

*HIDDEN VOICES (2004)
AND THE RETURN (2005)*
'ALWAYS INNOVATE...'

SUSAN MELROSE

Introduction

It is primarily on the basis of an engagement with her work and its signature, that some of us think that we 'know Rosemary Butcher', the artist. I wonder how well we can know the artist through the work, however, when over a period of decades that same work has seemed to hint at its own secrets, only proceeding then to guard them intact, possibly even from the artist herself.

There is a mystery here, which has a certain appeal. But there is also a challenge to those of us who are writers, and whose task, in part, is to attempt to pin down, to unravel, to unfold, to capture, to expose, to seem to explain, simply *to word*, what the work *might be*; how it manages to appeal to its audiences; how it maintains that appeal over time, while continuing to change and develop. How the work resists – if it resists – the passage of time, when simultaneously it seems to be inflected by, and to wear the marks of the time of its making.

Where might the work seem to *come from*? What were the conditions which might be seen, with the benefit of hindsight, to have enabled it to emerge (if not to have produced it)? How does Butcher sign the work, so that it is recognisably hers, even if that work mostly emerges on the basis of changing collaborations (and collisions) between practising artists from different disciplines? How has it

managed over the years, despite its acknowledged 'difficulty', its reticences, its occasional severity, to seem to touch some at least of its spectators, working *affectively*, when its maker has argued, over a similar period of time, that she works with the material, rather than with the abstract, the concrete, rather than the affective?

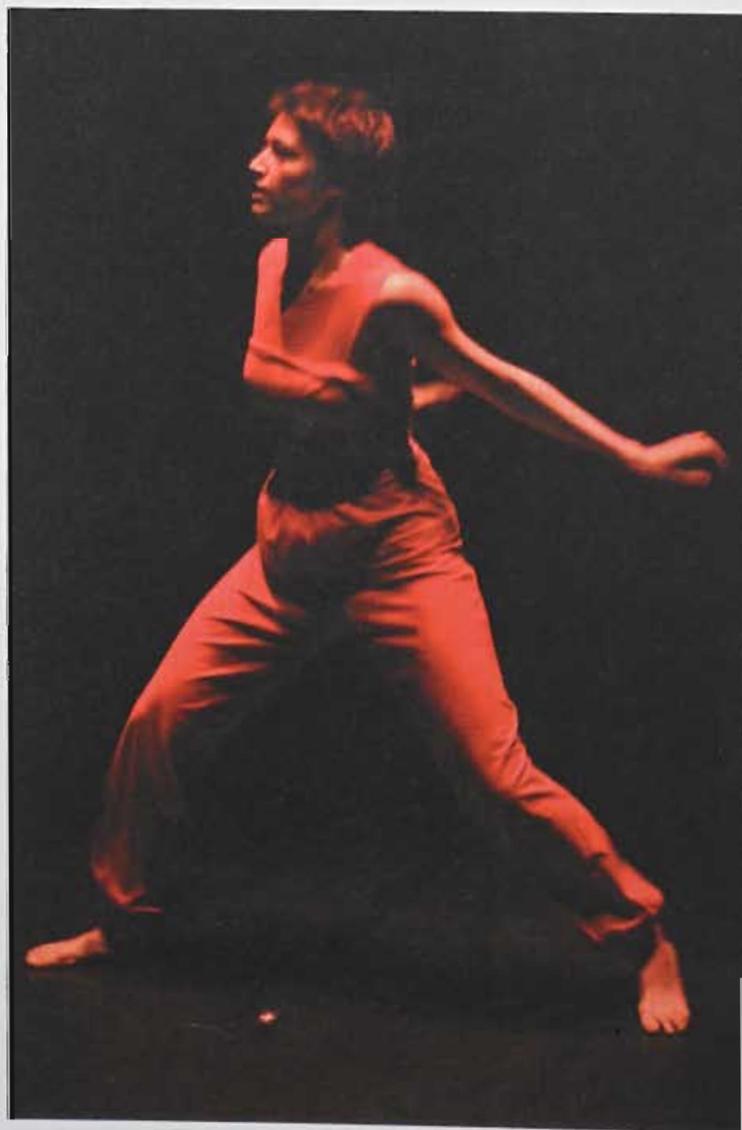
The collection of essays and images gathered here records and pays tribute to the ongoing invention, in work which reaches back over more than three decades, of a consistently challenging professional artist, noted for her collaborations and collisions with a range of artists with whom she has worked and continues to work. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that each of the writers whose work is included has also taken a stand, implicit or explicit, with regard to *knowing the work*, and in this sense the present collection of writing and images takes on a greater challenge: to enquire into knowing itself, in the context of choreographic artistry.

Rosemary Butcher's choreographic and visual art practices have enquired, over the past thirty years, into human *being-in-action*, as that might be portrayed, in quite specific spaces and at different points in time, and in so doing the work has recorded, over the past decades, *something in the air* – which moves and changes. This is a delicate concept, but unavoidable. Its (stubborn) fragility persists, despite the sense that it cannot be readily grasped through mainstream models of representation. Butcher's work goes on challenging, in its refusal to cede to some of the implications of disciplinary convention, even as it draws on the disciplinary mastery – including the expert contribution of other professional artists (whether dancers, lighting designers, composers or film-makers), in performance-designated or other spaces, live or on film – in order to make the work. One of my major preoccupations, in this final essay, will be to try to identify what is brought to Butcher's work by her systematic recourse, within what leans in the direction of a visual arts practice, to the contribution of expert dancers, even today where her new work has begun to shift to the screen. It is this work with dancers, it seems to me, that brings an affective density to the work, together with an engagement with human singularity as well as expertise.



Part 1 Butcher's refusal to cede was clear, and it was applauded (if not unambiguously), at The Place, in September 2004, when *Hidden Voices* was shown in London, with Elena Giannotti performing alone, held – trapped? – in a darkened space, bleakly lit, to a sound track from Cathy Lane, and lighting concept by Charles Balfour. The staging seemed to offer almost nothing, in compositional terms, to spectators, trained as many of us are to expect to experience – if only for a moment – that 'Aha!' moment, when hermetic work seems finally to give up what we take to be its secrets. According to Zoe Anderson, writing in *The Independent* (20/9/04) 'Rosemary Butcher's *Hidden Voices* is a brutal exercise in minimalism... The piece is an endurance test, a point made at exhausting length.' The fact that the piece lasted a mere fifteen minutes sits rather oddly with Anderson's observation.

In compositional terms, what *Hidden Voices* does offer is the almost perfect maintenance, for fifteen minutes, of the same dynamic and kinetic elements we started with. It requires that onlookers – similarly trapped – accept to slow

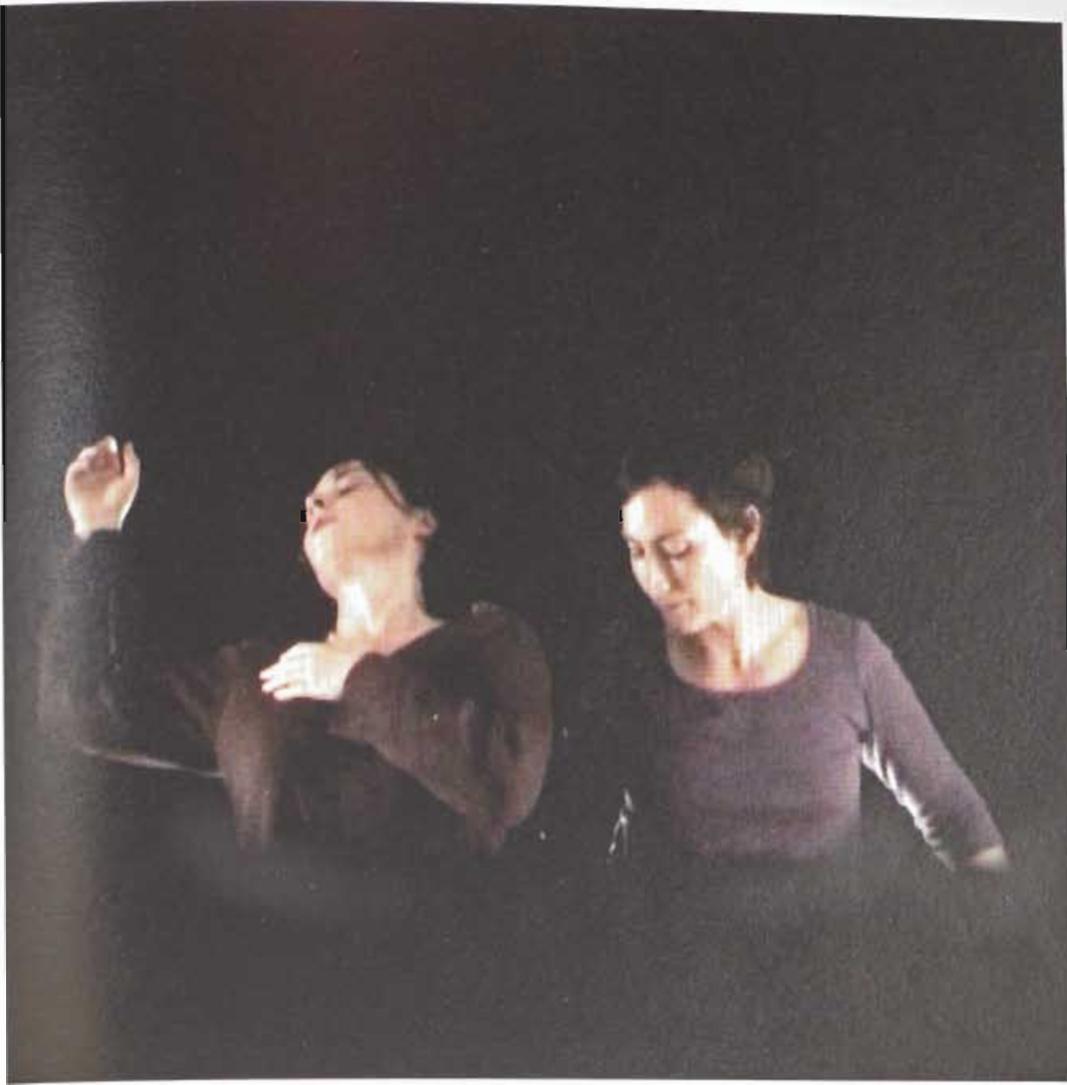


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their breathing, watch differently, hold back certain expectations, attending to minuscule change. The piece seems to me, in this sense, to point critically to some of the banal pleasures of rapid change – easier to produce, in dance spaces, than live constancy – which some of us might well take for granted in real-time-based performance. Such a contrast suggests, to me at least, that however much some of us might claim to suffer from (post-)postmodern fatigue, many of us actually treasure what is in fact, in these performance conditions, a wholly conventional moment of insight. Perhaps we do so because it seems, if only for that moment, to admit us into a secret shared with the choreographer or visual artist.

