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Introduction

Leena Rouhiainen, Kirsi Heimonen, Rebecca Hilton and Chrysa Parkinson

Here the four editors talk about writing and choreography, and co-authoring this introduction.

One editor (OE): Might we start with this quote from Yvonne Rainer:

What the body can say without verbal language is limited, which is why I so frequently used language in my dances ... to tell stories mostly. I would speak or project texts and later used more elaborate scripts, including multi-media.
(Jayamanne, Kapur, and Rainer 1986 as reported by Dempster 1995, 22)

Or this?

[...] choreography is just a frame, a structure, a language where much more than dance is inscribed.
(Jérôme Bel as reported by Bauer 2008, 42)

Another editor (AE): I guess it's also a lot about what you consider writing and how you write. The *how* of the what ... I like what poet Imamu Amiri Baraka says about writing machines:

If I invented a word placing machine, an 'expression inscriber,' if you will, then I would have a kind of instrument into which I could step & sit or sprawl or hang & not only use my fingers to make words express feelings but elbows, feet, head, behind, and all the sounds I wanted, screams, grunts, taps, itches....
(Baraka 1971, 156)

AE: All three of these quotes capture aspects of the subject, but there are so many ways to consider it, and as William Forsythe (2012, 201) says, “To reduce choreography to a single definition is to not understand the most crucial of its mechanisms: to resist and reform previous conceptions of its definitions.”

AE: Yes, choreography currently is a dynamic, mutable, even uncontainable art form and when we talk about choreography in this volume, we are definitely talking about it as something that continues to move and manifest beyond the framework of what some might call dance, or *a* dance.

AE: As in expanded choreography?

AE: Exactly, Anna Leon (2022, 23) describes expanded choreography as a “non-centralised network of practices and ideas probing what *else* choreography may be;” this seems reasonable to me.

AE: And the particular “what *else*” this volume is exploring or “probing” are practices of writing choreography; after all “graphia” denotes writing.

AE: And chorea signifies dance, which all we editors and contributors have backgrounds in, at the same time as we are all somehow working with textualities of and beyond dance.

AE: Hmm, chorea can also denote a chorus, or a group dance so what if we collectively author this introduction; so that multiple things become a single thing — a simple surface with complexity underneath?

AE: That would work; in fact, some of us have co-authored so often over the years that sometimes I can’t even remember who wrote what.

AE: I really like it when that happens, it animates me.

AE: So, it’s decided! Our multiple voices will now intermingle to form an expanded yet single authorship, which will situate the motifs, threads and themes we are exploring in this volume. Here we go:

Editors in Polyphonic Unison (EiPU): Conveying textual approaches to choreography, this volume proposes different ways in which language, text and writing inform current choreographic practice. *Writing Choreography: Textualities of and beyond Dance* engages with choreography in the expanded field of transdisciplinary processes, moving with and beyond the conventions of dance. In these practices, forms of writing organise the actions of human and more-than-human performers in various settings. While

the production of writing and text are anthropocentric processes, language-based exposition has only recently (in the historic scheme of things) become central to choreographic artists. It is our experience that in daily practice in the fields of dance, choreography and artistic research, there is a growing interest in the ways experimentations with writing and reading inform the processes and performance of choreography. This volume shares a spectrum of processes and practices that range in scale from local to international, from artistic to pedagogic, and from intimate to historic. In observing and discussing the work of seminal international choreographers, as well as reflecting on our own work and that of peers and colleagues, we decided that a volume focusing on textual approaches to choreography would be a relevant addition to the field.

Our curatorial process began with extending invitations to dance-artists, choreographers, dramaturges, writers, interdisciplinary artists and artist-researchers whom we knew were working in the area of expanded choreography and whose work had an existing relationship to reading, writing, text and language. The invitation:

We are inviting you to contribute to the anthology *Writing Choreography* by submitting one of the following: 1) an experimental, performative or poetic choreographic text with the opportunity of utilising alternative layouts and images, 2) an essay describing your practice of choreographic writing performed in other formats than printed paper, again with the opportunity of including portions of experimental text and images, or 3) a more scholarly article about timely conceptions and approaches to choreographic writing. While including concrete examples of materials in choreographic writing, please also respond to one or more of the following questions when composing your contribution: How in your view does choreography write? With what methods, tools and materials does it do so? Who writes in choreography, and for whom does choreography write? What does choreography write on, what turns choreography into writing or vice-versa, with what or whom does choreography write? When does choreography not write? In the end, what is writing in choreography? How does choreographic writing expand our conceptions about writing? What role does reading play in the above-mentioned questions?

The volume has contributions from 15 authors, including us. In addition to this introduction, a contextualising chapter and a poetic conclusion, it consists of ten chapters presented in a three-part structure: *Transcribing performance into writing*; *Practices of writing that choreograph*; and *Choreography as writing with*. The three sections interweave practically oriented chapters with more theoretical ones, a conscious editorial attempt to keep practice and theory in dialogue with, rather than separate from one and other. It may be useful to

note that some contributions or parts of the chapters are concrete pieces of textual choreography and others are more *about* textual choreography, reflecting the many different approaches to the theme.

