

BEING A CHAIR.
ESSAYS ON CHOREOGRAPHIC POETRY

Janne-Camilla Lyster

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gestures

Paper

Long before I could read, I was attracted to paper, to the surface of paper, to the pages of the book, to the book itself, the weight of it, the muffled sound of the book being shut or when I lightly knocked my knuckle against the closed book. The sound of the word 'book'. I would let my finger slide gently over the page, over the letters, and I thought I could feel them move towards my fingertip, like tiny insects. These insects could make images and landscapes appear when someone read aloud from the book, people doing the craziest things. A blank page attracted me just as much: I immediately felt a rush of expectation, an excitement at the thought of all that could arise there. The surface of the paper is a foundation of thought, of dream. A replaceable sky. The blank sheet of paper is a place where memories arise, where thoughts cease briefly and then stretch beyond themselves.

The visible, the invisible and the imaginary
Photographer Sally Mann takes pictures with an analogue camera and develops them herself. Through her gaze and through the development process – her craft, her hands, her use of time, her blind spots, the rooms she moves through, what she can and can't see, her exact shortcomings, mistakes, hopes and disappointments – the world becomes visible in a way that we would not otherwise have access to. Trees are not trees, a tree is also a tree, being in the world for the first and last time.

A face inscribed on paper in a fleeting moment that would otherwise be invisible to us. Photography is a confession between thought and world. As the snow covers the world and shapes it, it reveals the world at the same time so that we can see it anew, through those forms. Choreographer Deborah Hay speaks of her practice as including ‘the visible, the invisible and the imaginary’ when dancing. Such a juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory concepts or thoughts pervades the act of performing: the pace and inflow it gives to know that there is always *something else* than what is currently happening, that there is always somewhere else to look, something else to include. There is always a new place to go. Every moment is an inexhaustible realm to be unfolded.

Unit

‘The unity of the word does not guarantee the unity of the thing’, Nietzsche wrote. We hear the word ‘tree’ and think we know what we are talking about, but we are imagining the tree’s meme, inevitably condensed through language, through drawing as children, through learning to differentiate: the unimportant must be separated from the important, that which is needed to categorize, to classify. Trunk, branches, twigs, leaves. But the shape of the roots in Sally Mann’s photograph *Swamp Bones* (1996) from the series *Deep South* is reminiscent of bones, of worms, of dark beings once moving rapidly along the floor of the forest but now trapped in an inert present. Sometimes language must

be used to closely circle something rather than to hit the target – only then, the picture, association and experience evoked can be precise enough. In her project *Closer/Närmare* (2010), Finnish ceramicist Caroline Slotte processed different porcelain objects, brushed them down to white, sandblasted them, only occasionally leaving a small motif in glazed blue paint. The objects are processed so that they both are and are no longer themselves, both are and are not the objects they were before the process of decomposition. The process stopped at a specific point when they are still recognizable: a cream jug, a teacup, a small plate, a saltshaker, an egg cup. Matt and smaller, leaner, less symmetrical. Less cream jug, less teacup, less small plate, less saltshaker, less egg cup than before, but still able to be classified, still able to be accepted, still able to pass as the item they originally were. And so, the word love, or friendship, or daughter, for example, can be the right word for a long time until it gradually ceases to fit, until you can only barely use the word to describe what’s left.

The unimaginable

Some things I can imagine. Some things I may wish for, hope for, strive for, want. The problem, in my experience, is often *getting* there; when a goal is clear, it is, in a way, already lived through. A majestic tiger in the museum. In the evenings, I climb up on a street bench and look longingly through the illuminated window to where it stands, powerful on its podium. But when

I finally find my way into the museum one morning, the fur shimmers a little less than what I had imagined, and its roar has been silenced. Finding an animal that I could not imagine beforehand, however, is a matter of facilitation. It's about finding ways to make me free enough to move into unknown terrain, often with poor visibility. It can be uncomfortable, feel hopeless, perhaps even meaningless. But when I dare to step out into it, my arms in front of me like a sleepwalker, I may experience the adventure that arises when I am not bound by what I am able to imagine. Exceeding my own imagination, agenda, will. And suddenly the animal is standing there, right in front of me, breathing warmly into my face. Some enjoy such surprises. For me, it has taken time to appreciate them. Now these surprises are the very driving force in my work.

Something

Gradually I have discovered that by insisting on choosing a *something* over a nothing, and then one more something, a little gap can open in the world that was not noticeable before. There, I can slip in.

The neutral

I am thinking about what neutral means, that maybe it is to glide unremarkably into a situation. I come to think of a book I was introduced to during a rehearsal thirteen years ago. I remember the cover, but not the author.

The cover showed a glass of water and a glass pipette holding a dark purple liquid, of which one drop had just been released into the water. We see how the purple liquid moves in the water, in intricate shapes, which together form a pending figure, meagre and precise. The background of the cover is light, greyish. This is what I remember. And the title, in black writing. I search for 'The Neutral' and 'book' and find it, it was written by Roland Barthes. But the picture on the cover shows neither a glass of water nor a glass pipette nor any purple liquid that dissolves in intricate shapes in the clear water, it shows an inkwell containing a dark liquid with a purple label. The print on the label says *Teinte Neutre*, neutral tint. I call to ask my dad, who is a visual artist, how a deep purple colour can go by the term 'neutral'. He doesn't answer. Two days later I receive *The Neutral* in the mail. I read about how Barthes, one fine afternoon in March, goes out to buy some bottles of paint. How he chooses the colours by their name: golden yellow, sky blue, brilliant green, and so on. When he returns home, he spills one of the bottles, and when he picks it up he sees that it is the one called *Neutral*. But the colour that has been spilled does not glide unremarkably into the context, *Neutral* leaves greyish black stains on the table, on his clothes, on his fingers.

Reality

A double-exposed image of a cherry tree and a young man sitting on a chair. The black-and-white photo-

graph, titled *Postcard Self-Portrait, Black Mountain (I)*, was made by Robert Rauschenberg in 1952. The young man sits with his knees together and his hands folded on his right knee. His face is serious, as if he either knows that he is being photographed for a particular purpose that he respects, or as if he is listening to someone talk about physics, astronomy, the structure of the universe, and this topic interests him more than most. He wears a light knitted sweater over a light shirt, dark trousers with turn-ups revealing the lighter-coloured fabric on the inside, white socks and low, black leather shoes with laces. The cherry tree blooms through him, it is skimpy, it too looks young. The picture lets the viewer experience the world as if time and place do not represent any distance, like a human mind, all the moments laid on top of each other, touching one another, rather translucent. This is how we shape the world, by mind, by memory. And so the world shapes us. Every moment bleeds into another moment, radiates into the shadow of other moments.