In Butcher's most recent work, I have the clearest sense that secrets exist, and that they are inexhaustible in their implications and complications. As others have indicated in earlier pages, however, such secrets – apparently 'in the work' – may well seem, at times, to have surprised the artist herself, when the work seems to look back at her. In these sorts of terms, even though the possibility of *complicity with the artist* is entertained by the work's intimate relationship with the onlookers, the ('Aha!') moment of apparent complicity with the artist herself is consistently withheld or sidestepped. Perhaps this is because, for Butcher, life itself is unforgiving, barely able, on occasion, to be endured. This insight of mine has come slowly, however, as though in spite of the beauty of the work which has enabled it.

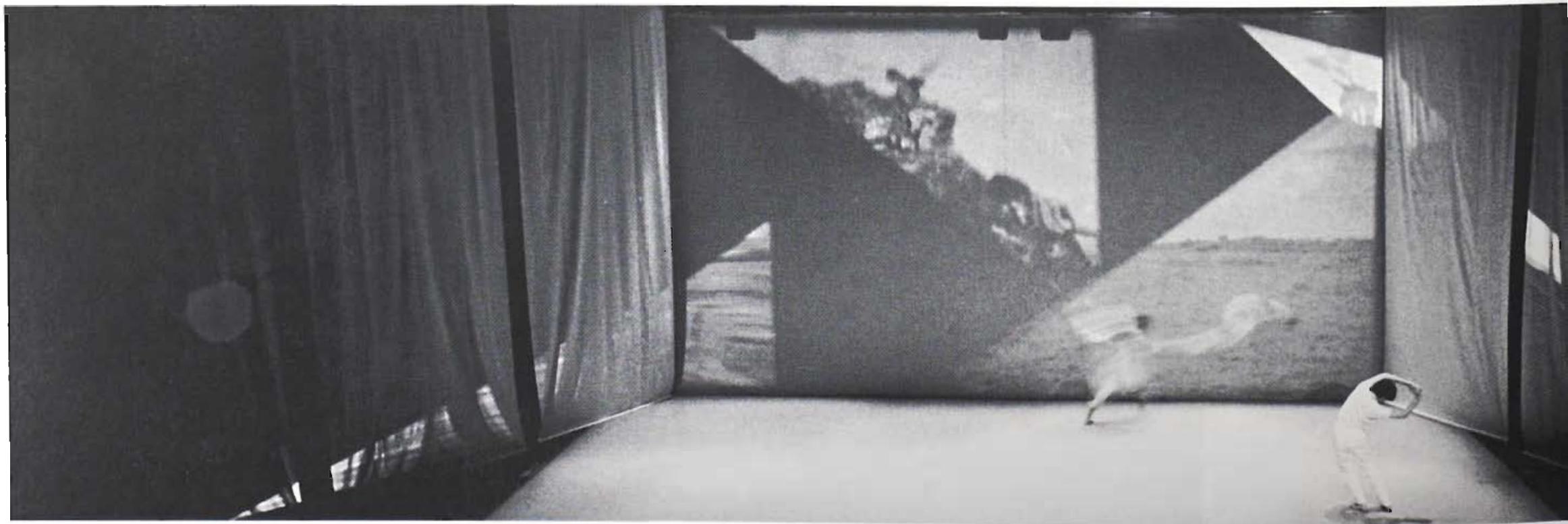
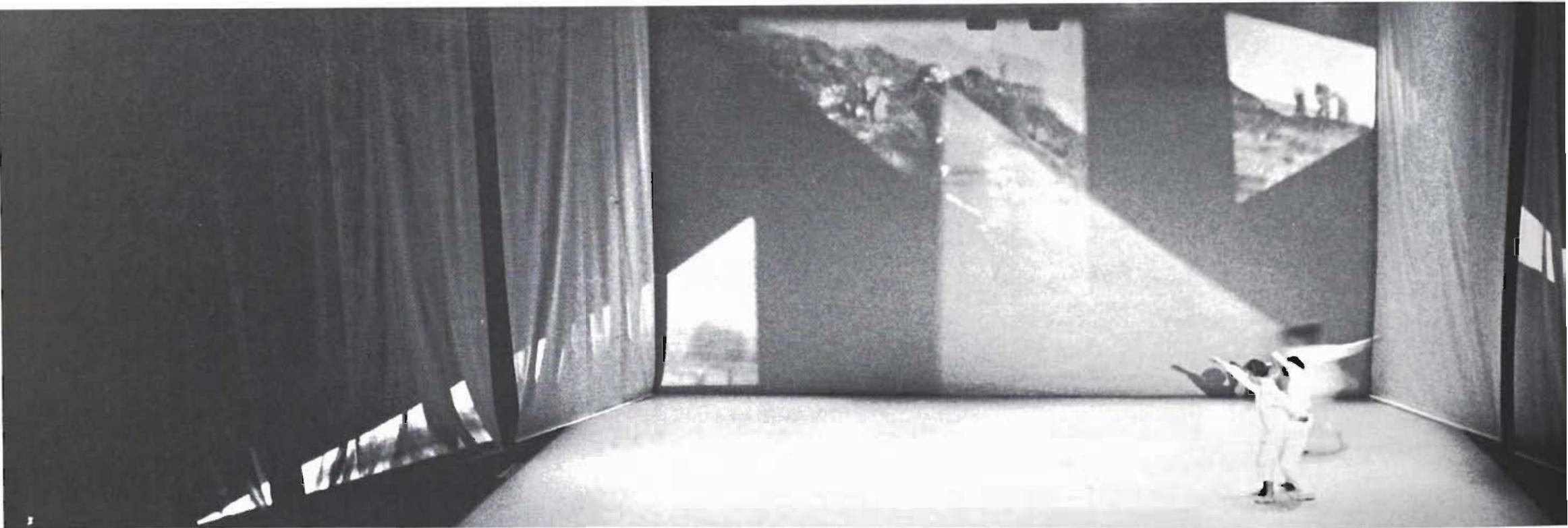
My more general sense is that the conditions of performance themselves are difficult to bear, even though as spectators each of us opts into – and generally pays for as well – the imprisonment entailed. Self-imprisoned in the event, willing 'it' to work, I don't simply expect 'something to happen'; instead I seem to require it, not least of the nature of 'event' itself. My need is complex, in the dance-designated space, and it is also curious: it is greater by far than I might experience in a circus tent, when virtuosic action, often performed by an artist *whose name we do not seek out*, seems to suffice. I tend to *make do*, in other words, in the circus tent, with a collective and anonymised naming – 'they...'; 'the performers...' – and in my experience it is rare to wish to identify, in the ring-master, an authorial or signature intervention. I don't, in the circus event, ever



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suppose, on behalf of that event, that it is required to *do more than it does, or show more than it actually shows*. Yet this '*more than*' seems to me to be precisely what some of us ask of 'the choreographer' and of her work with expert dance performers.

Spectators who persist in viewing 'difficult' work in public spaces would seem to have been trained, in the later decades of the 20th century and in the early 21st century, to expect to have to work hard at pleasure. We nonetheless, it seems to me – at least, if we are prepared to sit in silence in curiously constructed spaces, over a period of time, staring ahead of us, and armed only with our expectations – yearn for the sense of a fleeting kind of transcendent communication, between knowing-subjects (amongst whom 'the artist' is the most precious), however fine and momentary that (sensed) communicative experience might be. In the case of Butcher's *Hidden Voices*, such insight comes slowly, and bleakly, with a soft dissipation of energies. A quiet and uninflected 'Ah, I see...' emerged for me, in the event. It came in part from my sense of a breath held, and still held, at the end; from my sense that simple endurance was exceeded – almost unbearably; from my awareness that, in the split second of silence before the applause broke out (the metaphor is apt), something else seemed to me to break, as well. Break softly.



I want at this point to set out and to begin to consider, rather more formally, a question which runs through the essays collected here. It is a question which remains pertinent with regard to Rosemary Butcher's ongoing work, and it is one which seems to me to mark out some of the differences between a choreographic and a visual arts practice. It was triggered, for me, by the role played by Elena Giannotti in *Hidden Voices*, and it emerges, again, in *The Return*, with Eun-Hi-Kim and Martin Otter. It concerns the often unsung artistry of the trained and/or expert dancers who inhabit Butcher's work, and in many senses enable its production; on whose collaborative input that work fundamentally depends, as it comes into being, but who are merely named ('worded') in some of the writing collected in this volume, while remaining 'under erasure', in other essays.

What's in a name? And what remains, when the dancer's name goes under-represented, because it is the choreographer's name which seems to own the work? Perhaps it is the case that the expert input of the named dancer can only be identified in the processes of making the work, whereas the product, or outcome, available to spectator-writers, tends to resonate with a different name? I have found that this sort of question is rarely articulated in writing in the visual arts (including so-called 'arthouse' film).

The aesthetic of *Hidden Voices* depends significantly on the performance qualities and the plasticity of the named dancer herself – the capacity she plainly has to lend herself to, to be impressed into and moulded in terms of, Rosemary Butcher's long-established and ongoing enquiry. The work, after all, taking place in a dance space, was hardly 'dance',

but curiously enough it seemed to me that only the trained and expert dancer could mediate that sense of fragile breakings, of unbearable continuity, which different writers have noted. She alone has the resources permitting her to focus, to intensify, to draw and hold the spectator's look, to command the specular relationship.