In the contextualising chapter, we the two of the co-editors, Leena Rouhiainen and Kirsi Heimonen, approach the volume's themes from a dance studies perspective, with a specific focus on Western dance art. We unfold a history of textual choreography as experienced from a periphery, detailing how writing, text and language-related international practices have informed and influenced Finnish choreographic practice over the past 50 years. In exploring the volume's themes, the chapter lays out some of the ways in which writing choreography has manifested over time and place, locally and internationally.

Part 1, *Transcribing performance into writing*, includes various approaches to transcription as method, including a performance text, an entanglement of choreographic and writing practices, a past choreography as a future film and visual documentation of a planetary pas-de-deux as a form of choreoreading. These contributions each play with experimental and expanded forms of writing and reading, introducing new language-based ways in which choreography performs.

In the dance theatre work of Australian choreographer Vicki Van Hout, talking and writing, moving and choreographing, culture and community, the personal and the political, all combine to create a coalition of coexistences, with no one language or style or genre ever subsuming another. Her contribution to this volume explores relations between choreography, dance history, orality and literacy as well as speaking to the complexity of relations between contemporary art and traditional cultural practices, which inspire, situate and complicate her creative processes. Verbatim transcriptions of a live performance are accompanied by her reflections on the ways speaking/dancing/writing/choreographing and contemporary/traditional/indigenous/colonial/political/personal perspectives converge in her work; she asks, whose dance is this anyway and what does it mean, make and do, to claim authorship, to perform, to own and to write choreography?

Interdisciplinary artist alys longley's contribution considers textual choreography through reflecting on her previous artistic and collaborative work. Proposing writing as a form of movement and exploring the performative characteristics of language, the chapter entitled *The place where the actual and fictional touch, the place where a language flicks channels* discusses how language and writing informed two performance processes, namely *h u m a t t e r i n g* (2022) and *Mistranlation Laboratory* (2019). In contemplating choreographic composition, longley is interested in playing with and probing textuality via practices of erasure, striking out, experiments with font settings, alternative page layouts, concrete poetry, drawing and image generation. She works in the expanded art field, softening the disciplinary constraints of both choreography and writing.

Performer, choreographer and pedagogue Jennifer Lacey's text takes shape as a film treatment — a proposal for a not-yet-made film — which relates

in detail a choreographic situation that has already happened. She writes to permanently record the ephemerality of a situation that was both social and choreographic, moving her studio practice from stage to page, simultaneously documenting a past and proposing a future. She roams through these pasts, presents and futures via a free-wheeling, footnoting practice, which reveals the “worlds within worlds, times within times, places within places” present in the cultural and artistic practices of the various communities of dance people she encounters. Lacey depicts ways in which her practices of writing — in relation to studio, stage and page — inform, inflect and affect the before(s), during(s) and after(s) of her choreographic practice.

Simo Kellokumpu’s chapter, *Invitation: choreoreading EXOXE* emerges from their post-doctoral artistic research process. Referring to hyper-reading, a notion coined by James Sosnoski, they invite readers to attune to their bodies in specific ways while reading their article. Choreoreading is made concrete when Kellokumpu addresses the reader as a performer in collaboration with the textual artwork, guiding awareness towards the bodily practice of reading, the situatedness, the tempo, the tracking of the eyeballs, etc. Forwarding hyper-reading via choreoreading has led Kellokumpu to reflect on issues of composition in relation to attention, and to exploring the many potential selves we each harbour. Kellokumpu looks to queering choreographic conventions by speculating on ways that practices of science-fiction-ing and outer space-ing might generate an alternative choreographic-being-in-the-world.

Part 2, *Practices of writing that choreograph*, offers experimentations with various writing formats considered as choreography. These include a letter, email correspondence, a ship’s log and a restaging of historical figures’ journals. Through these trans-compositional processes, the authors commune with absences and presences, with real and imagined interlocutors. These texts highlight how practices of embodiment and embeddedness both slip from and exist through writing, sometimes purposefully and sometimes inadvertently becoming choreography.

Choreographer and researcher Lynda Gaudreau has a dedicated letter-writing ritual, which anchors her artistic research practice. In her article, a personal letter to Saint Hildegard of Bingen is interwoven with e-mail correspondence between the author and her good friend Barbara De Coninck. A strong and sudden emotional experience, had while standing in front of a painting by Vincent Van Gogh, leads her to ask guidance from Hildegard. The correspondence between the friends recounts some personal history, addresses issues rising from the event at the museum and shares various fragmented ponderings on art making, destruction, disagreement and freedom inspired by specific philosophers and theorists. Gaudreau’s letter writing invokes and attunes with her chosen saint, a practice which traverses multiple times, spaces and ideas. The practice of writing again and again to somebody, knowing you will never receive a response, urges the author toward questions of art-making as orientation, as transmission, as speculation, as hopefulness.

