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Developing Somatic Writing from the Perspective of the Feldenkrais Method

ABSTRACT

Embodied practices have not yet been widely studied in the field of creative writing, although writing is a core medium of emotional understanding. This article aims to develop connection between creative writing and a certain somatic approach, Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement practice, by seeking interlapping areas of interest and concepts, such as attention, and voice. This setting of writing and somatic practice into dynamic interplay aims to create an understanding of how the body's embodied knowledge, ability to sense, learn, and change can affect writing. The possible contact points of Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement method and creative writing practice have potential to improve writers' relationship to their practice and medium, and additionally, the discussion presented in this article widens our understanding of creative writing. Some Feldenkrais disorientation or perturbation strategies aim to regenerate novelty out of repetition, apply self-activation, and in general, use movement in constituting agency (see Kampe 2019b). These can be further applied in writing practices.

Key words: Creative writing, embodiment, somatic writing, Feldenkrais method, neuroplasticity

INTRODUCTION

Bodily practices can offer new insight to creative writing. At the moment, embodied knowledge is increasingly addressed in fields such as the performing arts (Eddy 2009, Kampe 2013, 2019a, 2019b, Paparo 2021, Sellers-Young 2021), all the while arts' enormous potential to manifest all kinds of knowledge in a deep, transformative way are also widely applied in scholarly research (Leavy 2018, 3–4). Additionally, various artists and scholars question the conceptual separation between modes of practice (doing) and research (thinking and knowing) (Hug 2020, 11). Creative writing definitely is one of the core mediums of emotional knowledge. In this article¹, I am setting two practices – writing and somatic practice – into dynamic interplay in order to create an understanding of how the body's embodied knowledge, ability to sense, and change are transmitted or put into practice through the very act of writing. Here I consider writing as a non-genre-specific creative practice without any presuppositions on "personal" or autobiographical content, although the approaches I draw from (See Adsit 2017) seem to come from narrative rather than experiential writing. Creative writing is a curious attempt at inquiring and understanding processed in written verbal form, and these processes cannot occur without the self. In literature and studies about somatic practices, the soma refers to a body-mind integrated conception

¹ This article is a second part of my scholarly and essayistic exploration on somatic writing. The first article (Pentikäinen 2022) is rather experiential, this second article at hand offers some theoretical insight and groundwork, and my third article will discuss more closely a few writing practices with examples. Teaching is part of my ongoing study and can be found here (www.somaattinenkirjoittaminen.fi).

of the self and occurs as a space for meaning-making and communicating it (See, for example, Sellers-Young 2021,15). With somatic practice, I refer to the various methods and techniques that address the body's organic, neural, and sensual pathways as well as its movement patterns. Here I will focus on Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement method, as it provides a well-developed approach targeting awareness through self-study rather than learning from finished scripts. The Feldenkrais method offers multiple strategies to guide the nervous system through demanding tasks that writing inevitably is (Kent 2017, 47). My method consists of practice identification and comparison of equivalencies. First, I will compare "soma" and the "voice", as these concepts direct to the embodied, first-person perspective, and then I will continue by exploring some core aspects of Feldenkrais in terms of what they have to offer for writing.

SOMA AND NEUROPLASTICITY

By using the concept "soma" instead of a more common "body", the philosopher Thomas Hanna (1928–1990) wanted to emphasize the very essential idea of perceiving the body "from within by first-person perception" instead of an outsider's perspective that often takes place in everyday discourses when the material essences of the bodies are being referred to (See Hanna 1995, Rouhiainen 2006). The soma, our experiential body, can be perceived through "immediate proprioception" and "unique sensory data" that it can give its holder (Hanna 1995). Hanna's pivotal idea was to argue and further develop the idea that life experiences in general lead

to physical patterns in the body, and through somatic practice, these patterns can be understood, regulated, and altered. Hanna developed his approach partially by being informed on the practices of Moshe Feldenkrais.

Hanna's somatic method as well as other relative philosophies and applications such as the Feldenkrais method, Alexander technique, and Body-Mind Centering, are often used when seeking therapeutic benefits, and therefore in the field of human interaction and creativity, their advantages have been explored, for instance, in dance and movement education, movement medicine and sport sciences. However, their connection to writing has not yet been greatly discussed. At the same time, especially in the last few decades, embodied knowledge has been widely studied within the humanities and the arts. The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty famously stated that the central perceptual experience of a human "is the gestalt, the meaningful whole of figure against (the) ground", and this is where the understanding of the outer world takes place (Merleau-Ponty 2005). If we accept that principle, we also admit that there is no human understanding outside of the body, or so to say the soma. Therefore, it is worth attempting to bring the potential of the body into the full consciousness of all practices that aim to develop not only the physical states but also the human creative production skills. As I discuss later, the somatic approach to writing allows us to bring these widely accepted theoretical perspectives of embodied knowledge into meaningful, targeted, and directed use, like the various somatic applications mentioned above.

Additionally, writing as a form of art is connected to somatics also through the body's capacity to "locus senso-

ry-aesthetic appreciation”, as Richard Shusterman’s (1949–) concept of somaesthetics explains how body movement and aesthetic experiences cooperate (Shusterman 1999). Joel Wilson has discussed Shusterman’s concept by applying it to writing rituals, meaning how the embodied practices and the body’s relationship to its material context may affect writing performance. His discussion helps us to understand how the body can be settled into writing tasks by controlling the outer environment and sensing the body’s response to it (Wilson 2015). However, this exploration does not fully lead us to the core of the problem, namely the heightened sense and production of language, but rather serve as an understanding of the role of body regulation and ritual setting in performing writing activities. Lately, effects and rituals have gained interest in the field of writing research in general (See, for example, Karjula 2020). Within different practices, embodiment means that the body can be trained with “the generative power of movement” (Sellers-Young 2021, 16).