In terms of performativity, it was that combination of command and withholding, in the work, which seemed to me to have underlined my sense that the expert choreographer as knowing subject *knows more than she does* (which means that the work resonates 'thickly'), and that she knows differently. It underlines my sense, secondly, that the expert dancer as knowing subject similarly *knows more than she does*, and holds much of that knowing in reserve, as 'expertise' – which means that she is likely to be viewed, professionally, as having considerable professional potential. The same combination enabled me to recognise, in addition, through the work, that Butcher *knows more (as artist) than (she can say that) she knows*, for the simplest of reasons, which is that her professional expertise is multi-dimensional, multi-modal, often multi-participant and collaborative, rather than wordable and linear. What this means is that writing, when she herself practises it, will tend to serve and to be secondary to her art, and not vice versa (as is sometimes the case for the work of arts-practitioners entering the university research context, and is the case for the writers gathered in this collection).

In *Hidden Voices* the query established by the work from the outset is sustained beyond the end of the piece – hence, in part, the writerly urge to go on writing. In *The Return* (DVD, 2005, with Martin Otter and Eun-Hi-Kim), the inexhaustible ache of certain images keeps coming back to me, and any sense that it might be released or resolved is effectively undermined first by Butcher's radical avoidance in the work of narrative sequence and linear causality, and second by the state of disciplined *knowing-unknowing* which I have attributed to her.

In compositional terms, the dancer in *Hidden Voices* pulls systematically back from/is pulled back from the energetic follow-through of any gesture, direction or impulse established. As this withholding accumulates, the thematics of (willing self-)imprisonment emerges for me, along with my sense that the potential for meaning-making of a linear kind itself is withheld *over and beyond the period of time available*. In order to stage and embody this undertaking, Giannotti herself needs considerable prudence, considerable expertise, an ability to (agree to) refrain from conventional *expressivity*. (Instead, Butcher *im-*presses.) A further point seems to me to emerge from this account of a dancer's expertise, of her manifest professional judgement (and I want to link this back, once again, to dance-writing and to writing in the visual arts): it is that I am unable, on this sort of basis,

to represent Giannotti's own (signature) work by the reductive and objectifying term 'the body' – so widely used in recent years in dance writing and in visual arts writing. Let's suppose, on the contrary, that the somatic complexity of her work is achieved on the basis of considerable expertise and artistry, both of which entail a number of critical instances of, and modes of judgement, including her skill in collaboration.

It might be appropriate, at this point, to begin to enumerate some of the areas in which her own expert judgement is required. As Brian Massumi has pointed out, in another context,¹ the judgement specific to expertise, in the performer, is informed proprioceptively ('defined as the sensibility proper to the muscles and ligaments'), as well as in exteroceptive terms (tactile sensibility) and interoceptive terms ('visceral sensibility'²). This is only a starting-point, however, and if we stop here, we run the risk of an apparent re-physicalisation of the dancer's expertise. The 'mature' or professionally trained dancer's expertise-in-action is consistently informed and modulated by her *judgement* – the most difficult quality to separate out from its effects. That judgement is individualised – which is not, however, to say that it is individual, since it is, at the same time, specific to the discipline.

These ways of expert knowing and doing (*in action*) are threaded together, in the growing work, with her ability to interpret, *in action*, the needs of the choreographer; and they are threaded through with her additional capacity to seem to step momentarily out of, and to objectify, her own contribution to the theatricalised, visual complexity. (That stepping-out and auto-reflexive looking is not, however, akin

to the specular activity of the spectator, for the simple reason that the expert dancer also then *steps back in*, to the work, which she modulates). Like many of us in a mediatised culture, the expert dancer has an acute self-gaze, and can be argued to police her own actionally dynamic image. Her expert judgement tends to operate, in the moment (of rehearsal), through an expert sensing and dance-specific intuition and through (expert) feeling, likely to be literalised in/as performance material.

My major point here is that there is *nothing at all*, in either compositional terms, or in terms of the dancer's and the choreographer's expert mastery, of the ready-made, the found object, the banal or the pedestrian, even if it is also the case that Butcher's work, at key historical moments, as a number of writers included here signal, has *thematized* the everyday, its processes and its objects. The pedestrian, after all, as Michel de Certeau's poetic text³ on the *art of making-do* shows, tends *not to be theatricalised*, as Butcher's objects, persons and processes continue to be, for an other's (quasi-public) regard, and to trigger that other's own (aesthetic) judgement, and judgement in terms of signification.

On the other hand, Rosemary Butcher's work has on occasion been positioned in late-modernism, in the postmodern and after it, and over three or more decades it has proceeded through the different feminisms, and responded, in turn, to the outbreak of the very democratic pedestrian arts; it has continued through the fall of the Berlin Wall, to the end of one century and the beginnings – some of them unbearable – of the next. It has 'taken their pulse', as I indicate above, and it resonates – recalling to me the words of the sculptor and visual artist Louise Bourgeois.⁴

Bourgeois, in interview in 1988, talking, one might conclude, 'about her work' (and cited in Stafford⁵ in terms of visual analogical practices or connectivities), has observed over a similar period of time what she calls the 'desolation of human relationships' – on which basis her own ethics and aesthetics of practice involve her grouping 'bodies' together, in her installation work, in order to 'see that they touch each other'. 'Touch', here, is metaphoric, as well as literal; it focuses a relation, 'within the work', which expands, then, potentially, to metaphorically touch (and thereby relate to) an

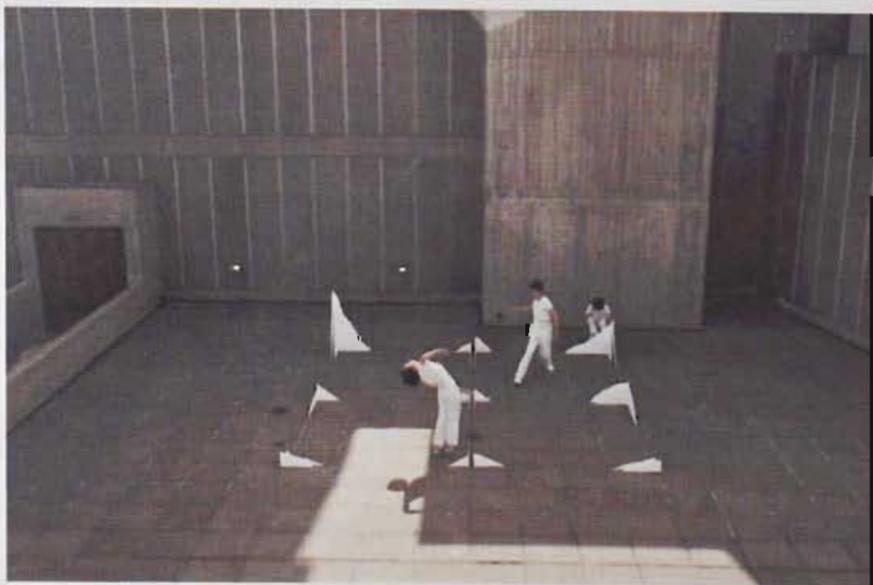
1. B. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2002, pp.58-59

2. *Ibid.*

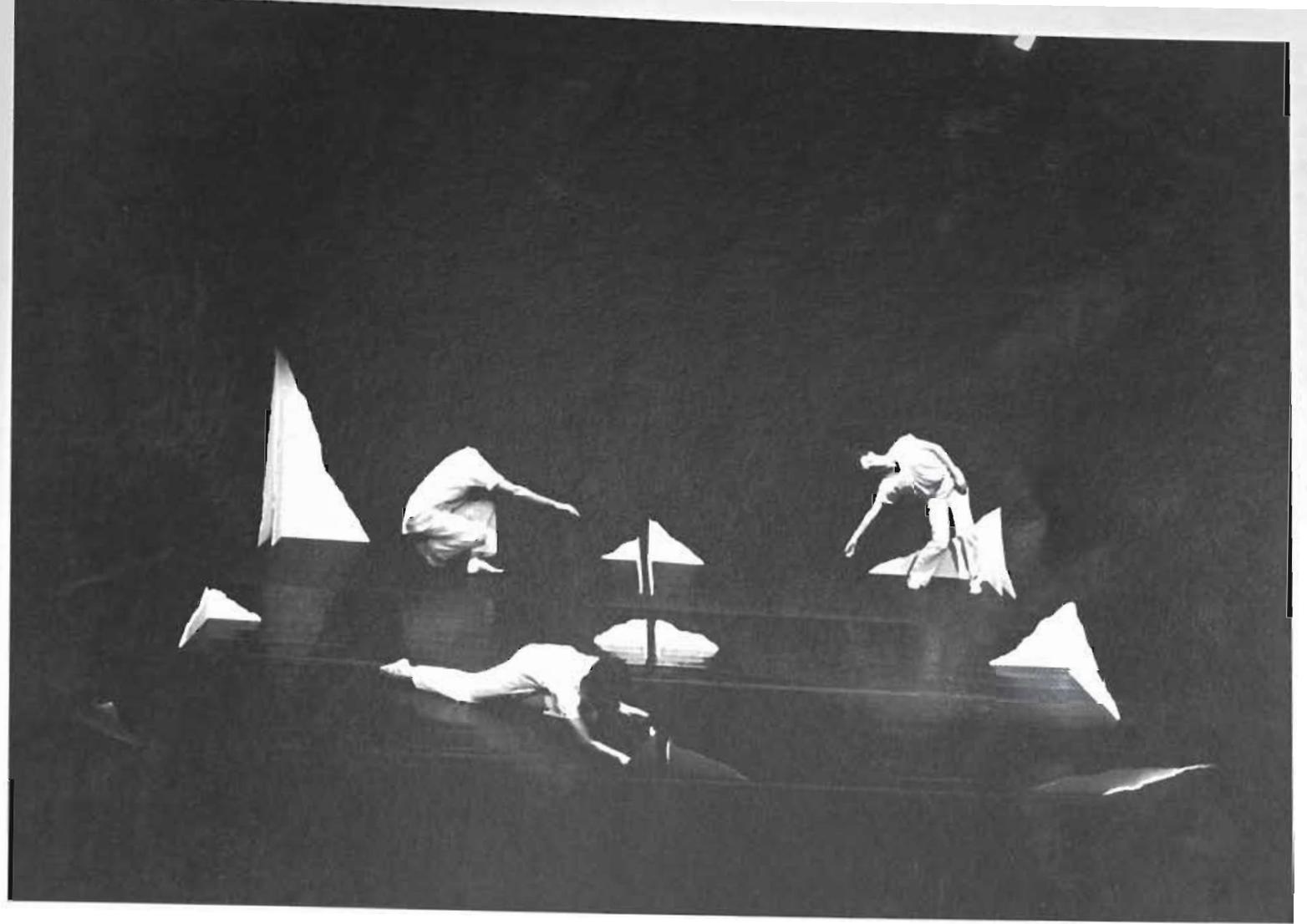
3. M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall, University of California Press, 1984

4. Louise Bourgeois is a Franco-American artist whose widely ranging work has been linked, historically, with the avant-garde, with feminism, and with psychoanalytic theory (esp. Kleinian theoretical writing) and practices. The most recently published account of her work is M. Nixon's *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and the Story of Modern Art*, The MIT Press, Massachusetts and London, 2005.

