

# Dorsal Practices—Towards a Back-Oriented Being-in-the-World

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**Abstract:** *Dorsal Practices* is a process-based, interdisciplinary artistic collaboration between choreographer Katrina Brown and writer–artist Emma Cocker. This research enquiry explores the notion of *dorsality* and the cultivation of a back-oriented awareness in relation to how we as sentient bodies orientate to the self, others (human, more-than-human), and interconnected world. Since 2021, *Dorsal Practices* has unfolded through the interrelation of three fields of experimental, embodied research practice: movement-based practices, conversation practices, and experimental reading practices. *Dorsal Practices* explores how the tilt or inclination towards dorsal (dis)orientation might enable new modes of *thinking–perceiving* and *being–with*, and more connected, sustainable ways of living and aliveness based on the reciprocal, entangled relationship between self/environment. We ask: How does the cultivation of a back-oriented awareness and attitude shape and inform our embodied, affective, and relational experience of being-in-the-world? Rather than a mode of withdrawal, of turning one’s back, how might a back-leaning orientation support an open, receptive ethics of relation? Central to this enquiry is an attempt to explore how different linguistic practices might be developed in fidelity to the embodied experiences of dorsality: how the experiences of listening, languaging, even thinking, might be shaped differently through this embodied tilt of awareness and attention towards the back.

**Keywords:** dorsality; embodied practice; choreography; language-based artistic research; listening; conversation; experimental reading; collaboration



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## 1. Dorsal Practices: Towards a Dorsal Orientation

*Dorsal Practices* is a process-based, interdisciplinary artistic collaboration between choreographer Katrina Brown and writer–artist Emma Cocker. This research enquiry explores the notion of *dorsality* and the cultivation of a back-oriented awareness and attitude in relation to how we as sentient bodies orientate to the self, others (human, more-than-human), and interconnected world. Our enquiry involves a three-fold attempt to investigate how a dorsal orientation is experienced and felt *within* the body, *within* the intra-action of body/world, and *within* language and thought. Understood as inextricably interwoven, this three-fold dimension of our enquiry circles around a set of interrelated questions:

- *Within bodies:* What emerges through a shift of attention from frontality, verticality, even visuality, towards an increased awareness of dorsality, diagonality, and listening? Rather than conceiving front/back as a binary relation, how might practising a sense of back-ness enrich a more holistic, proprioceptive, kinaesthetic sense of embodiment as the ground of one’s experience?
- *Within the intra-action of body/world:* Rather than a mode of withdrawal, of turning one’s back, how might a back-leaning orientation support a more open, receptive ethics of relation? How might the passivity and vulnerability associated with a back-leaning orientation become reinvigorated as an active field of cooperation, a way of being-in-the-world that is radically dynamic, vibrant, and alive?
- *Within language and thought:* What forms of writing and languaging can be developed in fidelity to the embodied experiences of dorsality? How are the experiences of

listening, languaging, even thinking, shaped differently through this tilt of awareness and attention towards the back? What new ‘dorsal practices’ emerge in the intermingling of movement-based ways of feeling–thinking–knowing and language-based artistic research?

Our aim within this article is not to address or answer these questions as such, but rather to share (perhaps even show) *how* we are engaging them through the entanglement of our bodies within practice, through a complex nexus of embodied, affective, and relational research processes and practices. Within the project *Dorsal Practices*, we have developed a distinctive *dorsal methodology* for testing and exploring how a dorsal orientation might be activated and experienced in practice, as an embodied enquiry. Central to this enquiry has been an attempt to find linguistic means through which to communicate and share the experience of a dorsal orientation—to explore the potential of a *dorsal voicing*. As foregrounded in the title of our project, *Dorsal Practices*, this is a practice research enquiry that is undertaken in and through *practices*. Since 2021, *Dorsal Practices* has unfolded through the interrelation of three fields of experimental, embodied research practice: movement-based practices, conversation practices, and experimental reading practices. This article attends to these practices as an evolving research assemblage through which we have attempted to attest to the sensory and embodied dimension of a dorsal orientation. The article comprises the interweaving of two textual components: (1) An outline of the methodological approach and how the embodied research practices evolved within the project *Dorsal Practices*; (2) Excerpts of transcript material (in italics) drawn from an experimental reading practice (a performative practice of ‘dorsal voicing’). Through these textual fragments we attempt to share the specific material–linguistic form that has emerged within our project through a collaborative and co-emergent mode of sense-making that unfolds within the complex interaction of bodies and language. The recording of the live ‘dorsal reading’ itself is conceived as part of the article and is presented online using the Research Catalogue (RC), a platform for publishing artistic research. We invite you—the reader of this text—to engage with the performative reading before continuing with the article itself. The reading–recording is available here: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2316784/2316785> (accessed on 27 March 2024)

*Ground. Sensation. Stillness. Formation. Arrive. Fall away. Drifting. Experience. Vibrant. Pressure. Navigate. Awareness, sinking. The mouth, the skin, the eyes—dropping, releasing, surrendering. Dorsal—forming. A dorsal voice—turning, bending, twisting . . . letting go [ . . . ] Twisting, leading, letting another thing lead [ . . . ] The floor is my horizontal plane, my point, my plane of reference. [ . . . ] There is a sense of the hairs on the back of the neck . . . an image forms in my mind from a sensation, embryonic trace of forming. Tuning into the back softens the front, softens the front—allows the front to drop back. Expectation drops, time drops, the body drops into another sense of time. Thinking about the back through a kind of undoing—an undoing of uprightness [ . . . ] All of this activation, relaxing and letting go, and releasing and loosening, and stopping holding and . . . and do I really know what it is to be upright? Am I even aware of this frontality that my experience is shaped by? [ . . . ] This awareness of the forward-leaning and future-leaning sense of frontality . . . and a coming to the ground.*

