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Melrose, Susan (2017) Expert-intuitive and deliberative processes: struggles in (the wording of) creative decision-making in 'dance'. In: Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader, 2nd Edition. Butterworth, Jo and Wildschut, Liesbeth, eds. Routledge, London & NY, pp. 25-40. ISBN 9781138679979, pbk-ISBN 9781138679986, e-ISBN 9781315563596. [Book Section] (doi:10.4324/9781315563596-4)

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Expert-intuitive and deliberative processes: Struggles in (the wording of) creative decision-making in 'dance'

Susan F Melrose

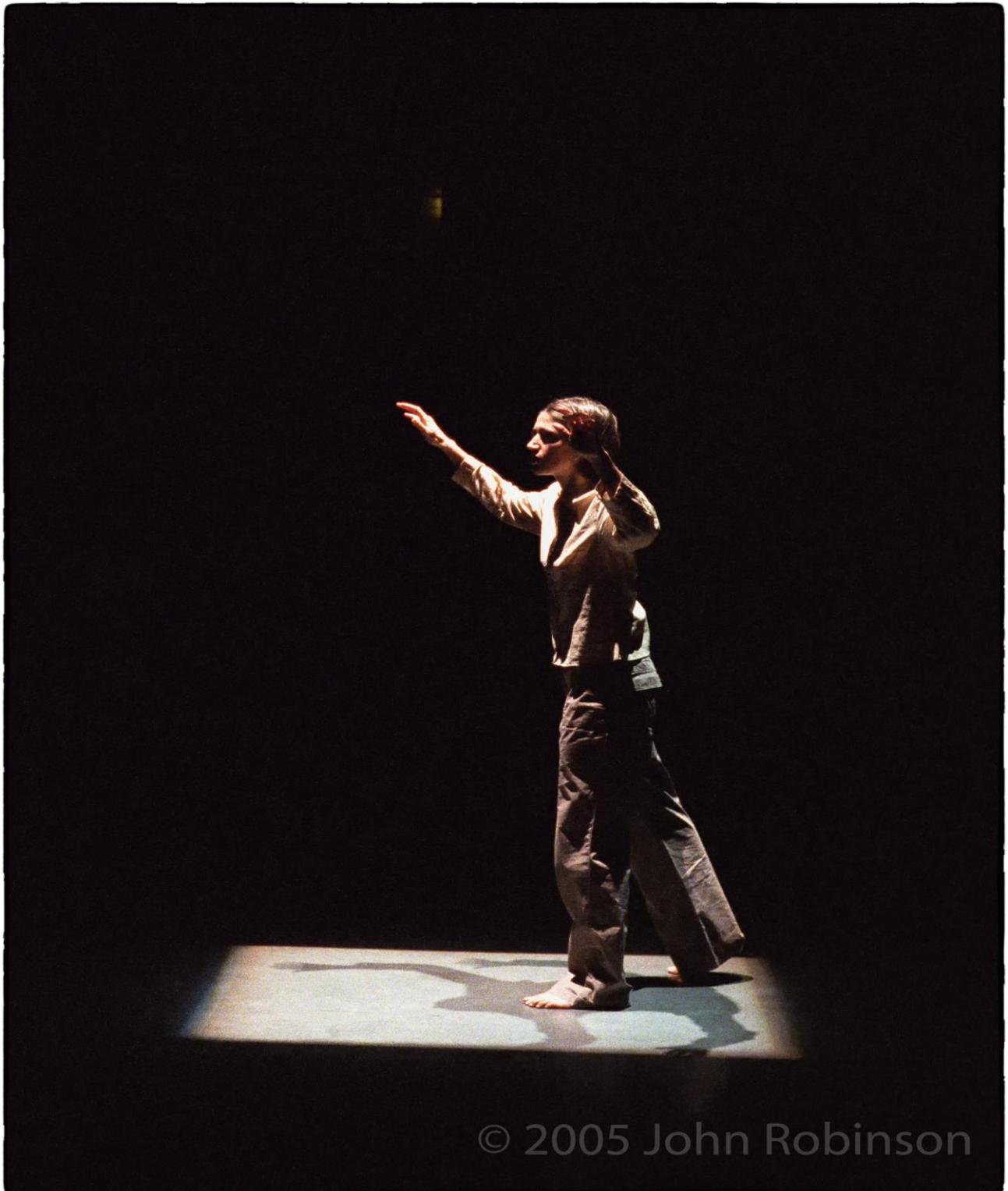
For Rosemary Butcher 1947-2016

I want to start with a confession: I want to write '*about* dance' – almost as though, firstly, you and I were already in agreement as to what the latter means, or might mean; and secondly, as though I *can* 'write about dance', even if it remains the case that my 'dance writing' can only be produced from my position as expert spectator, and on the basis of the relation to 'dance' that this spectating allows. *Spectating*, almost by definition, does transform 'dance' into *spectacle*, by which I mean into an aspect of the wider, ubiquitous, pleasurable and very persuasive visual economy. Perhaps I should only write, on the basis of this limitation of mine, 'about *watching* dance', where this shift in words would, at the very least, put me in my place: I am *not-a-performer*, at least as far as expertise in the performance disciplines is concerned, and I am *not-a-choreographer*. What am I doing here? (The first answer, of course, is *writing*.)

