

Speak: Authentic Movement, 'Embodied Text' and Performance as Research

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Intellect

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Abstract

In this article, I will examine the relationship between movement and language in my Authentic Movement practice, focussing on writing for and about performance. Although somatic practices such as Authentic Movement promote body-mind integration and often use language-based reflection on experience, I have often encountered conflicting perspectives on the relationship between body and language across the contexts that I work in. In order to investigate ideas of division and integration between movement and language, I undertook a performance as research project called Speak. Working with Janet Adler's (2002, 153-186) 'embodied text' as a strategy for exploration, which is a deepening of the process of study and practice with words in Authentic Movement, I addressed the question: What is the relationship between physical movement and language in Authentic Movement practice? However, the practice as research also uncovered issues of bringing pre-rehearsed scores from Authentic Movement and writing into performance. As a result, I propose ideas of conversation and dialogue as a form of movement-language exchange in Authentic Movement practice and performance. More broadly speaking, this project has led me to investigate methods from Authentic Movement practice which can support discussions of movement-based performance in practice as research. With the emphasis on body-mind integration and articulation of experience in Authentic Movement, the approach could offer methods to the increasing number of practitioner-researchers entering the academy and grappling with issues of reflecting on embodied practice through writing.

Keywords: Authentic Movement, writing, language, performance, practice as research

Introduction: conflicting discourses on movement and language

I have often encountered jarring discourses on the relationship between language and the body within the different environments that I work in – university, performance and somatic training contexts. In my experience, the relationship between movement and language can sometimes be seen as challenging, with language considered at times as interrupting or erasing bodily experience; or language can be seen as productive and generative as an aspect of body-mind experience. My somatic training

in Authentic Movement and Body Mind Centering with Joan Davis in Ireland explored the interrelationship between movement and language in many ways – including vocal utterances as part of movement expression, spoken and written reflection following movement, text or sounds informing movement practice, facilitation through language as well as touch and so on. Therefore my view is that Authentic Movement aims to integrate movement and language, where both are part of the processes of perception and action. The reflective capacity to articulate experience is also a focal point of the practice, using body-mind and body-language together. However, in working with performance practitioners both within and outside somatic movement contexts, I sometimes hear arguments against talking about movement, and a distrust of language which might erase experience. In this way, language could be seen as applied to the work, rather than an articulation and extension of the process itself.

A resistance to language could be seen as part of a backlash against Cartesian dualism, where Descartes has been interpreted as placing value on mental and thought based activity over bodily experience. Andréé Grau (2011, 7) points out that Descartes did not in fact propose a complete separation of mind and body, and questions ‘the assumption of the superiority of the [mind over body] that is generally attributed to Descartes and then presented as a ‘typical’ western understanding of the body’. At the same time, the perceived Cartesian disregard of embodied response over intellectual enquiry can be considered to filter down as a converse distrust for ‘thinking’. Within a dualistic frame, then, thinking could be assumed to cut the body off from the experience, and language to come from a rationalisation following the experience that might take away from the intrinsic value of bodily phenomena. The desire to promote experience outside of linguistic framing could be considered as a necessary step to reinstate the importance of bodily insight and give it a place in knowledge discourses. However, such a position could reinforce the body-mind divide which somatic work often challenges.

A distrust of language in articulating experience could also emerge from the ‘beliefs that there is something immutably and timelessly authentic about bodies and movement in a way that is less true for language and the spoken word’ (Murray and Keefe, 2007, 21). The title ‘Authentic Movement’ appears to maintain the assumption

of a stable, authentic self that can be derived from movement. However, in Authentic Movement practice, movements appear and disappear based on contextual elements, and identities are thus never stable but emerge from evolving personal and environmental relationships. In addition, unconscious material can be understood to make appearances in the body in Authentic Movement through a process of deferral and substitution, as an unconscious impulse might take a number of different forms during a session such as voice, gesture, archetype and so on. Indeed, Derrida suggests that Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious refers to a process of deferral rather than the existence of a stable and unchanging truth through the body. Derrida (1982, 20-21) comments that 'the unconscious is not, as we know, a hidden, virtual, or potential self-presence. It differs from, and defers, itself; which doubtless means that it is woven of differences, and also that it sends out delegates, representatives, proxies; but without chance that the giver of proxies might "exist".' Impulse can be repressed by the individual, influenced by personal, social and cultural constraints, and become part of the unconscious material that appears in the body. However, these 'appearances' mark disappearances, as they are traces of unconscious material – which can as equally be applied to movement as language, as in the proverbial 'Freudian slip'.