If the soma is the context of the embodied meaning-making, neuroplasticity explains, in theory, how the human brain has the ability to change itself (Doidge 2007, 101–113, 168). Neuroplasticity is a “general umbrella term that refers to the brain’s ability to modify, change, and adapt both structure and function throughout life and in response to experience” (Voss et al. 2017, 1). This plasticity is a biological aspect, which means that all experiences that happen in a body matter and hold significance (Remley 2017, 139). Within modern science, brain development was long considered to take place only through the early childhood and adolescent years of human beings, and after that critical growth period, adulthood meant the end of such growth and development

and thus living with stable brain systems. Only lately, during the last decades, neuroscientists have been able to find evidence that 1) the human brain is inbuilt with a constant ability to alter itself, especially in terms of adaptation, 2) this adaptation can occur as an unplanned part of everyday life (for example, when facing sudden trauma or being pressured to adapt to new demands) or as intentionally manipulated through various techniques and methods (See Doidge 2007, 101–113). Additionally, various body-mind techniques from Asian traditions and Western alternative treatment methods actually can be explained not only through their rootedness in certain belief systems and cultures but also through their access to body-mind activation and change, and that lays the background for various somatic practices (See Eddy 2009).

ATTENTION, VOICE, WRITING

In her study on creative writing learning, Janelle Adsit profoundly asks, what actually provides the increased sensitivity and new perspectives that often comes with writing progress, and as an answer, Adsit proposes a dozen of threshold concepts that consist of a disciplinary framework, whilst appearing as "lenses" that have the transformative power of changing the learner's understanding of their practice in general (Adsit 2017, 2–4). The first of the threshold concepts – perhaps also in terms of somatic writing – is *attention*. For Adsit, attention means learning to be a "close and critical observer(s) of the world" and the ability to reflect the ethical assumptions when perceiving and reinventing worlds through observation and research. Adsit considers research as data-seeking

and textual world construction that underlines "the importance of going outside of the self and one's received knowledge". (Adsit 2017, 3.) What she does not take into account is the writer's concurrent and thus reciprocal act of turning back to their very unique, individual ways of attention, and examining it in order to refine their verbal expression. The self is not merely content, or material of writing to grow out, but more importantly, it directs to the productive spaces. Attention leads to expressing through one's voice.

As Mihail Bakhtin noted, *voice* is the speaking consciousness, with its own will, desire, timbre, and overtones (Bakhtin 1981, 434). When writers find their way of "voicing" these desires, they often have found how to connect and combine the observed, researched, experienced, and embodied materials of writing into a transformative practice that has the power to resonate with other human beings and say something thematically valid about the outside world "in their own way". As "voice" refers to the material sound produced within one's upper body organs when speaking, singing, or otherwise meaningfully communicating with others or merely for self-expression, it means going through a certain, embodied way. As a common metaphor for writing, voice often emphasizes individual and personal expression, even the "true self", or a textual construction of it. Peter Elbow connected voice with freewriting, also implying liberation from normative, fixed, conventional modes of communication (Elbow 2007). It is, however, unclear if the individual writer's voice can be captured through a close reading of the linguistic and textual aspects of the text, or if it is a constructed social image that the reader produces as part of their meaning-making process. Voice may be a quality of language that reflects the autho-

rial choice and it can also be taught at some level, or it may merely be a lens for understanding the reading, writing, and learning process (Sperling & Appleman 2011). Additionally, the concept of *voice* is often used when the writer's relationship to their cultural or social contexts is being referred to. This kind of understanding of the voice is notably common in the time of identity politics. As identity and expression are integrally interconnected, "voice liberation" occurs when one finds their place, space, and purpose of communication that might not always have been available to them.

In terms of somatic writing, the concept of *voice* allows us to think about the here-and-now process of communication production within and from the body, or from the subject, the self. Additionally, the aural metaphor underlines the various nonverbal, material aspects of that act: the tone, prosody, accent, tempo, and other rhythmic patterns in connection to the possible gestural and other nonverbal elements – all products of the body. It is sounded, heard, and exists in time. However, as Peter Elbow reminds us, contrary to thinking of the literary through the "voice" lens, the "text" lens brings into attention the visual and spatial features of language in print as well as its essence of being "crafted", not natural. Written language is transferable through time and space, but at the same time, it is to at least partially lose its vital connection to the living body, even being "purely disembodied". (Elbow 2007, 7.) From the somatic writing approach, it may be useful to consider "voice" and "text" not as contrasting to each other, but rather as different layers or empowering resources for vivid embodied, and progressing writing practice.

Current writing approaches such as socio-cognitive theory, or the writers-within-community approach (Graham 2018),

underline the role of social context and language resources in all writing learning and performance. Maybe the increased interest in embodied writing (Perl 2004, Robinson 2012, Pallant 2018) signifies a slight change of paradigm, or even more interestingly, somatic approaches can complement the current socio-cognitive approaches (Graham 2018) by giving some insights on how the mind-body-language integration activates in all interactions and how it can be addressed. After all, those approaches note that meaning-making takes place in social interaction like the somatic approach notes that meaning-making occurs within our bodies and in movement. Again, Janelle Adsit's concept of attention reminds us to study the compelling outside and the mysterious inside to capture the possible, yet unreachable whole. Writing clearly is a multifaceted, nonlinear, nonnatural, and complex process, and thus not explainable through any singular theory only.