*Dorsal Practices* was initiated in and through a felt sensation, an embryonic trace of (an enquiry) forming, rather than by questions framed and articulated in advance. Advance—a state of being in front; to go or set forward; to move forward or towards the front. Our enquiry refrains from a frontal orientation in favour of the dorsal. Embodying a dorsal orientation as both the focus *and* method of our enquiry has necessitated some deviation from the normative conventions and expectations of academic research, where one’s questions and critical contexts are often located ‘up front’. We began in the middle. We began with a *turn*. Theorist David Wills begins his enquiry *Dorsality: Thinking Back Through Technology and Politics* (Wills 2008) with a reflection on human articulation and locomotion, addressing how the act of walking, which gives the human its bipedal orientation, necessarily involves

turning—turning towards the back. The specific turn that Wills deals with is “a type of turning around or turning back, a turning from the back or from behind, a dorsal turn, a turning to or into *dorsality*” (Wills 2008, p. 5). He argues that the importance of this emphasis on the turn “resides . . . in its sense of a departure that is also a detour, a deviation, a divergence into difference” (Wills 2008, p. 4). Wills asks the reader to, “imagine the human turning as it walks, deviating from its forward path in order, precisely, to move forward, advancing necessarily askew” (Wills 2008, p. 4). Askew—necessarily turning away or taking an oblique position, running at an angle. Our own dorsal turning is “necessarily askew”—we take an oblique position, acknowledging a wider milieu of critical discourse through the corner of our eyes, indirectly, to the sides. Our project title and the critical ethos of our enquiry is informed by (or perhaps better, takes its point of departure from) Wills’ focus on *dorsality* as a critique of the (technological) ideology of forward motion and frontal orientation. For Wills, “the dorsal turn operates as a form, or forms, of resistance” against a certain (technological) logic that proceeds “straight and forward”, through a “straight-ahead linear advance” (Wills 2008, p. 6). Our own project thinks *alongside* or *thinks-with* Wills’ notion of *dorsality*, in and through creative practice, or rather, we diverge into difference by exploring *dorsality* through an embodied artistic research approach.

*Straightforward—directly forward or right ahead. Of two adjectives—straight and forward. It is interesting—the nearby references. There is this word: tergiversation. Tergiversation—a noun meaning turning from a straightforward action or statement. Shifting, evasive, declining, refusing. From tergiversari—to turn one’s back on, or to evade, from tergum ‘the back’, and versare ‘to spin, turn’. The same origins as conversation, con- and versare, to turn together. Tergiversate—to be evasive, to turn one’s back, to turn one’s back [. . .] To turn or bend one’s back. Turning from a straightforward direction, shifting or declining. Straightforward is straight and forward. Direct, undeviating—not crooked, not bent or curved. Of a person—properly stretched. Direct, unambiguous, unconvoluting or uncompromising. In a straight line—without swerving or deviating.*

Through the inclusion of italicised segues, interludes, and interjections, we eschew the straightforward or clear-cut statement, preferring to remain in fidelity to the *turning* (*versare*—to turn, to twist) of language and thought practised within our conversation-based and experimental reading practices. We proceed through loops and re-turns. Proceed—to move forward or advance by yielding, or by turning aside. For Wills, “Any departure, however slight, from a pure and strict . . . forward linearity makes reference to what is behind . . . inflects as it were that strict forward linearity of movement with a decelerating pull from behind and so implies or calls for a thinking of what is behind, a thinking of the back” (Wills 2008, p. 5). *Dorsal Practices* responds to this call for “a thinking of the back” (or in our terms, thinking *with* the back) through the cultivation of specific movement-based, somatic, and linguistic practices. The experience of thinking *within* the back involves receptivity to the unknown, to that which remains behind, beneath, below habitual registers of meaning. Its knowledges emerge obliquely, indirectly, tangentially—*letting* a dorsal thinking come.

*There being just enough pressure, just enough resistance, to want to try and bring it into formation. The stimulation to try and bring a thought into formation, or a word into formation, can just fall away into a kind of silence or the un- again. There’s this settling, dropping, sinking—you almost go so low that you start to float. It feels like by heavy, heavy, heavy—a lightness comes into the body. This sense of the soft eyes that activate this dorsal listening—letting the thoughts just come rather feeling this pressure to speak. This pressure to speak is to do with a preoccupation with what is coming next, the future, an orientation to what is going to come . . . there is something about tense. In both senses—being tense and the temporal sense of tense.*

Allowing, accepting, letting—a back-oriented approach to sense-making requires a different engagement with time, with *teleology*: it calls for a willingness for waiting, residing, abiding, rather than reaching towards a destination, *telos*, or goal. Falling, dropping,

surrendering, relaxing, softening into back-ness—a dorsal attitude invites the de-privileging of the predominant social habits of uprightness and frontality: the head-oriented, sight-oriented, forward-facing, future-leaning tendencies of a culture intent on grasping a sense of the world through naming and control. In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Ahmed 2006) feminist writer and scholar Sara Ahmed asks, “What does it mean to be orientated?” (Ahmed 2006, p. 6), observing how “Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation” (Ahmed 2006, p. 3). Ahmed argues that orientation is not a casual matter, drawing attention to how “the body gets directed in some ways more than others” alongside the “difference it makes *which way subjects turn.*” (Ahmed 2006, p. 15). For Ahmed, “It is not, then, that bodies simply have a direction, or that they follow directions, in moving this way or that. Rather in moving this way, rather than that, and moving this way again and again, the surfaces of bodies *in turn* acquire their shape” (Ahmed 2006, pp. 15–16). Accordingly, as Ahmed asserts, “Bodies are ‘directed’ and they take the shape of that direction” (Ahmed 2006, p. 16). Ahmed confronts the shaping and ‘straightening’ directionality of heteronormativity, to then explore possibilities for a queer phenomenology that “faces the back, which looks ‘behind’” (Ahmed 2006, p. 29).<sup>1</sup> Within *Dorsal Practices* we acknowledge and recognise how (our own) bodies and lives are directed and shaped in particular ways through forward-facing and frontally orientated ideologies, specifically through the demands for more and more, faster and faster, within a culture of immediacy and urgency underpinned by capitalist values of progress and (economic) growth.<sup>2</sup> We conceive *Dorsal Practices* as an attempt to develop and practise a different orientation, a dorsal orientation. As Ahmed argues, “Depending on which way one turns, different worlds might even come into view” (Ahmed 2006, p. 15). *Dorsal Practices* explores how the tilt or *inclination* towards dorsal (dis)orientation might enable new modes of *thinking–perceiving* and *being-with*, and more connected and sustainable ways of living and aliveness based on the reciprocal, entangled relationship between the self and environment.<sup>3</sup> In our use of the term *inclination*, we invoke philosopher and feminist thinker Adriana Cavarero’s “critique of rectitude” (Cavarero 2016) which examines the political and ethical implications of postural verticality, before re-thinking the possibilities of subjectivity through the trope of inclination. However, whilst Cavarero critiques uprightness and rectitude through the figure of an altruistic *flexion*, the curve or inclination towards the other, we conceive the dorsal inclination as a receptive leaning back, an opening receptivity—perhaps even making vulnerable—of oneself to others, to the world.

