Vital Signs: Poetry, Movement and the Writing Body

Sarie Mairs Slee and Scott Thurston, University of Salford

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. For both poets and dancers, the relationship between the body and meaning is central, through embodied aspects of poetic language and through meaning-making in dance. How can interdisciplinary collaboration between poets and dancers in composition and performance throw new light on embodied meaning-making?

2. In performance, how might the written word and the acts of writing be played out in a movement context, involving all performers as mover-writers? How might performances be crafted to allow poetry spoken aloud to be integrated with movement?

3. Can ‘vitality dynamics’ (time, space, movement, direction and force) be activated as compositional and performance principles, both in interdisciplinary collaboration and towards new forms of transdisciplinary artistic practice?

4. How can this new transdisciplinary approach enhance the impact of dance and poetry on audiences?

TAKING FLIGHT

Push forward phrase

frayed nerves afraid,

impulses in the sternum –

information from the blade

instead of the shoulder.

Icicle tiptoes lived silence:

stubborn neck bows your head

like prayer bears on one’s present.

Just carrying my own weight,

the language of touch.

Always landing while taking flight

like your symbol, weighed down

by metaphor falling away.

Moot point, countering the narrative. ...//

Equivalency for lonely repetition,

the texture leaves its mark.

I am not light, but my weight

finds its joint effort, shimmering

change. Nothing finally lets go.

Roll up our sleeves packed in felt.

Despite my reluctance, flecks glitter.

We become friends: an old criticism.

Sarie Mairs Slee, a lecturer in dance at the University of Salford, has been working in the messy territories between dance and theatre for the last fifteen years, exploring links between the embodied experience of our humanity and the significatory power of the body in performance. From 2010 to 2013, her work has focused on collaboration with Studio Matejka, a performance laboratory ensemble in permanent residence at the Grotowski Institute in Wroclaw, Poland. In these and other collaborations, she has been exploring interdisciplinary and collaborative practices centred on embodiment as process, expression and identity.

Scott Thurston, Reader in English and Creative Writing at the University of Salford, is a poet, mover, critic, lecturer, editor and events-organizer. His current research combines a long-standing interest in alternative movement practices with a creative and critical background in innovative poetry in the United Kingdom and North America. His most recent poetry publication is Figure Detached Figure Impermanent (Oystercatcher, 2014) and a recent article is ‘Contemporary innovative poetry by women in the United Kingdom’ (Contemporary Women’s Writing, 2015). He is co-editor of the Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry and co-organizer of The Other Room poetry reading series in Manchester.

Contact:

School of Arts and Media, University of Salford, The Crescent, Salford, M5 4WT, England.

S.M.Slee@salford.ac.uk

S.Thurston@salford.ac.uk