Could writing partly happen as an ethnography of that soma, as self, connecting the areas of attention, resonance, and voice? What if those approaches we often direct towards making observations and remarks of others, could actually be fruitful in learning how to observe ourselves, and through this activity, develop heightened sensitivity towards the observation that can be done in connection to the other parts of the world? When suggesting this, I am somewhat conscious of the problem that the conventional understanding of "self-writing" may orient, and therefore I am strongly emphasizing the process as self-cultivation. Moshe Feldenkrais defined his approach as "self-fulfillment through organic learning" (Feldenkrais 1981). Somatic writing, at its best, is a process to advance writing practices that can address issues beyond one's embodied experience, as it opens avenues

to consider our interrelationship with others and the world (See Pentikäinen 2022).

COMBINING VOICE AND SOMA: CULTIVATING YOURSELF,
AND WRITING?

In the following, I am discussing some approaches that aim to apply somatic education or practice to writing or offer arts-based insights that can be relatable to writing. These approaches take place in various fields of study from college writing instruction to various performing arts, like dance, vocal arts, and multimodal visual arts (See Kampe 2019a). I exclude therapeutic and "alternative" physical treatments that, even being rich with multiple somatic approaches, hold notable differences in terms of principles, goals, and applications. The body of research covering this field is sparse, but despite this, it is possible to draw some preliminary remarks based on it.

Applying Richard Shusterman's concept of somaesthetics, Joel Wilson aims to "reevaluate the body and bodily experience within the writing process itself" (Wilson 2015, 174). According to his study, it is "individual students' body-mind nexus that underwrites the entire composition process" (Wilson 2015, 173). Through understanding and applying somaesthetics, the pedagogy of writing can be redirected to building fulfilling writing rituals. Those rituals seek to build organic interaction where body, mind, thought, hand movements, writing environment, and textual elements cooperate. In order to manipulate this embodied organic system for performance, one is guided to look for those locations, times,

and ways of preparation that seem fruitful for their writing. It is possible to teach the body to adapt to the task and direct and control its span of attention (Wilson 2015, 178).

Another study on college writing seeks to discuss the role of the group when learning to write. Douglas Robinson's study *First-Year Writing and the Somatic Exchange* (2012) explores how groups of human beings interact within their somas while learning academic textual skills essential for membership in communities of higher learning and academic research. Within interaction of shared writing practices occurs what he calls "the simulatory internalization of other people's evaluative body language as our own body states" (Robinson 2012, 49). Robinson's study discusses the experienced and embodied challenge of writing, and how it relates to human bodies' abilities to learn from other bodies. This learning can affect internalized change. "What we are simulating in and displaying on our separate bodies is group evaluative effect, the somatic exchange circulates norms or ideosomatic pressures that can be cognitivized as norms" (Robinson 2012, 49). He inquires less how these transformed, reflected, and reformulated experiences are, if at all, further represented and produced in written discourses.

Dance and writing teacher Cheryl Pallant's book *Writing and the Body in Motion: Awakening Voice through Somatic Practice* (2018) presents a detailed discussion on how the movements of the body, often free, improvised, investigative, as well as being somatically aware and listening, actually lead up to articulation in written words, and vice versa. When "writing is recognized as a function of the body", the writer can bypass the traditional first-person approach that limits the writer to consider the body as "mine", "my", or "I", which

obviously refers to the ownership between some kind of conscious mind and the material of the body, creating a sense of distance and possession, even control (Pallant 2018, Loc 1729). For a writer, shifting from writing "about" the body to writing "from" the body (Pallant 2018, Loc 1725) means an ontological and epistemic paradigm of change. "Pairing writing to somatic awareness is a rare combination but herein lies its strength: writing furthers the understanding, expression, awareness of the somatic body which, in turn, furthers the expressive capability of writing" (Pallant 2018, Loc 1626).

When speaking of writing, it is unquestionable that the interactions and symbolic processes that connect one's bodily sensations with words – or to put it in other words, what attaches them –, are of key interest. The writing researcher Sondra Perl applies philosopher Eugene Gendlin's theory of *felt sense* in order to understand what happens at the edge of this early formation of verbalization. According to Gendlin, felt sense may first be nothing but a weak and obscure, barely noticeable bodily sensation that may often be easily lost or drowned out by louder, busier, and demanding impulses. Additionally, felt sense may be disturbing to the writer because it is both attention-calling and unclear – meaning that it is about to seek articulation in words. Like Gendlin, who developed "focusing" methods to open up for the approaching, pre-verbal bodily suggestions or calls, Perl applies these approaches to writing, which according to her, is a constant invitation of yet unclear meanings. (Perl 2014.)

