



NOTES ON ELASTICITY

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subtle

voice

form

structures

networks enthralled in a
push

through
up
down

of

elasticity of

words

flexible
pliable
never finding a finished form,

transforming

I These texts manifest themselves as expressions that work with language, its connections, questioning how and where meaning is constructed in multilinear ways. It is based on my masters in choreography research that took place between Dec 2019 and June 2021 at Oslo National Academy of the Arts, resulting in a performance and written reflection titled *If Only*.

During my masters, I was attempting to decentre the hierarchy that speech often had over movement. I wanted to explore how a text produced meaning without it be understood as a linear narrative. My interest lay in exploring the co-dependence of words and movement; challenging how they were understood in relation to each other. I aimed to disrupt and transform the meanings and associations that words and movement created. This was explored through playful and chaotic tasks working with the body, movement, microphone wires, sound and text.

II

“Text relates to *texture* and *textile* and traces back to *texo – to weave*, referring to the way words and sentences are *woven* together. We speak of *weaving* a tale or *spinning* a yarn. A subtle idea is a *finely spun* one.”

— *Debika Lahiri* (2015)

I find that Debika Lahiri’s claim visualises how my work found its form. As the work developed I realised my interests lay in opening up for meaning to be generated in the experience of the viewer; how fragments of text, movement, sound frequencies could be read in multilinear ways. I attempted to integrate movement and the open text, to challenge form and composition by *weaving* an intertextual web of references together. My interest was to create a performance consisting of multiple connections woven together, creating potential openings for interpretation— not reducing them to one form or linear meaning.

I consider the work as an intertextual web of references that arise in the encounters between language and movement —interacting equally and connecting non-sequentially. The audience was free to make their own choices in their reading, continually shifting and being an *active reader*, which resonates with Roland Barthes concept of the *writerly text* (Barthes & Balzac, 1974) and Derrida’s approach to decentering (Derrida, 1998).

III

Deconstruction, a theory about language and literature, is a post-structuralist theory from the 1960’s referring to a wave of academic output which critically revised the structuralist movement which preceded it. The term “deconstruction” does not mean *destruction* as it might indicate, instead referring to analysis in a linguistic sense of undoing. Paul H. Fry at Yale University states that Derrida’s thought process on deconstruction was a deliberate process of refusing to settle for definite positions. He goes on to discuss deconstruction as “*the dismantling of the grounds whereby we suppose our thinking can be derived from one or another definite concept*” (Fry, 2012, p. 125). In other words, Derrida attempted to illustrate how basic ideas and concepts fail to ever express only one meaning in a text.

Derrida’s deconstructive strategies included taking apart hierarchical systems of thought to re-write them with a new intention. What is interesting to consider is where meaning is constructed in a text. In Derrida’s case he considered it not only inscribed in the sign (signifier and the signified) but considered everything as a “text”. That meaning and representation lay in the interpretation of the work. His famous statement “*nothing outside of the text*” (1998) can be understood that meaning is always incomplete depending on what will be said next and how the words are understood in relation to each other. Derrida didn’t mean that there is nothing outside of writing, or that text is all that matters, that the world of reality does not matter, nor is he trying to play down the importance of social concerns that lay behind the texts. Comparatively, he suggests that meaning is never as straight forward as we think. Stating that everything, like text, can be interpreted in multiple ways and is never a pure signifier of the signified.

IV

From my perspective intertextuality expands the Derridean view that there is nothing outside the text. Meaning exists in the interpretation and re-interpretation of texts and that it cannot exist outside of itself. Rather it views texts as a weave of codes from other “texts” or discourses such as history, philosophy, sociology etc. The term *intertextuality* was first developed by Julia Kristeva in an attempt to incorporate Saussure’s semiotics – his study of how signs acquire their meaning within the structure of a text. Kristeva described intertextuality as:

“*each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read*”

and “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another”

— Kristeva, 1986, p. 37

In other words, any text is an “intertext” existing through its relationship with other texts. The author of a text cannot avoid hinting at other works. Thus, meaning is not directly transferred from writer to reader, rather it is negotiated through “codes” made known to the writer and reader by other texts (Kristeva, 1986). An example of this can be seen in Roland Barthes work. His intertextual view of literature (in his later works) supports the idea that the meaning of a text does not exist in the text, rather the meaning is produced by the reader in relation to the text but also the reading process. Barthes called this “writerly text”, where the active participation of the reader is required to establish the text’s meaning. The goal of the “writerly text” was to make the reader a producer of the text, not just a consumer, while the “readerly text” was considered a classic text (Barthes & Balzac, 1974).