Practice as research (also known as artistic research, performance as research, practice-led research, research-led practice and so on) has widely celebrated active engagement through the body of the researcher as a way of knowing, and is evolving an international profile as a validated research methodology, albeit to varying degrees across cultures (Nelson, 11-17). Such discourses attempt to avoid the dualistic tendency to see body and mind as separate and therefore placing one in a hierarchy over the other. Instead, there is a process of exploring how they work together to inform knowledge and uncover insights which would not be available without processes of bodily experience, thoughtful reflection, physical activities, collaboration with others, documentation and articulation across various media. In a process of layering, ranges of experience and expression can be revealed – which includes body-mind-movement-language as interrelated elements of the process.

Indeed, the widespread development of practice as research in the performing arts has created a proliferation of (and urgency in addressing) forms of writing around,

through, in tandem and about performance practice. Henrietta Bannerman (2010) remarks that: ‘We can recognise from the increasing numbers of books, articles and papers written by choreographers that there is a growing tendency towards a scholarship which represents thinking bodily activity’ (474) which she describes in relation to the ‘increasing number of choreographers, both emerging and experienced, who enter the academy and as a result are called upon to write about their work’ (480). Emerging from a background of these kinds of debates on embodied practice and language-based articulation, my practice as research project called *Speak* examines the relationship between movement and language in Authentic Movement practice. In this process, I aim to find forms of language that might speak to, respond to, enunciate, and reflect on experience. Through the process, I have identified approaches to reflection as a body-mind experience which can be explored in a process of vocal and written forms; and ‘embodied text’ as a methodology borrowed from Authentic Movement practice. Firstly, I will introduce how the practice of Authentic Movement works with language, before moving on to describe the performance as research project.

Language in Authentic Movement practice

Authentic Movement was developed by Mary Starks Whitehouse from the process of ‘active imagination’ in Jungian psychoanalysis, where the client brings unconscious impulses into a creative form. This is practiced through movement, as the mover closes his or her eyes, waits for an impulse to take physical form and follows its expression. Later, Janet Adler specifically developed the role of the ‘witness’. The witness can be the therapist or another group member who watches the mover while reflecting on his or her own experience of that movement. The mover is then trained to develop an ‘internal witness’, which is a means of witnessing one’s own movement in relationship with the environment (including other movers). After moving for a set length of time, the mover and witness ‘process’ the movement material through writing, artwork, and spoken word.

In a therapeutic setting, Authentic Movement emphasises the authority of the client, with the therapist in a more facilitative role, in exploring physical and psychological health. Indeed, the subjective experience of the client (and often the subjective reflection or witnessing of the therapist) is seen as necessary for gaining insights into

psycho-physical issues. In the process, movement and language are not placed in a hierarchical order, with one being deemed more valuable than another. Language may be included in the movement session and the experience is often processed through written and verbal witnessing which emerges from body-mind experience. This process is clearly structured, particularly around the use of language, as part of the safety of the work – suggesting that the risks of using language are as relevant as those around bodily action and touch in some forms of psychoanalysis. Phelan (1996, 90) comments on Freud that: ‘Classical psychoanalysis abandoned the physical cure in favour of the clinical technique of the talking cure. A technique that depended too heavily upon touch was a huge risk for an epistemological revolution whose visionary leader was determined to be, above all, scientific.’ Authentic Movement works contrary to this, combining movement, language and sometimes touch (e.g. between movers), and inviting subjective experiences to inform reflection.

The role of language in witnessing was developed by Janet Adler, drawing from her training with psychologist John Weir. Tina Stromsted and Neala Haze note:

As they learn to contain their own experience and biases, movers and witnesses employ certain protocols, including a linguistic framework, to assist them in the challenging task of differentiating clear perception from projection. ‘Percept language’, as developed by John Weir (1975), is a speaking practice that Adler integrated into Authentic Movement as part of that protocol ... Its purpose is the creation of language that is neither judgemental nor interpretive. Witnesses make ‘I’ statements that locate the perceptions (and the feelings that accompany them) in the speaker rather than in external objects (the movers). (2007, 59)

Following Weir’s ‘percept language’, the witness uses the first person, present tense when offering witnessing. This is in order to acknowledge that any witnessing is a subjective rather than objective experience of what has occurred. Witnessing in the present tense allows the witness to return to the physical and emotional memory of the movement to re-experience it.

