

# A gift of writing? Choreographer and writer collaborations in the university

Pollard, Niki , Garrett Brown, N. , Lee, Rosemary and Voris, Amy

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# A gift of writing? Choreographer and writer collaborations in the university

[T]his essay is, in part, a defence of having nothing to say for oneself. (Denise Riley 2000:1)

## *Introduction*

This paper addresses every dance scholar (who may also be a practitioner) who has asked a dance-maker (or questioned themselves) for an account of how they make their work. It may interest too any dance-maker who has observed themselves hesitate when questioned about their work.

I am one such dance scholar; the last (first) word in my research lies always with one or other dance artist. The enquiry driving the present paper is into how an expert dance practitioner might word her/his understanding of how s/he works - a knowledge perspective that can be overlooked by those writing about dance product. If the overall concern is with attempts to observe dance practices, my particular focus is with the possibility of writing that matters to dance scholars precisely because, in the first instance, it matters to dance practitioners.

This enquiry carries implications for dance education in terms of how students are supported to reflect on and evidence dance study and professional development in and through writing. Such writing can include formal assignments or the sketches and notes students are encouraged to make as a record of choreographic enquiry and somatic-based and releasing classes. There are implications too for methodologies of creative practice as research in championing what might (if clumsily) be called dance practitioner-focused writing. Part 1 of this paper examines these implications through comparison with a practice as research model for evidencing knowledge that was proposed by Robin Nelson. Part 2 reflects on a writing collaboration between British choreographer Rosemary Lee and myself that aimed to acknowledge her professional practitioner knowledge of dance-making as speculative and future-focused (Melrose 2008). Part 3 addresses further the methodological challenges that arise in the project of (attempted) practitioner-focused writing, using a contrasting case study drawn from university-based dance research.

## *Part 1*

I write here, then, still troubled and curious about the possibility of practitioner-focused writing of dance-making. How and for whom will a dance practitioner write? When she or he writes, will writing work with a current choreographic or dance enquiry, or always report on what is past? Questions of this kind will arise if you approach writing as a professional artist; your responses may differ if you are, or are also, a university-based "artist-researcher" who not only practices dance but practices as research. (And will you indeed be reading this unless you have a stake in university research, be that as it may secondary to your dance-making?).

It has been suggested that the awarding of higher degrees in the performing arts begins to imply that the authority to 'constitut[e] the artist as a professional' belongs with the university (Jackson 2004:113). Is it possible then that the perspective of artists who can articulate and thematise their practice according to university-privileged registers of writing (de Certeau 1984, Melrose 2005) may become prioritised? As others have noted, the linguistic styles of rehearsal (a knowledge work setting for many dance artists), can differ greatly from those within which an academic evidences knowledge as writing. Discourse is used in the one to analyse interpretatively, in the other to attempt to record multi-modal and situational effects of experience. A choreographer's approach, that is to say, will be weighted to *affirmative-productive* knowledge modes (i.e. concerned with new-work-making processes), rather than *critical-reflective* (concerned with critical interpretations of work already made) (Massumi 2002:12).

As is becoming apparent, a practitioner-focused writing of affirmative knowledge modes may challenge existing frameworks for dance education and research. The factors in play here include both the contribution of artist-researchers and the ways students of dance are trained (and assessed) in articulating dance knowledge. It is useful to acknowledge that institutional appointments of artist-researchers and increased scholarly interest in dance-making (of which this paper is one example) are linked phenomena. The last decade has, in the UK alone, seen a wealth of academic conferences, symposia and research projects investigating performance-making practices<sup>i</sup>. Recent dance scholarly debates include, on the one hand, the legitimacy of practice-as-research (for example, Pakes 2003) and, on the other, whether expert choreographic practice may also be viewed in a university setting as research activity (for example, Brandstrup 2005-6, Melrose 2005).