In addition to these studies, there is a body of research that uses the concept of "somatic writing" when combining writing with various performing arts practices. In these cases, the question is how to write the somatic. Within these stud-

ies, artistic activity other than writing is in focus, thus creating such a "somatically loaded", comparable context for writing. For example, Fei Shi discusses contemporary Chinese performative body art in video format that challenges the normative ideas of gender and sexuality, and in that context, somatic writing is an "alternative embodied practice and linguistic strategy to capture the evasive, the illicit, and the erotic in these performances", and vice versa, "critical narratives continuously rewrite the body and participate in its meaning construction" (Fei Shi 2011, 245, 264). As noted earlier, somatic writing invites the body-based, embodied understanding from within the body, and in the contexts where the uses and interpretations of bodies are critically discussed, somatic writing may appear as complementary practice.

FELDENKRAIS AWARENESS THROUGH MOTION APPROACH AND WRITING

To continue from those detailed studies mentioned above, I will ask how a certain somatic approach, Feldenkrais Awareness Through Motion, applies to creative writing. In practice, this can be done by combining movement and writing sequences, like the Sense Writing method developer Madelyn Kent has addressed (Kent 2017, 47)². Parallel to that, in dance research, the Feldenkrais method has proven to be a choreographic resource and thus a source for a dancer's

² I want to acknowledge that my practice-based experience of applying Feldenkrais approach into writing is first-hand learned with Madelyn Kent (Sense Writing) and Charlie Blowers (Moving Pieces). Both teachers combine movement and writing exercises.

movement craft, informing how somatic learning strategies can be layered to artistic modalities throughout the process (Kampe 2013, Kampe 2019b). From the wide field of various somatic practices, I have chosen Feldenkrais due to its emphasis on embodied awareness and a ‘learning to learn’ approach. In the following, I present the Feldenkrais method shortly and continue by discussing some of its principles by connecting them to writing.

It seems obvious that at least most, if not all, somatic approaches relevant to writing seek to train or regulate the body, often through physical movement – although in some cases, mental imagery exploration and partial body mapping are a notable part of the practice (Kent 2017, Pallant 2018). Maybe the various somatic writing practices could be separated from each other based on their involvement in body movement. Lesser amounts of activation can occur in those practices where the bodily experiences are captured through mental imagery practices, which are applied, for instance, in various ideological, spiritual, or therapeutic contexts. A bit more open-based body activation happens when body mapping, sensing, or breathing techniques are used to capture the mostly immobile and still widely active body’s ability to sense and give feedback (See Kent 2017). Finally, the exercises that use the body’s movement, be it scripted or improvised, obviously aim to actively involve the sensory data of the body in terms of heightened awareness. Although the actual somatic writing practices can apply and combine all these qualities of body activation, by distinguishing these approaches one also notes different assumptions. The Feldenkrais method is strongly based on the body’s sensory system changed by movement.

Moshe Feldenkrais (1904–1984) was a Ukrainian-Israeli scientist and athlete who ended up acquiring a knee injury. Instead of undergoing surgery with some obvious risks of not recovering, he started to apply different movement practices to train the hurt knee. Through this activity, he came up with a revolutionary idea that the nervous system could be trained through unlearning and relearning certain movement patterns, and through such training, one could improve their movement skills and even recover. It is not far from true to say that with this approach, Feldenkrais was an advocate for neuroplasticity before the concept itself. During his lifetime, Feldenkrais wrote several books, more than 1000 activities, and assignments as well as started to educate others to use his methods. Today, the Feldenkrais education methods consist of "alternative", individual physical therapy for improving the body functions, and the already mentioned group method that teaches the body awareness through movement exercises. The latter is of my personal interest in terms of writing. My core idea is that the more the body can re-learn to sense, the more detailed can a writer's expression grow as they are working within and through their body. (For the application to writing, see also Kent 2017).

Feldenkrais himself saw that the liberation of the body was a core principle for his work. He wrote: "My way of looking at the mind and body involves a subtle method of 'rewiring' the structure of the entire human being to be functionally well integrated, which means being able to do what the individual wants" (Feldenkrais 2019, 26). This also included letting go of undesirable movement habits and learning new ones through given triggers instead of direct models.

Moreover, the Feldenkrais method offers an open-end-

ed and experiential learning process. Participants develop an awareness of themselves by observing how they move as they explore various movement sequences. There is no right or wrong, but only observation, and then wording. According to Kampe, such structure of action and reflection cycles with slowness and comfortability is the main force of learning (Kampe 2019b). The lessons, designed to explore a specific function one at a time, are directed through voice only, the teacher does not serve as a model of doing it right. The lessons grow from simple developmental movements like rolling and turning to more complex and sophisticated ones. The teacher guides students through a sequence of movements and directs their attention to the sensations before, while, and after moving. The aural direction may actually also strengthen the idea of "voicing" the information of the body movements, and vice versa. The somatic voice emerges as a result of all movements, thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the process. In general, Feldenkrais method users look for various outcomes, like decreased tension, chronic pain or stress, improved posture, better motor coordination, increased range of motion, and overall sense of well-being (Hillier & Worley 2015). By demonstrating how the awareness of oneself is the foundation to learning to learn, the method is quite widely taught in the field of performing arts, and there is preliminary research on applying Feldenkrais, for example, to singing and chorus leading (Paparó 2021).

In the following, I will continue my discussion by exploring the Feldenkrais method colliding with writing in more detail. Scripted awareness through movement exercises may, according to my understanding and experience, bring intriguing openings and extensions for writing practice in

terms of preparation, rituals, settings, and sensuality (See also Kampe 2019b, Kent 2017). The Feldenkrais method's intrinsic value is that it offers a self-directed way to heighten sensation and build knowledge. The writings of Moshe Feldenkrais provide a theoretical background to the working methods. The practice is ultimately grounded in the body's sensory and neural capacity, and the target of arising heightened awareness clearly resonates with writerly ambitions of attention, observation, voice, and resonance. Obviously, it is ultimately possible to ground and build writing practices around other practices in a similar way.