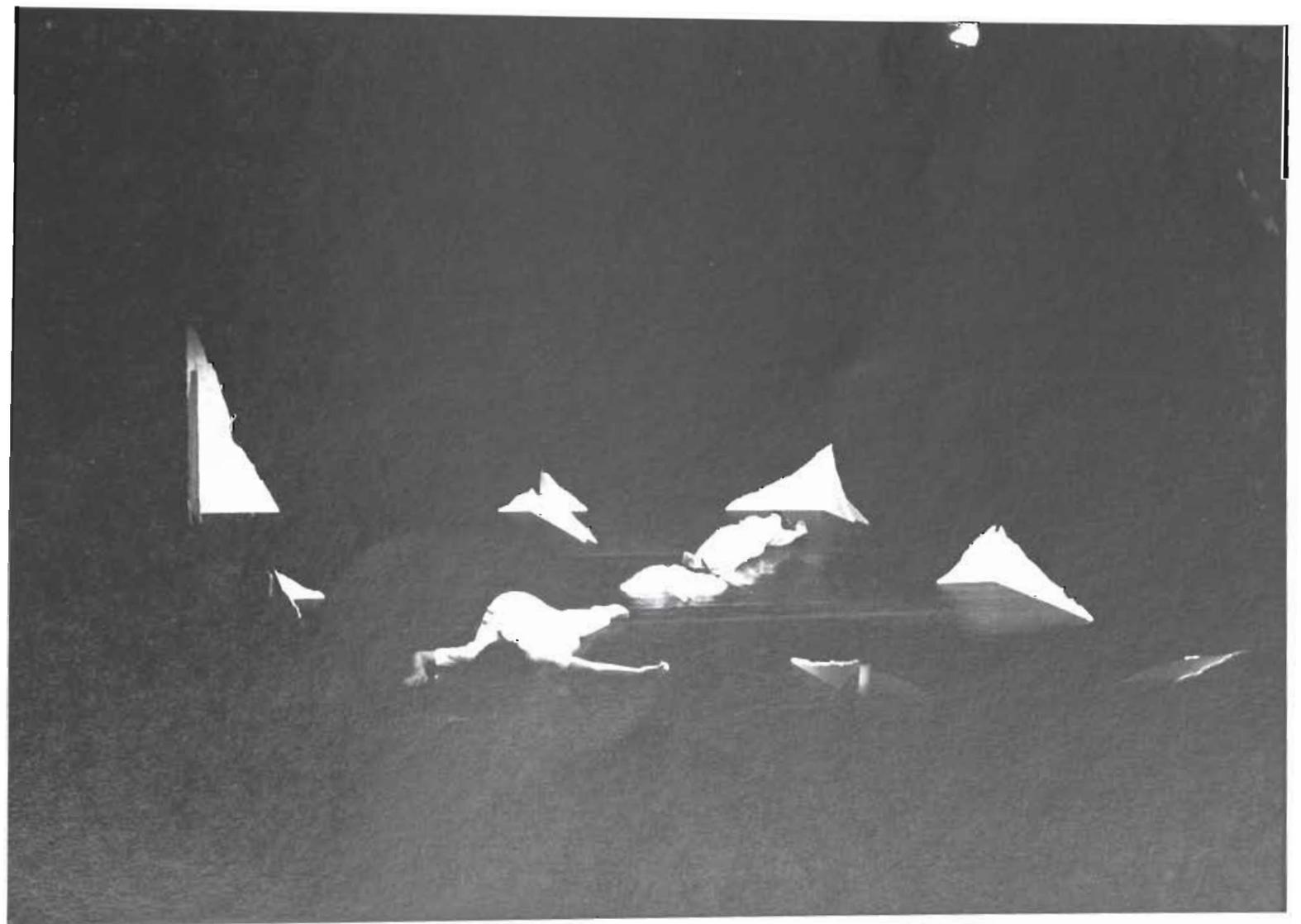
5. B. M. Stafford, *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting*, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 2001 (1999), p.25



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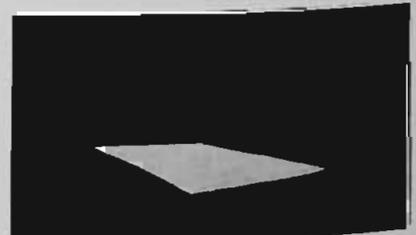


onlooker. In Butcher's work, meanwhile, the sculptural object is replaced by the (expert) human, and the possibility of relating and touching grows literally as well as exponentially. The choreographer must, as a result, understand, contain and modulate the potential to touch, its affective potential; and needs, if this is to be accomplished, expert input from the (named) dancer.

The problem for her as artist, Bourgeois observed, has been 'to put every body in place, to give them a place, and especially to be sure that they are together'.⁶ But which body – and whose – do her words refer to? The French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, writing at the end of the 1960s (around the time when Rosemary Butcher began to make her work), about the 'ethology' of the 17th century philosopher Spinoza,⁷ posed a not dissimilar question, pertaining once again, in part, to the ethical and to affectivity:

How does Spinoza define a body? A body, of whatever kind, is defined in two simultaneous ways. In the first place, a body, however small it may be, is composed of an infinite number of particles; it is the relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles, that define a body, the individuality of a body. Secondly, a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality. These two propositions appear to be very simple; one is kinetic and the other, dynamic. (p.123)

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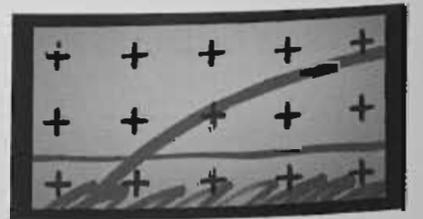
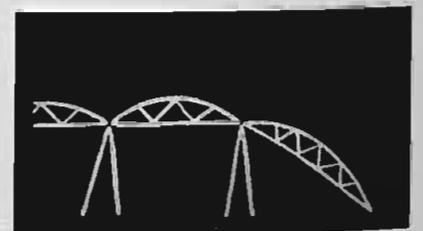
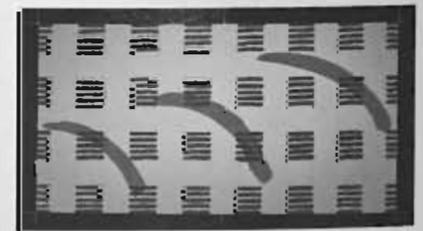
6. Bourgeois, quoted *ibid.*

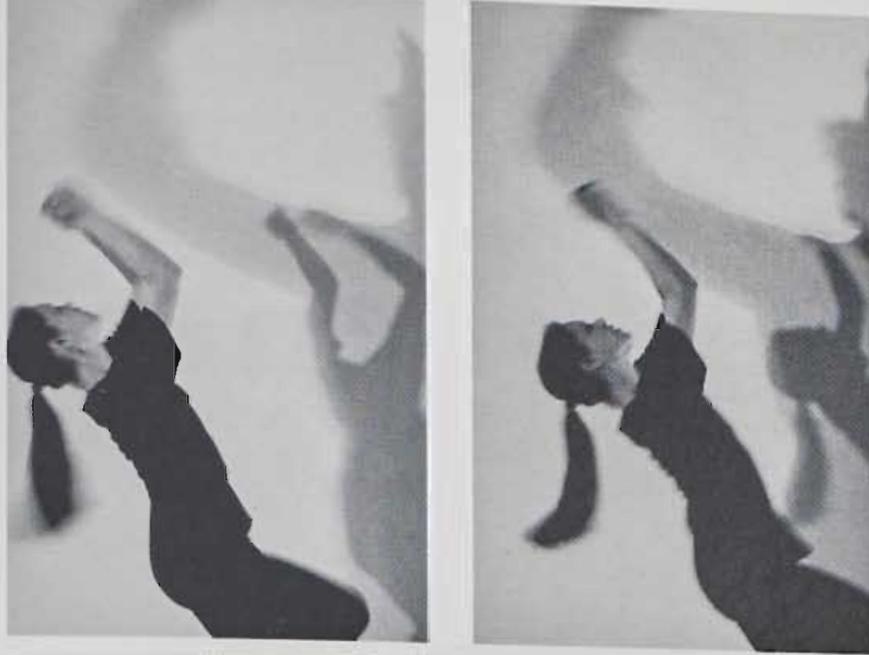
7. G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. R. Hurley, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988 (first published in the French as *Spinoza: Philosophie pratique*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1970)

8. B. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2002

9. *Ibid.*

10. Traditionally, ethology is concerned with animal behaviour, and the attempt to formalise observation and description; but ethology includes studies of instinct, more generally, and the attempt to relate *behaviour observed* to cognitive function. Hence the connection with the work of Rudolf Laban is clear.





d2 1990

Part 3 We need to avoid literalising 'a body', in this context, since in Deleuze's reconfigured 'Spinoza...', that body might be animal or plant life, scientifically observed; in Bourgeois's work it might be mineral, certainly material, analytically, syncretically and aesthetically observed and positioned. In Butcher's work, which takes the singular plasticity and actional potential of certain expert dancers as its compositional *focus*, 'body' is both literal and metaphoric, and the word itself is inadequate.