*A different kind of gaze—almost like the liquid of the eye drops back into its orbit, into the actual socket somehow. We are dropping back into something that is not yet formed. Dropping into the back feels as if there is something much closer to experience. Exploring this relationship between doing and being—it feels as if the back is more a mode of being, and the front a zone of doing. But again, there is a risk that these are binaries that are being perpetuated.*

## 2. *Dorsal Practices*—Methods of Enquiry

*Dorsal Practices* unfolds as a practice research enquiry with an emphasis on artistic, embodied, and performative approaches. We situate our own enquiry in the context of a wider milieu of research practices and associated discourse, specifically in relation to the field of artistic research. For theorist Henk Borgdorff, “artistic research seeks to convey and communicate content that is enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices and embodied in artistic products” (Borgdorff 2011, pp. 44–63). Accordingly, *Dorsal Practices* attempts to disclose and communicate the aesthetic experience of a dorsal orientation, where the aesthetic is conceived through its etymological origins in the Greek *aisthesis*, meaning understanding based on the engagement of the senses, related to sensation or perception. Our research process enacts or activates the experience of dorsality through specific creative practices, in turn generating different artefacts (including textual transcripts) that we hope might embody the experiential qualities of the dorsal itself. The notion of

dorsality is not only taken as the object or focus of our enquiry; rather, we also attempt to activate or embody a dorsal orientation, a dorsal attitude, as our method *and* means of dissemination. For Borgdorff, “Knowledge and experiences are constituted only in and through practices, actions and interactions” (Borgdorff 2011, p. 47). Our research approach focuses on the cultivation of dorsal practices; moreover, it is the practices themselves that we seek to share. Our research findings or discoveries remain enclosed, embedded, and embodied *within* those practices (and resulting artefacts), refusing to be wholly *precised*, resistant to extraction, conversion, or translation through more discursive, propositional modes of language.

In *Embodied Research Methods* (Thanem and Knights 2019), Torkild Thanem and David Knights ask: “what techniques and practices may we draw on to investigate the bodily expressions, practices and felt experiences that make up the lived reality of embodiment”, advocating that “lived embodiment should be investigated by observing and describing bodily actions, movements, gestures and appearances” (Thanem and Knights 2019, p. 38). They observe how, “It is the body, then, and the perceptual nature of the body, which involves us in things and puts us in contact with the world, with other people and with ourselves” (Thanem and Knights 2019, p. 27). Within *Dorsal Practices*, we have developed practices for bringing us into contact, into touch, with the embodied experience of dorsality; these are practices through which we attempt to evolve an embodied language for speaking *with* and *from* that live and lived experience. Our italicised transcript extracts—that form the spine of this article—foreground a form of *linguaging* produced through a *dorsal voicing* (activated through conversation and reading practices), a linguaging informed by the body and the breath.

*To try and be aware through the back of the body of this experience that we are having in the moment—what does it open? [. . .] Feeling able to rest in the situation, reside in the situation. To lean back. Taking time . . . there is something about taking time. Like the frontal mode feels a bit urgent or a bit hurried or maybe even a bit uncertain. Transition. Efficiency. Curiosity continuum. Vulnerable. Discipline and curiosity. Forgetting. A kind of dreamy state. Halfway [. . .] Slip into. Back/front. A vertical line. Gravity. Unsettle, unsettle this sense of the binary between the front and the back. What gets lost or what falls away in our capacity if we are not careful, out of habit, or ease, or sometimes inefficiency. Allowing the front and the back to cooperate more . . . (and) maybe the qualities of thinking connected with the front and the back to cooperate more, so rather than it being this either/or it has more possibility as cooperation. The body has to roll—to roll, it has to be asymmetrical [. . .] Something has to move first—something has to drop first. There’s always a sort of curiosity about what will start the movement.*

The movement of our enquiry was initiated by a *dorsal curiosity*. In his ‘Manifesto of Performative Research’ (Haseman 2006) artist–academic Brad Haseman outlines how within a ‘performative research’ approach, researchers might begin from “an enthusiasm of practice”, where they “construct experiential starting points from which practice follows. They tend to ‘dive in’, to commence practising to see what emerges” (Haseman 2006, p. 100). At times, our own diving has felt more like dropping in, leaning back, resting, or residing in the embodied experience of dorsality in order that the enquiry might gradually let itself become known. Our enquiry was not defined *anterior* to or separate from its unfolding, nor are its findings presented *posteriorly*, after the fact. Both the enquiry and its findings have emerged in and through practice; moreover, both become sharable in and through that practice. Indeed, for Haseman, one of the consequences of performative research is that “people who wish to evaluate the research outcomes also need to experience them in direct (copresence) or indirect (asynchronous, recorded) form” (Haseman 2006, p. 100). Drawing on Haseman’s model, curator–researcher Vytautas Michelkevičius states that the results of performative research “are not expressed through discursive text, but rather through richer, or material forms of practice—still and moving image, live action (performance) etc.” (Michelkevičius 2018, p. 147). Here, the means through which the research is communicated becomes critical: as Michelkevičius states, “When research results are presented through

utterances, they perform the act” (Michelkevičius 2018, p. 148). Within this article, we attempt to show the practice itself through the recording of our live and improvisatory reading, and at the same time, how this unfolding voicing (in time) might be encountered through the written word (unfolding in space) on the page. Accordingly, our own dorsal utterances are presented in two different ways—as a written transcript *and* as the originary spoken-word practice itself, which can be encountered online within our research catalogue exposition here: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2316784/2316785> (accessed on 27 March 2024)

*How do these various modes of experience and of thinking experience cooperate? This movement from the front to the back as a kind of conscious transition. It is very messy and murky . . . it just won't crystallise [ . . . ] Murky back thinking [ . . . ] I can just collapse, I let go of everything and I fall to the ground. There is a dark spaciousness [ . . . ] there are more shadows, you catch things in the corner of the eyes. The corner of the eye . . . shadowy spaces between physical things and imaginary things [ . . . ] That zone is somehow concealed or hidden or not accessible or unknown in a way. [ . . . ] It seems counterintuitive that somehow this leaning back into the unknown . . . enables a kind of relaxation or a resting in experience. [ . . . ] The sense of the blur—looking through the gap of the eye, slight slant of the eye. How sight is often trying to direct, pinpoint, to name things, whereas this half-blurred vision . . . almost like the eye's sight touching the surfaces of things . . . a different kind of possibility with the eyes [ . . . ] There are qualities of thinking that have much more of a sense of back-ness.*

Our enquiry emerges at the threshold between choreographic-movement practices and experimental language-based artistic research practices.<sup>4</sup> Our research process draws on the dialogue between our distinct expertise as a choreographer and as a writer–artist, by combining body-based, somatic-informed exercises with conversation-based practices, experimental reading, and ‘awareness-centred deep listening.’<sup>5</sup> Rather than somehow perpetuating the binary between the body and language, we are interested in exploring the possibilities of an ‘embodied languaging’, perhaps even our potential as ‘linguistic bodies’. For Ezequiel A. Di Paolo, Elena Clare Cuffari, and Hanne De Jaeger, “As a linguistic body, you are made up of utterances and relations between utterances [ . . . ] They are acts. They are embodied, material patterns enacted by organic and sensorimotor bodies. They unfold in time and space” (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p. 2). They argue that linguistic bodies thrive through *critical participation*, through an “ethics-as-practice” which is “realized in keeping ourselves open to our own unfinished becoming—in other words, in learning” (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p. 3). *Dorsal Practices* attends to the *pleasure* as well as the vulnerability of participation, to the intricate cooperation between body and environment, self and world.<sup>6</sup>