The journal *Performance Research* in 2006 published a paper by Robin Nelson in which he set out a model for dance education by which knowledge produced through dance practice as research might be evidenced as scholarship. A brief review of Nelson's argument will enable me to develop the argument I am making for writing that matters to dance practitioners. In his paper, Nelson identified, in addition to a dance product, three domains for knowledge-production within a dance research process. These domains become the corners to a triangular model. They are firstly, 'practitioner knowledge (tacit, embodied or know-how, for example)'; secondly, 'critical reflection that aims to make 'the tacit more explicit'; and thirdly, the 'broader conceptual frameworks articulated for example through academic writing' (Nelson 2006:115). Nelson's point was, moreover, that 'relational encounters' between the three domains, and the 'mutual illumination of one element by another', can yield practice-as-research knowledge. These encounters, he wrote, 'might helpfully be pointed up for the purposes of articulating research' in a university context.

It is important to highlight that Nelson's model addresses university knowledge practices, whereas the present paper addresses primarily an interface between the knowledge practices of professional dance artists and that of university. Nelson is referencing frameworks for "reflective practice" that developed from the research of Michael Polanyi in the 1960s and of Donald Schön in the 1980s. Notwithstanding its productive take-up through the 1990s and post-2000 in higher education professional training programmes, "reflective practice" may not enable the practitioner-focused understanding that it might seem to offer. Schön's 1983 introduction to *The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action*, for example, evidences a troubled (and troubling) relation between scholars and arts practitioners. He wrote that:

When people use terms such as "art" and "intuition", they usually intend to terminate discussion rather than to open up inquiry. It is as though the practitioner says to his academic colleague, "While I do not accept *your* view of knowledge, I cannot describe my own". Sometimes, indeed, the practitioner appears to say, "My kind of knowledge is indescribable", or even, "I will not attempt to describe it lest I paralyze myself". (Schön 1983:viii)

Schön's representation of an "unreflective" professional practitioner seems surprisingly harsh; one who would 'terminate discussion', contrasted with the normative values of scholarly practices concerned with 'open[ing] up inquiry' and welcoming debate. The dogmatic refusal, 'I will not attempt' and the hyperbolic, archaically-phrased justification, 'lest I paralyze myself', evokes a figure that gestures towards the wilful, neurotic and histrionic, beside the apparently clearly articulated and well-intentioned objectives of pedagogic practices and their formulation. It is worth considering that, two decades into the take-up of Schön's approaches, some artists continue to show reticence in wording their practice for (or as) a researcher - including those who have access to the tools and modes of reflective practice (Pollard 2007).

I recognise, however, that a professional dance artist who also at times takes up the subject position of artist-researcher might indeed write with an aim, as Nelson suggests, of making 'the tacit more explicit' by a relational encounter between their choreographic knowledge and expertise in

academic modes of critical reflection. Whether what is thereby written can be deemed practitioner knowledge - or indeed, critical reflection (Rae 2003) - remains contested (in spite of the seductively neat visual rhyme, 'tacit/explicit'). The artist will be required to think at a meta-level of awareness (about how s/he works) which may tend to take one out of the time and space of the art process. Reflection may thereby be in addition to the arts practice, rather than produced as and within it. An account made from this somewhat disengaged subject position can "yield knowledge" by being framed in terms of a practice-as-research paradigm, as Nelson indicates. Reflections that arise in and as practice, however, may be connected to a given there and then, that is are experiential and engaged. To contribute to a university knowledge economy, they are seen as requiring scholarly intervention ("critical reflection", "broader conceptual frameworks").

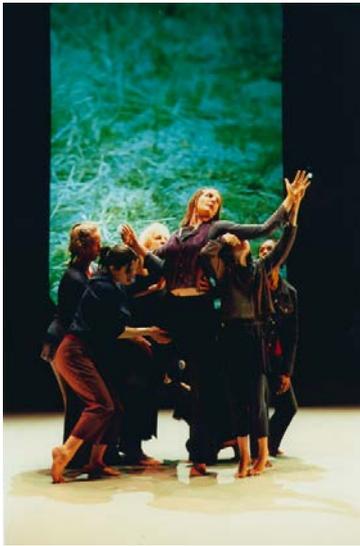
It might be speculated that the widespread teaching of phenomenology in dance institutions in this period will also have had an impact on practices of first person writing. Carol Brown has observed that the 'movement in contemporary dance in the 90s towards what has variously been called, the 'thinking body', or the 'reflective practitioner', has been largely inspired by the influence of somatic practices and techniques on the training and development of dance artists' (Brown 2003). As indicated in this paper, however, the position from which an artist reflects has until recently been less examined.