Blindness I

Springtime. It is getting warmer outside, I am playing the piano with the windows open. I am not really interested in practising, and I don't have the sheet music in front of me. I play pieces my hands already know from the time I was taking piano lessons, classical pieces, probably from the baroque and the romantic era. I don't remember the names of the pieces or the com-

posers. It is important that I don't think about what my hands are doing, and especially not of what to do next; otherwise everything falls apart and I must start over. My hands know the pieces as patterns, colours, images constituted by precise sentences whose meaning crumbles if I start to scratch them instead of focusing on the images they evoke, the light growing out of them. I must play with a sort of blindness, gazing at something other than surfaces.

Time I

One day I receive a quote by email from dancer Chrysa Parkinson, it is by Yeats: 'A being racing into the future passes a being racing into the past, two footprints perpetually obliterating one another, toe to heel, heel to toe.' The quote is from the poem titled 'A Vision'. I watch the screen and read it over and over again, I see a horse, I imagine a horse at full gallop, whose hoofs cross each other the moment the heavy body lifts off from the ground, the hoofs on the front legs crossing the hoofs on the back legs. Years later I revisit the quote and realize that my image was wrong; it's not one animal, but two. *A being*. Not even an animal, necessarily, and thus probably not a horse with hoofs, hence not the required heel and toe on which the quote is based. For a long time, I greatly appreciated the image of the galloping horse; I thought I understood it, that it was telling me something profound about time. Something I could only understand through this

particular image. What I understood was that time is not static; that there are moments when past and future meet, and this is what is called the present. The present is not static, it can be stretched out, expanded, for later to gather, retreat and, suddenly, as in an unexpected hovering, the present can even cross itself; by reaching a great speed, the past can be transformed into the future. When spelling it out, it all seems a tad flat, especially the part about the past crossing the present and becoming the future. It should at least be the other way round. No. That doesn't help. Now I try to understand the quote again. I envisage an image of two feet (they look disappointingly human) and the legs above the feet, up to the knees; they are standing in one place, I am seeing them from the side, the opposite rocking movements as each foot rolls against the ground from heel to toe together creating one swaying figure, where the past and the future stretch apart and the figure flattens out, then gather in a kind of middle as they are drawn towards each other and meet. As I write this, a bird hits the window in the room I am sitting in; it is sunny outside, sharp winter. I startle, turn to the window and see the bird's shadow as it falls. I lose concentration, the present flies apart, feathers scattering helplessly. Then I remember how the email ended. 'And then this also resonates with the question of writing presence into time, or writing time into presence maybe?' Yes. When writing, searching for a way of doing so that makes the moment unfold, acutely – self-obliterating and infinitely constant.

Time II

When writing and reading something *as* dance, time is the first thing that springs to my attention. Gradually, I have started circling in on various types of time in the reading and writing of choreographic poetry: given, indicated, embedded, found and experienced time. By given time, I mean time stated in measured sizes, such as clock time, or the playing time of an average vinyl record. Indicated time is less measured in pre-existent sizes; operating with, or creating indicated time, means giving signs of a certain relative duration. A sentence divided over multiple lines may indicate a slower time and a slower pace than if the whole sentence were put on one line. With embedded time I think of the time that somehow already exists within the score: the time it takes to flip through the pages or read the text aloud, to read the text in silence, or to clap the rhythm of the syllables of text, for instance. Found time is the time that the score amounts to, as it turns out, through the dancer's practice – a solo that turns out to be twenty-one minutes long in its final interpretation, for instance. This is determined by the interaction between the particular score, the performer's reading of the score, the approach chosen in the dancer's work with the score, and the duration of this process, among other things. Then experienced time: the time that unfolds through the senses, the dreams awake and in sleep, the pace that builds from within when reading and dancing. This form of time has occupied me more than the others. How word selection, juxtaposition, compilation,

syntax, punctuation, line division, motif, rhythm, format, font, font size, text orientation and layout, separately and together, form the experience of time.

The singular word

Once, as a child, I repeated the word ‘fork’ aloud to myself, over and over again, fork fork fork, until I began to doubt whether it was really a word or if it was just a collection of sounds that I had invented. Fork? I heard it as if for the very first time, completely cut off from the object the word points to, completely cut off from anything but the sounds of the word itself. It was a way of retrieving the word, experiencing it again, giving it a renewed glow: as the word slowly went back to its usual meaning, I felt an appetite for the word itself and a joy at having found it, at knowing that it was part of the world.

Mother tongue, body tongue

Reading and writing in my mother tongue and reading and writing in a foreign language resonate differently in my body. The language I grew up with, the sounds and rhythms I heard, the nuances and the melody of the various words, slowly, slowly started to relate to experiences; certain light conditions, shapes or objects in the room, a particular table. The original table, the coffee table in the house where I grew up. Translating a thought into language – an experience related to

snow or childhood – is inevitably about reinvention. The thought must be rethought, the experience must be experienced again through a new language and must become a new experience – a parallel to the exchange between language and movement, perhaps. The English word ‘table’ entered my life in the form of a drawing in a textbook at primary school. It also means chart. ‘Table’ is black outlines on white paper and is placed outside my body, must be pushed in when I need it.

Fractioning and expansion

I take two words and move them around to see: What does it do to one word to have the other word in front of it, behind it, over it, under it? What effect does it have if one of these words is moved, is placed further away or right beside the other? I take a single word from a novel without reading the novel. I find the word rings with a kind of *normality*, an implicitness, or perhaps a general self-satisfaction of representing a certain side of the world. But this ‘world’ represents the smallest common denominator: ‘a table’ is all tables, ‘a tree’ is all trees. Then I read the novel and look at the single word again. Now, the word has been charged with a new specificity: the work. The word emerges as a sign of the experienced, an odour that evokes the memories as if they were here, now. In the work by Norwegian graphic artist Ane Thon Knutsen titled *The Mark on the Wall* (2019), the artist has divided Virginia Woolf’s short story of the same title into fragments consisting

of a full stop, a comma, a word, two words, three words, four words, each printed on an A3 sheet of paper and put up on the four walls of a large gallery space, so that you have to walk a total of eleven rounds to read the entire short story chronologically. Through this fractioning act, each individual fragment is expanded: you get the opportunity to see the single part anew – for instance, a comma – in the specific light of the whole story. The gravity and shadow of the literary work are gathered in a single point, in a comma, and instead of the short story being reduced, the sign is charged. When I started writing literary scores for dance, I wanted to stay close to the performer in time and volume of information; I wanted the text to run alongside the dancer, I wanted the text and the dance to fold together like hands. Gradually, I began to explore the possibilities of letting the text form a point instead, which could expand in time and space through the meeting with the performer. The challenge is to craft a density, a charge strong enough to facilitate such an expansion, so that the performer is not forced out of the score to bring in more fullness or information. In the score titled *Circle* (2018), I tried to go to a preliminary extreme of this idea of expansion from a point. It reads like this: ‘In a circle: the mechanics of love.’