Even when it is literalised in choreographic practice – '*her expert dancer's body*' – that *expert* 'bodyness' has only a passing 'thingness', in contrast with what might be suggested by the term 'the body'. Instead, as Deleuze's writing enables me to suggest, what a dancer makes available to choreography is *particulate*, mediated by energy production and use, rather more than it is solid or hard-edged, or monolithic. The expert dancer is gifted in this offering of potential – and aspires, in turn, to qualitative transformation. In these terms, this expert bodywork is both given (in part), and it is emergent (despite its individual,

professional history), rather than given as such. Its operations are fleeting, while its particles are momentarily stabilised, coalesce, are theatricalised (by which I mean, in part, that they are made available to be looked at twice).

What the collaborating expert dancers at work with the choreographer might also be enabled to articulate, and what is articulated as though 'across' her or him, is patently not akin to, nor is it commensurable with, either her or his everyday body (which expertise and choreography transform), or (despite the claims of the 'textual turn' of the later 20th century), with *text*.

In/as elements within 'the work', in which the particles from which spectators constitute Butcher's signature flicker, the performer's expertise and artistry is more than three times invested: first, by each dancer's own creative as well as professional aspiration (to what Brian Massumi has called 'qualitative transformation'⁸) and her or his affective investment in it; second, by Butcher's investment, which is existential, as well as creative and epistemic (or knowledge-centred and internally varying); third by what is pressed into them by spectators, by spectators' expectations, and by the nature of 'event' itself. These different investments can be identified in terms of different process threads,⁹ and to some extent they can be separated out artificially, because language permits us to name them (if not, in so doing, to grasp their full complexities); whereas 'the work' tends to draw them together syncretically, and to weave with them. In each of these different investments, bound together as performance, the Spinozan impress, as Deleuze has rearticulated it, can be identified.

To summarise my central argument here: Rosemary Butcher's insistence that she make new work with expert, trained dancers, whose artistry and disciplinary mastery she can take as a starting-point in a collaborative composition, means that she grants herself the opportunity to explore, with each, the Spinozan 'infinite number of particles, ...relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles', as well as 'this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality'.

Given the broad interpretation of ethology,¹⁰ which I have brought via Deleuze into this framework, it is this concern for individuality which I want to emphasise here: the individuality of expert, named dancers, their maturity, grasp of performance-making, the repertoire of options they can make available to the generation of new material, their resilience and their circumspection – as well as their individual 'look' and way of being in space and time – are consistently profiled in Rosemary Butcher's 'science', even when she thematises the everyday; so, too, in rather more determinate terms, is that expert dancer's capacity for judgement in action.



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Part 4 What does it mean to argue, tentatively, that Butcher's ongoing enquiry (if not any one of the individual works itself) is ethological? That she has been concerned throughout with exploring, in given socio-cultural and dance-specific contexts and situations, in response to creative as well as professional and philosophical 'imperatives', possible relations established between (expert and singular) bodies, for the sustained look of an other? Can we begin to argue, on the basis of the work itself (which 'work' necessarily includes every professional 'thing' that can be inferred from, but is not visible as such 'in the piece' – such as casting, collaboration, workshop and rehearsal) that Butcher is a dance scientist? Plainly the work does not expound its scientific status in the sorts of expert registers used by professional researchers in the university, who seek to specify discursively the links between motion and emotion;¹¹ but the audience reached, in Butcher's case, is almost certainly broader, and likely – on the basis of that sustained look which dance events address – to be differently affected. Let's make no mistake as to the epistemic (or knowledge-centred) nature of Butcher's enquiry: the Spinozan ethology, as Deleuze pointed out in the early 1970s, involves – as does Butcher's – a 'long affair of experimentation, requiring a lasting prudence'. It is precisely 'because no one knows ahead of time the affects [on other bodies] one is capable of' (125), in changing situations and contexts, that Butcher's work continues its enquiry.

Butcher, in the terms I have set out above, is fully familiar with the processes of systematic and ongoing enquiry (of which casting, collaboration, 'the workshop', and 'the rehearsal', constitute four examples) that allow her not simply to arrive at the production of 'challenging' new work, but to believe in that capacity in herself. The works themselves reveal a range of imperatives, and investments, which are consistently articulated together with that ongoing enquiry, as well as that belief; yet she makes no claim whatsoever as to the usefulness, to the artist's ongoing productivity, of that type of dance-ethological knowledge which takes writing as its principal articulation – and indeed she has no need to. It is by the work and its signature, its often observed 'difficulty', but also its ethics of collaborative practice, that so many of us know her.

I want to test the Deleuzian observation once more against Butcher's own practices, before I proceed to introduce the other writers' work assembled here. The Spinozan 'ethics', Deleuze goes on, 'has nothing to do with a morality; he conceives it... as a composition of fast and slow speeds, of capacities for affecting and being affected on [the] plane of immanence'. With reference then to Rosemary Butcher's work: this work has nothing to do with a morality. She approaches it, in significant part, as a creative-ethological experiment in contemporary visual and

human action-based aesthetics, drawing on the input of expert, named dancers (and other collaborators), to produce a new composition of fast and slow speeds, of capacities for affecting and being affected, on the plane of immanence of (hence recognisable in disciplinary terms as) 'dance performance'. The work emerges through a long affair of experimentation, requiring a lasting prudence, because the choreographic artist does not know, ahead of time, the affects, on other bodies (including those of spectators, but also of film-maker, sound designer and lighting designer), that her work is capable of summoning forth.

In the most recent work, Butcher explores the transfer to film of dance's performance specificity, which she thereby theorises in/as expert multidimensional action, 'reduced' and intensified through recourse to filmic registers. Butcher works in particular, with the camera in mind, with the trained dancer's upper torso, arms, hands and face: she choreographs and films faciality itself, seemingly seeking to reveal 'something', which emerges over time, not in an instant, and in filigree. Hence what is, or might be, revealed, is not of the immediate surface – yet paradoxically the surface is its site; to identify it, where it appears, those of us who spectate need a founding story about human complexity, a relation to the exterior perceived, of one or another story of interiorities.

The work emerges through a sustained, choreographic observation of tiny, particulate movement, tiny particulate changes¹² in the visual, perceived in the rehearsal space, which a particular expert dancer (and not others), watched intently, and called upon, can make (always imperfectly) available. What I find in Butcher's later work is a curious mode of dynamic-kinetic portraiture, eminently realisable on film or video, but rarely undertaken by film-makers or video artists themselves, who tend to prefer the dynamic of narrative characterisation, visible interaction, a relation (enacted) to situation and 'world'. Butcher chooses the faces and hands and upper torso of expert dance practitioners, who are accustomed to work with the choreographic requirement that something (seem to) be revealed somatically. Butcher seems to me to aim, in these terms, for what Lagneau, quoted in Deleuze's *Spinoza...*, has described as a 'capacity for discerning in a single act the relationship of the greatest possible number of thoughts'.¹³

11. The study of the links between motion and emotion was formalised, in terms of dance at least, in the modernist dance-analytic programme deriving from the work of Rudolf Laban.

12. 'Particulate', because they operate at a finer level than is understood by the order of 'the sign'. These are not 'signs', but rather the flickering that one or another viewer will gather and combine, on which basis s/he will semiotise what she has herself brought into meaningful 'being'; and in my experience, she will argue, then, that these were 'already there'.

13. G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. R. Hurley, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988, p. 127

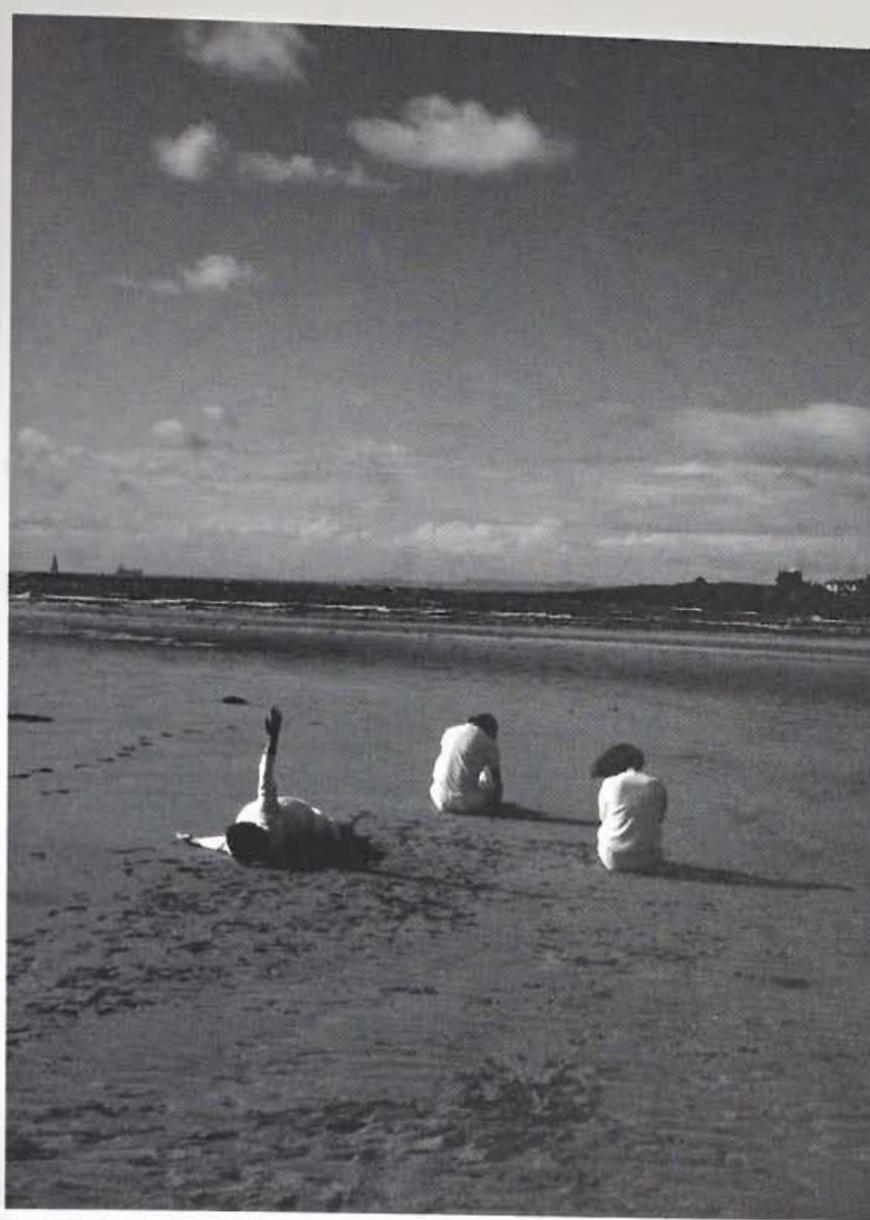
Part 5 How might the expertise of the artist be viewed in academic contexts which focus on creative and performing arts, but largely from the positions and presuppositions of an expert spectating – a spectating which also takes the production of writing as its primary objective? I have suggested that choreographic practices and expertise operate in a radical outside of writing, meaning that there is no easy ‘fit’ between the former and the latter. I have gone further, in order to suggest that the expert choreographer *thinks* (in expert practice) *geometrically, diagrammatically, schematically, and multi-dimensionally*, rather than in the linear-dominant mode bound-in to writing.