BODY'S ABILITY TO LEARN

Today, neurobiologists, humanities scholars, and learning researchers quite commonly agree that all experiences, movements included, play a significant role in human cognitive development. Learning takes place when the human body responds to behaviour, experiences, or social interaction (Remley 2017, 138–139). Feldenkrais emphasized that a person can learn directly from the use of their own body (Kampe 2021, 18). What makes Feldenkrais's method especially invaluable to creative writing is the fact that the developer linked his embodied practice rigorously with the body's ability to learn. Moshe Feldenkrais' learning to learn approach is based on a view that the human body consists of and allows meaning-making and learning in three stages. First comes the flesh, all the neural, muscular, and other organic options a human body offers, and they are more or less similar to all individuals within the species. Second, comes everything that

is learned individually but through socialization within specified groups of growth environments: language, habits and manners, ways of speaking and acting, all carry similar functions but take different forms in different groups. While this group learning is essential to our survival, it also brings notable limits to individual choices (Feldenkrais 2008, 16). Third, one can practice learning through self-education, namely seeking to emphasize, regulate, and re-train certain functions (Feldenkrais 2008, 25–29). The body awareness movement education is a form of this opportunity, and this aspect clearly emphasizes human relearning and growth aside from the predetermined social identification.

Feldenkrais movement exercises differ from common physical training methods in looking not only for movement improvement but the body's ability to sense itself. The "doing it right" still refers to learning through socialization, while the goal here is to learn how to track differences in one's body, also called exploratory self-learning. Learning — or being exposed to change — can take place in different practices, either separately or by informing each other. As Kampe mentions, "hybrid practices emerge through a collage or layering of these diverse practices", somatic practice, and creative processes (Kampe 2019a, 2). There is no "target" or "learning point" in the outside world, or to say, outside of the learner. All one aims to learn is to pay closer attention to their body through certain movements and patterns, and through that heightened sensitivity, the embodied expression pattern may grow (Feldenkrais 2008, 33; Kampe 2019a).

THE BODY, MOVEMENT, AND AGENCY

In the following, I will discuss some foundational aspects that take place in the Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement method and can have some specific benefits in writing. At the core of the Feldenkrais method lies an assumption that all learning happens with and through body movement, regardless of the size, intention, or quality of the move. "Awareness Through Movement" actually means that one can produce heightened understanding while processing movement patterns and structures (Feldenkrais 2008, 43). The method does not aim to direct the consciousness of the mind to the "social" sphere of the body, namely to that layer that consists of areas of learning within human interaction but to that layer that is species-specific: the very essence of a human, their neural and other sensing capacities (Feldenkrais 2008, 40). Although we process our notions through using social language – and often the remarks from the body refer to things we may have learned through interaction – from enjoyment and pleasure to suppression and trauma, the very essence of the approach is to direct the attention to those layers in our bodies who do not only "store" meaning but have the full capacity of producing and processing it.

While the human body holds the ability to serve as a meaning-making space, the movements are the units of the meaning-making. For Feldenkrais, the moving body serves as a platform for self-education, where relearning for one's full capacity and dignity can take place (Feldenkrais 2010). Therefore, the movements hold the power of constituting agency (Kampe 2019a, 13). Agency means that one can make informed choices that carry the potential to make dif-

ference in the world (Elbow 2017, 169). If we consider writing as "voicing" (Elbow 2007, Bakhtin 1981), we can take the metaphorical meaning also literally. The body produces, strengthens, and directs the voice, the verbal expression in its own capacity and objectives.

Additionally, the promise of the Feldenkrais method for a writer lies in its ability to practice detailed sensations – those that serve as a basis for all observation and attention. However, in Adsit's core concept approach, the writer is sent out to the world to collect observations (Adsit 2017, 3), and when applying Feldenkrais, the writer is asked to work inwards, within their own body. The body as a meaning-making space can be metaphorically compared to the text, a meaningful unit, and a production space of voice (Elbow 2007), where all details organically co-operate. The texts as coherent units of meaning also create discursive spaces – they have invisible thus porous borders that communicate what belongs to them and what is left outside. Textual analysis means that one can pay attention to one detail at a time and then draw a synthesis of the whole — not unlike how the Feldenkrais method advises us to analyze the small movement units of the body in order to capture the wholeness of our learning power, leading to agency.

**DISTURBATION STRATEGIES:
TOWARDS REINVENTED NOVELTY**

As human beings, we are excited to learn something new, and get bored easily. The human being is born with plenty of potential skills for various movements but needs also ex-

tended time to practice and learn to apply those movements with fluency. Once fluent with, for example rolling on the floor or standing posture, one slowly gets so used to these movements that they lose their intensity – and the ability to produce new knowledge. Movements can also grow lazy, ineffective, or even cause some musculo-skeletal problems. (Feldenkrais 2010.)