Juxtaposition

The Pillow Book is a collection of texts written by Japanese author Sei Shonagon around the year 1000.

The texts are often in the form of short paragraphs entirely made up of enumerations. The book reminds me that there are shockingly simple ways to describe the world. Sei Shonagon makes unfamiliar compilations and constructs, easily and gently, an astounding hierarchy of things that can have something in common. They can be about emotions or objects, customs, stories she has heard, legends or events. For example, the sub-headings may look like this: ‘Deeply Irritating Things’, ‘Miserable Looking Things’ or ‘Things That Are Hard to Say’. Much of what is described is anchored in a distant time and in a culture foreign to me (Shonagon was a court lady). Still, there is something about the very way she compiles these things that builds a tactile and sensuous consciousness, a way of seeing I can lift from the paper, out of the imagined, and towards the world around me; a force that turns up the volume of colours and sounds, giving figures a sharper outline and making reflective surfaces blindingly brilliant.

A line

Any claim, rule or description, if only a single adjective, brings something to light. And it is easy to forget about the vanishingly great ‘everything’ that is not. For what is said can be so simple that we confuse it with ‘anything’. For example: a line on a sheet of paper. A particular line on a particular sheet of paper. The thickness of the pen, the colour, the pressure with which the pen is passed over the paper, the location of

the line, the arc, length, and so on. The surface of the paper, the way the ink is distributed on it, the way the paper has given in to the tip of the pen so that a certain recess or indentation has been formed. What if someone asked me to dance that line, play it on the piano, or draw a face where this line is part of the outline? What movement might it correspond to or invite, what path, force, rotation? What tone, intonation, strength, duration? What face? What opportunities does that particular line open?

Loneliness I

The night before I go on stage again for the first time in two years, I dream that I have forgotten my costume at home. I run for a taxi to get back in time, I climb into the back seat. The driver doesn't turn around, says nothing. I must have fallen asleep, because when I wake up, I'm in a strange room. It's late morning, curtains, wet snow outside, January. I hear voices somewhere in the house, a man and a little boy, I go to the door and discover it's locked. I find a foot roller and break two panes of glass in the door, put my arm through it and unlock the door. I slip out into the hallway, see my shoes standing there, decide quickly that I won't take the chance and run out barefoot through the front door. When I stand on stage two hours later (I'm doing a solo at the opening of an artistic research week), blinded by the bright sidelights, I understand I've been abducted again; from here there

is no way out other than by mobilizing everything I have and hoping that is enough.

Giving shape to resonance

By not only seeing text as text and dance as dance, but rather both as modes of seeing, experiencing and accessing the world in specific ways through human existence, there can occur a gap of productive exchange between these modes; between the modes of thinking, imagining, associating and responding that is peculiar to each. Weaving a tissue of resonance between them. When thinking about it in this way, choreographic poetry is essentially about giving shape to this resonance.

Loneliness II

I think I see a former lover on the street on my way to work. But it's not him. I follow him with my gaze, thinking, 'So where are you?' Suddenly it becomes clear to me where *I* am, as if these few moments, an early morning in January, were of particular importance. As if what I am wearing, the particularities of the way I move, the place I am at, what I can see around me, says something significant about who I am – an extract, a detail from which my life before and after can be read accurately. I think that when I get to work, I will read something in *The Poetics of Space*, I feel like the chapters' titles are speaking to me now that I am filled with the rooms that we used to move in, now that they are

empty inside me. The furniture is gone, a doorknob suddenly appearing as a significant memory, a corner of the room, the light as it falls on a naked wall.

Time and space I

We have just left through the staff entrance at the theatre, it is late at night, 1 February, there is a strong wind down here at the edge of the fjord, it is snowing. I fumble for my hat in my jacket pocket, squinting to protect my eyes from the snowflakes that feel sharp against the skin because of the wind. As I see it, you work on the exchange between the linear and the circular, in a manner that only gives meaning through the asymmetrical, my colleague says. And continues: The linear exists through all layers of the space, all levels, and in all types of bodily tissue. Bones and nerves. And so does the circular. Where the circular is most noticeable, the linear is still present, only less noticeable. And vice versa. As performers we must be aware of what we want to be noticed at any given moment in order to be precise. Yes. There is always a drop of the one in the other, it is a question of what is given attention, I reply, as we lean into the wind and push forward as we round the first corner of the building.

The shadow orchestra

Everything I see, hear, experience, practise, think, dance and read forms an orchestra, I imagine. The orchestra is situated a little out of reach, in the

shadows. Actions, choices and reflections are formed in tune with the music they play. For example, a significant book or performance becomes a violinist, while an insight that fundamentally changes how I think about something joins as a percussionist. A statement that is constantly coming back because I feel that it is important but also unfathomable stays by the light switch, turning it on and off, so that the orchestra has to pause when it gets dark, then has to reconsider where and what to resume when the light comes on again.

Format

A book facilitates a different chronology than a map. Or loose pages that can be moved around, a sheet folded as an accordion that can be pulled out, transparent sheets that allow the next pages to shine through and leak into the present page. The format determines how the text can be read, how the content and connections of the text are revealed, along with the way the words, letters, sentences and phrases are put on the sheet. High or low, large or small print, serif or sans, upside down, backwards, scattered, in a cluster, like rain or like clouds. Quickly or slowly, in a circle, backwards, one word at a time or in any order. When I write, I relate to certain hierarchies or habits; I'm used to reading from the top left corner, I'm used to a portrait format, I'm used to reading certain fonts more often than others. Breaking with these expectations creates opportunities for other ways of reading; other spaces to enter as a reader and

performer, other chronologies, other experiences of time. The format of the score makes it possible to connect thoughts, images and associations, to indicate relationships between different parts of the material and between the material and the world outside the score.

Blindness II

I write with a kind of blindness. This is how I experience it: because I try to write a dance rather than describe one. I do not imagine a movement and try to describe it; I relate to something I haven't imagined before, something that hasn't been done before, something yet to arise. The work is to articulate a specific opportunity for the dance to arise through poetry – a flip side where the front is the dance. And the front must be invisible to me not to be anticipating the transformation from poetry to dance – not to reduce the dance to what language is capable of grasping. And vice versa. As soon as I imagine a concrete movement, I would rather show it to the dancer; and the score would be an unnecessary detour, or a slightly boring puzzle, perhaps. The two sides or pages cannot be read at the same time, they are not equal or mutually interchangeable. But together they make up the same sheet of paper.