To return to Nelson's model, I want to underline the attention he gives in knowledge-terms to *relational encounters*. I am struck by the idea that, if a choreographer writes repeatedly, but in different ways, at different times, with different relations to dance-making, knowledge might, in Nelson's phrase, 'aggregate'. (Thereby raising new questions as to how a choreographer's writing is read.) What is tacit cannot of course directly be made explicit since language is a worked relational interface, producing its own affects during every communicative transfer. Any written account of knowledge produced through practice-as-research, with which Nelson is concerned, is complicated by the choices, grammatical and ethical, of its writing practice.

What I want to take forward from this discussion, then, is an awareness of the questions that remain as to how and when a dance practitioner (more so than a university artist-researcher) might produce writing. Dance academics therefore *should* be more concerned with the questions a professional choreographer might ask before writing, not least because their responses have a bearing on the practice-as-research carried out by university dance departments

## *Part 2*

The present paper was in part prompted by feedback following a writing project with professional choreographer Rosemary Lee. Lee is additionally employed by a university research centre (ResCen at Middlesex University) although not within a practice-as-research framework. Lee and I had worked together on a series of projects of collaborative writing supported by ResCen in which I wrote from the position of researcher-observer. This paper was written in consultation with Lee and builds on that collaboration; images are included in this paper so as to signal the primary importance of her choreographic practice to the present enquiry. The images below are from performances of *Passage* (2001), the first of Lee's works that I observed in the making, and from our subsequent reflective webpages.



Lee's *Passage* (2001, photographs by Pau Ros)



Images from the *Passage* website (2002), photographs by Pau Ros and Rosemary Lee

My own research refers to Lee's practice only if she has given prior feedback and permission to publish (as is the case with the present discussion). This section centres on her feedback on a description I made about observing aspects of the making of *Passage*. Lee's feedback stands here as caution to academic interest in choreographic practice:

I come across as a bit unknowing or sort of slightly helpless to my past or imaginings[...] I actually think that's correct to some extent but it then somehow makes me a subject in a public arena, that I become analysed and looked at and I remain silent. I think sometimes I present myself as a doubter [...] at other times I feel clear, assured, certain and secretly knowing.<sup>1</sup>

Lee's response suggests a reticence in the face of my scholarly enquiry into our collaborative writing and how it relates to her choreographic practice. Her concern that she might be represented

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<sup>1</sup> Rosemary Lee, June 2006, personal email, reprinted with her permission and revision.

as “unknowing” in a piece of academic writing would seem to signal some of the ethical difficulties for writing by a researcher “of” a dance-maker’s practice (and thereby implications for dance scholarship). In her feedback, Lee gives what I take to be considerable insight into a doubled affective stance: experiencing herself strategically in dance-making contexts as a “doubter” in order to orient herself to unexpected, unplanned-for moments in the studio, but simultaneously limiting the extent to which she experiences doubt so as not to jeopardise what for her is a necessary and productive conviction that she can succeed.

Lee's email points to difficulties for the project of developing dance-making focused writing by a choreographer and researcher that go beyond a collaborator's need for an ethics of practice (for example, of negotiation, trust, feedback and consideration). Particular philosophical difficulties face a choreographer in seeking to articulate his or her knowledge of performance-making as an actional, future-oriented process (and in the absence of that process, other than as partially traced in for example memory, video documentation or notebooks). Others have cited the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1972) and it is important to do so again. Bourdieu was an astute observer of the complex shifts of position (even as those I read in Lee's email) that occur when a practitioner is invited to reflect on her or his practice. If Lee makes an observation about her practice, it could be argued, following Bourdieu, that her making activity thereby becomes something looked at rather than being done: the artist researching her practice will then be 'trying to answer questions which are not and cannot be questions for practice' (Bourdieu 1972<sup>2</sup>).