In order to return to such excitement of learning, heightened knowledge-building, and fluency of movements, one can, according to the Feldenkrais method, learn away and relearn movement combinations. This is done through a series of movement disturbance, like breaking the conventional movement patterns into a set of separate movements and then combining them again. (Kampe 2019a, 11, Feldenkrais 2010, 37.) To find freedom or the unbounded fluidity of movement, one can apply the opposition to it, in terms of limits, boundaries, or other types of manipulation. This can be used through the following: first differentiating the movements, then limiting them, and finally, giving up with limitations and experiencing movements from this new, altered perspective. This can be applied to writing. (Kent 2017, 47.) Feldenkrais himself used metaphors like "composition" or "improvisation" when speaking of his assignments, and this also emphasizes the transformative quality of the practice (Kampe 2019a, 2; ref. Goldberg 1990).

Reflection with awareness is an essential part of learning through movement. It develops the body-mind connection. According to Kampe, that is why the Feldenkrais practice consists of action and reflection cycles with pauses. Additionally, the learner's curiosity is cultivated "through strategies of the setting, increasing, and taking away of problems, and

unity between thinking, sensing, feeling, and doing in interaction with the world is fostered through verbal guidance of the facilitator". (Kampe 2019b, Feldenkrais 2010, 22.) In the Feldenkrais practice, the teacher only uses oral instruction and does not show how to do the movements in the correct way. The learner needs to find their own easiest way of doing the movements and that encourages self-direction. Slow working, with ease and minimal effort especially in terms of muscular power, allows for closer observation of the quality of one's movements. Oral instructions help to focus one's attention on specific sensations and feelings connected to the movements. Moments of rest are introduced often since then one's attention is fresh at the start of each new movement sequence. (See, for example, Feldenkrais 2010, 4–7; 35—40.)

The learner is asked to make notices, and do a "mental survey" on what they experience when working (Feldenkrais 2010, 9). With the help of verbal instruction, one learns how to pay attention to the body parts detail by detail, and the purpose is not to learn of the body as such, but also to get more detailed, rigorous, and self-confident in every task that demands heightened attention (Feldenkrais 2010, 30). The mental survey requires some orientational landmarks that help one to focus, notice, and conceptualize the remarks. Otherwise, the observations may stay arbitrary, amorphous, or uncritically verbalized in a way that does not encourage learning.

In the Feldenkrais method, the mental survey allows the systematic, organized collection of subjective remarks as well as their comparison - that is the base of learning about change. A mental survey needs certain concepts or landmarks - either stable sensations or movements - that can be

used to catch the changes that may occur before and after a certain practice. Such concepts can be derived from the linearity of working ("before and after"), the vertical structure of the body ("left and right", and gravity (Feldenkrais 2010, xvii, 10, 17, 33). With them, one is able to direct their attention to their body's own sensual meaning-making system and thus avoid unnecessary borrowing from any other discourses, which perhaps is appropriate for social meaning-making but still "foreign" or carrying unnecessary interpretation in terms of embodied sensing. Additionally, the relative real and felt asymmetry of the body serves with another sense of reference point, as one can monitor changes and differences for example, between the right and left sides (Feldenkrais 2008, 43; Feldenkrais 2010,7).

According to the Feldenkrais method, this kind of working activates the new neural synapses to build up when the once-learned and thus automatized movements appear as "fresh" like recently learned new activities. The actual benefit lies in the neurological functioning of the body: each move activates the neural system, and each movement combination creates new synapses in the neural network. This encourages neuroplasticity, our organic ability to progress in all mental work (See Doidge 2007).

It may be not too far-fetched to compare this to the dynamics of the written text. The written text in general is linear, and stories consist of temporal lineage and a thematic change manifested through minor changes — like the Feldenkrais practice consists of setting, intensifying, and solving problems (see Kampe 2019b). Additionally, a traditional story creates tension between opposing parts, often personalized as protagonist and antagonist, and in the end,

there is a resolution that aims to measure the meaning of the whole (See, for example, Adsit 2017). To put it together, the embodied learning approach developed by Moshe Feldenkrais can be symbolically compared to the composing system of the written text, especially in terms of structure. Small units of observations or details are put together to consist of a new meaningful unit that did not exist before.

Additionally, this disturbance and reinvented novelty process connect not only to the text but also to the writer's craftwork. In order to be fluent and reproductive in written language, writers go through a careful, detailed study of certain crafts and techniques in order to increase their capacity on how best to communicate their preliminary ideas. Literary language demands constant reinvention. In terms of language, writers constantly try to abandon and avoid conventional expressions and metaphors, stereotypes, and clichéd narratives as part of heightened attention (Adsit 2017, 3), and this again, demands a parallel re-wiring of the language's meaning-making system.

SELF-ACTIVATION AND SELF-DIRECTION

With the embodied, aware learning process, Feldenkrais aimed to equip the "participant towards the development of the 'somatic aspects of consciousness' as a means to 'self-direction' and 'self-activation'" (Kampe 2019a, 14; Feldenkrais 2010).

Such embodied self-orientation can take part in different contexts, combined with various objectives, and participating in different discourses. While working somatically, one can

transition from educational self-study into a creative practice, where the somatic practice is not anymore merely "self-study" but also directed towards a more specific function with specific demands of material and process (Kampe 2019b). This transformative process also happens when writing with agency turns into an aesthetic object.