Translation

When I was nineteen, I went on Interrail. With every country I visited, there were small shifts in me – small

changes, expansions. Words went missing, I had to resort to other ways to find what I wanted to say. The traffic signs looked different (in Germany they were larger, in France smaller, in the Netherlands they felt sort of naked). The pavements were wider or narrower, the asphalt coarser or made up of very small stones. The humidity in the air when I got off the train in Nice for the first time was not, even if I had been told about it, something I could ever have imagined. A clean hotel room in one city was a dirty one in another. I discovered that I could make jokes in German, but not in Danish. Something I had considered to be an important insight seemed to crumble as I tried to convey it to a new friend. In English, I could suddenly extend the moment by saying 'I am dancing' instead of the old Norwegian way of saying it, 'I dance'. When travelling through different languages, a text changes a bit in the same way: finding other sides of itself, other nuances, losing some of what is safe, implicit, being met in ways different to what has gone before, perhaps moving with a slightly different gait down the street towards the sea.

Turntable

I imagine a potter working at the turntable; the movements arising in the meeting between the hands and the clay, the mutual connection where the concave shape of the hands forms a convex shape in the clay, and vice versa. If the hands let go, the clay is given over to time

and the rotating movement of the turntable. I imagine the connection between the hands and the clay to be similar to the writing process, or to performing a score. When contact is sustained between pen and paper, performer and score, there is a mutual movement leading to change; the shaping of change is created. When the connection ceases, what is written is affected by other forces – perception, time, memory. The wind blowing through an open window. The constant or abrupt impact of the forces of the environment; a continuum extending beyond my own concentration.

Dimensions

In a short story titled ‘Dimensions’ (2009), Alice Munro describes how, after being involved in a brutal event, a man believes he can experience other dimensions. Through the way the author writes, we understand that it is most likely a delusion. At the same time, she opens up the possibility for us to be left with a slight doubt; and this doubt makes me imagine how it would be to experience a plurality of dimensions – and thus I get a sense of what it would be like. It resembles something evoked by a text I read, the timbre it creates through my memory, my mind, my senses, my body. How, when I move or when I see someone move, several doors of existence are left open at the same time; the visible, the audible, the tactile; the imaginings and associations that arise and disappear; what is remembered and what is forgotten.

Haptic vision

On our way from rehearsal, a colleague tells me about a book called *Maps of the Imagination*. The point, he says, is that it is almost impossible to imagine time as size, we almost always relate time to space, to geography. Or we give it properties as if it were a being. Time goes by, time is coming. The past is behind us, the future lies ahead. In this way, time also engages in the realm of the graphic, the image, he says. A line is not just a line, it has an experienced extension, also in time. I nod, I’ve read *Philosophy in the Flesh*. Have you heard of haptic vision, I ask. It really has nothing to do with what he just said, I’m just getting excited. I speak about how the senses are connected in such a way that we ‘feel’ with the eye as with the hand when we look at a surface. A sheet of paper, for example, or skin. The same goes for sound, or hearing, I say. We can ‘feel’ the texture of the floor through the sound of a chair scraping against it. My colleague nods, lifting his eyebrows, his gaze is clear and sincere, he says ‘Ah’, showing that this interests him. Back home, trying to find a good article about this to send to him, I start doubting whether I have misunderstood, or if perhaps I have been dreaming, beyond the correct idea of the haptic.

Hearing a light

The world has many faces; some are evident, others need to be listened to. A yellow flower is recognized as a yellow flower; but what if the wavelength of the light

reflected in it could also be heard? The sound of the flower's hue. I imagine that if, by using an instrument that could translate light waves into sound waves in a frequency that was within the human ear's register, we were able to hear the flower colour, we could not, with an untrained ear, hear that this was in fact a yellow flower; we would not associate the sound with the colour. Nevertheless, the audible colour would be a concrete side of the world, just as the visible colour.

Time and space II

I stop as I am about to cross a busy street, an older man releases a leash out of a mechanical handle so that his dog gets a longer radius and bolts out into the road. The traffic stops, the dog is sitting in the middle of the pedestrian zone, waiting patiently for the owner to catch up, the owner walks slowly while retracting the leash by pressing the button in the handle. When the man catches up with the dog, they both start walking, the owner mumbling happily. That's how they do it, they force the bloody traffic to stop, they shouldn't have to stand and wait, that time is over.

In-between

In *The Book of Beginnings and Endings* (2007), poet and essayist Jenny Boully shapes a number of in-betweens. The book consists only of beginnings and endings – starting with an ending. The endings appear to be the

last parts of fictional texts; the beginnings on the following page are – or are reminiscent of – non-fiction. Whether these texts exist in their entirety or not remains largely a mystery to the reader; what stands out to me are the spaces formed between what is ending and what is beginning. The in-between spaces appear seen in the light of these particular texts – that is, what grows out of them – a complex space is formed between them: precise and expanding. What is left out has a song of its own that can also be heard in what is in fact chosen. Putting something next to something else always creates a third. I like the idea that this third, these in-between spaces, blank lines, these luminous shadows that stand out after gazing at an object for a long time and then looking up at the ceiling can be a main concern in writing, in dancing, in what is happening between us. That what emerges there, in the reverberation between two surfaces, can be the opening into a cosmos where listening is what takes you forward, takes you further.

Forgetting your own name

I am holding a workshop for four quite young performing artists; two of them have a background in dance. It's May and it's hot outside. I suggest that they go out and collect words, listen for words that resonate in their physicality, or that give them an appetite to move. Notice and write down words that present themselves to you without pondering the reason for noticing just that word, I tell them. Intuition is the sum of all the

experience you have so far, whether you inherited the experience or acquired it yourself. I have previously done similar exercises myself, where I make a word collection on a sheet of paper, spreading the words out over the page so that they are easy to 'cross-read', letting the eye move freely over the sheet and capture various words and compilations of words. Then I, or my eye, choose for example three words, one morning, and then I write in the extension of the impulse that these three words together create. Sometimes I alternate between writing for five minutes and going out on the floor moving for five minutes, and as the exchange has been going on for a while, both the movements and the writings interlock, finding their own phrasings, tightly or loosely linked to the three original words and the sum of them. It is this exercise that I intend to undertake with the participants of the workshop when they return twenty minutes later. But as we sit around the table again and I'm about to explain the rest of the exercise to them, one of the participants interrupts, saying that he wanted to use 'magnolia' but that this word, this name, did not give him access to either the smell of the flowers or the shape of the leaves. It is a kind of protest. He does not associate 'magnolia' with the tree he saw. This is of course a weakness with the exercise, I realize, and start regretting that I did not suggest something better. Maybe it's about circling in on something rather than pointing at it, I say, maybe you need another word, or more words, to create the sensuous connection you are looking for. Probably I am gesticu-

lating more and being less articulate, but at least this is what I want to say. Then I come to think of two quotes that I believe can be helpful to the situation. Deborah Hay says that 'editing language is editing choreography', I continue. Changing the language of what we do will change what we do. If someone tells you that the way you walk is elegant, you will probably stop walking the way you have done so far and instead try to walk 'elegantly'. Fortunately, several of the participants nod in what I think is recognition but might be appreciation. I look at the clock, the break is approaching. 'Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees', I say. This is the title of a book about the artist Robert Irwin. If you are going to be good at drawing or writing or seeing or dancing, you have to get past what you think you know. What you already can do. Maybe, I round off, you even have to forget your own name.