V

The core of the process involved working with indeterminacy; exploring how elements in language and movement that are not precisely fixed or established can interact. Throughout the creation process, I framed explorations that allowed for moments of chaos and not yet known materials to unfold. It was vital that my choreographic work wasn’t set, meaning that there was not a fixed form controlling the outcome which the performers reproduced in each performance. In my work I create tasks that can function as entrances into a research, that can continually be explored



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if one tries to collapse the roof falls but if one tries on ones head one tries the roof falls if one tries to fall but if the category collapse the roof on ones collapse the category falls on ones head but if ones head tries the category the head falls on ones roof ones head tries the category the roof falls but one tries to collapse category on if to collapse the category falls on ones head one tries the category the roof on ones head on ones one tries to roof the falls on ones collapse the category falls on ones head but if to collapse the category falls on one one tries to collapse the category on ones head but one tries the category the roof tries to collapse if one collapse the roof on ones head to collapse the category the roof falls collapse the roof on ones head but one tries the category on ones head if one tries to collapse the category if one tries to collapse the category ones head falls on ones collapse category the roof on ones head to falls on the roof

and new discoveries can be made in performance settings. I consider the work as real-time explorations based on structures, scores and orally given tasks.

Often form isn't important to me, it doesn't need to look the exact same each time it is performed. What I am interested in is clear executions in the explorations. In other words, what matters to me is experiencing the exploration of the tasks and discovering something unforeseeable, which arises when the performers are focussed on *building together* — giving space, time to each other and

the task at hand. The energy, potentiality and edge that occurred when the form wasn't set was alluring to me. Similarly to Deborah Hay, the goal of my work is not for the "performers to arrive" at an answer, but rather to notice the possibilities and potential for movement outside of ones habitual movement comfort zone" (Goldman, 2007, p 164). I realised that the potentiality of the work lies in the moments of listening and noticing. Therefore, materials are framed through language and oral instructions, opening up possibilities of multi-linearity in the materials.



VI

In my choreographic work there are different apparatuses at work; text, movement, and sound. In each of the materials there is often a feeling of flexibility, that they are malleable and adaptable. I refer to my work as having a *pliable form*; as active and tactile— ready to change and be transformed.

The term pliable indicates something that is supple and can be formed or changed without breaking. The openness of the text and move-

ment material is established through boundaries and structures in the form of oral instructions. My concept of pliable form lies in the extension of my work with graphic scores, including the delimitation given through oral instructions. My choreographic works are designed through rules, structures, instructions and graphic scores - this is the framework that determines the performances' orientation (it is not an open improvisation where anything is possible). There are always particular and specific strategies, thoughts and intentions that go into the work. The scores and strategies

that are developed have very specific intentions and goals, yet the form of movement material is open within the research.

VII

Something interesting I noticed in the process of giving oral instructions was the role certain words played in the understanding of the meaning. Particular words were loaded with meaning and associations which in turn had repercussions in improvisation explorations. Words had the potential to close, end or restrict possibilities, yet could be experienced as openers— creating options. I realised that semantics and the composition of oral instructions played an important role in how they were interpreted and understood. This informed how I worked with my concept of pliable form; creating improvisation situations within set limits or boundaries, rather than restrictions that reduced creativity.

I wanted to create a work where an audience saw the process unfold: the unfinished business continually evolving and new discoveries being made within the pliable form. It was about making the process visible and allowing viewers to make connections in the work as it materialised. Meaning was being constructed and deconstructed through fragmentations of movement motifs and words in motion, woven together. All of the materials; sound, movement, text were equally valued in the work, informing each other.

The absence of linear narratives does not place my work into a landscape of randomness. Rather, the work can be seen as sketches of meaning being explored; not quite full sentences, fragmented words in motion, colliding with movement motifs - reaching to say something precise yet impossibly ambiguous at the same time.

insisting
suspending
the in-determinable

About the gap, *the possibility* for failure, *the attempt*
A liminal space of *continuity, separation, transition, and overlapping.*
Constant negotiations

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