As mentioned earlier, my understanding of the relationship between movement and words has been informed by my Authentic Movement training with Joan Davis. Her training programme and performance practice integrates language, with the term

‘movement’ coming to be understood as inclusive of words, images, sensations, and stories that move through the soma; while witnessing practices includes drawing, writing and speaking which attempt to inflect body and mind in a reflective process. Davis (2007, 187) notes on her witnessing practice that: ‘I am looking for embodied words – words that can offer the listener a physical and ‘felt sense’ of what those words are conveying. It is the combination of both the choice of word and the speaker speaking it from a bodily felt sense that makes for embodied speaking.’

In her book on Authentic Movement practice called *Offering from the Conscious Body*, Janet Adler (2002) suggests that as movers become more experienced, they can make ‘offerings’ or sharings from Authentic Movement to others through forms such as writing and dance. Her approach to offering from language is described as ‘embodied text’, and she suggests that as the mover practices the language of witnessing, he or she can loosen the structure around the process. She notes that:

As people explore writing the embodied experience rather than writing about it, they can discover new ways of knowing the distance between experience and word, as well as the absence of such distance. The writing process brings a heightened awareness of words that emanate directly from the body.

(2002, 154)

Following Adler’s idea of ‘writing the experience’ rather than about it, I have also been experiment with writing about the overall sense of a movement session, rather than the specifics of a movement. Instead of documenting the physical manifestations of the experience, I write my response with an open mind to the overall sense of what has emerged. The first time I wrote in this way, it was a surprise to me that this layer of experience existed and it was only brought to consciousness through the process of writing.

The writing engages with the movement, returning to the body, expressing experiences but also unravelling, breaking apart and creating new forms, making something new appear or become clearer. Writing may alter experience but is also a means for experiencing. Loosening the form of the written response acknowledges the loss inherent in writing, changing the material substance that is being articulated. The inscription has a life of its own, and instead of representing or preserving movement, there is the possibility to relish the generative opportunities, insights and expressions

that appear through writing. Alys Longely's (2010) evocative phrase 'kinaesthetic archive' suggests a process of collecting records of movement at the same time as documenting somatic perceptions, crossing the physical 'nuts-and-bolts' of the action with subjective qualities.

Performance as research: *Speak* and investigating 'embodied text'

Speak is a performance that developed from an ongoing practice of allowing language to inform movement, and movement to inform language, underpinned by Authentic Movement practice.¹ Adler (2002, 176) notes on her practice of embodied text that:

As the words come back into gesture, back into the body, people are encouraged to explore a reentering or an entering for the first time in a new way. We are moving from body to word and back to body again but this time, because of the developing inner witness, we are arriving in a new place.

I enter rounds of movement following writing with no intention to revisit, but the writing starts to become part of the information which is carried in my body-mind. Focussing my attention on my moving through a writing practice, I start to notice habits, changes, familiar patterns and specific threads or themes. As I continue the practice of rounds of moving and writing regularly, I also invite my attention to vocalising and speaking as 'pockets' of experience in my moving. Sometimes, I move with my eyes open to make connections between internal impulse, externalisation in space through movement, sound, and speaking, and the environment surrounding me.

My diary entries for developing *Speak* record sensations, feelings, thoughts and movements that occurred, and track a story of my fear of being still, pushing the body, followed by exhaustion and a feeling of floating without any power or energy. There is also a new emerging physicality which includes anger, pushing, pounding and jumping followed by movements that are both vibrant and relaxed, not pushing but not collapsed. Wanting to share some of the process through performance, I revisited my journal to note the different currents of the content – descriptions of movement, words that appeared, repeated movement patterns, and so on. I began to edit the writings to clarify what remained of my experience and I also started revisiting some of the movement material that stood out in my memory. This evolved into a movement vocabulary and a written sequence of poetic texts that were linked together in terms of broadly related themes of exhaustion, forcing the body, collapse and

hyperactivity. I created storyboards with drawings of movement sequences and written words on cards that I arranged in different orders, trying out different sequences of moving and speaking together. I rearranged the cards, and tested each new sequence until I had found a journey that I felt brought me through the experience of my practice which took place over the period of a year. An extract from the score reads as follows:



Figure 1: *Speak*, At Unit One Performance Art Night, Smock Alley Banquet Hall, Dublin. Credit: Ciara McKeon

(She breaks into a run, running in circles. The run starts out relaxed and easy, stretching upper ribs with loose hips and waist.)