Fiction

I imagine that different layers of fiction, and different degrees of fiction, can co-exist, alternating effortlessly. And that they can work together. What I see, what I imagine, what I do not perceive and what I associate all works together and creates a complex gaze that at the same time looks inwards to myself and outwards to the world. And out of myself, into the world. Seeing a performance, or reading a book, is a resolved situation regardless of whether the performance itself or the book has an impact on me to the extent that I forget

that I am sitting in the audience or that I am reading. I can appreciate what I see, even though I can suddenly start to worry about whether I will reach the train or start thinking about a new poem. In the opening of the novel titled *The Absence of Music* (2007), Norwegian author Rune Christiansen describes how Lancelot, after a violent battle, opens his visor and removes his helmet before getting off his horse and falling on his knees in the mud. Both he and the horse are exhausted; the horse tumbles to the ground and, lying on its back, kicks violently against the sky. As Lancelot takes off his gloves, tears off his chest plate and lies down beside him, the horse calms down. As he stares up into the drifting clouds, Lancelot sees his father, the woman he loves, a friend and a valiant warrior who suddenly raises his sword and strikes him; out of reflex Lancelot raises his arm to protect himself. Later, Lancelot and his horse walk together through a small woodland. They spot a lake, they drink, rinse the blood off, and go back through the forest, up to a road where a car is parked.

Butoh-fu

In Japanese butoh ('dance of darkness'), a distinctive poetic language is sometimes used to create, guide and transform bodily concentration. This language is called butoh-fu. Butoh dancer Hijikata Tatsumi developed inventive, irreconcilable, poetic word images to generate movement and gestures. These images are sometimes referred to as 'notation' because they guide, inspire

and motivate the dance movement. The images are most often transmitted verbally from choreographer to performers and individually notated; and in Hijikata's case one can say that they constituted a choreographic structure, a chronological course of word images that were danced. Surrealism is an important part of butoh, and one of the gripping things about butoh-fu is the idea of what is surrealistic to the body (or, more precisely, the 'body-mind'; like in phenomenology, butoh relates to body and mind without a dualistic division). What language or word images are surrealistic to the body, I wonder. Butoh does not relate to a strict technique, but instead seeks to achieve the most 'emptied out' body in order to function as a 'vessel' of the poetic images of butoh-fu and in order to undergo the transformation that butoh requires with as much depth and power as possible. It speaks to me of boundlessness. A boundlessness that is both affectionately optimistic and that has surrendered to the dystopic. Dancer Yoko Akshikawa also believed that the audience could enter the imagistic process of butoh, even though they would not be able to identify each image with accuracy. They would know, or participate in, the impact of them, I think; and this is what I imagine choreographic poetry to do. A kinaesthetic transmission taking place between the performer and the audience; a shared moment unfolding through movement (anchored in something written). I find a video recording of Hijikata, where he dances the choreography titled *A Girl*. The year is 1973, he is wearing a pink dress, he has a beard and his feet

are bare. The stage is dim, the sparse light is warm and falls on the thin fabric of the dress, the light skin of the arms and legs, dark hair growing on the legs. He moves forward, crouching, he stops, pulls his chin back as if looking for something or as if thinking of something whimsical but honest, rubbing his face with the back of contorted hands, before standing on one leg and sitting down on the floor by letting himself fall to the floor, wilful or relieved. I am struck by how recognizable this figure is to me. Once I was referred to as an adult woman with a sensitive face; I'm still not rid of the shame I felt being described in this way. It felt wrongful, limiting, mean (although I'm quite sure it was not meant that way). I'm not an adult woman with a sensitive face, I fantasize about having answered, I'm a fat man with a dog's voice. The metamorphic, the shifting, the things that shy away from static or unambiguous identification are what remind me most of how it is to be alive.

Mirror

When I unintentionally catch a glimpse of my own reflection in, for example, a large window, I look different from the image I have of myself. It seems I always walk at a fast pace, with slightly raised shoulders and my head titled slightly forwards, as if leaning into a strong wind. My legs never stretch out completely when I walk, neither pushing off nor receiving the floor with the sole of the foot. It looks as if I am constantly enduring a series of small, insignificant falls. I am both taller

and wider than how I experience myself. Arms and legs move more sideways than I imagine from the experience of walking, more sideways than forward and backward. It looks tight. Is this body so stiff, so hard? I, who have made it my profession to move easily and adeptly? There is always some degree of disappointment and a subsequent desire to change myself when I meet my own reflection. Often, I change my gait at once, stretching my knee as I push off the ground, straightening up, trying to release the tension in my shoulders as much as possible, letting my arms swing forward and back, following gravity, letting myself be free and ready for the world. It always fails me, it seems. To maintain this ease I am longing for. But maybe there is something that changes in me, a little, every time, over hours, days, months, decades. And maybe there is something in this strong wind, something I don't see, besides through my own reflection in the window, which I do not understand, but which is an important part of how I move. Or maybe one can imagine that there is a whole register – through imprints and traces in time and things, places and other people, with insights about myself – which I will never have access to.

Reflection

If I look at myself in a mirror, I see something other than if I look at my own reflection in a water surface. What I see myself through reveals or shows me something specific, something which is only revealed in the

face of this particular other. I lie on my back and gaze up at the summer sky, and I become aware of everything that makes us different, the sky and me. Or an old cupboard. Hello, cupboard. You also hold something, you also carry a darkness, both similar and different to mine: the darkness of the ear canal, the darkness in a closed cupboard. The darkness behind or underneath a cupboard, the darkness of the pupil of the eye. My own shadow moving before me on the path. We elucidate each other through our difference, we could say. And we may find connections, unheard of or surprising.

Words

Sometimes I do an exercise. I look at something, anything, and call it 'beauty'. What happens to it then? Calling something ugly carries with it a kind of rejection. But in beauty lies an invitation, a welcoming, something coming forth: the senses being drawn to whatever is for the occasion called 'beauty' and touching it, with the eye, thought, memory – imagination's eyes widening, eagerly, trying to place the thing in the world anew. And I get the opportunity to be subjected to a beauty I haven't experienced before.