It is on this sort of basis that I have argued that there are questions of knowledge (of causes, of contexts, of situations, of actions, of artists...) at stake here, and that they reach beyond ‘the work itself’, to encompass *the person* of the arts professional. What Deleuze noted in his *Spinoza...* is that a philosopher’s life – and, I would add, a professional artist’s life – has a particular mystery to it. He sets out some of the terms of that mystery as follows: the ‘philosopher [or artist] appropriates the ascetic virtues – humility, poverty, [if not necessarily] chastity – and makes them serve ends completely [her] own, extraordinary ends that are not very ascetic at all, in fact’.¹⁴ They are not very ascetic at all, he argues, in the sense that this life which might appear to be one of lack, is actually ‘a life no longer lived... in terms of means and ends, but according to a production, a productivity, a potency’. Rosemary Butcher’s life, at least from where I view it, is lived according to ‘a production, a productivity, a potency’, marked by her signature (or graphic trace).

Butcher’s work, however, is not in fact concerned with ‘a body’, as a philosophical *text* might be, nor even with ‘some body’. Philosophical *writing* tends to generalise, even when its concern is the singular. I have indicated that it is not possible to generalise choreographic specificity, not least where a named practitioner’s work is at stake. If Butcher’s work is intimately and consistently concerned with, and composed in terms of, what Deleuze calls the ‘relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles, that define a body, the individuality of a body’, it is vital to differentiate between *what* choreographic



14. G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. R. Hurley, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988, p. 127



practice can *thematise*, *how* it does so, and how that doing and its thematisations *differ* from those of writing. Denying this constitutive difference is either lazy, or that denial practises a colonisation by writing of writing's radical other. Writing, besides, is one of the most conventional and rule-governed practices we have available, even if what it can thematise seems to be infinite.

If Butcher's work, then, has plainly been concerned both with 'the individuality of a body', which that work systematically thematises, and with staging the possible relations between bodies – such as we saw in Louise Bourgeois' observations briefly cited above – it is also the case that the *way* Butcher *makes work*, is singular, signature-specific, but recognisably 'dance'. It engages not with 'a body', nor with the universal 'any body', but rather with '*this* [named, expert dancer's] body[work]', displayed to an other's sustained look. Whereas Butcher's expert art practices *thematise* concerns familiar from philosophical writing, to bring this about, Butcher must draw on the expert or disciplinary, named dancer as real, as singular, as symbol, and as a constitutive element in the dance symbolic.

Here lies a key difference between the *economy of the text*, to which Susan Leigh Foster refers in the present volume, the place of reading or writing in that economy, on the one hand, and on the other expert performance-making in the specular and event-specific economies. In place of the clause, the paragraph, or the text (or indeed the intertext), Butcher's own philosophical engagement, which is always also an experiment in aesthetic terms, challenges too in compositional terms. It is *other than syntactic* in its performative engagement. There is no equivalence between the order of the well-behaved text, in the economy of writing, and the choreographic experiment that is new dance, or dance on screen, professionally produced.

Hence when Butcher's work reveals, as it certainly does, that 'a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies', it does so, in addition, on the basis of the acutely performance-determining qualities of a particular named dancer's expertise, her contribution, and her own work's emergent qualities. While I have constantly to seem, as writer, to negotiate *with traditions of writing* the words I put together, the key difference between Butcher's expertise and

mine is that the words I choose are also mine (and yours), whereas 'Butcher's dancers' (as I so easily qualify them) are not, in fact, hers. They are not merely her other, but first, that otherness is constitutive of her aesthetic signature; and second, the dancers themselves are also the promise of a qualitative transformation that will, in the best of cases, surprise both of them.

Now, *if* we can accept that Rosemary Butcher philosophises in *and* as choreographic action, drawing on the artistry of a whole range of expert practitioners in order to produce choreographic practices which are dense, 'thick' in their rich evocation, but at the same time minimalist, speculative, resonant, and elusive, we need to be clearer with regard to the ways in which this philosophical undertaking works. My own suggestion is that this sort of density and complexity engages spectators and listeners – *when it works* – in the productive operations of catalysis, as well as hypotyposis. Catalysis means that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, because each functions to transform its other. Hypotyposis, meanwhile, involves a highly economical, vivid sketch or outline – either visual, movement-based or sonoric, or all of these – which operates in the given economy of (art) production by enabling a listener or spectator to perceive *as present* something complex which, by definition, cannot be present/ed, because it operates below the levels of sensory representation.¹⁵ On this basis I am going to proceed to argue that Rosemary Butcher *philosophises* multi-dimensionally, with considerable economy, through multi-schematic and multi-participant, *signed* arts practice, with qualitative transformation in mind, by requiring of her spectators that we provide what she does not, but in terms which she has conditioned.

Others have noted that Rosemary Butcher's ways of seeing and doing tend toward the geometric, the architectural, the associative, the speculative and, in addition, the poetic, humanist and expressive. Her philosophical practices, in other words, rather than 'writing-like', instead enact and instantiate a 'something (schematic and symbolic)', which triggers in some spectators at least their own productive input. This 'something' is *im*-pressed in multi-dimensional mode, into the (expert) human real, both

by choreography, and by spectating.

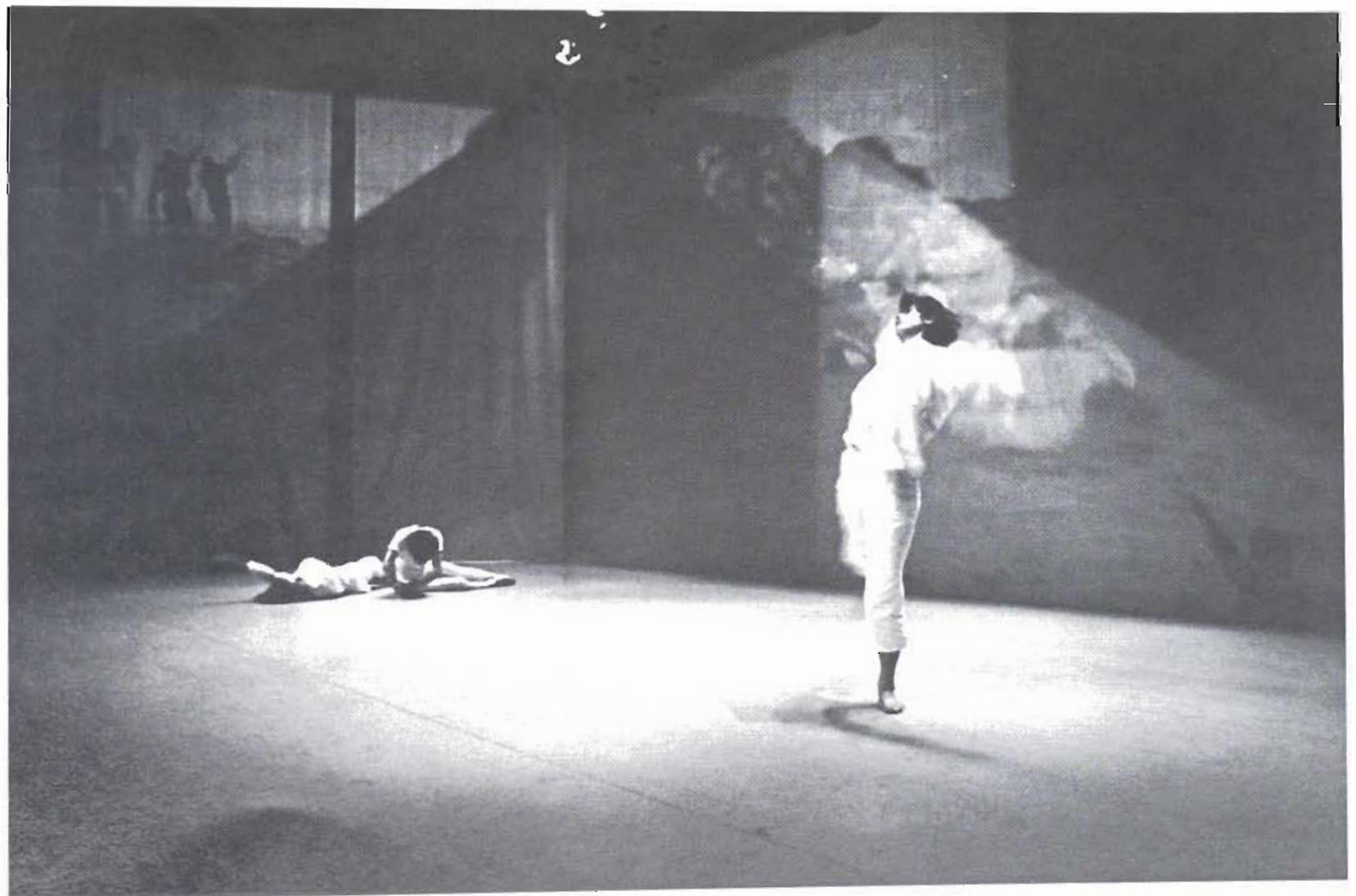
In so doing, rather than generalising, Butcher's practices singularise, ostending this or that particular, named dancer-artist at work under her impress; that dancer's particular height, body mass, musculature, faciality, gestuality, way of moving and of not moving; ethnicity; gender; her or his colouring, her or his look (or plasticity). This recourse to the real human, which we can only engage with, as spectators, on the basis of Butcher's compositional choices, invites viewers themselves to move from the minimal to the extensive; from the exemplary, the singular, and the particular, *to* the general – whereas writing-bound philosophical practices tend to encourage us to move in the opposite direction. In so doing, they tend to profile and to prioritise the operations and outcome of *expert or professional intuition*, which the professional artist tends to sense, rather than to 'think' (I am supposing that there are differences here, in brain site, and in type of brain activity), proceeding to subject these, in discipline-specific manner, to the logics of production and professional production values.

