

Abstract

This thesis investigates somatic movement and puppetry as tandem practices. It draws particularly on the somatic education approach of Moshe Feldenkrais, originator of the Feldenkrais Method (FM) and its two modalities; verbally guided Awareness Through Movement and hands-on Functional Integration lessons. I pinpoint self-image in FM, which relates to a person's kinaesthetic awareness of herself as she acts, as a key concept for theorizing puppetry, reframing it as person-image to avoid some of the theoretical pitfalls of 'self'. I re-examine the idea of body-image in Paul Schilder, Feldenkrais's source, and identify the importance of his work for critical thinking on person-image and performance. Relating person-image to the trainings and writings of Jacques Lecoq, Dennis Silk and Heinrich Von Kleist, I analyse the ways in which it can include objects, puppets and materials and propose a new practice, Awareness Through Puppetry, which goes beyond an application of FM in puppetry training. I apply the fresh understanding of person-image I have developed to specific performances by Pierre Tual, Ilka Schönbein and Xavier Le Roy. Throughout the thesis I refer to Tim Ingold's concept of the 'meshwork', weaving lines in, out and around my practice and thinking, connecting them to critical thinking more broadly in performance studies and beyond.

My contributions to knowledge in this thesis are an assessment of Schilder and Feldenkrais's work applied to somatic performance practice in puppetry, which I understand as an approach as much as an outcome, leading to the practice of Awareness Through Puppetry, and a fresh approach to performance analysis through the lens of person-image. I situate the thesis in a

broad ecological context where puppetry has a new subversive role as a somatic technology through which it is possible to discover something about what it is to be human and nonhuman, and how these interact.