Seeing

Rembrandt painted a picture entitled *A Woman Bathing in a Stream* (1654). And the painting shows just that. Or does it? Yes, I see a half-undressed woman and

she is bathing, I see water, warm sunlight. And before I know it, an expectation of beauty descends on the picture, a habit, a filter that comes with the gaze before I have time to realize what is happening, which repeats everything I know of a half-naked woman in summer light, a conventional look upon beauty lays on the lenses of my glasses like dew when coming in from the cold. But wait a minute. For what Rembrandt lets through in this painting is precisely not a painter's outer gaze on the woman bathing. Instead, it is her own gaze that I can borrow. John Berger writes about how one can see in the picture 'desire experiencing itself as something as old as the known world, tenderness experiencing itself as the end of the world, the eyes' endless rediscovery as if for the first time of a familiar body'. The painting lets me take off my glasses and instead take part in the experience of the cool water against the legs on this particular summer day in the seventeenth century.

Imaginarium

On a typical day of writing, my desk looks something like this: three or four open books; poetry, prose, textbooks; some pictures; photographs, postcards, clippings from newspapers or magazines; a porcelain cup (which I do not drink from), a piece of fine-woven fabric, a notebook with small drawings and collections of words, half-thought thoughts. Some things stay for longer, through several writing processes, others are replaced when a score is completed. Every book,

every picture, every object has its own specific force; and the text I write arises at a meeting point between these forces, without being equal to the sum of them. It reminds me of standing at a crossroads, the shadows of the buildings falling into each other, shaping a new territory through their intersections, un-figured-out patterns, a different place to think from.

Doubt

‘I would like to have the right to express my deepest doubt’, Inger Christensen writes.

Tempus

What does it mean to dance the past? What does it mean to dance the future? Or what impact does it have on me as a body, here and now, that the text is written in the past tense? What impact does it have on me as a body, here and now, that the text is written in the future tense? I believe that writing choreographic poetry is about creating a text that has an acute significance for being a body, in the present moment, no matter what tense is used in the language, but that different impacts can be shaped or created through how the text’s tense charges the moment. The future tense may charge the moment with a tension between expectation and anticipation; the past tense addressing the manners of memories, evoking images, in paler colours, growing into space through one’s own gaze.

Rhythm

Rhythm is what shapes material through repetition: the buildings I walk in and out of, the days, the doors that open and close, the nights, the language. Rhythm is also how repetitions create patterns in different ways. A flock of birds. The branches of a naked tree in November. The smooth pulsating breath of the ventilation system.

Reading mistakes

Often, when I read, something interesting catches my eye that turns out not to be there; I’ve read it wrong. To me, this has become an important part of writing. I write down what I thought I read, something that essentially did not make sense in the context of the original text, but which precisely creates a glitch that is felt in my body, a friction creating a spark of movement.

The impossible

I have some idea of what ‘doubt’ is – or at least some images come to mind, some pictures from some collective imagination, the time we live in, what I am exposed to, what has been linked to the word ‘doubt’. I have an even clearer picture of what it means to ‘plough’; I have seen the crop fields transformed from surfaces with sharp barley stalks into soft, dark impenetrable furrows as the tractor slowly moves

forward while pulling the curved blades behind itself. But to 'plough doubt', how do you do that? As two familiar things meet and form an unknown act or description, dance awakens in me. To figure out how to plough love, I have to feel it in the body, thinking alone is of no use; I have to feel its texture by moving my hand over its surface. I have to let the doubt and ploughing meet in me to know the force they make up together. And although no one can tell if I am right when I move by the force of ploughing doubt, and no one (probably) will recognize that I am ploughing doubt (because it does not exist before I do it), the experiment itself is specific and shapes what that is, 'to plough doubt'.

Footnotes and memory

The tools of writing provide distinctive possibilities in the form of dance. One might say that writing dance opens up opportunities for both dance and text that would not otherwise be available and which are 'writerly' to the dance and 'dancerly' to the text. Read as a dance, a footnote can be an embedded information; a word with a footnote can, after reading the footnote, point in a specific direction, or act as an affix, a configured unit. If the word *body* has a footnote, then *body*¹ is charged

¹ Lonely, seed-like, slightly shiny in the deep green leafwork. Wind gusts, rhythmic, swinging. Legs are moved backwards, clinking fine embroidered socks in dark blue and green, element of yellow. Is a yellow hummingbird deep inside the tree crown, as far as visible, a fast heart.

with the effect that this footnote has. *Body* is no longer *body* as it were before the footnote, but rather a sum of *body* and the specific effect this footnote has on *body*. *Body* becomes a kind of 'zone' in the choreography; and so, for example, I can easily remember a number of words and practise the 'zones' which every word in the series constitutes.

Punctuation

A full stop, read as dance, has a unifying effect; in time, in space; a completed stretch, a movement that is fulfilled, coming to an end, disappearing, vanishing. A line break allows a motion to echo out, a comma gives renewed force to the continuation, the next part of a phrase. A sentence or paragraph may be a sequence. An uneven right margin may create a hovering between two phrases, where a block-adjusted text may encourage a smoother hunt forward in time. A parenthesis invites confidentiality. An even margin on one side gives the notion of searching back. For example. And so on. The technical, formal aspects of the written sphere have an impact on the text read as dance and changes its meaning or effect when being surged up into another system, another paradigm, which the dance then constitutes. And vice versa. Choreographic poetry happens at the crossing point between these two spheres.

Polyphonic writing

I can watch five performers dance at the same time, but I can't read five pages of text at the same time. Nevertheless, in the score *Escape and Transformation* (2015) I tried to *write* a text to be danced simultaneously by five dancers. I think of it as polyphonic writing – that five tracks in the text together constitute one course, one chronology, which can only be 'read' polyphonically as the text is danced – similar to how a choral work arises as the different voices are in the same room at the same time, performing together. This way of writing requires acceptance of one's own inadequacy, because the writing action is limited by the way I can read and keep track of the text while writing; and it requires that memory (the ability to keep multiple poetic images alive simultaneously in my mind), the power of imagination and the ability to guess is sharpened as precisely as possible.

Synthesis I

Compiling words, without a pronoun, is like mixing colours, I imagine: *dreams tissue timeless – untold arms wind – particularities light undersides*. Together, the three words form a different 'colour' than each would, had they stood alone. This specific 'colour', or synthesis, that the words create together can give a singular resonance when read as dance. The chronology of the reading action is erased, the eyes no longer need to move from one word to the next, I can at once feel

dreams tissue timeless, listen to its shapes, its patterns, through movement.

Synthesis II

A body does not have blank spaces between moments, the body exists and exists. It draws everything together through itself; whether concentration is kept steady as a lasting tone or has short pauses in-between. Dancing a choreographic score means letting one's own presence be constituted by a (practised) progression that is and must be here and now and which is tethered to the reading of the score; the reading that has been and which has gradually found its way into a movement but which, to some extent, always points back to the very act of reading. The sensory images, the chronology, the states, the figures, they are both here and now, in patterns and movements, a fine-tuned presence – and inside the dancer, in a kind of activated past – the moment of reading.