*This pleasure, a pleasure in moving backwards, a pleasure in being and moving, a very elemental pleasure . . . the pleasure of cooperation of the body and the ground and the environment. In the frontal mode, I seem to skate over the surface of the environment to get somewhere. This pleasure of participating [ . . . ] Allowing—allowing certain movements to happen, not resisting, or maybe not even thinking [ . . . ] Soft back and soft belly [ . . . ] Breath and softness create a sense of spaciousness, if the body lets that happen. Something about the dropping back, not necessarily back, but letting go [ . . . ] My eyes, softness, closing of the eyes . . . this blurred vision. This blur . . . the blurring, the dissolving of those differentiated categories. But as soon as you come to language that experience becomes squeezed into binary relationships. To try and take attention to the sides of language, to the grey areas of language. Not the up and the down, but to really activate this side space that is neither up nor down, nor front nor back . . . Falling. Behindness. Backness. Different kind of register. Forgetting. Allowing. Gravity.*

Whilst we acknowledge a wider frame of contextual and theoretical references, our own enquiry has proceeded first and foremost through the testing and evolution of specific *practices*. Since January 2021, we—Brown and Cocker—have developed *Dorsal Practices* through a live enquiry involving the interrelation of three fields of experimental, embodied

practice—various movement, conversation, and reading practices. Firstly, our nexus of practices involves the physical experience of dorsal orientation through various bodily movement exercises and scores. These movement explorations are accompanied by a process of conversation for reflecting *with-and-through* the embodied experiences of physical practice, alongside the poetic and philosophical concepts of the dorsal that arise from this *working-with* and together.

*Being willing. Pelvis, limbs. Counterintuitive, vulnerability. Clockwise, anti-clockwise [...] The openness of the body—taking the attention to the back opens the front of the body in a way that feels quite vulnerable or exposed. [...] Transformative possibility. Pattern of being, micro frequencies. Bracketed, less and less—tiny vibrations. Pressures of a certain way. Rhythms and pulses, fluid and loose. Sentience—a being that is alive [...] A real sense of being alive, being alive that's free of all those habits of life that accumulate over time [...] In these practices, very alive in the sensations of exploration and unhindered by habits of identity [...] We fall into talking through thinking through the process [...] To follow what's happening, and speak it as it happens ... There are moments where the thinking and the speaking and the reflecting and the circling around are folding back, in and out.*

The conversation transcripts are then re-activated and re-organised through various experimental reading practices—conceived as an experimental, improvisational approach to textual genesis—where a mode of linguistic sense-making emerges live through the interplay of spoken word, the intersubjective interweaving of two voices within the occasionality of dialogic encounter. These phases of research activity are not sequential and progressive but rather are inherently interwoven, cyclical, looping, where the findings generated within one phase of practice are re-visited, re-activated, re-organised, and re-enlivened within the next. However, here within this article we attempt to share our working approach for each phase of the practice.

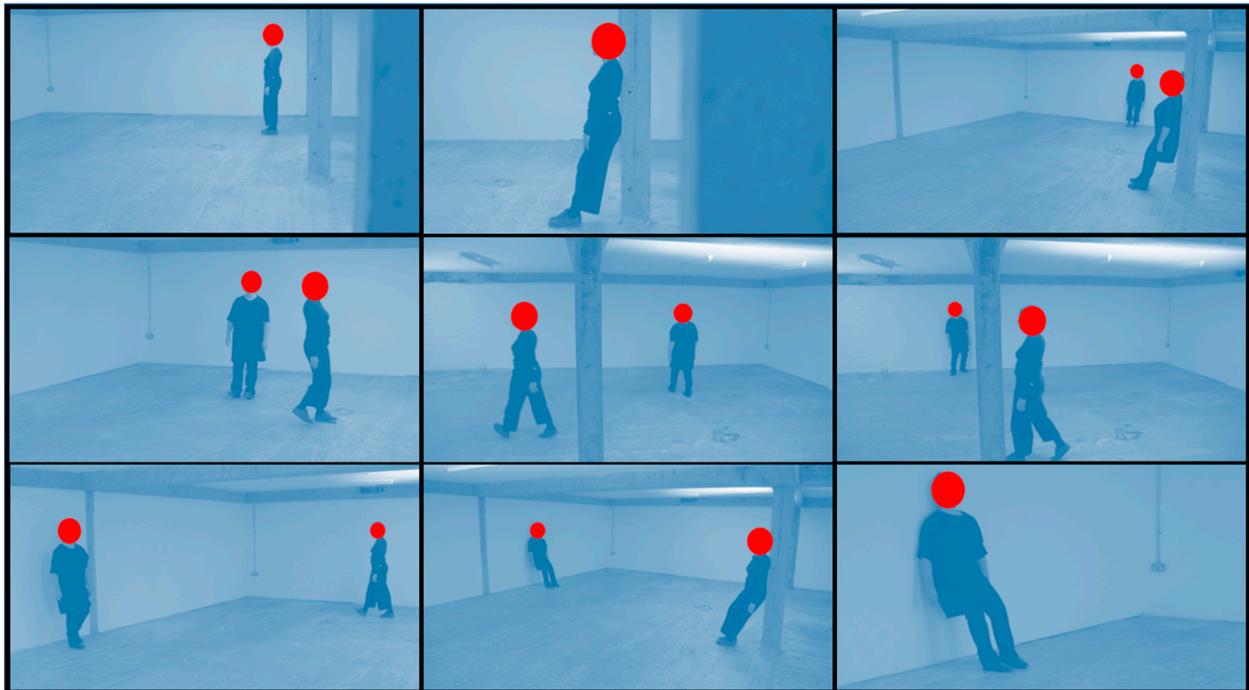
### 3. Body-Based Somatic-Movement Practices

The movement component of *Dorsal Practices* evolves from Brown's ongoing choreographic research in relation to the re-organisation of the senses away from visuality and uprightiness. Since 2019, Brown has been developing physical exercises and choreographic devices for tuning into dorsality, bringing attention to and exploring the unseen surfaces and axial technologies of the back. Brown's research project, *tilt-rhythm-back* (2019–2021), explores moving through the back (and moving backwards) as a way of opening connections to the spine, weight, gravity, breath, skin, vision—and time—often manifesting as a slightly disorientating force.<sup>7</sup> Within *tilt-rhythm-back*, the dorsal becomes foregrounded for its capacity to operate as a disruptive choreographic intervention in the general forward direction of moving, working, and living, where philosophical ideas of the dorsal coincide and reside in the moving body and in moving together. The collaborative research project *Dorsal Practices* has its inception within the frame of a residency at Dance4 in Nottingham (2019), where Cocker was invited as a critical witness—or even *wit(h)ness*—to observe and *think-with* Brown's process of performative back-oriented drawings in situ.<sup>8</sup> The body-based movement scores developed within *Dorsal Practices* further extend our shared interest in the use of 'scores' or 'prompts' for activating proprioceptive and interoceptive enquiry, alongside our individual engagement with wider practices such as Feldenkrais (Moshe Feldenkrais) and somatic practice (Thomas Hanna).<sup>9</sup>