Foot on floor

Echoing sound

Creating time where there's nothing solid

(The run starts to increase speed)

The counting out of time

The order in my life

The fear of getting nowhere

Of losing out

(She sets her feet solidly on the floor and stops)

I stop and listen to my heavy breath

And beating heart

I stop

...

(She lowers onto her hunkers to take a good look around her. She moves on hands and feet in a downward facing dog position, turns her head in towards her chest and kicks her feet back, then lifts her head and upper spine up to look around again. This is repeated several times. Then she leans her weight heavily into her hands. Her weight gives way towards the floor and she curls up on the ground.)



Figure 2, *Speak*, At Unit One Performance Art Night, Smock Alley Banquet Hall, Dublin. Credit: Ciara McKeon

There is a moment

When I stop

And wonder

If there's any need to move at all

Time passes

Lost years

Loss of heart

A 30 year old body shimmies

Then shuts down

Unsure

(Extract from *Speak*, 2013)



Figure 3, *Speak*, At Unit One Performance Art Night, Smock Alley Banquet Hall, Dublin. Credit: Ciara McKeon

I gave the title *Speak* to the piece, as my body-mind was speaking through the ongoing practice of moving and writing – I was now hearing what it was articulating quite distinctly which I might not have noticed without attending to this practice.

For me, Authentic Movement practice offers an intervention in a society which values efficiency, progress, productivity and action. On the other hand, sometimes the practice has brought me into such a state of rest that I often wondered if I would ever feel the need to move again. During the making of *Speak*, I sometimes found a place

between these limits. However, I would also fall into familiar patterns and play out the ongoing process of re-locating this place ‘in between’. It is the process of moving and writing together that aided me to develop insights into the process, create material for performance and finally to write about the practice within the frame of ‘research’.



Figure 4, *Speak*, Dance and Somatic Practices Conference, Ellen Terry Building, Coventry. Credit: Christian Kipp.

I first performed *Speak* at Unit 1 Performance Art Night at Smock Alley in Dublin in February 2013. In performing, I went through the motions of the piece without fully experiencing it, and felt disconnected from the surrounding environment and the audience. Apart from the fact that I was moving from Ireland to the UK at the time which gave me some feelings of disconnection, I also wondered if the ‘rehearsed’ quality of reproducing physical and vocal material from Authentic Movement in another context meant that it felt ‘out of place’. As another experiment, I also performed *Speak* at the Dance and Somatic Practices conference in Coventry University, UK in July 2013. At Coventry, I decided to add a different beginning point to the performance which added an action that could change as it occurred in the moment of performance. The piece now began with putting together a cake stand, placing brownies that I baked on the stand and eating one. As I ate the brownies, my hands shook with performance nerves and my throat felt dry. I took a drink of water

but my hand quivered so much that the water spilled out, which caused laughter from both me and the audience. One audience member, Hilary Kneale, noted that:

I can't remember her words but I saw that her hand was shaking as she held the glass of water. The water in the glass, the trembling water, a visceral mirror of her condition. In that very moment inside the performance, her body was communicating her condition. She cut the cake into smaller pieces, eating the cake, was she attempting to create some order in the cutting and eating? As she spoke to me directly to me and also to them, I felt a growing sense of immanent chaos, a tipping out into which she moved. (Kneale, personal communication)



Figure 5, *Speak*, Dance and Somatic Practices Conference, Ellen Terry Building, Coventry. Credit: Christian Kipp.