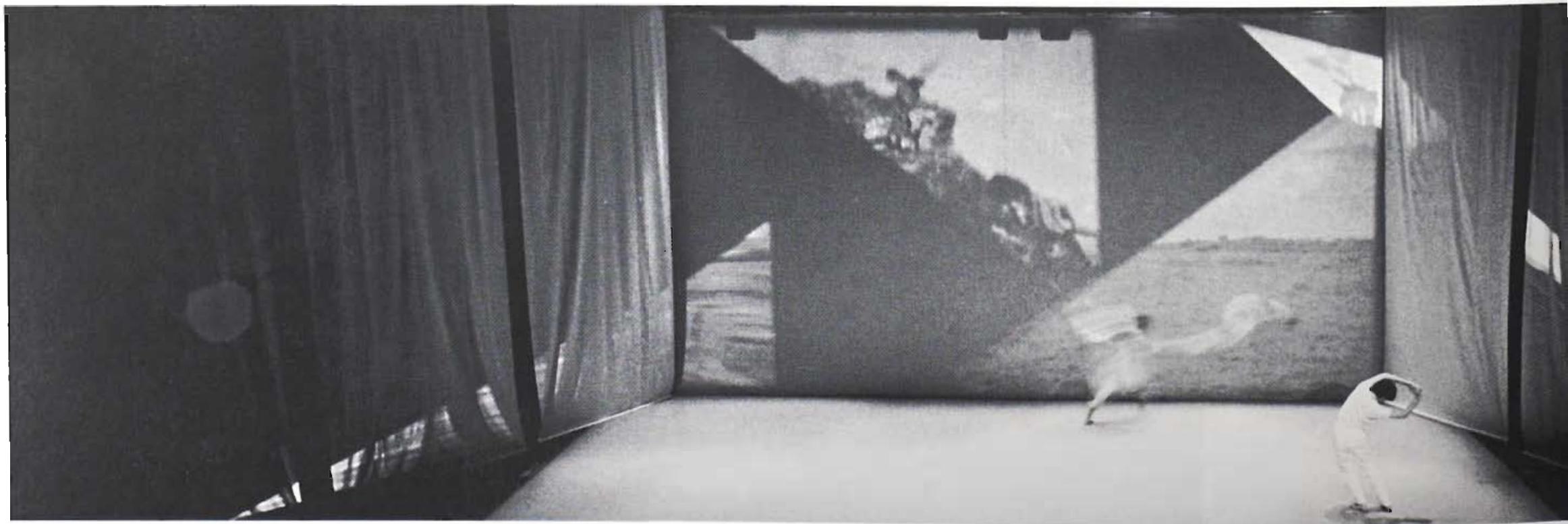
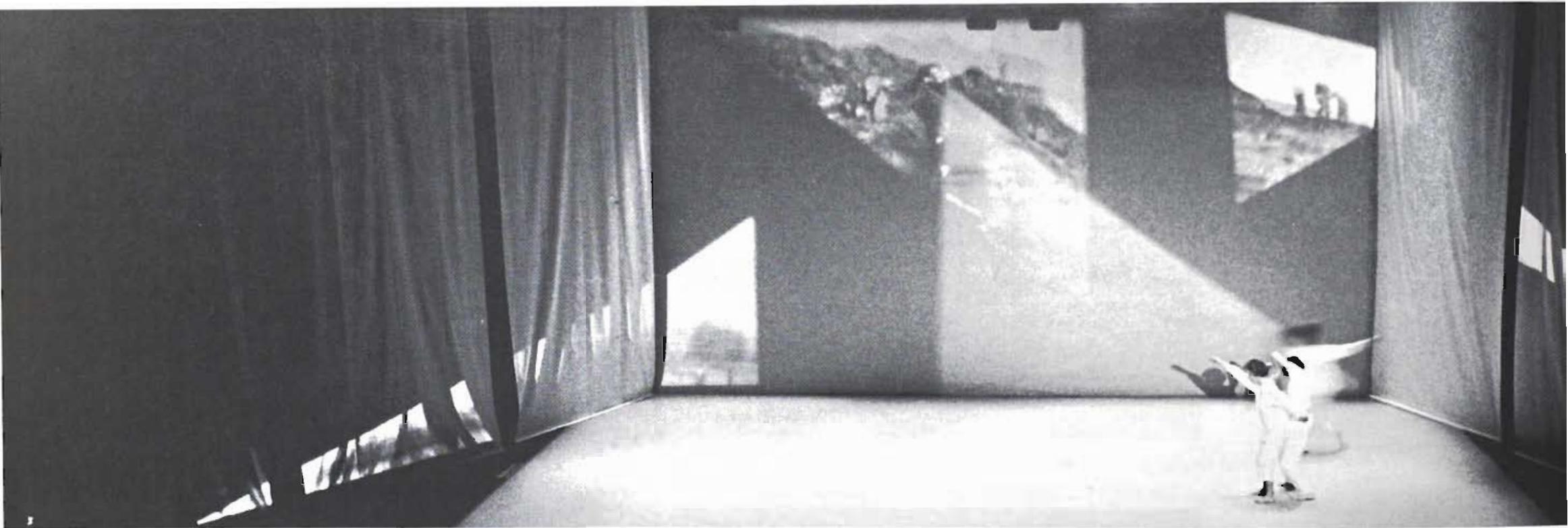
Plainly there is nothing new in intuitive processes, which have been investigated in mainstream philosophical writing ranging from Descartes to Kant and, more recently, Deleuze, as well as in writing on education and creativity. The processes which interest me are not simply intuitive, however. Instead, when I am confronted by Rosemary Butcher's work, I am concerned with *the operation of 'expert or professional intuitive processes'*, brought into productive interface with the logics of performance production and its event. For some readers, the notion of expert intuition might recall aspects of the Kantian philosophical concern with what have been called 'sensible intuitions'. Sensible intuitions, in the case of expert practices, are not static, and self-defined or defining, as may be the case with some of our everyday intuitions. Instead, they participate in the generation of aesthetic practices and/or objects; in certain instances of Rosemary Butcher's work – and this is the case for *Hidden Voices*, and for *The Return* – these expert intuitions, in the practitioner, will tend to trigger other intuitions, in the expert spectator. That spectator will seem, in turn, to grasp through them the capacity, 'for discerning in a single act [of performance] the relationship of the greatest possible number of thoughts'.¹⁶

Sensible intuitions (which seem to spring from a nowhere of rational thought), operate, in choreographic practice, alongside elements which can only be *thought* (the latter involve, for example, the logics of production and interpretation, also brought to the making processes by the choreographer), according to what the Kantian tradition has called 'symbolic exhibition'. Symbolic exhibition is given as one aspect of the rhetorical function of hypotyposis.

15. 'Hypotyposis', traceable back to the Ancient Greek, is identified by Paul de Man in terms of a figuration, 'which makes present, to the senses, something which is out of their reach, not just because it does not happen to be there but because it consists, in whole or in part, of elements too abstract for sensory representation'. See Paul de Man, in Sheldon Sacks (ed.) *On Metaphor*, University of Chicago Press, 1979.

16. J. Lagneau, *Célèbres leçons et fragments*, P.U.F. 1964, cited in G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. R. Hurley, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988.





Part 6 Because they are identified as 'too abstract for sensory representation', such performance 'elements' seem to operate 'below' the level of 'the sign' – a crude conceptual mechanism still introduced to undergraduates as one element in performance analysis, from the perspective of the spectator. In these sorts of terms, these particles are 'subsemiotic', and they flicker apparently across 'a work', while contributing significantly to the sense we get of that work – *if* we are prepared to work with it in its own terms. In the rehearsal circumstances, the 'sensible intuition' emerges in part in response to contingent factors – the sudden angle, and power of revelation, of a bar of sunlight, through the studio window; the haze of dust through which the light flickers, and falls; the sudden weight of a body held, seen from here... or here... or there; the chance co-incidence of recorded sound and breath held.

Rosemary Butcher's complex and minimalist 'figuring', in *Hidden Voices* and in *The Return* – but radically different in each of these – works in such a way as to offer more than it actually gives, despite the sense I get, as spectator, that it has given more; that what I get, I get 'from it' (the gift, in terms of Heidegger's philosophical writing, requires very little of me in return – hence the apparent frugality of the professional artist's life). The minute detail of the so-called 'pre-' or 'sub-semiotic' figuring seems to be scattered across the available choreographic options, and to be in repose in none of these. It is catalytic, in the sense that this minutely detailed ordering is internally productive and transformative. In the latter sense, what we observe can only be understood, in disciplinary and compositional terms, on the basis of the *intertwining* the artist will have effected, by adding heat to it, between the stuff of sensible intuition and what can only be thought *and subjected to disciplinary and personal judgement*, which also orders it.