Dance as difference

Given my limitations as expert-spectator and writer, even as I sat next to Rosemary Butcher in 2004, *watching dance*, at The Place, in London – as I have done a number of times over recent years – it is absolutely clear to me that *how I watch*, *what I see*, and *what I make of it*, differ from Butcher's own ways of watching, ways of seeing and experience of 'the work'. I have become aware, for example, while watching Rosemary Butcher watching 'dance', that whereas I can 'see dance' almost as though it were projected on a screen, Rosemary Butcher, sitting in The Place beside me, also 'saw

dance' multi-dimensionally, as decisions-taken and others lost, and through the lens specific to expert-practitioner performance-making.



Photographic 1: Elena Giannotti in Butcher's *Woman and Memory* at the Tate Modern (2005).

Butcher saw – and she was not alone in this – what was going on in those parts of ‘dance’ that my gaze fails to reach. She saw expertly. (I did not, except inasmuch as I am an expert-spectator.) The formulation ‘what was going on’ is easy to write but resists easy articulation in terms specific to choreographic expertise. Butcher saw at least three times over, on the dancer’s behalf and that of other collaborators, as well as her own, and on behalf of an imagined onlooker. She saw the outcome of complex decisions made and opportunities lost; she saw what would come, in the moment before it arrives, and she tested what she saw and didn’t see, in terms of an expert memory of ‘dance’ that stretched back, in terms of lived experience, to the 1970s and forward to the next pieces of work to be made: Rosemary Butcher continued to make new work in the months prior to her death, work that others qualified as challenging. In contrast with my spectating, Butcher saw *the other side of the dancer at work*, while I can only see the side I actually see. In the most banal and axiomatic of research terms, then, ‘dance’, to the trained dancer and the experienced choreographer, is ‘*nothing like*’ – or ‘non-identical with’ (Knorr Cetina 2001: 175-88) – the ‘dance’ that an expert spectator, reader, educator and critic sees and appraises in terms of her or his own experience. And ‘the dancer’, of course, *can’t see even what I see*, which means that ‘*the same dance*’ is once again, in terms of the range of participants in it, *unlike*, or non-identical with itself: it is already multi-perspectival, and it is already internally differentiated and those differences tend to remain heterogeneous.

Let’s assume, for the moment, nonetheless, that we are, to some limited extent at least, sufficiently in agreement as to the meaning of ‘dance’, to enable us to use words to write and read about it here. Let’s set aside, for the moment, the contentious issue of the authority upon which researcher-writers might ‘word’, or name, or account for a complex system – or rather, systems – that operates, for the most part, *outside of language*, and within a cultural ‘assemblage’¹ that has a strong degree of agency in its creation as well as its use by and pleasure for others. Operating in the main outside of language, and despite the appeal to some writers of linguistic metaphor, ‘dance’, as system, is neither ‘structured like a language’,² nor is it either ‘textual’ or ‘non-textual’ (the latter a

negative definition); 'dance' is neither 'text-like', nor 'un-like'. Its measure is taken from 'dance' and from other performance modes, not from the linguistic/discursive.

Dance as expert practices

In the simplest of terms, then, the noun 'dance' always represents more, and other, than it might seem to stand for: not only an art form, dance made expertly is *work* that brings together a number of different instances of expert practice, entailing a range of different modes of engagement and decision-making. When it is expertly made, it tends to bring together the input of a number of expert practitioners – such as, in the European tradition, 'dancer', 'choreographer', sound designer, lighting designer. As an array of practices operating outside of writing (if not outside language-in-use by practitioners), 'dance' tends, inasmuch as it operates effectively in the wider arts communities, to be signature-marked, by which I mean that the name of the choreographer – and sometimes that of one or more dancers/composers/lighting designers/film-makers involved – assumes the status of symbolic capital³ and its articulation tends to serve as a token of cultural exchange: that name figures, one might say, in the models of intelligibility (or ways of seeing and understanding) specific to its practices. 'Rosemary Butcher' means, in the context of dance making, much more than it says; it names a considerable body of work, in shorthand, and in this sense, the name is a shorthand marker of a professional dance signature – or 'signature practice'.

'Dance' tends, on this sort of basis, and in the wider arts communities, to be *impressed with* the name/s of the expert practitioners involved, tends to be 'marked by' something (some 'things') associated with the name of an artist. I write these words with recent experience of Rosemary Butcher's 'dance' production processes in mind, and against the backdrop of my long-established concern with the ways expert arts-making practices are approached in the university. Is Rosemary Butcher's recent work onstage and film 'dance', 'dance on film', or 'dance on screen'? And if – in your view – it is 'not dance', how is it that so many of those who contemplate it do so through the lens and within the frameworks which apply to the dance and dance-related professions, in the wider arts communities?