The actions of eating the cake and drinking the water had invited a moment to experience my multisensory response in relation to the audience and environment, and also to attend to my destabilised experience at the time. However, Kneale notes that she can't remember the words as much as the actions, indicating that the text I had gathered from Authentic Movement was not so relevant to her at that time. While it could be suggested that the text was already part of my bodily history and therefore

was in some way informing my movement, I had not managed to transition into a way of speaking in relation to the context surrounding me.



Figure 6, *Speak*, Dance and Somatic Practices Conference, Ellen Terry Building, Coventry. Credit: Christian Kipp.

Another audience member, Adam Benjamin, commented that:

The piece had a very engaging start that seemed to include the audience, and establish a sense of you being ‘just like’ us doing something in the space that we were party too. For me this gradually slipped away, as you became more focused on the activity, which we began to ‘watch’ and somehow the immediacy of your connection to us (and therefore the connection to the piece) began to drift. I felt much further from you at the start than I had at the beginning, the potential for humour and sharing had faded by the conclusion. I kind of wanted you back with us. (Benjamin, personal communication)

As described by Benjamin, I lost my conscious attention to the audience and environment as the piece went on. I stuck closely to the score and text which did not allow enough openness to embrace the ‘practice’ side of Authentic Movement as an ongoing process of change. It is also interesting that my new ‘action’ at the start of the

piece was silent, and I had not found a way to include language as part of the unfolding attention to my body in context. In my journal, I note:

Running fast, I want to feel again as I did before. I try to reach the same feeling but it is out of my grasp no matter how fast I run. My body is not the same, in chaos and overrun, I cannot contain all of the information I am receiving and feel disjointed from my words. I go through the motions. My body is trying to signify, but what? The impulse, the drive, is it gone now? (Author's journal, 2015)

Reflections on *Speak* , process and context

My experiments in movement, speaking and writing consider the potential arising from engaging body-mind together in the process of Adler's 'embodied text' and developing these ideas through performance. I suggest that Kristeva's discussion of language exploration as it emerges between the social and somatic body can be of value in understanding embodied text. Kristeva (1983, 14) argues that: 'the kind of activity encouraged and privileged by (capitalist) society represses the *process* pervading the body and the subject, and that we must therefore break out of our interpersonal and intersocial experience if we are to gain access to what is repressed in the social mechanism: the generating of significance.' Through breaking habits of signification, such as our practices of moving, speaking and writing, we are both revealing the social worlds in which we live from new perspectives and upending the kinds of discourses being created. In interrupting the constraints within which we move-speak-write, an overflow of sometimes unintelligible, fragmentary, messy and insightful understandings of the world we inhabit can potentially come through. Although this is a difficult process, and I have met my own 'failure' to fully engage in it, it is a practice towards a deeper understanding of the modes of signification in the public realm which can be informed by the whole body-mind, movement-language making subject who lives within, through and beyond the socio-political and cultural structure. Kristeva (1984, 16) accounts for how creative, sensual, somatic and impulsive materials can be accessed through poetic language; and therefore she suggests that experimental writing can 'underscore the limits of socially useful discourse and attest to what it represses: the *process* that exceeds the subject and his communicative structures.' In *Speak*, the movement and language materials

developed in the process of making moved between familiar patterns and new materials that surprised me and ‘exceeded’ repetitive behaviours.

Kristeva (1984, 25) discusses how impulses, drives or energy charges pulsate through the body of the subject, through the regulated order of the social body at the same time as rupturing it. Her theory of the semiotic ‘is associated with the intimate somatic rhythms of the body and of language as it is experienced before speech’ (Grosz, 2005, 174). Here it is suggested that language therefore can be both an impulsive drive and a culturally informed form as it emerges. Fluid experiences of movement and language therefore underlie articulation, and as part of the process of being shaped for comprehension, can unravel interruptions to our perception. Language can also explore the felt-sense qualities of movements, which can also reveal the discourses contained within them. In this way, the social and cultural constructs as well as the ‘semiotic’ aspects of human experience can be uncovered through both movement and language practices. In *Speak*, the work with embodied text allowed me to explore the emergent drives of body and language through forms of movement, speaking and writing, which revealed discourses on the pressures of productivity and the desire for more sustainable approaches to living.