*There are moments where ... there is a glimpse ... of this kind of pure being, joyful. Dwelling, lingering ... swaying. [...] This sense of having something in mind, lightly. Having the notion of dorsal practices lightly in mind, held in the background but not looked at too directly ... so it informs but in an indirect way. Dropping into the present—it doesn't need to resist, doesn't need to have a sense of the retrograde, or pulling back [...] Allowing in of the dorsal, let it seep in gently. Perhaps there are these other modes,*

*allowing it to come in gently, because then it really does have this possibility to evolve, or change, yes, change things.*

Taking place in approximately month-long blocks or ‘episodes’ of practice, since 2021 we have explored the physical experience of back-ness and the felt experience of a dorsal orientation through various body-based, somatic-informed movement scores. Except for a few instances where we have been able to work together in the same space (See Figure 1), we have undertaken this phase of practice individually—separated by the geographical distance of our respective places of residency (and for some time by the limitations and constraints of a global pandemic). We approach the photographic records of our practising less as documentation (of what *has been*) but more in the spirit of scores for inviting future engagement (within other bodies), visual prompts, or cues for *what might be*. Conceived as non-verbal explorations of a dorsal orientation, the physical practices focus on everyday movement patterns (e.g., lying down; axial rotation; transition from back-ness into movement), alongside nurturing an expanded repertoire of movement patterns and habits (e.g., walking backwards, micro-turning) through repeated engagement with various scores and exercises.<sup>10</sup> In so doing, habitual everyday actions become disclosed as relational, uniquely situated negotiations—complex co-operations between a dynamic body and its participation in the forces and flows of the world.



**Figure 1.** Katrina Brown and Emma Cocker, *Dorsal Practices*. Photographic documents/scores generated in S1 Artspace Studios, Sheffield, November 2022. Original video stills by Leon Lockley.

*Wayfinding, finding the way. Having to go around the back of things or meander a little to find a way in or find a way back. These different systems of locating, navigating, orientating [...] Orienting backwards, towards the back. This sense of facing to the back, or back-to-back. Way finding, to find the way. And finding a way, finding a way, rather than looking for the way. There are two different kinds of listening: through the ear, skin or nervous system, or just the sensitivity to everything that is vibrating. This idea of sensing vibrations of bodies, objects or anything really. Micro-frequencies . . . we are kind of sensing machines—you can pick up static, air circulating, tiny vibrations of many different things. This idea of lingering in it and being with the movement of the world in a different way. A sense of being among, being one of those vibrating things. There is another kind of located-ness through vibration and being present—more linked*

*to listening. There are other kinds of listening or ways of understanding how one is orientating. How can it become less and less?*

*Dorsal Practices* attempts a shift from automaticity to attentiveness, from unreflective reactivity to a radically reflective responsiveness. The sensorial, experiential, affective register of practising within our bodies (and with other bodies), allows us to recognise deeply the complex interrelation of body and world, and how our sense of body–world becomes shaped in and through the lifelong inculcation of habits of behaviour and of perception. Experimenting with various ‘dorsal practices’ has at times revealed the persistent, even insidious, presence of conditioned habits of ‘frontality’ and ‘future-leaning’ within our own experiences. It has allowed (in philosophy scholar Claire Carlisle’s terms), “the force of habit (to) be caught in the act, and recognized as such” (Carlisle 2014, p. 10). For Carlisle, “clarifying the distinction between habit and practice helps to understand why attention has a transformative effect” (Carlisle 2014, p. 6). Our own enquiry engages practices as a way of revealing certain (frontal) habits of orientation, at the same time as cultivating an emergent inclination towards the back. However, rather than conceiving front/back (even habits/practices) in a binary relation, we consider their interwovenness as a dynamic field of daily negotiation and continual live(d) enquiry. The body is not a neutral vehicle within which one *passes through* the world, but rather a complex assemblage where self and world become revealed as thoroughly interwoven, emmeshed.

*The path is not drawn like a straight line—it meanders and takes tangents. Straightforwardness—what does this mean? What does it mean to be straightforward? And why is that a value? Such a strange value, this straightforward—so one-dimensional in a way. And how is a dorsal way of practising not straightforward? To activate these diagonal relationships, and the criss-crossings and the meanderings. The turn is . . . not straightforward [ . . . ] It is constantly pulling you off the straight, the upright—pulling you a little this way and a little that way, swaying this way and that way, even as you are progressing forwards. Sway and to be swayed [ . . . ] There is the sense of a diagonal orientation creating space where there appears to be none—this cut of the diagonal, the diagonal as a desire line. All these diagonal paths [ . . . ] refusing to be one or the other but being both [ . . . ] That is why we have to turn—to keep turning and to keep moving the spine to turn—to activate these diagonal relationships, and the criss-crossings and the meanderings [ . . . ] Fluid, subtle, murky, dorsal.*

#### 4. Language-Based Practices

The linguistic component of *Dorsal Practices* evolves from Cocker’s language-based artistic research which involves a matrix of writing, reading, and conversation practices, including diverse process-oriented and dialogic-collaborative approaches. Working with different language-based practices—including performative, poetic, and even phenomenology-oriented approaches—Cocker’s research involves the dual attempt to bring to reflective awareness the experiential and relational aspects of artistic *thinking-in-action*, whilst at the same searching for a mode of linguistic expression capable of operating in fidelity to that experience. Within this enquiry, linguistic content is not already known in advance but rather *comes-into-being* through the embodied and material process of *working-with* language. Certainly, there are other examples of embodied language-based research practices operating at the interstice of choreography, somatic practices, and words.<sup>11</sup> However, within *Dorsal Practices* the collaboration between a choreographer and a writer–artist has enabled us to evolve an original approach, a distinctive circulatory sequence (or even *ecology* of practices) for combining and *bringing-into-relation* various movement-based, conversation, and reading practices. It is a process that unfolds *dorsally*, that is, it proceeds by turning, re-turning, again and again—*coming back*.