Dance as/and disciplinary practices

On the precarious basis of an assumed degree of agreement about meaning-potential of uses of the noun and verb 'dance', and my place (as word-maker) in or with regard to it, I argue that 'dance' – whether or not one likes this notion – is a discipline-specific complex practice or complex system of practices, characterised by expert practices and mastery, whose histories are rich and complex; they are relatively stabilised, in terms of the systems specific to the discipline, as well as repeatedly destabilised, from within. In short, 'dance' is a stabilised self-destabilising system, located within a cultural 'assemblage' that has a strong degree of cultural agency: open to internal transformation, from within; dance-makers select – explicitly or implicitly – a certain number of discipline-specific or related options with which they play; whereas spectators bring modes of engagement that seem to me – if we read Dance writing – to fall within a finite range of possibilities that are themselves culturally modulated. In the case above, Rosemary Butcher's recent *work* (the dance event or the film), and her ways of working, are consistently calculated upon the input of a highly trained dancer. That work is, similarly, consistently informed by and attentive to dance production values that accrue to professional practice, as well as 'new (dance) work', viewed from the perspectives of the wider arts communities: these are manifested in judgements of taste and value made by all involved. When Rosemary Butcher's *Hidden Voices*, with dancer Elena Giannotti, reached the finals of The Place Prize in 2004,⁴ none who admitted that they found it challenging, or not to their taste, are likely to have claimed with much conviction that it should not have been presented in the context of 'dance', at a major London dance institution. The Place, at least, recognised, and thereafter articulated, its place and function within the discipline.

Dance and the institution/al

What I want to entertain at this point is the possibility that, for some members of the audience at least,⁵ Rosemary Butcher's *Hidden Voices* works (or fails to, for some audience members) in significant part because Butcher stages an expert dancer, in a pool or pools of light,⁶ at The Place,

London – that is, an established venue that is widely recognised within the institutions of dance in London. On the basis of that institutional set-up, it is likely to be a 'dance audience' that attends and in which terms the work is evaluated. In other words, set-up itself, and in this context a 'dance set-up', within a greater 'assemblage' of cultural institutions and forces, is far from inert, and has agency when it comes to the ways the work is interpreted. It did initially seem to me, when we together saw *Hidden Voices*, that the pool of light constrained the dancer, requiring of her that she refrain from 'dancing' as such, while the work that emerged consistently bore the impress of Butcher's signature: a pattern, for the non-initiated, that might seem to smack of choreographic over-determination; but Giannotti's stance was upright, her face vivid and her gestuality apparently her own, rather than constrained. Butcher has since described the work they were making together as an interior journey, in what I take to be a meditative sense, rather than a simple invention bearing her name; it was already clear in the developmental stages that the dancer also played a determining role.⁷

Dance and the dancer

The notion of the dancer as creative artist collaborating with the choreographer, to make a work that will bear the latter's name rather than her own seems to me to have a certain delicacy to it, that we might need to unpick. Plainly Giannotti's work, as a trained dancer, is both her own and it locates itself within a dance tradition that includes a recognisable repertoire and history, and equally it has a more general currency; her bodywork as well as her ways of being in the world – her sensibility as artist – are able to be measured against a 'dance' that is itself understood in relatively conservative terms, and yet are singular in terms of Butcher's choice to work repeatedly with her. While I might effortlessly view 'the dancer', in my mind's eye, when invited or required to, in terms that are relatively banal, it is plain in the case of the dance artists with whom Butcher has chosen, over the years, to work, bring a particular sensibility to the task. Their expertise and their artistry go beyond a relatively banal choreographic/dancerly set-up, and the emerging work, despite its rarely bearing dancer-artists' names, remains their work.

Let's acknowledge this: Butcher's restless pursuit of 'new work' tends to be measured, even by its most radical commentators, against a notion of 'dance' that remains relatively conservative, yet her ways of working with other artists were, to my eye, singular, and produced, on the basis of her dancers' active contribution, a work of multi-participant and heterogeneous artistry that we are sometimes in danger of overlooking. The discipline of dance remains central to that work, however, not least when it seems to have been challenged. Hence 'dance' in the case of *Hidden Voices*, is irresistibly present, the more so at precisely those moments when one or another 'dance spectator' complains about its absence.

Dance remains present but *under deconstruction*, as some of us in the university might have written in the last decades of the twentieth century: 'dance', retained and relatively abstract as far as some of us are concerned, is brought by all of us who participate, even in the event that proclaims its own radicalism, and it hangs around that event in the ether. Is the term 'the ether' an obfuscatory rather than a helpful metaphor? Even if it is, I use it here to signal that in certain set-ups (such as The Place, London), 'dance' is in the air, it is architecturally attended to; it is always present and in mind, as well as expected to reveal the new – even in the case of Butcher's work with Giannotti.