In *Speak*, moving and language connected me to myself and my environment during the process of making, but this was not the case for most of the performance. Bainbridge Cohen (1993, 6) suggests that: ‘Our ability to embody the structural and physiological processes underlying breathing and vocal production gives us another important way to establish our relationship to ourselves and to our environment.’ Here, she describes how the bodily awareness can support speaking, as a process of communication and exchange with our surrounding environment. Although the repetition of movement in *Speak* also felt disconnected, the transition from ‘past’ written material into live spoken form was particularly awkward for me, as I couldn’t reengage with this past material from my current position. The performance was a ‘finished’ piece drawing from Authentic Movement practice, whereas the initial process had engaged with phenomena that were arising at the time. Authentic Movement practice in performance raises questions about how to continue to engage with core values of responsivity and adaptation in the practice, to connect with the new environment encountered and to elicit a capacity for change. Malaika Sarco-

Thomas (2014, 194) notes that in somatic work more generally ‘the valuing of conscious choice over blind habit involves noticing and questioning frameworks about one’s own patterns and ability to change.’ How then can performance work with Authentic Movement and language encourage an engagement with contact, exchange, interaction and collaboration within each new rehearsal and performance context?

The role of the audience was raised by Kneale when she commented on the performance that:

I was aware at the time, of strong bodily responses to the way that she spoke to us as 'viewer' both through her words and through her body. I could not 'respond' to her almost confessional dialogue, as I continued to hold my role in the piece as 'viewer'. (Kneale, personal communication)

Here she notes that she felt held within a separate role as ‘viewer’ with no opportunities to respond. In Authentic Movement practice, the subjective vocal, written or movement actions, and their corresponding reflections afterwards, emerge through an association with the personal landscape, perception of the environment and relationship with the witnesses. In *Speak*, I had not thought through how I could bring these relationalities into performance, in considering the role of the audience and context in the exchange. I was not clear how I could develop a sense of conversation or dialogue, which forms part of the practice, with the place and audience as part of the performance landscape – and the piece became less porous as it moved towards performance.

On the one hand, I had a desire to work with the language produced from the process and on the other, to find ways of sharing this that maintained the unfolding inherent in Authentic Movement practice – of body-mind awareness, listening, unknowing and interchange with the context. Therefore, I have begun to think beyond the idea of ‘embodied text’ in Adler’s offerings, suggesting that practices of ‘dialogue’ or ‘conversation’ might be good metaphors as well as modalities for considering Authentic Movement and language in performance in the future. Recently, Jane Bacon and Vida Midgelow have created a performance work called *script* which ‘engages embodied, felt sense, improvisational and collaborative modalities in relation to the act of writing’ (2014a, 73). *Skript* involves an interactive process with

the audience of playful and dialogic language making in relation to the body and dance. Bacon and Midgelow also describe preparing for the performance through an openness to the body and the audience to facilitate the language making process. Their strategies are pertinent to developing the process of integrating Authentic Movement, language and performance. However, in *Speak* I was also looking for ways in which the speaking and writing articulated during the process of Authentic Movement practice can become part of the fabric of performance, such as the poetic ‘embodied text’ which remains and surprising physical-vocal movements that have arisen. Models for working with the texts produced during an Authentic Movement practice could be developed, by finding interactive ways to share pre-written texts such as participatory exhibitions where filmed movement sessions are shared alongside witness writings and layered with visitor responses over time; one-to-one performances that use pre-written texts as starting point of conversation; open-door rehearsals or durational performances that invite the audience to see the pre-written texts in the context of a process; or many other possibilities yet to be discovered.

Finally, Authentic Movement has offered me ways to write about experiences that come from movement practice and body-based performance across the contexts that I inhabit as a practitioner and researcher. Wolff (1998, 244) comments that ‘rather than the suggestion that to dance is to escape the constraints of linguistic rationality, we find the idea that language itself can be rendered innovative and critical by learning to write, think and speak in the mode of dance.’ In this sense, my experiments in movement and writing consider the potential arising from engaging body-mind together to reflect on insights arising from practice as research. I suggest that Authentic Movement practice has developed unique reflexive methods from witnessing to embodied text which might be useful to practitioner-researchers in developing the ‘capacity to find language, to become articulate, from within the work’ (Bacon and Midgelow, 2014b, 15). My proposition on Authentic Movement conversations and dialogue could also offer possibilities for sharing this reflection on practice in ways that invite contact and exchange within varied scholarly and performance contexts. Practice-based research ‘offerings’ of physical, verbal and written materials could be formulated as an unfinished encounter where potential for interaction is made available in the dialogue between presenter and audience, inviting

provocations, uncertainties, moments to respond, questioning, collaborative investigation and curiosity.²

