series, conceptual art discourse, and the ways in which her practice asks us to formulate links between self and other. This essay highlights key elements of Mercer's framework, encapsulating how the anthology—despite its flaws, and in conjunction with the others in the series—will continue to generate provocative research questions at the intersections of cultural studies and art history.

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Carrie Noland and Sally Ann Ness, eds. ***Migrations of Gesture***. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2008. 296 pages.

For critics in the arts and humanities, the term "gesture" is a seductive one, suggesting a sensual affinity between aesthetic expression and the variability and subtlety of physical movement. If pressed to explain gesture, many of us would compare it to language, while perhaps qualifying the analogy by noting that gestures are more organic—and more ephemeral—than either speech or writing. *Migrations of Gesture*, a collection of nine essays that range in scope across the visual and performance arts, sets out to undo these

[18] Specifically, Mercer quotes Piper regarding her interest in Kant's metaphysics and epistemology, and discusses her investment in the philosopher's belief in objective knowledge and reasoned truths. For Piper, as Mercer shows, poststructuralism takes away the rights of objectivity and rationality to which all subjects should be entitled (148).

assumptions. The volume offers several fresh approaches to thinking about movement as constituting individual identity as well as a social field that extends through bodies and cultures. While this transmission can happen gradually, the collection points out the more rapid ways that aesthetic forms are "co-opted" or extracted from their original bodies and locations, whether through commercial appropriation or geographical migration.

The term "gesture" almost inevitably invites a discussion of Derridean concepts such as "trace" and "inscription." However, while several of the essays rely substantially on a theory-based vocabulary, most seek a balance between the abstract and concrete, making the collection a good illustration of how deconstruction's attention to signs and signifiers can—and perhaps should—operate within culturally specific frameworks. Marc Franko voices the urgency of making theory tangible, observing that "deconstruction's claim for an embodied writing suffered egregiously from a lack of actual bodies" (241).

Contributors Deidre Sklar and Sally Ann Ness both locate "actual bodies" at the center of their critiques. Sklar looks at how the native conversational gestures of Italian and Jewish immigrants change in their new locales, indicating that gesture is a flexible intermediary between the interior and social selves. Similarly, in her carefully reasoned essay, Ness challenges the belief that dance is an ephemeral form of communication by taking the analogy between dance and "inscription" literally. She examines the effects of years of technique and training on the anatomies of Balinese classical dancers, concluding that the "bones, ligaments and other tissues of the dancers are the host material for the inscription of a living quasi-argument . . . influencing virtually every element of Balinese life" (15). One has only to consider the startling sculptural form that is a ballerina's foot to see the force of the internal inscription Ness describes (16).

Other essays in the collection begin with the body but move outward, studying the movement of gesture across time and place, and its impact on social identity. Ketu H. Katrak looks at how the expressive symbolism of the Indian dance Bharata Natyam altered as it traveled and took root in California. By considering how native cultural expression takes on new forms in diasporic communities, Katrak's essay focuses on the body as the site from which aesthetic traditions emanate and evolve. In one of the volume's most rewarding essays, Susan A. Phillips explores a related theme through a discussion of Crip Walking, or C-Walking, a dance form common

among gang members in Los Angeles that is used to mark loyalty to the dancer's neighborhoods and other gang members. With dancers treating their bodies as styluses, spelling out the names of people and places, the dance "rides the line between oral and literate cultures" (49). Phillips traces C-Walking back to the slavery-era tradition of cakewalking—a competitive dance practice involving fancy dress and strutting that slaves used as a form of mockery and resistance, but which masters routinely misinterpreted as expressing an aspiration to social gentility. Linking C-Walking to slavery's violent past, Phillips argues that when the dance finally made its migration into mainstream culture, its co-opted version was stripped of its playful, subversive origins and had become little more than a predictable "mime" of gang culture (62).

While Phillips shows that dance can act as both a bodily and socio-historical inscription, Carrie Nolan suggests that the gestures of writing can approximate dance. Nolan looks at the Belgian poet and painter Henri Michaux's alphabet-like signs, which were inspired by prehistoric cave markings, maintaining that while the artist may have begun his markings with the urge to craft a universal language, he was driven above all by a fascination with the "untapped gestural and graphic possibilities within the practice of inscription itself" (168).

The subject of film also emerges in the volume, with contributors regarding movement as part of a film's production process and as an aesthetic ingredient of the film itself. Lesley Stern examines director Hou Hsiao-Hsien's practice of treating the camera as a gestural device that mimics or "ghosts" the movement of bodies in space. Meanwhile, Akira Mizuta Lippit writes about experimental filmmakers who manipulate bodily movement in such a way as to distort meaning. In his view, Martin Arnold, for instance, uses techniques such as erasing actors from the frames of old Hollywood films and endlessly looping frames until mundane gestures—a head turning or a door opening—are "severed from the 'flow of life,'" thereby taking on a terrifying significance (123). In a similar manner, Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*, the radically slowed down version of Hitchcock's classic film, has the effect, writes Lippit, of "annihilat[ing] movement" (120).

The static medium of photography may seem like a less likely place to encounter gesture, but Blake Stimson reveals the motion inherent in photographs by regarding them in constellation rather than in isolation. He goes on to claim that movement is also integral to the process of capturing an image, since the squeeze of the shutter

is a "complex" of bodily and technological gestures (78). In examining the various physical movements that go into picture-taking, Stimson draws a revealing contrast between Henri Cartier-Bresson's perception of photography as a quest for decisive moments to be arranged and captured, and Robert Frank's treatment of the camera as "a device for distancing, othering, abstracting, a device that throws photographer and beholder back on themselves" (80).

In *Migrations,* essays about film and dance sit side-by-side with those on photography and painting. It is clear that the editors of the volume deliberately chose not to classify the essays according to art form, though doing so perhaps would have helpfully underscored the similarities and differences between the various treatments of a given medium. Still, it is apparent that such a structure would have been too rigid for a series of essays devoted to exploring the diffusion of meanings among people, geographies, technologies, and artistic and cultural bounds. The collection and its organization reveal some of the many ways that embodied movement transmits cultural meanings, showing just how "place-like bodies can be, and how gesture-specific places can be" (278).

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Xiaobing Tang. ***Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde: The Modern Woodcut Movement*****.** Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008. 318 pages.

Tang Xiaobing's book is like a grand history painting that portrays its main subject—the woodcut movement that emerged in Republican China in the 1920s and 30s—against a complex backdrop of political upheavals, institutional changes, and competing discourses. Tang convincingly argues that the woodcut movement was truly avant-garde because it not only challenged the prevailing aesthetics, but also established the woodcut print as "an incomparably expedient and politically relevant" medium in modern China (218).

The book opens with the reform of art education in the 1910s, championed by Minister of Education Cai Yuanpei and realized by young art educators like Liu Haisu, Lin Fengmian, and Xu Beihong. Cai believed that *meiyu* (aesthetic education) would, as Tang claims, "foster cultural cohesion as well as social harmony in modern China"