Dance as multiplicity

What then, is 'dance'? It seems, to me at least, to be relatively abstract, yet formal, discipline-specific, stabilised, multidimensional, and both embodied and present to mind – yet it is differently present to Butcher's mind, and to my own, and different again for the dancer/s involved. 'Dance' is similarly present and absent in the hazy movement of the performer in Butcher's film *Vanishing Point* (with film-maker Martin Otter) *Vanishing Point*⁶ (with film-maker Martin Otter, 2005) when it is viewed: it is retained, by spectators of dance, as a whole range of well-established, discipline-specific relationships and judgements of taste and value – all apparently insubstantial but determinant, which is why I represent them, metaphorically, in terms of *ether*. It's *in the air*, yet inconsistently so, always needing to be made again, and its strength is dependent upon the degree

of your own experience, expertise and place in it. Some places breathe dance in and out, and thereby cause some of us to try and to fail to name *what is going on*.

'Dance', is a discipline-specific performance mode, and its makers strive for expertise and mastery. It is constitutively relational, by which I mean that its significance depends upon a high degree of ratification by audiences, however much practitioners might claim not to take these into account. Expertise more generally is relationally-determined and ratified: I cannot claim it to myself, but rely on others' acknowledgement – especially the acknowledgement of my peers. What this means is that expertise is time-sensitive, as well as relational: I cannot own my own expertise – it requires other specialists' ongoing or renewed agreement as well as a degree of negotiation. Perhaps we don't acknowledge this enough, in research terms. Expertise is a symbolic currency that few of us, in traditional research contexts, have sought to acknowledge but our failure to do so damages the ways we talk and write about expert practices. Expertise in the fields of creative practices seems widely to be taken for granted by those who write about them, rather than enquired into, yet any pedagogic practice aims, explicitly or not, at identifying the potential for and enabling the gradual acquisition of mastery.

Re-presenting dance as expert-creative decision-making processes

The relationality of dance in performance terms means that any attempt to account for 'dance', needs to be diagrammatic, multidimensional, in at least two places at once, rather than conventionally writerly; and 'dance' is regulated by a pulse, that writing cannot capture. Butcher's entry into the space of making and performance is already-energised, rhythmic; the place of dance is already marked out by virtual action. Butcher has always imagined the place of her spectator in any performance-making decision she makes: action is oriented to an empty space of spectating. Implicitly, she takes a spectator's ability to concentrate into account, as well as what she takes to be their wants – of 'dance', and of what for her is *'my new work'* – and interests. Her smallest decision tends to challenge an onlooker, precisely because of that onlooker's expectations of 'dance'; it can only challenge inasmuch as both maker and spectator have a notion of what 'dance' entails –

something that might surprise her most challenged spectators. But in the making, her lucid concern is artistry and how she might make it emerge through her work with the expert dancer, and with one or two other performance professionals.

Butcher's 'impress', into that space, is dynamic, energised, precise as well as dispersed, rather than identifiable in any one area. How to 'write impress', in research terms, if I cannot even seem to locate it precisely 'in the work'? A metaphor like 'cartography', and a concern with what many performance writers call 'the body', pleasing as these may be to some writers and indeed to some artists, fail to allow us firstly to work with a relationality that is multidimensional and invested with energies that include those particular to the singular, disciplinary input of a number of expert practitioners; they fail to allow us, secondly, to work with the artistry of the named, potentially singular, skilled dancer or performer. Plainly her or his artistry includes corporeality, but that physicality needs to be linked to a name – for example Giannotti – to particular ways of working inventively, and to her or his highly significant role in the visual aesthetic.

Sensibility, singularity and signature in dance-making

To my eye, the term 'the body', however ideologically motivated its use was in early Dance Studies, serves now to reduce a named artist's work – for example, that of Darcy Bussell – to an anonymous marker of physicality. In place of a metaphoric map, or a reductive term like 'the body', I prefer to use the terms 'signature' and singularity, to represent the work of a particular dance artist and to attempt to deal with the relational (and mutual) impress of choreographic choices and dancer expert input. The expert practitioner-performer is underrepresented in what I have written above, but it is the highly trained and/or expert dancer, in Butcher's collaborations with her or him, whose work – bodywork, if you prefer, although the term is limiting – contributes so significantly to Butcher's invention. Butcher looked, in my experience of her most recent choices, for the person in the expert performer, and for what I have called, without the means here to unpack the terms, artistic sensibility and affinity.

Signature and sensibility are identifiable, 'in the work', as singular, a mark of intellectual property and aesthetic ownership to which a name is given; but it is also a matter of dispersed and heterogeneous particles, rallied by and impressed into, and partly transformed, and it is these transformed particles that, in significant part, constitute 'the work', or rather 'the dance work'.

In pragmatic terms, Butcher was a dance practitioner who impressed her mark, recognisably, into both the larger lines and the detail of the work, and in intellectual property terms, she legally owned that impress; it resonated with her name, despite the fact that it almost certainly included within it those heterogeneous particles provided by other expert practitioners who had agreed to work with her, and whose input catalysed and was catalysed by her own. Now, different particles of what I call 'signature work' might well be copied by others, but not in such a way as to bear her (endlessly renewed) signature: one cannot 'copy' the input brought to Butcher by a chosen expert dancer, which, in that particular relationship, qualitatively transforms that dancer's own way of working and that dancer-artist, too, 'gives back'. So while the attempt to copy Butcher's written signature would have legal implications, her dance signature cannot be effectively extracted from the work; on the other hand, attempts to reproduce Butcher's stylistic choices have taken their place in Dance Studies programmes internationally, over a matter of decades.