Acknowledging some of these difficulties of writing in relation to dance-making, Lee and I sought to practise modes of writing that might ‘interface’ relatively un-intrusively with choreographing, sensing Lee's dance-making processes to be frequently provisional, speculative, active, collaborative, time-specific and omni-attentive. One outcome, for example, was a book reflecting on the making of Lee's dance work *Beached* (2002); the book aimed in part to write a choreographer's 'sense of the piece she has made which ambivalently echoes how she had imagined it in rehearsal and which may or may not coincide with how she sees it in performance'.

[IMAGE]

A page from *Beached: A commonplace book* (Pollard & Lee 2006)

When I attempted to describe our collaborative practices as I had observed them, Lee sensed herself to be represented as ‘*unknowing [...] slightly helpless to my past or imaginings*’. Her feedback reveals, it seems to me, that my observations had no validity as creative practitioner-focused knowledge of dance-making. (None, that is, unless marked relationally.) A researcher-observer too moves between implicated, motivated positions (here oriented to choreography and academia). The ways I observed Lee in the studio, for example, have been influenced by models of fieldwork practised in an anthropological tradition that readily, despite its best intentions, “others” its objects of analysis, as Lee's remark suggests (Clifford & Marcus 1986).

Brian Massumi in *Parables for the Virtual* (2002), describing a fast-moving ballgame, made a notable distinction between a player's and a spectator's understanding. The players' relations to one another, the goals and the ball, he began, are 'too complex to measure, only registerable as heightenings and releases of eddies of intensity in the midst of which appear openings for the potential movement of the ball' (Massumi 2002:74). By analogy, a choreographer might be said to

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<sup>2</sup> My thanks to Susan Melrose for first directing me as a research student to Bourdieu and Massumi's writing.

be attuned to the 'heightenings and releases of eddies of intensity' such that openings appear to her for choreographic intervention. In the web pages 'Caught by Seeing', Lee and I tried to illuminate the multiple frames of attention with which Lee operates (which might be said to contribute to Massumi's eddies of intensity), documenting and reflecting on her practice for both a university and arts setting. Melrose might term it a choreographer's *multidimensional look* (Brandstrup 2005-6); the plurality of Lee's voiceovers acknowledges that any single account would be inadequate.

[IMAGE ]

Webpage from "I am caught by seeing" Rosemary Lee with Niki Pollard (2005), interaction design by ActionTimeVision and The Brew, and documentary footage by Peter Anderson. Commissioned by NESTA, now available at [www.rescen.net](http://www.rescen.net)

Massumi continued:

Any and every movement of a player or the ball in that space modifies the distribution of potential movement over it. Each such modification is an event. The play is the event-dimension doubling the empirical event-space in which the substantial terms in play physically intermix. (Massumi 2002:75)

Massumi's distinction between *event-dimension* and empirical *event-space* might, I propose, be productive to theorising arts practitioner writing. If Lee as choreographer could be said to work in an event-dimension, I, as observer, see only the empirical event-space. I may feel myself to be observing qualities of eddying intensity, and Lee may attempt to illuminate them (as was the case retrospectively in this website), yet the experience is an illusion (which nonetheless motivates the attempt to write collaboratively); the intensities I perceive will not be choreographic for the reason that my engagement is not actional, is not that of a "player" - or rather, a "maker".