Approaching the performer

When I first approached writing choreographic poetry, I thought it would be wise to use the pronoun 'I' when approaching the reader. I thought it would create the most direct connection between score and performer. But 'I' was more easily perceived as 'me', i.e. the one who writes, and thus created a distance where the reader read the text as 'another', a person who talked about herself, and thus required an extra 'translation'

(‘how does this apply to me when you are talking about you?’). Then I tried to use ‘you’. *You rid yourself of any doubt, rid yourself, you’re a riddle. You are a riddle written in birdsong.* This way of approaching the reader forms what I refer to as ‘soft imperative’; it says something about what happens to ‘you’, the reader, in a direct approach from the text to the reader, but it also paves the way for the text and the reader to be ‘one’; implying that the text knows something about the reader, creating a familiarity where the text and the reader agree, or at least *can* agree, on what the dance is. Later, I wrote in the third person, the first person plural, the implicit subjective (as in soft imperative, but without the pronoun), with no pronoun, and with fluctuating perspectives and pronouns. I remember the first time I read the score of *I’ll Crane for You* (2008) by Deborah Hay, which opens like this: ‘Like a fan opening, the stage space unfurls into life with his entrance – a short, curved path, situating him near the audience. / He moves along the edge of the audience performing a blurry dance in blurry space.’ And I remember that I first thought, ‘Who is he?’ before immediately thinking, ‘He’s me’. The dance is constituted by the fact that ‘I’ dance ‘him’. And it is not about making up an idea of who this ‘he’ is in the form of a particular character or figure, but that by practising the score, ‘learning from the body’ and listening to the possibilities this exact ‘he’ opens up for what had not been there had it been ‘I’ or ‘you’. By making a linguistic distinction between body and thought in the concept of ‘learning from the body’, Hay

allows the performer to think of the body as a teacher rather than as a kind of vehicle to be navigated. I think that in doing so she allows for a dominant feeling that the body is subject to thought – in the manner of a vessel used to look for movement material that is to be continually addressed and used or rejected – to be turned upside down, and it can feel liberating for the dancer to instead look at the body as an intelligent capacity.

Appearing

In *The Journals of Susanna Moody* (1970), Margaret Atwood writes: ‘I take this picture of myself / and with my sewing scissors / cut out the face. // Now it’s more accurate: // Where my eyes were, / every- / thing appears.’ This description of *seeing*, of being in the world, of how the missing field in the image lets the world appear, reminds me of dancing: a hole is cut out of existence as it is in daily life, routine, the useful or necessary; and through this opening, the world appears, all of a sudden both so near and so fragmented, as through binoculars, a field that is constantly transforming through moving and where the strange and the familiar are equalized, perceived anew.

Space I

On my way to the university library late one night in March, I am interrupted by singing as I enter through the revolving door. I stop and see a choir. They are

standing in a circle in the foyer outside the library, wearing everyday clothes, it looks like they have moved a regular rehearsal into this area just for tonight. Why? I stay for a while and notice that they have shaped the circle on the spot in the room where the ceiling is at its highest. The communal voice constituted by the choir resonates powerfully, it feels like it is moving into my body, I am filled by it, the melody and the sound appear surprising and strong. Until a moment ago I had been walking fast, worrying about something I was going to write and how I should go about it. I hadn't heard this music before, yet it feels recognizable due to the close physical contact of the voices and my body. By singing in this room, something must be audible that in another room would not have been. The distances, the shapes and materials of the walls and floor, their position, the shape they stand in, giving the sound a certain resonance.

Space II

The spatial has a somewhat bothersome potential to establish a mimetic relationship with text on paper; how it is distributed on the page, the layout, the format, shape and size of the paper and the font. And, like attempting to describe dance rather than write dance, indicating spatial incentives or facilitating certain spatial choices through how the text is physically shaped may feel as though it is reducing both the text and the dance; by trying to let the one be the same as the other.

Space III

Often, I think of a dance as a drawing in the room, because it leaves a certain imprint – one can envision a path on the floor where the dancer has been, or a multi-dimensional 'trace' in the air, as if any movement and displacement draws a line. Finally, it might look like a kind of cloud, a pencil sketch of a cloud, maybe. When, for several months, I practised daily the solo *Dynamic* (2012) by Deborah Hay before premiering my adaptation of it, I used to draw after each practice freely from memory the floor path I had just moved in, both as an element of documentation – something lasting, proof that I had done it even though no one may have seen me – and as a tool. In the end I could then put the sheets of paper on top of each other, hold them up to the light and squint; there it was, a spatial preference or density that I had not initially been aiming at. In the solo *Violin Phase* (1981), Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker dances on a surface of light sand. The solo is choreographed so that the dancer gradually 'draws' a particular pattern in the sand, a pattern that is only visible if one sees the substrate from above. And in the baroque notation system for court dances – *la belle danse* – only the steps of the feet were recorded; the arms and upper body movements were probably seen as so obvious that they did not need to be mentioned – somewhere it says that if you wonder about the arm movements, ask your dance master. This probably caused some headaches for twentieth-century dancers and choreographers – as these court dances, after their peak

era, were put aside and forgotten about for a couple of centuries before the dance scores were rediscovered. (What a fantastic thing to be able to dance like they did two hundred years ago, and with great accuracy! Like travelling in time – I'm going to end this parenthesis now.) In the books *Drawing a Hypothesis – Figures of Thought* (2011) and *Choreographic Figures* (2017), Austrian artist Nikolaus Gansterer shows a compelling collection of figures of thought and figures of motion, maps and diagrams. He approaches the idea of thought as if it were movement, a movement that can be read off by inscribing the 'pathways' and 'shapes' of these thought-movements. In this way, both thought and movement are given a different, 'non-language' form – not a translation, unless one also thinks of language as a translation of thought and movement – but a form that gives access to *the same*, so that one can approach the same reality from radically different access points and so that this *same* necessarily behaves and develops differently, in the encounter with the chosen form.

Space IV

A dance must take place somewhere, for example on a mantelpiece. In the book *Body Space Image* (1990) by Miranda Tufnell and Chris Crickmay, there is a picture of five men in long dark robes standing side by side on a mantelpiece, each at a slight diagonal, with a lightly bowed neck and eyes reverently drawn inwards. This picture never ceases to astonish me.

A work's identity

It's easy to get inspired; and often I find that what I am using the inspiration for says more about me than about what inspires me. An inspiration can be precarious; it does not require anything in return, it tags along willingly in your jacket pocket, in your gaze, in your writing – inspiration does not oppose. To interpret a score is something quite different, I find. It requires a mutual commitment, a partnership established over time: firstly, through how the score is written, then how it is read, practised, danced. It requires attention to detail, chronology and wholeness. It requires attention to the time the score evokes or creates in the person who reads it. Attention to the sense of space it evokes. Attention to a fine-tuned presence specific to this particular score, and in the encounter just me as a performer. I think it's possible to recognize such a partnership, such an attentive process of enduring listening – something we might choose to call *the work's identity* may then appear.