Diagrammaticity, rhythmicity in dance-making

Perhaps the impress of a particulate (or multi-particle, dispersed) signature is best identified in terms of a diagrammaticity and rhythmicity (Deleuze 2003) that resonates with the name of the artist, and that seems to continue to exist without her: her impress remains on 'her' collaborators. That impress is likely to be multi-dimensional, hence it sits uncomfortably – as you can see here – in words, whether in research writing, in expert-spectator interpretations or in journalists' renderings. In diagrammatical terms, Butcher marks out her choreographic space virtually – that is, before she brings to it the artistry of the dancer herself. This diagrammaticity is multi-dimensional, in contrast with – for example – the work of the painter Francis Bacon, who, in Deleuze's account, positions himself before the canvas and its support, and may literally impress the canvas with diagrammatic

strokes. The rhythmicity of the space – in a gallery or a more conventional dance venue – is a pulse; it is allied to the actual or imaginative entry of the choreographer into the space. The diagrammatic and the rhythmicity of the expert practitioner together enter the space *with* the choreographer. I would like to add that dance-making spaces anticipate the entry of the artist, and can seem to be marked out already by the bodily presence and for the gaze of the choreographer: this is a virtual space, overlaid on a material one. Butcher's experienced dancers knew already where she was likely to position them, and sometimes, to what end. The space already pulses: it anticipates a virtual rhythmic movement with which Butcher begins to work. 'Dance' is already present, and it might be useful to think of the dance space, from this perspective, as one element in an assemblage that brings together heterogeneous entities and particles in advance of the entry of the choreographer. A signature rhythmicity – see for example its material realisation in Butcher's *Vanishing Point* – and its pulse predispose the specific choices in the work of the practitioners who enter the field of play. But predisposition, despite its powers of persuasion, does not overrule invention.

On these sorts of bases, dance signature cannot be 'read' (all that really obtains thereby is the artist's name and/or the spectator's own identity); nor can it easily be accounted for in research terms, since any narrative constructed around it requires the writer's own inventive intervention, and tends, then, to be constructed in that writer's own image. Its outcome can, however – and here lies the paradox – be recognised, even when the work is 'new'. I would argue that its paradoxical nature is such that 'we' might need to draw on a theoretic (or theoretical practice) of choreographic multi-dimensional composition, collaboration, and catalysis, if we are even to begin to grasp (at) it *in words*. To do so requires that researchers work inventively with the creative decision-makers, before, during, and after her or his work in the studio or workshop. Such a researcher intervention can be intrusive, however, invasive, sometimes bruising. It can also seem slow, tiring, and – perhaps more importantly – mystifying to the extent that the expert-intuitive processes are not available to external observation. To the extent that 'we' have not written about the vital role of the expert-intuitive in creative decision-making, researchers tend not even to look for it, to underestimate it if they note it, or to approach it as insignificant.

Discipline, once again

The notion of 'discipline' – and of mastery, and of expertise, and of the arts professions - has itself tended to receive a consistently bad press over the past few decades in published writing in Performance Studies⁹ – hence the crucial link with my concern with ways of *wording* 'things', *in* the university, when those 'things' are specific to arts practices, as these are practised *outside* the university. It might be worth observing here that the ways arts practices are worded, in the university 'economy', are themselves contingent upon the 'ways of seeing' (Berger 1972) and models of intelligibility (e.g. 'cutting-edge work'; 'liminal practices') that are dominant within that university economy. In these sorts of terms, the inter-, post- and anti-disciplinary have been preferred to the notions of discipline and disciplinary specificity in performance-making throughout the university culture, over a number of decades, perhaps because practices in the realm of the 'inter-', the 'post-' and the 'anti-' are less difficult to resource in the university (as distinct from a specialist provider in the higher education sector) and tend to 'fit' with certain generations of academics' self-image.

Iconoclasts who reject the term 'discipline', in Performance Studies writing at least, seem to associate discipline with what they take to be a conservative power structure imposed and 'measured' from above, entailing discipleship (hence obedience to a master), and subscribing to conservative value systems, associated with one or another elite. My own observation is that disciplinary mastery – as well as notions of singularity and signature practices – does entail exceptional skills, but no more so than those specific to leaders in any professional field. My colleagues and I salute the exceptional, whenever we pay to see the work of Pina Bausch or Robert Wilson, Fiona Shaw, Darcy Bussell, Siobhan Davies, Lucinda Childs or, indeed, Laurie Anderson: the mastery of the complex codes and the challenges specific to professional creativity are developed and engaged with by relatively few of us. Some of us recognise their names but equally some do not. In the university system, sadly, the pursuit of mastery is less sustainable than programmes with wider access and fewer weekly contact hours at undergraduate level.