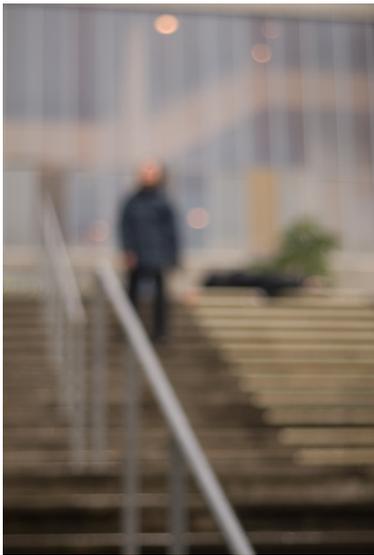
Lee valued my input as researcher-observer in spite of this considerable obstacle of my not being a "player". (And it can be recalled that the overall research premise here concerns the development of writing capable of articulating what matters to choreographers.) In writing collaboratively, Lee and I were also each continuing different individual enquiries. Outcomes include the present paper or the hybrid performance/lecture entitled *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie* as Lee developed it 2005-7. However, with the knowledge-position of observer so compromised, is there a future to practice-focused writing that includes a researcher-writer's perspective? Cautiously, my argument is in support of practices of collaborative writing by a choreographer and researcher-writer, but that remain alert to the motivated and implicated positions of each.

### *Part 3*

Taking as its starting point, Lee's commitment to co-writing with a research writer, Part 3 proposes that the case for collaborative practice-focused writing is strengthened by theorising the value a dance artist may give to the collaboration. Returning once more to Nelson's model, knowledge-productive conditions were described as being made possible by an 'interplay of perspectives' (Nelson 2006:115). A dance artist might value a collaboration precisely because s/he recognises knowledge is being produced in inter-relation with a researcher-writer, knowledge which both matters to him/her and which is not otherwise forthcoming.

It is worth noting that the perspective of the writer is not something brought to the collaborative 'interplay', but is itself a negotiated element. Lee, for example, invited me to observe rehearsals, read her notebooks and talk with her over an extended period. My knowledge perspective in the

collaboration was immersed but not that of a “player”. In Part 3, I will additionally be concerned with another collaboration in which my writing knowledge perspective was differently negotiated. Part 2 was concerned with the attempt to word a professional choreographer's understanding of how she works. Part 3 considers what bearing this attempt to write in affirmative-productive modes has on university-based performance research, which may have diverse outputs including professional performance, research presentations and academic papers. The collaboration was with dance artists Natalie Garrett and Amy Voris, and photographer Christian Kipp (and with whom I have liaised in writing this paper<sup>3</sup>). Garrett and Voris invited Kipp and I to contribute to an extended enquiry into practices of what may be termed (not without difficulty) site-responsive dance and which has centred on developing a duet in a series of underpasses on a Coventry ring road. Outputs to date include a conference residency and a paper by Garrett (AHRC *Living Landscapes*, Aberystwyth 2009), and performance sharings (Summer Dancing, Coventry, 2008 & 2009). My role was to respond to and contribute to Garrett and Voris' research practice by participating as a writer whose practices include dance.



If an artist values the interplay of perspectives with a writing practitioner, the knowledge position of the latter is less compromised than appeared at the close of Part 2. For there to be this interplay, a clear interval, however negotiated, must exist between practitioners' perspectives, the one primarily leading, the other responding. If that interval, narrow or wide, is elided, any writing produced will attract Melrose's critique of spectator-viewpoint representations of performance practice (Melrose 2008).

Can the interval between perspectives remain dance practitioner-focused in the kinds of writing collaboration I am proposing? My reply is speculative and draws on an exchange - an interplay - between Garrett and I. Reproduced below is a passage from my notebook in which I reflected on how Voris and Garrett draw on their ongoing training in Body-Mind Centering (BMC), a practice of experiential anatomy developed in the US by Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen, to support their work at the Coventry ringroad.

Natalie briefly offered me BMC bodywork that encouraged my attention to my heart and arterial/venous flow. She then guided me to movement patterns that are supported, according to

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<sup>3</sup> The present paper seems to position aspects of their project, *Enter Inhabit Leave*, as illustrative of my theoretical argument, an academic move with political and ethical difficulties. To mark the limited, provisional status of the positioning, I invited Christian Kipp to include project photographs in this section.

BMC, by these physical structures and processes. The heart and arterial movement patterns felt initially unfamiliar and not within my repertoire of movement preferences [...]