In this article, we outline key aspects of our unfolding process, accompanied by a parallel research catalogue exposition where we provide an actual example from our material archive showing the various phases of the research process in practice (including examples of our ‘prompts’ for movement-based practices, documentation of our conversations, the

resulting transcriptions, as well as the experimental practices of reading and etymological exploration). This example can be found here: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2316784/2316787> (accessed on 27 March 2024)

After each durational ‘block’ or episode of body-based somatic-movement practices, we have come together online on Zoom (See Figure 2) for a process of conversation, conceived as a way for attending to and reflecting *with-and-through* our embodied experiences, for wit(h)nessing and engaging empathetically. Often undertaken back-to-back (releasing the eyes from the frontal habits of online meeting), our conversations foster sensitive interaction, heightening attention to the embodied experience of listening and being listened to, allowing for an emergent ‘dorsal voicing’.



**Figure 2.** Katrina Brown and Emma Cocker, *Dorsal Practices: Practice of Conversation*. Screen shots of selected online back-to-back conversations undertaken between 2021 and 2022.

*Delight. Cooperation. Anatomically. Light tread. Neural patterning. Super blurry. Unthinking and unthought . . . Releasing the seeing. Unthinking movements and the unthought . . . Releasing, releasing. Low orientation. Releasing, releasing the eyes. Releasing, releasing. Easiness in the eyes. Letting the eyes be released of orientation in a different way [ . . . ] The delight, a kind of release to the front of the body. We are designed for walking forwards and yet operating in . . . this reversal brings such ease and relief. The re- of reflection and the testing [ . . . ] Re-turn—as in go back to or do it again . . . to turn it over, to re-test it, or do it again, and then to notice anew. [ . . . ] The turning over and over, the testing having a more circular or folding quality [ . . . ] Re-establishing neurological pathways that might have got lost or forgotten through inaction or through not being used [ . . . ] This dwelling with what’s been or where one’s been—not rushing towards something in the future, but just sort of letting in [ . . . ] Regarding—having a regarding quality to what was being observed. This sense of spaciousness, this expansiveness—into the body, into the lungs, into the chest, into the shoulders . . . opening the arms . . . opening the chest. There’s a softening allowed—to fall into the back.*

Our conversation practice takes place through a process of timed ‘turn-taking’, allowing us to each speak without interruption, moreover, for fully focused ‘deep listening’.<sup>12</sup> In *Time to Think*, Nancy Kline argues that “the quality of a person’s attention determines the quality of other people’s thinking”, that “our thinking depends on the quality of our attention for each other” (Kline 1999, p. 17). She observes how, “We think we listen but we don’t. We finish each other’s sentences, we interrupt each other . . . we fill in the pauses

with our own stories” whereas to “to know that you are not going to be interrupted allows your mind to dive, to skate to the edge and leap, to look under rocks, twirl, sit, calculate, stir, toss the familiar and watch new ideas billow down” (Kline 1999, p. 17). We conceive of conversation as an embodied, affective, and relational act: a complex entanglement of attention co-created through the *being-with* of speaker and listener. Additionally, within our practice, we work with the following score.

#### *Score for the Practice of Conversation*

- Take a moment to tune into the chosen object or focus of exploration—this could involve a period of recollection, or looking back at notes, sketches, wordings that relate to the object/focus of exploration, or by noting/drawing/diagramming.
- Connect and try to stay connected with your direct experience.
- Feel free to speak before knowing what it is that you want to say—thinking *through* speaking.
- Feel free to speak in single words, partial phrases, half sentences, and thought fragments.
- Allow for vulnerability and embarrassment—for wrestling with, stumbling, and falling over one’s words.
- Consider different speeds and rhythms. Allow for silence.
- Approach listening to the other as a ‘dorsal practice’.

The *Practice of Conversation* evolved within *Dorsal Practices* builds on a practice called *Conversation as Material* developed by Cocker over the last decade within a series of artistic collaborations (Cocker 2022). *Conversation as Material* is a language-based artistic research practice for attempting to speak from within the experience of collaborative artistic exploration, a linguistic practice attentive to the lived experience of aesthetic co-creation. Whilst the practice of *Conversation as Material* has been adapted and modified within the frame of different collaborative contexts, there is a common quadripartite structure that unfolds thus: (1) Conversation: Engaging in a period of framed conversation as a way of touching upon, getting in touch with or turning over together some aspect of (shared) experience. The conversation may have a specific object of enquiry identified at the outset or the focus might arrive or emerge in and through the process itself; (2) Transcription: Transcribing the conversation, by listening slowly and carefully to the recording of the conversation, paying special attention to the peripheral and the incidental parts within the dialogue, those moments of speech that might have gone unnoticed at the time of conversation or that functioned as asides; (3) Distillation: Distilling the transcribed conversation through a process of editing or condensing the transcription material which might involve highlighting or redacting content, in an attempt to allow a more dense form of poetic text to gradually appear, become revealed; (4) Presentation: Exploring ways for re-activating the poetic distillation, through various modes of presentation which attempt to further activate or amplify the *vocative* potential of the text for communicating a felt sense of the pre-reflective, living experience that the overall practice takes as its focus.<sup>13</sup>

Within *Dorsal Practices*, the process of conversation is recorded, which we then transcribe through an embodied process of ‘slow listening’; the manual activity of transcribing is experienced as a durational undertaking based on returning to the conversation over and over in the translation of spoken word to written text.

*A more radial sense of space—my ears are scanning around me; I am listening to the shifting sounds. I am bringing attention to the immersive quality of being in the space—sounds close and far, and different volumes, frequencies . . . picking up or listening in a different way as well. Temperature and air are combining with different senses of listening—listening through touch and through the skin as well as through the ears. Almost like a choreographic score—the different combinations of turns and half-turns as a way of disorientating. How we orientate in relationship to a sense of direction [. . .] So, there’s a kind of double focus [. . .] Testing in a way, or exploring, testing again. What do I notice? What am I aware of? Is this my experience? Is this my experience? [. . .]*

*Before things become fully automatic there's this interesting wrestling where it's not quite familiar [...] What does that awkwardness do?*

In *Slow Philosophy: Reading Against the Institution* (Boulous Walker 2017), Michelle Boulous Walker outlines the importance of the slow and patient act of returning as a necessary precondition for engaging with the complexity of the world. She asks: how can we engage with the world and our work in meaningful, non-utilitarian ways? Drawing on the writing of various thinkers including Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Simone Weil, Boulous Walker advocates a practice of 'slow reading' that requires the sustained act of re-turning, re-assessing, re-considering, re-engaging, a relational and ethical attentiveness based on intensity, intimacy, and proximity, increased receptivity to complexity, difficulty, even *strangeness* (Boulous Walker 2017, p. xxi). In the process of transcription we do not differentiate one speaking voice from another—the perspective of the singular speaking subject talking from their own experience is loosened through the process of attempting to distil a singular text for speaking of an experience beyond the individual "I". Through transcription, we attend retrospectively to the tentative vibrations of thought in conversation, those instances of speech that were disappearing even as they were coming into being, those thought fragments that were not always possible to discern at the time of conversation itself. Once complete, we each return to the transcripts again, reading and re-reading them, carefully highlighting those parts of the text which feel especially resonant or even redolent of the embodied dorsal experience. The highlighted transcript is retained, the rest redacted. The retained text now becomes a 'working material' which we re-activate through further experimental and improvisatory reading practices.