The reasons for a tendency to dismiss discipline and its implications are complex and relate to a wider post-WWII radicalism but I would argue that in spite of that radicalism of artists the work staged still required mastery. Forced Entertainment's Tim Etchells and the performers themselves¹⁰ are internationally-recognised professional artists rather than lifelong revolutionaries (or perhaps they are both). DV8¹¹ still depended on virtuosic dance and choreography, as *Enter Achilles*¹² demonstrated. The 'interdisciplinarity' of university programmes places its emphasis, admirably, on blurred boundaries, on liminality, on merging and hybridity, on difference and inclusivity, rather than the exclusivity and perceived elitism of master practitioners but I would still argue that disciplinary mastery is required in companies and artists whose work survives, and the university focus on Interdisciplinarity is hardly sought in the wider arts communities.

Professional mastery and the role of the intuitive

Academic researchers into the arts have only recently begun to explore how we might theorise the development of mastery and the role of the intuitive in creative decision-making. How these are acquired, how they might be developed and taught, and how they might be understood are questions posed more often in Psychology, Education and Professional Studies¹³ than in research into the Performing Arts themselves. A rare exception is provided by the work of Music research team led by Daniel Bangert¹⁴ whose recent publications are concerned with the usefulness of 'dual process theories of cognition' in an attempt to identify the place of expert-intuitive processes (these are expert, and as such they involve insights into the creative process that are already informed by experience in decision-making in performance), and deliberative processes (these bring production logics to bear on intuitive 'stuff'; they are likely to include, for example, performance-technical and discipline-specific aspects of the making, structuration, aesthetic and thematic consistency), in the development of expertise in music performance.

Despite this new surge of interest the continuing paucity of research enquiry into expertise and its development in the Performing Arts themselves means that many of us in the university continue to misrecognise the expertise and associated 'production values' (or the clear potential for

the same, in the academy) that always inhere in 'great work', whether that work is submitted for evaluation in the higher degree context or enjoyed in and by the wider arts communities. Until we begin to identify and theorise the role of disciplinary mastery as such, in Dance Studies writing, we will continue to be unable to understand creative decision-making in the work of any of the notorious expert practitioners whose dance pieces tend to be cited in dance programmes across higher education institutions.

The Invisibility of the expert-intuitive (to the eye of the spectator/researcher)

The operation of the expert-intuitive and the deliberative in dance-making is central to the making processes (as it is, differently, to other creative disciplines),¹⁵ yet importantly in research terms, these constitutive processes tend to be unavailable *as such* to the expert spectator whose own engagement with 'dance' tends to take product or outcome – 'the performance event', within which she can plainly take her place – as her primary focus. That is understandable, but that does not mean that as researchers we can set aside the vital 'knowledge project' of creative artists at work. On the contrary. Nor should we observe that as researchers we cannot enquire into expert collaborations and the catalytic effect attendant upon these,¹⁶ simply because so few of these processes are available to spectating. We do need, however, to cease to imagine that 'the work' that emerges in the performance event is identical with the work of the creative artists involved in the making. Some of us might want to plead spectators' rights, and celebrate our own input, but let's not imagine that what expert spectators are concerned with is expert creative decision-making.

As I have suggested above, however, it might be useful to include spectating within any account of the 'assemblage' of heterogeneous factors and functions that initiate as well as work upon choreographic choices and dance choices even at that moment when makers feel that they are testing aesthetic and other boundaries: we might need, today, too also include what are called 'dual process theories of cognition' (respectively the expert-intuitive and the deliberative) in any research account of 'dance-making' and of dance pedagogy. Although 'assemblage' is not an unproblematic notion, not least because of its abstraction, it does allow us to focus on the expert-intuitive and

deliberative processes that I am arguing operate systematically in creative decision-making in dance. Equally important is a consideration of judgement, in dance-making and dance pedagogy.

There is a notion of the “machinic” in uses of the term assemblage: ‘dance’, in all its complexity, includes a generative function, engendering certain sorts and modes of cultural activity. Our shared engagement with dance operates productively – it makes ‘us’ do certain sorts of things and not others; it encourages certain sorts of judgements (of taste and value) that we are bound-in to, and it is internally self-destabilising as well as recuperative. Dance-making enjoys modes of practice in which makers of all kinds participate, but it is difficult for any of us, at any particular moment, to identify where dance resides, and who (or what) engenders it. Dance ‘things’ are made in certain ways, and ways of knowing dance accrue, such that dance appears to transcend the individual actions and intentionality of a particular human Actor (in the grammatical sense) or Agent (having agency: he or she who is active or takes action; who initiates); whereas singularity and signature practices depend upon a particular artistic or cultural sensibility, and are rewarded appropriately. The performance ‘apparatus’ includes spectating within it, constitutively, and all manner of orientations relate to that spectating.

Observation-based research and ‘knowledge problems’ for dance-making

In terms of access to knowledge, it is worth noting again¹⁷ that expert spectators *can only see what they can see*, and equally tend to do so from where they are located in a given set-up, which means that their access to creative outcome is limited; but we spectators are trained willy-nilly to fill in the rest, often discursively, through a combination of *sensing* and of inferential processes that are normalised in many a university department. On the other hand, in the context of Rosemary Butcher’s work over recent years, I do also seem to ‘see’ an afterimage that I retain from my experience of her earlier works, and whether I wish to or not, I test out and tend to ‘measure’ the new against the after-images of the old, in terms that precede critical attention. Such training accounts for some spectators’ modes of interpretation: these processes operate through what are

called 'models of intelligibility' – one of which might be anthropological, another psychological, another feminist – or ways of interpreting and understanding what we perceive.