Deliberately working with these somatic patterns on site, I was startled by how markedly my experiencing of the site changed. When I moved, adopting these heart and arterial patterns, I experienced moment-by-moment connections with the site in kinaesthetic modalities. Moving with a heart-flow sensitised embodiment, I perceived myself to be *meeting* particular qualities of the site [...] as a secondary process, I could rationalise the nature of the connection I was feeling between site and my embodiment (for example, as a response to traffic sound, or to the sight of a crane's silhouette).

The distinctions are subtle and hard to word [...] entering the site with an already sensitised somatic state, I was surprised by how I experienced connections as *already* existing between my moving (and therefore my self) and the site. That is, they did not feel mediated by the information I was receiving there through sensory channels. These connections were available for me to recognise and hone, but were not ones I had been aware of making.

(Pollard, *Enter Inhabit Leave* process writing, 2009)

In these paragraphs I attempted to document my encounter with Garrett and Voris' collaborative process. To move in the underpasses with a physicality attuned by BMC had struck me as distinctive and unusual. Upon reading the paragraphs, Garrett annotated them "thank you", commenting that my description had helped her crystallise her (verbal, meta) understanding of her collaborative practice with Voris. This occurred despite gaps in my knowledge, for example, as to why Garrett and Voris had chosen to work with a BMC-focus on heart and circulation. What Garrett's thanks marks, I believe, is that my writing offered back to her an *interface* with the practice she had offered me, one that brought into sharper focus its research significance. I had written in the first instance to Garrett and Voris; my motivation was to reflect back to them what seemed to me to be of significance for them.

This constitutes an unusual and sometimes contested collaborative relation for dance research. Is it nostalgic and deferential to artists as origin of meaning for their work? No, I would argue, since the writing produced is not *about* a creative practice, but a worked interface with it, more akin to a dramaturgical function. As writing practitioner, I seek to engage with what seems to matter to a dance practitioner. The knowledge-productive conditions arise only when the dance artist engages with and responds to the writer's effort to engage and understand. By this mutual engagement, ideas and observations are prompted which fold back epistemically into the arts practice and/or are investigated further as writing. In the case here, when I wrote in response to Garrett and Voris' practice, I formed a provisional understanding which prompted for Garrett further and different insights and opened up further enquiry in and as both dance and writing.

What is the status of such writing? I have been addressing some of the methodological challenges of practice and practitioner-focused writing as I wish to argue that these forms should be included in dance training and research. Yet it is difficult to envisage a publication context for them. Extensive revision might be required to make writing produced with and for a dance artist publishable to a wider readership. In so doing, the writing risks becoming something other than practice and practitioner-focused.

### *Concluding*

The present paper has offered a model for, and described attempted cases of, dance practice- and practitioner-focused writing produced relationally by collaboration with a writing-practitioner. Questions remain as to how, when and why a dance practitioner uses writing as an interface with his or her dance practice. Many of these questions have a bearing on the approaches to practice-as-research carried out in, or associated with, university dance departments. I have proposed moreover that dance scholarship recognise the philosophical implications of asking a dance practitioner for an

account of how she or he works. In the instances discussed here, when I have asked a dance practitioner about how they work, the context has been a collaboration – that is, a mutually knowledge-productive interplay. It is worth underlining that this constitutes a particular case, which I can clarify with a remark of choreographer Kim Brandstrup:

When we come together, the dancers and I, it is to make a piece. That piece for me takes its shape from them [...]; for them the piece comes from what I give them [...]what they bring of themselves, is a gift, something that I might want, but something that I cannot expect. (Brandstrup 2005-6) <sup>ii</sup>

It may be that Brandstrup is using “gift” in the sense of a talent or aptitude, yet as an inter-relation it offers clarification of the collaborative relation proposed by my research. That is, if dance practitioners sometimes hesitate or seem reticent when asked to give an account of their practice, it might be useful to ask what a dance scholar gives in return. Writing in *Performance Research*, P.A. Skantze (2007) observed that ‘academic training continues primarily to teach us how to articulate stillness in thinking and writing’, blind to how these are taken up and used (2007:139). Skantze proposed instead that academic writing take up a trope of writing in a gift economy: ‘We cannot know the gift has been received unless we know it is gone – a different category of knowing – moved on’ (Skantze 2007:144).