### 5. Experimental Reading Practices

The conversational transcripts are re-activated and re-organised through various experimental reading practices (again often activated on Zoom), where an immanent mode of linguistic sense-making emerges through the intersubjective and improvisatory interplay of spoken word, where fresh insights and understanding happens through the unexpected conjunctions, (re)combinations, and the circling and looping of language. We each have piles of transcript material from our previous conversations spread out on our respective tables. Within an agreed period of time, we each scan the transcripts, selecting fragments of these texts to read aloud as a live improvisation—the very moment of voicing creating a 'new' and contingent unfolding of dorsal sense-making. The 'reading scores' evolved within *Dorsal Practices* extend Cocker's ongoing artistic research interest in reading as an aesthetic practice and the 'poetics of attention' therein (Cocker et al. 2020). Within our live readings, we oscillate between the two following scores.

#### *Score(s) for the Practice of Reading*

For practising together

1. *Reading (Noticing Attraction)*—Each person has the transcript in hand, allowing one's gaze to be soft, to glide or roam the pages. When a word draws your attention, speak it out loud. Allow for overlaps and also silences.
2. *Reading (Distillation)*—Take time to tune into the transcript, noticing phrases and words that strike you or that resonate. As the practice begins, when the time feels right, read out loud single words, phrases, or a cluster of sentences. Once familiar with the practice, allow the act of distillation to happen spontaneously in the moment, speaking words and phrases live as they come to your attention. Attend to the emerging sense-making between the lines of two voices intermingling—letting one's attention shift between listening and speaking.

Rather than crystallising or distilling our textual materials into a conclusive or definitive written form, the act of reading and re-reading keeps the texts alive, endlessly capable of being reconfigured, through a live process of sense-making where content is each time apprehended afresh. The recorded 'dorsal reading' that we present online as part of

this article demonstrates our reading ‘practice’ in action and can be encountered here: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2316784/2316785> (accessed on 27 March 2024)

The transcript of that singular reading practice is the source material for the italicised textual extracts interweaving throughout the article. The reading itself comprises four episodes in which we work with the conversation transcripts corresponding to different periods of our movement-based exploration as follows: (Part 1) *Lying and Rotation*; (Part 2) *Transition and Movement*; (Part 3) *Perhaps*; and (Part 4) *Walking Backwards*. The improvised reading of the conversational transcript is punctuated by a series of ‘interludes’ where we simultaneously read aloud the edited transcripts from an ongoing shared practice of ‘etymological exploration’, within which we unfold and circle around the hidden (perhaps even dorsal) meanings of recurrent words within our enquiry: reverse, oblique, sentience, proprioception, straight-forward, and uprightness.

*The evolution of movement has this push towards uprightness and faciality and frontality, and yet moving to the back—whether physiologically or psychologically—brings such release and joy [ . . . ] This sense of abandon, the joy of abandon. How can it not be part of the fabric of being human and having a human body? These brief interludes in a life which otherwise feels very frontally oriented [ . . . ] The fatigue of frontality, the tiredness of it and these fluid, pleasurable, joyful pockets of exercising and of testing something out. And the sorrow that this is how it seems to be [ . . . ] It doesn't need to be a brief exercise—why could it not be more, why not live life more dorsally?*

*Dorsal Practices* is an ongoing research project: a *live enquiry*, perhaps even a *life enquiry*. We consider *Dorsal Practices* as a technology for (re)training our attention through specific sharable practices, for nurturing alternative ‘ecologies of attention’.<sup>14</sup> Rather than excavating findings as such, we are interested in how to share our ‘dorsal practices’ within bodies, with and through our bodies, and with other bodies. We wonder—what kinds of research contexts, formats, even research assemblages might be necessary for sharing research processes that are embodied, affective, and relational? We have been exploring the potential of performance readings and live workshops for sharing our practice and its material–linguistic forms, but still are curious about expanded possibilities of publication.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, we conceive this article as an *experiment*—through the interweaving of different textual modalities and through our invitation to you to engage with our recorded materials beyond the page.

*There is this temporal elasticity, but very present at the same time [ . . . ] This disturbance of linear time in a way. To do with releasing, release of, permission to lose control. There is something to do with control, expectation, responsibility, the sense of ourselves or how we think to present ourselves in the world, to ourselves and to others. And that is allowed to shift—it is a psychological and emotional shift as well, a twist, and a turn and a drop [ . . . ] Time released and opening into this atemporal timelessness, from this small shift of orientation. Such a transformative effect on how time and space and body and surroundings are experienced—very radical in a way [ . . . ] Releasing (the eyes) from their role of orientation or searching or protection or route-finding [ . . . ], the eyes being able to inhabit a different mode of being in a way. Just allowing the eyes to be. Just letting in the sky and the clouds, and yes [ . . . ] there is this quality of expansion.*

We conceive *Dorsal Practices* and our turn towards dorsality less as an explicit critique of or complete turn from frontality, from various head-oriented, sight-oriented, forward-facing, future-leaning tendencies and biases, but rather as a *call*. In one sense, to engage in dorsal practices, to practise dorsally, might serve to *call out*, show up, or otherwise disclose certain habits of orientation, implicit knowledges, and socio-cultural conditioning, which might otherwise remain unacknowledged, unexplored, untransformed.<sup>16</sup> Through body-based and language-based practices, we might notice how such ingrained biases (and associated value hierarchies) have become inscribed in both the body and in language. *Dorsal Practices* is also a *call for* or *call towards* a different orientation; it affirms the possibilities within a *dorsal turn*. We recognise the fatigue of frontality, of the felt pressure of fronting up