Therefore, Feldenkrais's Awareness within Movement approach can be creatively interpreted as a theory of self-liberation through the use of one's own body. Feldenkrais himself had a lifelong interest in unarmed self-defense and one of his core objectives was to return human dignity through his work (See Doidge 2007). Through self-activation and self-direction, the learning body can approach their perceptual and symbolical liberation (See also Kampe 2019a). "Freedom" is a concept loaded with ideologies of democracy and opposing devastating forces, and it easily loosens its emotional density if appearing measureless and in infinite spaces or is merely used in a dualistic way, in opposition with an enemy. According to the Feldenkrais approach, to practice liberation one does not need an external or outsider oppressor force, let alone one with a physical appearance (like the stories need antagonists). Instead, the body holds it all: possibilities of limitations and liberations. Layering somatic education with the artistic creation process can advise a new, ecological consciousness and connect and participate with the outsider world (Kampe 2019b). Also in creative writing, freedom of expression comes from the ability to choose from a variety of options, conscious of the fact that the possibilities and limitations for "voicing" are intertwined within one's own body.

COMBINING PRACTICES, INQUIRING RELATIONSHIPS

As an experiential and conceptual discussion, my study actually takes a form that supports the quality of writing: strongly practice-based, thus leaning on certain principles. Although many somatic methods appear mostly as embodied and enliven practices instead of being derived from ontological and theoretical assumptions and consequences within a scientific study, the question of relevance still demands some attention. There is still limited scientific data on the benefits of some "alternative" approaches, like the Feldenkrais method, in the field of medical research that holds the power to present various treatments as scientifically appropriate and evidence-based or not (Hillier & Worley 2015). The way the Feldenkrais method – in the use of body awareness, not physical therapy – works aims to strengthen those bodily sensations that are subjective and require verbal processing. The method might be more impactful as a learning paradigm rather than an actual disease treatment method (Hillier & Worley 2015). When combining two practices, like I am doing in this article, the question of relevance – at least in scientific terms – remains speculative at its best. Additionally, I consider it alluring to refer to Feldenkrais's view on learning, where he emphasizes the acts of self-learning as the targeted improvement of human activity in general.

Discussing one practice in terms of another is of course a risky road. My aim here has not been to argue the benefits of Feldenkrais method for writing improvement, although I would not be writing this if I did not consider it worth a try. More specifically, I am connecting and putting two practices into a conversation and interplay and seeing what

kind of dynamics this would bring. Experiments, at their best, may bring understanding that does not spread and occur unchangeable outside their spaces, and their value is thus context-specific. To conclude, I will shortly tie together the possible contact points of Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement method and creative writing practice, and see how the presumed suppositions and goals of Feldenkrais may have the potential to improve writers' relationship to their practice and medium.

1. Somatic practice is based on the experiential body, its perceptions, and feelings. The perspective of "first-person" is primary. The Feldenkrais method is based on the human body's biological, neural, and sensual capacities and preconditions that can be seen as species-specific, or more or less common to all humans. At the same time, the method clearly holds a critical, even liberating view of self-learning, empowerment, and agency. However, one can also note that the exercises are constructed and targeted to seemingly able bodied, neurotypical individuals³. The Feldenkrais method clearly argues that the bodily movement patterns can be changed or altered. The writer, ultimately, has no other lens to the world than their perceiving body, especially if they are not considering any outsider force or spirit guiding their work, and accordingly, they hold the option to guide their body's capacity to observe, process, create, and manifest.

2. One of the goals of this somatic practice is to develop, hone, and honor embodied perception. It is not so much a matter of improvement as such, but specification, diffusion, and trust. If a human being consists of overlapping interpre-

³ I want to thank my anonymous reviewer for this note, as well as both two reviewers for excellent comments on this manuscript.

tation processes of body, language, and mind, the writer in them aims to hold and use their capacities fully integrated within their communication. Like language skills are constantly trained through literature appreciation and analysis, also the embodied sensation capacity may require and benefit from awareness practice, tuning with care. For example, Feldenkrais's method for movement differentiation and reintegration aims to elevate the body's ability to produce sensual data from the simplest movements, and some writing assignments hold the comparable goal for breaking situations into details and thus combine more detailed descriptions. This is done by channeling one embodied practice to strengthen another.

3. The foundation of somatic practice is based on the understanding of the human being as a sensing and feeling whole. At the same time, the Feldenkrais method now appears as an example of neuroplasticity before the self-renewing capacity of the human body was even understood within modern science. Feldenkrais's view of self-learning is based on the human body's ways of developing and connecting new neural pathways through conscious practice that replicates the learning patterns in our genetic inheritance. If a writer's general aim is to study and narrate the human experience, this definitely means that the embodied understanding is a crucial part of it.

4. Somatic practice is based on human beings' embodied ability to adjust and re-orient. Moshe Feldenkrais, a physicist by training, considered learning to happen in three ways. First, the biological, species-specific body of a human being allows the development of communication, movement, and social skills. Second, the cultures and social groups define the

how: what languages are spoken, how the movement or traffic is organized, and how the relationships are maintained. Through this kind of learning, the vital conditions are maintained, but the options to learn get limited. Third, comes conscious self-learning, which is based on one's own needs and decisions to grow and change in whatever form it may take. For Feldenkrais, a devoted martial arts practitioner, this happened after a knee injury, and considering the possible risks of 1920's knee surgeries, he decided to start training and re-channeling the pain in his knee. However, the writer strives from a certain language, literature, and cultural tradition, and their aim is always to produce something new, that is not yet written, and even seek new ways of expression within language. Maybe it is not too far-reaching to note that for Feldenkrais, and for any practitioner within the arts, adopting the inherited and the social to new ways of understanding makes sense.