By Nelson's model, a dance practitioner's writing, collaborative or otherwise, might evidence knowledge gained through creative practice-as-research. Taken a step further, using Skantze's proposal, we arrive at another possibility; that a dance artist's writing (evidencing creative research that perhaps unfolded in the making of a performance work) might also contribute to ongoing research. A choreographer who gives an account of his or her practice and enquiry, may, to follow Skantze, operate to a different category of knowing; their enquiry and their work has *moved on*. In a writing collaboration, the theoretical complexity is increased; knowing moves on plurally, with differences and synergy.

To conclude, an attempt at practice-focused writing by or with a dance practitioner might be measured as effective, by that artist, to the extent that in producing it s/he can elaborate a creative enquiry of his or her own, which s/he pursues elsewhere *as dance*, as well as a writing-based enquiry, within a university framework or not. Collaborative writing as work should seek, on this sort of basis, as ethical undertaking, to “give something back” to the dance practitioner, “about” his/her work, but viewed from a position outside of, as well as empathetically immersed in. To pursue this through to one effective outcome (writing practised), the dance artist contracts-in to the negotiation; and on that basis, alone, can a writer undertake to listen carefully to the dance artist. With *Enter Inhabit Leave*, I was listening to Garrett and Voris and to my experience, observing and participating, of becoming immersed. With Lee, I was watching her (at) work, systematically assuming a position secondary to her own. At best, the practice of writing is produced as a gift to the dance maker.

Building on the research of Melrose and Massumi, the modes of practitioner-focused writing must be affirmative-productive (concerned with new-work-making processes), rather than critical-reflective (concerned with critical interpretations of work already made). In its interface with dance practices, writing will be provisional (because produced in relation to an ongoing art enquiry); alert to its writers' motivated positions and habits of judgement; tentative (and often fragmentary, so as to acknowledge the multi-modal knowledge-complexity of rehearsal that has not be “captured”); and practitioner-driven - that is attentive to what matters to a practitioner. For dance education, the implications of this project are pressing, as Melrose has warned<sup>4</sup>, if universities are to meet the concerns of experienced dance artists enrolled on their research programmes, not simply to side-

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<sup>4</sup> In July 2007 introduction to her website, [www.sfmelrose.u-net.com](http://www.sfmelrose.u-net.com)

step them with concerns substituted from a viewing theoretical perspective. The call to scholarship is to theorise the complexity, both grammatical and ethical, which dogs every attempt to write research into artists' own practices.

December 2009

**Niki Pollard with Rosemary Lee, Amy Voris and Natalie Garrett**

developed also on the basis of work with Susan Melrose, Kim Brandstrup, Rosemary Butcher

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## Abstract

What is investigated are certain philosophical implications of asking a dance artist for an account of how she or he works. The research proposes the development of practices of collaborative writing by a dance artist and researcher-observer (alert to the motivated and implicated positions of each) that are capable of articulating what *matters* to dance practitioners. Noting that many issues specific to the production and reception of a practitioner-focused writing have a bearing on dance education and on institutional practice-as-research frameworks, it is argued that dance academics should be more concerned with the questions an artist might ask before writing.

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<sup>i</sup> See Pollard 2007:5 for a survey: of research centres premised on “practice as research”; completed practice-based doctorates; the appointment of AHRC creative fellows; and the array of conferences, symposia and research projects investigating performance-making practices since at least 2000.

<sup>ii</sup> Brandstrup's conversation has been published in co-authorship with Susan Melrose. Melrose commented of their conversation, significantly for the present paper, that 'we are *co-authoring* here as an aspect of your professional-creative research project. We are trying to unfold one aspect of it, and this dialogue could not take place except in those terms'. Melrose in Brandstrup 2005-6.