

# OPPONENT'S ASSESSMENT OF A WRITTEN DISSERTATION

**Dissertation title:** The Recontextualization of Visual Elements in Dance Narrative

**Dissertation author:** Ji Eun Lee

**Programme of study:** Choreography and Theory of Choreography

**Programme type:** doctoral

## **Definition of objectives and their fulfilment:**

The objective of the dissertation was to provide a new understanding of dance narratives by focusing on the role of visual elements, semiotics, and the choreographer's agency in meaning-making. The research aimed to broaden traditional approaches to dance analysis as well as the possibilities for creating and interpreting dance works.

The work identified 4 objectives:

1) To Redefine Dance Narrative through Visual Semiotics. It proposes an approach of understanding dance narratives by incorporating visual elements and semiotics in order to create more poetic, identifiable, and sensible ways of visualizing meaning and metaphoric triggers within dance works.

2) To Explore the Choreographer's Role in Meaning-Making. The study investigates how choreographers can utilize various visual elements to create and differentiate meanings at different stages of the composition. It focuses on the process of "recontextualization," where movements and objects are used to form metaphoric expressions and visualize layers of meaning.

3) To Apply Theoretical Frameworks drawing on theories from Janet Adshead-Lansdale and Mieke Bal to analyze and understand the narrative structures. These theoretical perspectives and selected parameters provided a framework for exploring the creation processes across 16 stages.

4) To Challenge Notions of Choreography and create new choreographic methods and understanding dance narratives from different perspectives. It emphasizes the choreographer's role in meaning-making. The text mentions the increasing complexity of dance in poststructuralist contexts, which transitioned from perceiving narratives as fixed, concrete entities, to understanding that narratives are products of narratological construction, and subject to interpretation in a nearly infinite variety of manners. Intertextuality that is at play entails a dialectical relationship with the receiver of the work.

**Topicality of the dissertation topic and relevance of the selected methodology:**

The dissertation is anchored in concepts and terminology of poststructuralist concepts from late 20th and early 21st century dance studies and performance research, including the role of the spectator/reader/choreographer in shaping meaning. It emphasizes the significance of these concepts for understanding and creating dance performances. The dissertation presents methods and processes for choreographers to explore visual semiotics as both an informative sign and a metaphoric trigger in developing interpretation. It offers possibilities for choreographers to deepen their understanding of the intertextual nature of dance and create more complex and meaningful narratives.

Throughout the reading, a recurring question was the rationale behind the methodological framework employed in this dissertation. While arguments were provided for the conceptual framework, methodology, and choreographic and compositional decisions, the underlying motivations for these choices remained unclear to the reader.

**Scholarly contribution, originality of the dissertation, and its utilisation in practice:**

This dissertation represents a pioneering effort in the field of dance studies at HAMU. As the first one in English supervised by a practitioner, it adopts an approach close to practice-based research, focusing on the practical aspects of choreographic creation. This sets it apart from previous dissertations. The dissertation demonstrates an ambition to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and their practical application. By exploring semiotics, intertextuality, and recontextualization, and developing methods for articulating an intertextual interpretive approach, the research offers possibilities for choreographic creation and narrative development. The work has the potential to inspire the field of dance studies and approaches to choreographic practice.

**Logical construction and structuring of the dissertation:**

The dissertation covers a range of relevant topics, there are some minor questions regarding its logical construction and structuring. The dissertation has a clear focus on semiotics, intertextuality, and the construction of dance narratives. The topics covered, such as choreographic composition and recontextualization, are directly related to the research objectives. The structure of the thesis is introduced later, which can make it difficult for readers to understand the overall organization and flow of the argument.

The clarity in annexes: The charts from Janet Adshead-Lansdale, while helpful, ask for deeper clarification and context. The sketches from the choreographic process also seem ambiguous, with the question of whether they are visual semiotics or merely documentation remaining unanswered.

**Formal requirements and requisite contents of the dissertation, including its length:**

The work meets the criteria of standard sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, results and conclusion. The dissertation presents a defined research question that guides the entire investigation. It provides a literature review that summarises existing research on the topic. The dissertation details a methodology, including research design and analysis techniques. The dissertation presents the findings of the research. It concludes by summarising the findings, discussing their implications.

**Work with information sources:**

The work acknowledges the contributions of Janet Adshead-Lansdale and Mieke Bal, it might benefit from a more comprehensive exploration of literature to establish the context of the research and demonstrate the author's familiarity with the field. The theoretical section introduces various names and concepts without providing sufficient context or depth, making it difficult to fully understand their relevance to the research objectives. Delving into the specific ideas and arguments presented by these authors and explain how they relate to the research might help the reader and fellow researcher to gain a deeper understanding of key sources. Exploring different theoretical approaches or contrasting viewpoints could potentially enrich the discussion and provide a more nuanced understanding of the topic.

**Level of language and terminology:**

While the language is generally clear, there are a few sections where the argument and flow of thoughts are somewhat difficult to follow. The terminology used seems appropriate for the intended audience.

**Evaluator's overall summary:**

This dissertation is a valuable and inspiring exploration of the choreographic process, drawing from the concepts, theories, and methodologies of semiotics, intertextuality, and the work of Janet Adshead-Lansdale and Mieke Bal, authors the dance scene, especially practitioners might be less familiar with.

From the perspective of my dance practice as maker, it continues the line of work and thought that in the Czech dance context has consistently been presented by Jean Christophe Paré elaborating on the choreographic process. Paré's research is grounded in more than 4 decades of experience as a professional performer, having worked for renowned choreographers, as an inspector for the Ministry of Culture, as the director of two major conservatories in France, and as an artistic coach for young choreographers. His approach and methodology are grounded in studies of semiotics,

textuality, intertextuality, and the processes of writing and composing choreography. It proposes tools and concepts for creation exploring the choreographic process from initial material through micro-compositions and the application of choreographic games to macro-composition.

The theoretical section frequently introduced various names and concepts. I was curious about a more thorough definition and exploration of them as well as about the extent to which these concepts influenced the choreographic decision-making process.

In the practical section of the choreographic analysis I wondered how much the concept of "the text looking at us" was considered in this research. Did the choreographer shape the work, or did the work shape the choreographer's perspective and inform her choices?

**Questions and topics for discussion at the oral defence:**

What were the reasons for selecting or the choice of the following was informed by what?

- Janet Adshead-Lansdale's concept and, in particular, Stages 2 and 3
- the three concepts for interpretation—quality, character, and meaning—was informed by [Provide specific reasons, such as their comprehensiveness, their applicability to the research, or their connection to other theoretical frameworks].
- the three metaphors from Mieke Bal's six metaphoric functions?

To which extent the stated concepts influenced the choreographic decision-making process?

Provide specific examples of how the frameworks informed decisions about movement, composition, or narrative.

Provide (specific) reasons for the decision to focus on selected movements, objects, and physical parameters in the practical works.

How much the concept of "the text looking at us" was considered in this research?

**Recommendation of the dissertation for the oral defence:** yes

**Date of elaboration of this assessment:** August 22 2024

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Name of the dissertation  
opponent

August 22 2024