Symbolic exhibition in Butcher's work, then, emerges on the basis of the transfer of sensible (expert) intuitions, in major or minor keys, into concrete practices, made available to spectators. As far as I have been able to tell, the expert choreographer achieves this transfer by bringing to them both her own conceptual signature, and the operations specific to a set of disciplinary rules. The disciplinary rules are not however wholly able to determine the new work: if they could, it would be judged to be repetitive or derivative. The discipline-specific rules seem to enable the artist to make a new concept available to the work, effectively to reveal a new rule, which the broader discipline itself will in turn expand, in certain instances, to take up. In Rosemary Butcher's case, we can see the work of this set of disciplinary rules, and the production values they involve, on the basis of which her still-growing national and international reputation is grounded. Her ways of seeing and doing, her ways of knowing, have gone (as algorithm)

into, and they expand, the visual arts as well as the choreographic repertoire.

At work in the rehearsal space with a dancer, when the work is 'going well', it seems to me that Rosemary Butcher's interventions work to establish the possibility of her effecting a concrete analogy – compositional, at its most basic; possibly visual; possibly relational (between bodies, and gazes); possibly all of these, but equally actional, tactile, haptic – with the materials available, 'in which [her] judgment performs a double function'.¹⁷ Such an analogy, Stafford has recently argued, in terms which are respectful of the artist's ongoing affective (indeed existential) drive to make new work,¹⁸ is 'born of a human desire to achieve union with that which one does not possess'. It also entails, Stafford adds, 'a passionate process marked by fluid oscillations', involving the (Lacanian¹⁹) quest for 'an approximating resemblance', possibly diagrammatic or schematic, rather than mimetic, which might momentarily seem 'to fill [the] place' of 'that which one does not possess' (2).

First, Rosemary Butcher brings to this choreographic task and to the intuitions it excites, the *conceptual order* which she has developed through the history of her dance-making, and which bears her signature: she makes the emergent her own. Second, she reflects on sensible intuitions through her bringing to them the conceptual order specific to her own highly individual ways of seeing. She juggles these. Third, she brings disciplinary rules and production values – choreographic, visual art-specific – to bear on them. Fourth, she reviews this combination, and the thematic values which begin to emerge, in terms of the as-yet scarcely imaginable 'new work', to which she is professionally committed, and which will have, in terms of her own judgement and exigency, to be qualitatively transformed, to surprise her, while bearing her signature.

It is at the interface her work establishes between these aspects – the signed and singular conceptual, the disciplinary and rule-governed, the 'pulse-taking' specific to a given time and place – that rehearsal observers begin to see the emergence of 'something new', an instance of symbolic exhibition, in which the particular emergent qualities of the dancer as artist play a key role. Next, she modulates this emerging complexity, its density, its human-expressive and evocative power, by beginning to weave into it those process threads²⁰ and that positioning, which together articulate the drive that informs the practices: to make new work, which will look back at her.

If the sensible intuition appears to the senses as though in a flash, seeming to come from nowhere, yet it comes, it would appear, from a new and highly specific patterning of the complex mass of acquired, expert, overlaid experience and perception of the artist herself. It cannot be commanded forth, although 'the professional' depends upon

its emergence. It is on this basis that the workshop or rehearsal needs to be identified in terms of a stabilised experimental environment. When it emerges, in the arts-professional context, the intuition also tends to do so on the basis of a particular objective or objectives in view – for example, a specific professional production date, as well as an affectively informed and a qualitatively transforming objective. In this sense what emerges will already be heavy with past, present and future perspectives. Butcher captures it, in its fragility and uncertainty. She overlays that fragile material with the *rules* (specific to choreographic production) which she has mastered over a lifetime's work, and with a different future (new work) in view. In so doing, she also reflects on that intuition, retaining and discarding some of its implications; and she proceeds then to apply the merging of concept, intuition, and rule to an entirely different, signed, (philosophical) object – still called 'dance'.

I have argued elsewhere,²¹ on the issue of the operation of expert intuition, that some of the most notorious theoretical writers, over the final decades of the 20th century, whose writing is found to be particularly interesting by those involved in the visual and performance arts, have themselves used expert intuition whenever they have found themselves preoccupied with the task of theorising the radical outside of writing. The challenge that this 'radical outside' brings to philosophy, according to the cognitive neuroscientist, Steven Pinker,²² lies in its quality as 'something [that is] peculiarly holistic and everywhere-at-once and nowhere-at-all and all-at-the-same-time'. Its complexities are such as to test even the greatest 'compositional [and] combinatorial abilities' (140)²³ of the human mind. In her highly particular aesthetic, Rosemary Butcher chooses expert choreographic and filmic practices as the preferred means to articulate her own speculative and constantly reappraised grasp of these complexities.



17. Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, trans. with editorial notes by Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987

18. B. M. Stafford, *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting*, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 2001 (1999)

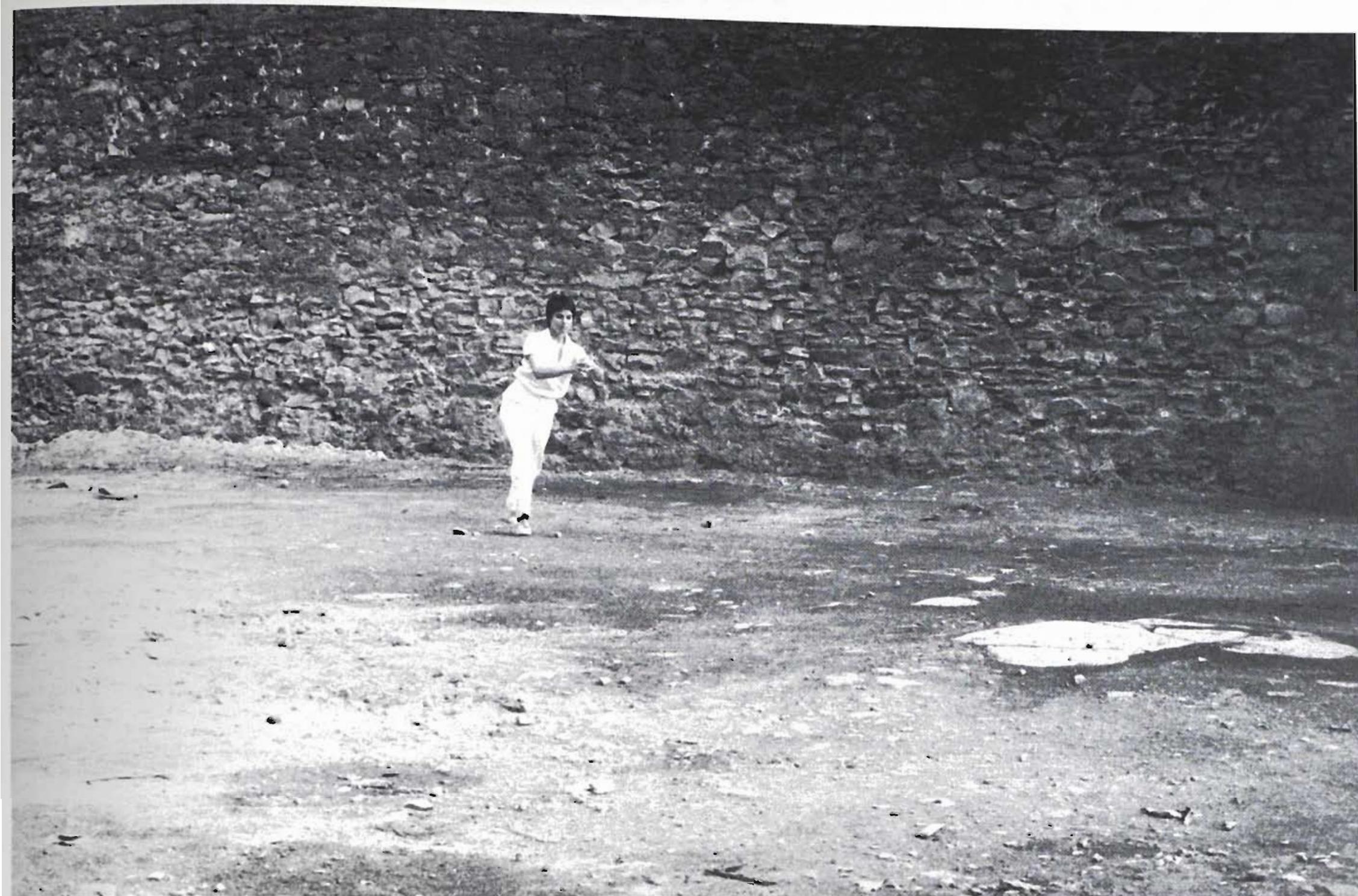
19. The Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition (although she does not otherwise invoke it) provides B. Stafford, as it does many other writers concerned with art practices, with the notion of the 'game of back and forth' (*Fort/Da!*), with which she begins her study of visual analogy. See, for example, J. Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. A. Sheridan, London: Tavistock Publications, 1977.

20. B. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002

21. <http://www.sfmelrose.u-net.com/justintuitive>

22. Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: the Modern Denial of Human Nature*, London: Allen Lane (Penguin Press), 2002, p.564

23. *Ibid.* p.120



GROUND LINE
Arnolfini 1976

Conclusion

I have sought, in these final pages, to do something quite specific: that is, to underline my assertion that the various instances of writing included in the present study together frame Rosemary Butcher's expert practices in such a way as to reveal within them an ongoing, unresolved, philosophical as well as epistemic (or knowledge-centred, research) engagement. My final question, in these terms, is simple: what precisely can one enquire into, in philosophical terms, choreographically? In this particular case, the philosophical engagement weaves together a particular aesthetic; a number of ways of knowing, hence a *techne* – or craft, or way of expert-doing (that is, a practice grounded in an 'account' – something involving theoretical understanding).²⁴ That *techne*, or a way of expert or professional knowing and doing, is itself informed – in this particular case – by the choreographer's own wider and constantly shifting knowledge of contemporary art practices. From this perspective, Rosemary Butcher's engagement in pursuing her own creative practices is also that of an expert (art) witness, whose own practices engage with and account – in speculative and reflexive mode – for aspects of the changing visual art context and choreographic contexts, within which she has found herself at work, over the past three decades. This is a remarkable achievement.

24. For a very useful account of the relationship between *techne* and *episteme*, before Aristotelian intervention, see R. Parry, 'Episteme and Techne', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2003 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2003/entries/episteme-techne>.