Conclusion

Authentic Movement practice emphasises the movement-language continuum, exemplified in the development of the ‘mover-witness paradigm’ (Goldhahn, 2007, 14). Initially, the mover is tracing inner impulse and movement expression in space, sharing this with the witness through writing and speaking, with the witness reflecting back through language. Adler describes her experiments with this through ‘embodied text’ which explores poetic writing arising from Authentic Movement practice, but also through the ‘dance circle’ where gestures from the movement session are recreated and repeated by movers and witnesses. Therefore, movement and language are explored in Authentic Movement as alternate and complementary forms of reflective moving and witnessing. Rather than separating out movement and language, I have tried to interweave both in *Speak* and do not posit the body as more ‘authentic’ than language, but rather seek to find the connections and interruptions between body and language through the soma.

My investigation into language in Authentic Movement practice has formed part of an inquiry into the attitudes towards language and the body that I encounter in different contexts. On the one hand, I have met with suspicion of language replacing embodied practice and insights, and on the other hand, a welcoming of language as a process by which embodied experience can be reflected and explored. During my performance as research project, I learned how language becomes part of the moving experience as a means for reflection and articulation. The practice also uncovered difficulties for me in bringing pre-rehearsed scores of movement and writing developed from Authentic Movement practice into performance. Specifically, I felt like there was a gap between the pre-written text, re-uttering this through speech, and the new information I was receiving from my body-mind in the moment of performance, as I was experiencing myself in a completely new context. In the future, I plan to explore conversation and dialogue as a form of movement-language exchange in performance and research settings, rethinking how the materials from Authentic Movement practice underlie new interactions and can also develop or change through the process of ‘offering’.

This article is situated within the rapidly expanding field of practice as research, with its implications for the ways in which work is made and articulated. It addresses the ways in which practice-based research takes place in body-mind acts, how this process can be articulated and how the practitioner-researcher can communicate across the settings that they now operate within. In this way, the role of language in relation to practice, specifically movement in this case, becomes pertinent to explore and question. The article responds to questions about what Authentic Movement practice might offer, in terms of examining how movement and language relate to each other, and what methods there might be in crossing them in writing about performance experience. I propose the employment of witnessing practices, experimenting with embodied text and also the potential to explore conversation and dialogue in practice-based research sharings.

This article is a brief overview of a much larger process and can only touch on issues of movement and language in performance and practice-based research. Further research and practice could investigate the relationship between Authentic Movement and psychoanalytic concepts of language, such as the Lacanian theory of the child entering the structured ‘symbolic order’ at the moment of language acquisition. Such research would develop understanding of the perception and psychophysical experiences of ‘rupture’ or division between body and language. Authentic Movement practice as a discipline reaches into fields of therapy with its reflective insights, and performance as a creative form of expression, but it also is considered a spiritual practice by many practitioners. From this latter strand, an inquiry into the relationship between body, language and mindful or meditation practices could also be useful. This could shed light on challenges to thinking and language-based articulation in these practices, for example spiritual leader Eckhart Tolle (2015) proposes that there are issues with ‘thinking, or more precisely identification with thinking’ and ‘thinking without awareness’, while he also states that ‘words are only pointers...what is being communicated lies beyond words, but we can use them to go at least in the direction of what is meant and that is helpful.’ It is beyond the remit of this article to fully consider the impact of knowledge in these many strands of the therapeutic, creative, and spiritual, on an understanding of the relationship between movement and language in Authentic Movement practice. However, I have tried to argue here for the complex but interwoven interaction of each in Authentic Movement and the

possibilities this offers to performance and practice-based research. Finally, this article has unfolded over time through a process of writing, moving, questioning, grappling, editing, consultation, conversation, review, exchange, revision and re-writing. My writing is provisional as I continue to experiment and I am offering my own lived words at a particular moment in time which I hope will encounter debate and change.

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Alys Longely called '*Open Dialogues ~ remixed, unfinished, begun: A forum for early- to mid-career researchers and artists*'.