Movement and presence articulation

When I look up the word 'articulation' I find that, among other things, it means to conjoin more than two things, and then how things are conjoined and how they move in relation to each other. For instance, movement and presence. Perhaps dance can be perceived as an articulation of movement and presence. In any case, it is difficult to separate the one from the

other; and when I write or read something as dance, it is always about these two, like needle and thread, how the needle and thread form their path through a fabric woven by time and space.

Being a chair

I always thought it was quite easy to be, for example, a muffin, or a chair. And I'm not just thinking about the shape, how the chair looks, but about entering the actual condition, the character, the personality of this particular chair. One can probably imagine that it is all about simple animation, the humanization of the thing, the chair. But I'm not so sure. In any case, I don't think it's just about that: because approaching another state, with some kind of extended or excessive empathy, a recognition of co-existence perhaps, implies the listening, sensing, widening and attracting of differences and similarities between the materialities of two things, their textures, gravity, position, pose, structure, function, movement, porosity. This in turn can give way to some kind of transformation from human-as-thing to human-as-thing-meets-chair-as-thing. I think it is possible to recognize the similarities and differences, and to use both to approach the non-human. In this way, it is a shorter distance between the human and the non-human than we might be accustomed to thinking. Although we can only read these differences and similarities from a human perspective. That a tree has a different 'presence' than another tree; a tree has a different presence or

condition than the building next to it. In any case, I can feel the difference in my body. I use this when writing dance and when I dance. I can approach the tree, or the building, by 'borrowing' its state. In the book *Fox 8: A Story* (2013), George Saunders writes the story of a fox. The fox has learned to read and write human language by spending countless hours outside the living room window of a human family on the outskirts of the forest. It sounds silly and funny, and it's fun, but also surprisingly credible. When the fox writes that one night he was sitting outside the house, 'smelling all the interest with snout', the language has approached a 'foxy' syntax, and I nod in recognition: yes, this is how to be a fox, you smell the interest with snout. Approaching my surroundings in this way is about entering the state of things rather than looking at them as objects: if I am going to dance a horse, I am not concerned with how the horse looks, what characteristics it has as an 'objective' horse, but by its 'horseness': how it is to be just this horse, how it is to see what it sees, the way it sees it, and what it uses it for. How it is to move across the floor like a horse in a human body. How I'm searching for the hoofs in my feet, how I want to bite into the grand piano, how a door is no longer just a door, but also a strange mechanism for which I don't have the instructions.

The body

The book *The Body: An Essay* (1990) by Jenny Boully consists entirely of footnotes to a text we don't get to read.

This reminds me of what insights I have in my own body: I know a lot of things *about* the body, and I continually experience what it means to be a body, but I can never understand what being a body *is* because I have no other experience to compare it with. I have often experienced a feeling of being stuck in the body. An overwhelming realization that the body is the only way. But what arises from the body, from the body's imagination, could be seen as an extension of it; a book is written from the body and returns to it, allowing the body to see itself as something else, a transcending of its physical limitation.

A forest of words

I am used to having to find the right word through dance. In the studio, in technique class, in rehearsals. Before and after a performance. Movements have or are given names; sequences and phrases are confined or evoked through words, sounds, language-born images. Moving language close to dance and seeing what happens to the dance when touching it with words. A continuous conversation where each voice changes seamlessly or abruptly between the verbal and the physical, in pursuit of a common understanding, agreement or discovery between the two who are speaking. – *Pffff and then [hand movement] tsch tsch [sliding sideways] but then I somehow can't find the right tempo. – If you turn around like it's for the first time? – Yes, maybe so. [] Dressed in a hunting suit [turning] – Yes. I have found my way to scores through a forest of words.*

A crevasse

Writing is physical work, or so I experience it. I can sense the text in the body, feel the sentence take shape before I hear it as an inner voice, or before I see it on the screen or page, I move around in the chair, get up, walk down the stairs and back up, listen, trying to get the text moving, building. I can think differently when writing than when not writing. Dancing is mental work, or so I experience it. I can sense a thought moving me, I can sense that what I am thinking can make it possible for me to move in other ways, that asking myself questions or telling myself words, expressions, sentences does something to the way I am aware of being a body, can open me up for a movement I could not imagine. Between a dance and a poem is a crevasse. From one side to the other, small leaves sail in the wind; what can be thought through dancing, what can be made possible to dance through thinking, what can be thought through writing, what can be made possible to dance through the written, what can be written through dancing.

How do you find the dance in there?

A writing colleague of mine asks the question. He is pointing eagerly, with his whole hand, at a random book on the table between us. I feel a sigh trying to escape, or maybe it's my heart sinking, I don't know. Because this is something I should be able to answer; one who is writing choreographic poetry should be

able to say something in general about what makes a text not just a text, but also a dance. So, I take a deep breath and I try: I look for a paragraph or a sentence or just a two-word juxtaposition that is of significance to the present moment. I begin. Not just in terms of reflection, but more specifically: a zone of the text that has an impact on being human, as a body, in the present moment. That provides or causes an immediate, physical experience. Or something that demands physicality to be experienced. Furthermore, I look for something that can be performed as an ambiguous action. I look for something that requires action or movement; a texture that must be felt, like when I move my hand over a rough surface to know what a rough surface is. Or I look for an altering or ambiguous state, a condition that shifts me out of the habitual, gives me a different experience of what my body can be, of what that is, being a body. Actually, I'm not even looking for these things, I say, and suddenly I am eager, I grab the book, open it at random – and now I am illustrating how it really happens, finding the dance in there, while explaining: – It's rather as if my eyes drift quickly and easily across the page before I have the time to read the text properly. The eyes search and find the dance, like a dog's nose, tracking.

Abstraction

I never quite understood how dance could be abstract.
How moving could be experienced or considered

abstract, without being able to distinguish the person from the movement. In my experience, rather, dancing is concretizing beyond the recognizable.

Time IV

The body has a time of its own – the time it takes.

These essays were first published as part of the book *Choreographic Poetry* (2019), a collection of literary scores for dance. They were written in the framework of my PhD in artistic research at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts, *Choreographic Poetry: Creating literary scores for dance*. Thanks to the dancers and musicians who contributed to the process of developing the PhD project. To Chrysa Parkinson, Anne Gry Haugland and Bojana Cvejić for their valuable contributions during the process of writing these essays. And to Jeroen Peeters and Mette Edvardsen for further editorial dialogue.

Janne-Camilla Lyster is a writer, dancer and choreographer. She has published poetry, novels, essays and plays.

www.jannecamillalyster.no

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