to, perhaps even *confronting* (to stand in front of, to be facing) the demands of work and life. Yet the shift towards a dorsal orientation can be *disorientating*, unsettling, for it involves some loss of control, a process of letting go, of leaning (back) into the unknown. To practise a dorsal orientation might be undertaken as a way of becoming more sensitised—more attuned, indeed more accustomed—to the experience of uncertainty and disorientation. Through practice, what is first felt as a loss—loss of control, of bearings, of the frontal orientation of the eyes—might open towards a sense of release, ease, an enriched proprioceptive experience of living and of life. Rather than conceiving front/back as a binary relation, *Dorsal Practices* explores a more sensorially integrated and embodied awareness of the entangled and co-constitutive relation between frontality and dorsality, between body and language, between self and world.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Ahmed highlights how the etymology of “direction” (from direct) is inextricably related to the notion of “‘being straight’ or getting ‘straight to the point’”, (Ahmed 2006, p. 16).
- <sup>2</sup> Whilst we do not conceive a dorsal orientation as synonymous with slowness or deceleration as such, we do recognise resonance with certain discourses on slowness and rest as modes of resistance. For example, philosopher Isabelle Stengers argues that “Slowing down means becoming capable of learning again, becoming acquainted with things again, reweaving the bounds of interdependency. It means thinking and imagining, and in the process creating relationships with others that are not those of capture”, in (Stengers 2018, pp. 82–83). Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber describe and confront the hurried, instrumental, and efficiency-driven emphasis on productivity, competition, and continuous improvement experienced within the contemporary corporate university in (Berg and Seeber 2016). In their edited compendium, Felicity Callard, Kimberley Staines, and James Wilkes address both the presence and absence of rest within diverse contexts, including specific practices of both rest and restlessness. See (Callard et al. 2016). More broadly, we recognise potential affinities between a dorsal orientation and wider de-growth philosophies and critiques of progression-focused ideologies. See also (Berardi 2011).
- <sup>3</sup> We wonder if the dorsal orientation might better be understood as a mode of disorientation. For Ahmed, “Disorientation could be described here as the ‘becoming oblique’ of the world, a becoming that is at once interior and exterior, as that which is given, or as that which gives what is given its new angle”, (Ahmed 2006, p. 162).
- <sup>4</sup> Language-based artistic research is a new term for an emergent genre or field of artistic research which Emma Cocker, Cordula Daus, and Lena Séraphin coined for describing approaches to artistic research that work-with language as their material. Cocker, Daus, Séraphin, and Alexander Damianisch are co-founders of the Society for Artistic Research: Special Interest Group for Language-based Artistic Research, which was established in 2019 within the frame of the Research Pavilion #3, Venice. See <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/835089/835129> (accessed on 27 March 2024)
- <sup>5</sup> Whilst influenced by the ‘deep listening’ practices of sound composer Pauline Oliveros (Oliveros 2005), the practice of ‘deep listening’ within *Dorsal Practices* is also informed by a method called Awareness Centred Deep Listening Training (ACDLT®), a programme founded in 2003 by Rosamund Oliver to develop meaningful and beneficial communication between people and in communities. Cocker is trained in Awareness Centred Deep Listening. We also find resonance in artist and sound theorist Brandon LaBelle’s ongoing enquiry around listening as an embodied research practice. LaBelle states, “If listening takes us somewhere it is into the ebbing and flowing of life, the deep pulse and resonant reach of becoming-with; it is towards intimacies and a world of touch”, in *The Listening Biennial Reader*, (LaBelle 2022, p. 7).
- <sup>6</sup> Di Paolo, Cuffari, and De Jaegher note how “Social interactions are vulnerable. And so are their participants. The latter are vulnerable insofar as they are embodied agents and [...] their autonomy, both organic and sensorimotor, is an ongoing achievement under precarious conditions”, (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p. 71). They state that, “Precariousness and vulnerability are not ‘unfortunate’ empirical aspects of how autonomous systems (individuals and interactive patterns) are realized in the real world. They are constitutive of this autonomy and without them the concept of autonomy would be empty”, p. 72.
- <sup>7</sup> See (Brown 2022, pp. 145–63) and <https://katrinabrown.net/project/tilt-rhythm-back-dances-drawings> (accessed on 27 March 2024).

- <sup>8</sup> With-nessing is a neologism of witnessing and being-with. The notion of ‘with-nessing’ as an artistic research approach was developed by (Cocker et al. 2017, pp. 164–66).
- <sup>9</sup> For example, see (Feldenkrais 1950; Hanna 2004). We recognise resonance with the score-based practices of choreographer Steve Paxton [e.g., *Small Dance*], dance-maker and improviser Lisa Nelson [e.g., *Tuning Scores*], and sound composer Pauline Oliveros [e.g., *Deep Listening*].
- <sup>10</sup> We are grateful to the reviewers for drawing our attention to Annika Olofsdotter Bergström’s and Juliana Restrepo-Giraldo’s article (Olofsdotter Bergström and Restrepo-Giraldo 2023).
- <sup>11</sup> See (Rouhiainen et al. 2024). Vida L. Midgelow explores the “interplay between writing and improvisational dancing to describe a methodology for an embodied, sensual and experiential mode of writing/dancing in which the boundaries between these two disciplines are blurred”, in (Midgelow 2012, pp. 3–17). Jasmine B. Ulmer asks: “(W)hat if writing danced? What if words embodied movement? How might writing be inscribed as a material, kinaesthetic, visual process?”, in (Ulmer 2015, pp. 33–50, 34). More broadly, cultural theorist and political philosopher Erin Manning’s wider oeuvre might be conceived to operate at the interstices of movement, thought and language. See for example, (Manning and Massumi 2014).
- <sup>12</sup> The ‘turn taking’ without interruption is based on Nancy Kline’s ‘time to think’ model. See (Kline 1999).
- <sup>13</sup> Phenomenologist Max van Manen refers to the notion of ‘Vocative Writing’, where “the term voke derives from vocare: to call, and from the etymology of voice, sound, language, and tone; it also means to address, to bring to speech.” See (van Manen 2014, p. 240), especially the chapter ‘Philological Methods: The Vocative’, pp. 240–96. Van Manen outlines the vocative dimension of phenomenological writing by methods of the revocative (lived through-ness: bringing experience vividly into presence through anecdote and imagery); evocative (nearness: an in-touch-ness activated through poetic devices including alliteration and repetition); invocative (intensification: a calling forth by incantation); and convocative (pathic: expressing an emotive, non-cognitive sensibility).
- <sup>14</sup> Citton asks, “What can we do collectively about our individual attention, and how can we contribute individually to a redistribution of our collective attention?” (Citton 2017, p. 10).
- <sup>15</sup> For example, we have presented our enquiry through a performance reading and a workshop within the frame of the symposium, *Sentient Performativities: Thinking Alongside the Human*, (Dartington, June 2022) and as a performance reading at the Society of Artistic Research conference, *Too Early/Too Late*, in Trondheim, Norway, 9–21 April 2023.
- <sup>16</sup> Here, we recognise the need to question what might be conceived as ‘implicit knowledge’ or even ‘common sense’ drawing on the work of philosopher Alexis Shotwell, for whom ‘knowing otherwise’ involves an attempt to explore the possibilities for new kinds of ‘livability’, a ‘new common sense’ [new *sensus communis*] based upon relationality, interconnection, and freedom dreaming, arguing how [only] “this sort of socially situated, embodied knowledge can function as impetus, sustenance, and imaginative motor for individual and collective change,” in (Shotwell 2011, p. 70). See also (Shotwell 2014, pp. 315–24).

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