5. Somatic practice aims to catch and use the resources of the body without labeling them unnecessarily. For example, one of the goals of the Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement method is to find again the embodied fluency of the movement. Our everyday survival is based on our ability to perform so many skills unattended, but simultaneously, relational numbness may grow. This poses a threat to anyone who needs their embodied attention and reflection skills as well as creativity and sensual flexibility. The possible stiffening of the embodied sensation ability means survival when a notable threat is faced, and sometimes, it also appears as a threat itself. Through somatic practice, one can reconnect with those "layers" of the body that hold yet unexamined or unverbilized experiences. This kind of work connects to the

use of somatics in individual therapeutic practices, but it may also have relevance to writing. Sometimes the experiences of pain and suffering, suppression, and various forms of violence or self-reduction run in the families or social groups, spreading in spatial or temporal levels. The somatic practice connected to writing can also aim to unleash and rebuild such embodied packings. For example, many writers working within colonial and postcolonial contexts tend to write about rootedness and connectedness, both in genetic and spiritual, and territorial aspects, as well as ancestral experiences and guiding belief systems. As the Feldenkrais method emphasizes self-learning, writing in so many contexts and uses means a relatable "liberation" of embodied individual and social meaning-making (See Kampe 2019a). Additionally, it also refers to the widely used contents and structures of stories: so often stories consist of the conflict between the individual and their social or material context and thus push the aims of the protagonist towards some kind of liberation.

This is a newly edited version of the original article (published in May 2022). Some references have been added and some chapters are revised.

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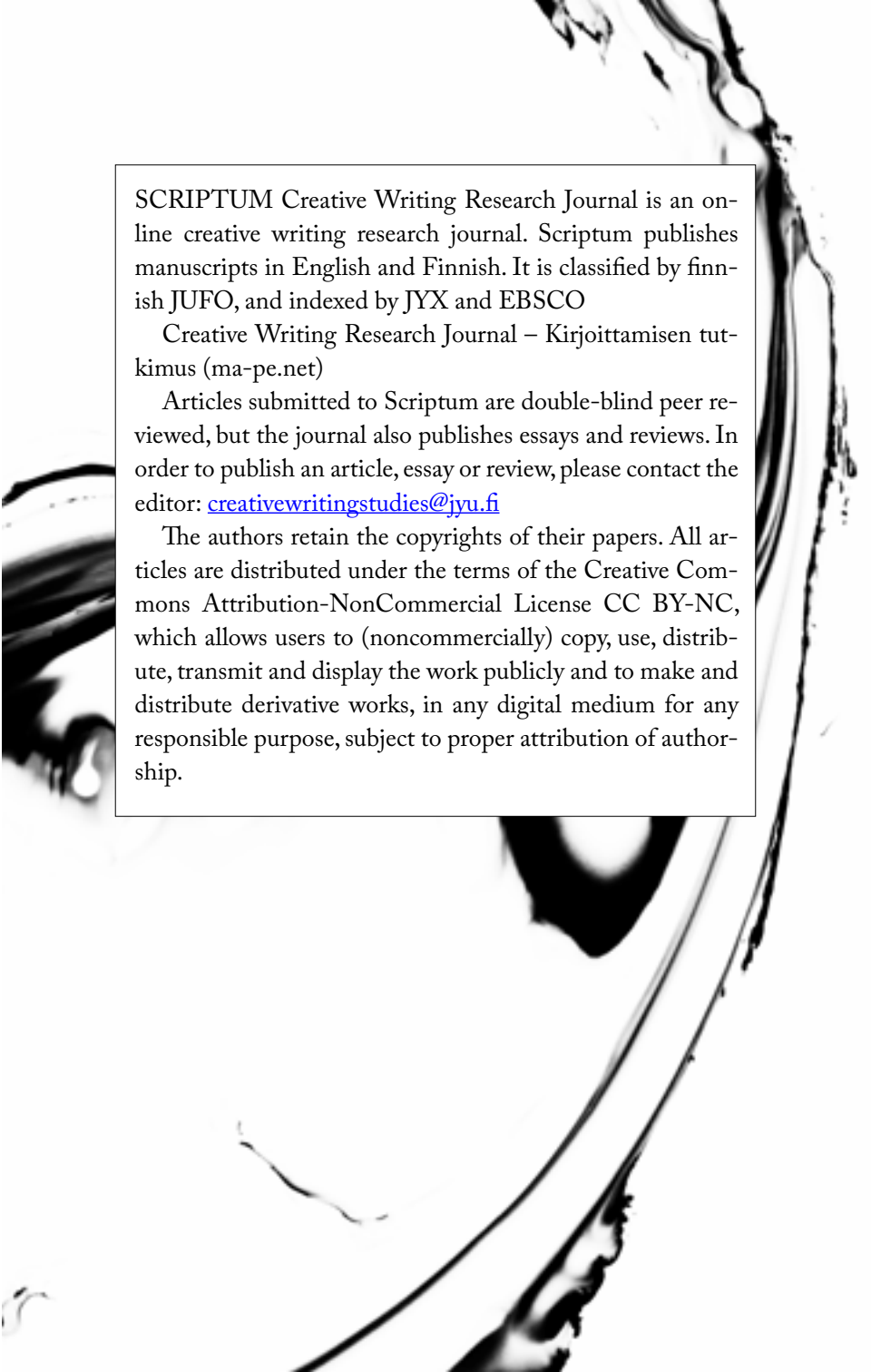
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