Performer, choreographer and writer Amaara Raheem's textual choreography draws on experiences she had during an artistic residency on a cargo ship travelling from Vancouver to Shanghai. The journey takes 24 days. Her search for relevant compositional and choreographic strategies through which to explore the immersive intensity of the experience included devising ways to move with and communicate with her fellow traveller, the crew and the ship itself. She created multiple archives of words, acts and gestures, collected via practices of conversing, spying and eavesdropping, and through studying and copying the ship's logbook. She finds that merely residing in the ship is unsustainable, and through her relational practices of residing-with, she explores processes of change, changing and being changed. The article *Logging: expedition and encounter* recounts in detail the embodiments, experiences and experiments had on, in and with the ship and its denizens. Raheem's performative textual choreography frames this transformative experience, and shares her agile, reflexive, in situ practice wherein choreography writes and writing choreographs.

Dramaturg and writer Martin Hargreaves contributes *Notes on betrayal*. The result of a performative writing practice that involves letter writing, fabulation and restaging, Hargreaves uses Susan Sontag and Jean Genet's own writings to queer their genealogies and choreographically "put them in touch." His evocations exceed, and betray, the historical figures he calls forth in a playful, erotic chaos of misfires, and not-not true stories.

Part 3, *Choreography as writing with*, addresses choreography and writing in collaboration with other human and more-than-human agents. The collected articles explore these themes via poetic texts sewn onto fabric, processual interweaves of writing, drawing and speaking, and the politics and poetry embedded in a co-authored, site-specific textual choreography. These contributions explore collaborative endeavours in relation to other artists, places and things, interlinking writing with other expressive media, materials and environments not necessarily associated with either literature or choreography.

Marie Fahlin's *Cicatrix textus II* has been created in a solitary process of sewing. Fahlin pierces her materials' surfaces with needle and thread, creating a kinetic writing that leaves a scar where language might have been. Each of the three choreographies in this work participates in its own reading through sensual logics and deviations, undertows and overlays that seem to simultaneously create and mend rifts in the fabric of sense-making.

In their chapter, the trio Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer and Mariella Greil revisit their collaborative artistic research project, *Choreo-graphic Figures*, offering insights into and examples of experimental textual practices situated at the interstices of choreography, drawing and writing. The chapter *Choreo-graphic writing: towards more-than-one means of inscription* is accessible in two ways: in this volume, as an article sharing and reflecting on their collaborative process, and via a link to their exposition on the Research Catalogue, a

free online platform. The Research Catalogue exposition introduces and/or performs concrete textual outcomes of the choreographic writing processes generated by the trio. The article discusses the rich methodology that inscribes the thinking-feeling-knowing, which characterises their artistic practice, doing so from the different perspectives of the three collaborators. Their article highlights the inventive cross-artform and multi-medial opportunities textual choreography makes possible.

In their duet, *The choreographic politics of a staircase*, Heimonen and Rouhiainen introduce their score-based approach to co-authored site-specific textual choreography. They present the outcome of their choreographic writing in relation to their exploration of the staircase at Parliament House in Helsinki. They discuss the political dimensions of generating both the text and the choreography itself, highlighting the significance of framing an open-ended process. They also share insights regarding the project's collaborative and site-specific characteristics. Here, they call on André Lepecki's notion of choreopolitics as a practice of freedom. Commitment, dedication and repetition are central to the duo's politics of choreographic practice, and the invitation here is for readers to continue to perform the choreography through the reading of the published texts. Emerging from a collaborative endeavour by the duo, their textual choreography extends into the public realm, providing an opportunity to continue enacting alternative choreographic futures.

The volume ends with a poetic response to the theme of *Writing Choreography* generated by us, the four co-editors, produced via a textual choreography score, developed by Rouhiainen and Heimonen. In *Choreographic aftermath* the focus is on enabling the absent presence or present absence of dance-artists, choreographers, dramaturges, writers and interdisciplinary artists engaging in inscribing choreography on the page. In so doing, the co-choreographed piece writes an appreciation of the different bodies, places and approaches involved in this volume.

OE: This writing process feels a bit like choreography.

AE: The unison?

AE: All of it, the singular surface, the plurality of voices, the complexity. The coming together to make something.

AE: The authorship becomes permeable, even questionable, like in a choreographic process. Like when you're dancing.

AE: Authorship and authorisation, signature and ownership — they come up when thinking through choreography and writing. Recognition, stability and continuity...

AE: Are you talking about permanence? And impermanence?

AE: Yes, the fading or staying stable is choreographic in and of itself. The relative permanence and impermanence of the medium you choose to write with choreographs.

AE: ... and the dance itself writes: choreo graphy — χορεία γραφή

AE: Ah, transcribed performance becomes writing, practices of writing choreograph, and choreography writes with.

EiPU: Yes!

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