What by definition *can't be seen*, or sensed by a non-practitioner-spectator is that time when a discipline-specific inventiveness was summoned forth, juggled with, tossed about and tested, and in those processes catalysed and/or transformed, and/or rejected, on the way to a production. A spectator can see the outcome of some of these operations (if indeed the material produced is retained in the show itself), but not how the expert-intuitive emerged, nor in whose hands, nor, at length, how it was modulated (or discarded) through deliberative practice. Expert collaborations, common to much making in the performing arts, are largely mysterious to outsiders, not least because the discourse between expert collaborators is largely in a closed register, often cryptic and sometimes apparently imprecise (but actually entirely precise). What need hardly be spoken of between them, after all, is that earlier signature work, through which these artists know or know of each other, and experience a certain affinity. As far as the expert practitioners involved are concerned, the exact source of a particular happy invention, catalysed by the collaboration itself, is rarely quarrelled over at the time, and the practitioners concerned may not recall, when interviewed, who did or said what. The means to work in that manner, in my view, can only be learned through engagement in certain sorts of meaningful activities, in certain productive set-ups, with certain sorts of future activities in view – like 'making something new', or 'qualitatively transformed'¹⁸ – under the constraints that those are specific to the discipline. These are largely closed even to expert spectators, and the means to work in that manner cannot be acquired in most postgraduate settings, outside of the few specialist colleges in the higher education sector. Learning in the context of expert making operates best through something like an informal apprenticeship, rather than a postgraduate seminar, in that the former tends to expose the apprentice-practitioner to the ways of expert-intuitive and 'felt' knowledges that bring together the inventive and a keen grasp of production logics and production values, which are exercised in expert invention within a particular disciplinary field, whereas in the latter, speech and written tend to dominate.

The expert-intuitive and the gift of 'rich knowledge'

The work of *making the work*, that leads up to and is concretised in the dance 'event' tends, in research terms, to be unavailable to spectating (or to observation) with clear implications for those of us who draw on the so-called 'observational sciences'. That work involves complex practitioner processes whose register tends to be internal to process, practitioner-specific as well as internally differentiated in time and in type; they are marked internally by their different production stages and the processes that are associated with them; and it is worth noting of them that their outcome tends to be non-identical with the quest that drives the making. How might researchers begin to grasp this work as such, if the work of expert making *cannot be seen*? How to 'theorise' internally-differentiated work processes, through mere access to work's outcome, when it is through expert-intuitive and deliberative processes that the practitioner identifies 'rich knowledge'¹⁹ – about 'dance', about 'my work', about the other artists concerned, and about the performance event – vital to the performance outcome? This 'rich knowledge' is likely to relate to the practicalities of complex performance-making systems – including the specificity of singular artists' experience and feelings – and as such lies outside of researcher writing.

The public event of performance, despite the insistence of some performance theorists/expert spectators that it is fleeting, characterised by loss,²⁰ that it is 'never the same' from one night to the next, is, to the practitioners involved, *work*, and its expert-intuitive and deliberative processes involved in creative decision-making have been '*worked through*'. They are likely to involve the artists concerned in ongoing and rarely completed self-critical review; they tend to emerge *just in time*, and, as Bastick (1982, 2003)²¹ confirms, with a *feeling* of rightness (even if, at length, it turned out to be wrong). They are always a compromise with what's available; the work is constitutively incomplete, which will drive the professional maker to turn to the next work to be made; and it is not quite loved by the practitioners who put their name to it, until it is ratified by positive feedback – which, besides, never really lasts. These intuitive processes, Ulmer adds: 'in contrast to analysis, operate (...) in a global or Gestalt mode, crossing all the sensory modalities in a way that may not be abstracted from the body and emotions' (Ulmer 1994: 140).

Farewell, Rosemary

In Rosemary Butcher's case, her artwork was eternally worked through, taking intuitively and deliberately into account the range of sensory modalities, bodywork and affects to which Ulmer draws our attention. They were equally eternally subject to a feedback loop that never released her, such that her new work, over recent years, tended to be characterised by the memory of and by the *working through* of work already made in earlier decades. Yet it was 'new', to the rest of us but also to her: she surprised herself. Her *expertise*, in its singularity, and her choreographic signature derived from her ongoing *experimentation* and *experience* – three words marked, dramatically, by the shared morphemes 'ex-' and 'peri' – but that, perhaps, is another story..²²

¹ Assemblage is a widely borrowed term from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans Brian Massumi. Interestingly it is Massumi who used the term 'assemblage' to translate the French Term *agencement* which has no direct equivalent in English; but the term *agencement* includes within it the notion of agency, bringing a sense of action, in place of the apparently static sense of assemblage.

² This notion is widely borrowed from the Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition – see for example Jacques Lacan (1977) – and has proved useful to the textual economy and its products, but rather less so to those who operate outside of it. A wide range of writers in the final decades of the twentieth century have borrowed terms from linguistics and discourse analysis, applying them to fields as diverse as film studies, visual arts studies and even anthropology. A difficulty emerges for the arts discipline concerned as soon as one asks what the implications are, for the arts, of taking language and linguistics as the external measure of practices that are actually *unlike* language.

³ I am paraphrasing from terms used by Bourdieu (1977) in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

⁴ *Hidden voices*, The Place, London, 2004, was commissioned for entry into The Place Prize, 2004. It began as a five-minute piece, then extended to fifteen minutes, and performed over ten nights by Elena Giannotti. Butcher described it to Elena as an inner journey. It has been performed internationally since 2004. See Rosemary Butcher and Susan Melrose (2005).

⁵ The term 'the audience' bundles individual differences amongst different spectators – in terms of orientation, experience, attitude as well as cultural diversity - into a monolithic unit. Words in use can 'ontologize': that is, their use can seem to bring something into being, as though it pre-existed that use of language.

⁶ Lighting design is by Charlie Balfour.

⁷ Giannotti herself, in a workshop session at Laban observed to Butcher (and not the other way round) that her own movement choices had been overly 'balletic'; this self-awareness and autocritique signals exactly why it is vital to view the invention as genuinely collaborative as well as 'signature-marked'.

⁸ Butcher's film, produced with film-maker Martin Otter and dancer, Elena Giannotti, with music by Walter Fähndrich, was first shown in 2004 at the ICA, London. Commissioned by Capture 3, Arts Council England.

⁹ See for example Jon McKenzie's *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (2001).

¹⁰ Available online at <<http://www.forcedentertainment.com>> (accessed 20 October 2016).

¹¹ Available online at <<https://www.dv8.co.uk>> (accessed 20 October 2016).

¹² *Enter Achilles*, by DV8 Physical Theatre, directed by Lloyd Newson, and first performed in June 1995 at Vienna *Festwochen* in Vienna, Austria.

¹³ Much research into decision-making in Professional Studies was triggered by Donald Schon's seminal enquiry into decision-making in *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1959, republished by Avebury in 1991).

¹⁴ See Daniel Bangert, Emery Schubert, and Dorottya Fabian (2014, 2015). These three researchers explore what are called 'dual process theories of cognition' that recognise the combination of intuitive and deliberative processes in knowledge at work.

¹⁵ Research into expert-intuitive and deliberative processes has burgeoned in the latter days of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century. While writers like Hubert Dreyfus and Stuart Dreyfus began to argue in the late 20th century, in *Mind over Machine: The Power of Human Intuition and Expertise in the Era of the Computer* (1986), that professional practices were supremely intuitive, the research findings that have emerged since the turn of the century, some of them in the fields of Education or Psychology, have tended to turn to what they call 'dual-process theories of cognition', specific to professional and expert practices, that include intuitive as well as deliberative processes. We might want to characterise these dual-process theories in temporal terms in the creative decision-making: the one is essentially exploratory, in the performance-making contexts with which I am concerned here, whereas the deliberative assesses and processes the 'intuitive stuff' that emerges, in terms of the logic of production.

¹⁶ Catalysis or catalytic processes suppose mutual transformation of two or more elements, such that the outcome is greater than the simple sum of the two parts. My argument is that this applies widely in effective collaborations by expert practitioners working in different disciplines. Catalysis makes it singularly difficult to 'unpick' the choreographic material that emerges. Butcher's relationship, within the work, with dancer Elena Giannotti, is catalytic.

¹⁷See for example <http://www.sfmelrose.org.uk/justintuitive/>. I have similarly described Performance Studies, over recent years, as a closet Spectator Studies that misrecognises

itself as such. That is, its writers genuinely believe that they are writing 'about performance', whereas in fact they tend in the main to write about their own spectating, in the performance event.

¹⁸ In my view Brian Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002), which offered me the notion of qualitative transformation, continues to make a vitally important contribution to research in the Performing Arts.

¹⁹ 'Rich knowledge' is a term proposed by Christian Harteis, Tina Koch, and Barbara Morgenthaler (2008), and disputes the notion that the intuitive is merely fast and 'frugal'.

²⁰ Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) and *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (1997) pursues this spectatorial sense of loss.

²¹ The most persuasive work on the research history of intuition continues to come from Tony Bastick (1982, 2003).

²² The three terms, experiment, experience and expertise are linked etymologically by the two morphemes, 'ex-' and 'peri'; :i) 'experiment', from Latin *experimentum*, means "a trial, test, proof," noun of action from experiri "to test, try"; ii) 'experience', comes from the notion of "observation as the source of knowledge; actual observation; an event which has affected one", iii) while expert signals a person wise through experience, or "having had experience"; it comes directly from Latin expertus (contracted from *experitus), "tried, proved, known by experience" past participle of experiri "to try, test", "experiment, proof, experience". The three linked terms tend to focus on "practical trial or proof", obtained from repeated trials leading to knowledge and learning, available online at <<http://www.etymonline.com>> (accessed October 2015).

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