THE ARCHITEXTS OF EIDOS: TELOS

A critical study through intertextuality of the dance text conceived by William Forsythe

by
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ABSTRACT

This study has grown out of the experience of reading dance criticism, and being unable to relate it to the performance in question because the preconceived opinion of the critic has served as a barrier to seeing. What this reveals as problematic is the notion of closure brought by traditionalist criticism to non-traditional art forms. The problem is not created by the art work itself, but by critical approaches conditioned by the past. If the convention critiqued by the postmodern art work is rejected by criticism, then there is need for a different kind of relationship. In this study, intertextual theory is proposed as a means by which criticism and postmodern art are able to position themselves as equals. Performance semiotics provides the model through which this is explored, first for structuring performance as text, and second for drawing up a methodological approach for intertextual criticism of dance.

The work of William Forsythe and his company, the Ballett Frankfurt, is directed at critiquing ballet, which is treated not as a fixed entity, but as an encyclopaedic resource awaiting activation by philosophical discourses. Critics who are unwilling to engage with this enquiry, preferring to see ballet as glorifying its past, reveal an odd lack of curiosity about the results of the research, and often reject it. Forsythe's *Eidos:Telos* (1995) becomes the model through which to examine the problems of criticism in a postmodern context, addressing them through the perspective of intertextuality. *Eidos:Telos* communicates by many different signifying systems that cannot be collected together into a neat summarising statement. In approaching *Eidos:Telos* through intertextual criticism, the ballet must first be examined to see if it can be identified as a text. As text it can be presented through descriptive interpretation, then probed for evidence of intertextuality.

The 'architext' is used as a metaphor for bringing together ideas both from the literature on text and textuality and Forsythe's work, with its emphasis on architectural and textural structures. Four architexts are identified, and analysed for evidence of intertextual relationships. The intention is to show how intertextuality can bring a useful perspective to seeing *Eidos:Telos*, a text that is always complex, and frequently obscure. The architexts are not confined within specified moments, but are revealed as thematic strands, or reverberative forces running through *Eidos:Telos*. These forces are neither fixed nor stable, and cannot be shaped into a summarising conclusion. The referent always disappears, allowing no single reading of *Eidos:Telos*. Intertextuality enables criticism to be brought into a relationship of equality with the art work. While it does not lessen the complexity of seeing and connecting, it does bring a perspective that enhances seeing.
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Here and there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion.

TS ELIOT

From East Coker, *Four Quartets*
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INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with dance criticism and the difficulty of seeing perceptively when what is seen does not conform with, or live up to, expectation. These problems are pursued through an examination of the choreography of William Forsythe, his work with the Ballett Frankfurt, and the challenge that his ballets produce for criticism. In the need to find a way of tackling the problems of dance criticism, and of 'reading' what is seen in Forsythe's ballets, a particular perspective is introduced.

Forsythe's choreography is in demand wherever there are ballet companies (Meisner, 1995; Wilkins, 1998), because it is work that brings fundamental changes to dance. His choreography is rooted in ballet, but the choreographic investigations that he has carried out over the past two decades conflict with tradition and reveal instead a postmodernist sensibility towards history. Forsythe approaches dance as if it were a body of knowledge awaiting fresh challenges. Seeking to discover new forms and to explore form through different concepts, his works are complex montages, threaded through with influences that extend from high art to the vernacular, by way of philosophical questioning. Almost from the start of his career, he gained a reputation as a subversive choreographer, and in nearly twenty-five years of producing new work, he has done nothing to change this image. His work is like a magnet, and draws creative artists of many different nationalities to it, not just from dance but from other art forms as well.

And yet, it is hard to find examples in the critical literature that discuss Forsythe's work in depth. The vast majority of what has been written is to be found in reviews and journalistic articles, combining summary information about the work and the choreographer. Though substantial essays appear from time to time in dance periodicals and academic
journals, and though there is evidence of considerable interest in writing about the work in undergraduate and post-graduate studies,¹ there is no solid body of literature that can be turned to for factual, analytical and interpretative understanding of the work.² Nor is there any published study devoted to an individual Forsythe work.

The omission can perhaps be set in context through looking at Forsythe’s geographical positioning in Central Europe. While Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt tour frequently in Europe, Frankfurt itself is not renowned as a place of critical pilgrimage. Therefore unless a writer is making a special study of Forsythe, enquiry into Western theatre dance often overlooks the work completely. Indeed, many recent publications bringing insight to dance through different theoretical perspectives do not even mention the name of Forsythe (Desmond, 1997, Carter, 1998, for example). In focusing on Forsythe’s choreography, the intention is to bridge the gap in the literature, and to provide an account of the work, its characteristics and the challenges it brings to seeing – and to look at these challenges in the context of a single work.

The thesis is divided into three parts, with Part One looking at the difficulties between criticism and the postmodern art form, and proposing intertextuality as a critical perspective through which to bring them into a relationship as equals. Part Two concentrates on Forsythe’s work and background, and on his development of the Ballett Frankfurt. Part Three analyses a single Forsythe work, *Eidos:Telos* (1995), through intertextuality.

In Chapter 1, the central problem is introduced, showing how criticism can ‘misread’ postmodern dance when it seeks to impose a judgement from the past. The problem lies in attempting to look at a work using history as an authority, when it may be the very authority that the dance work critiques. In other words, an inappropriate measure is being applied by criticism. Dance’s ephemerality, and the lack of tangible evidence for
criticism to work with after the performance is over produces difficulties. Dance criticism has been slow to theorise its practices, and that practice is often self-perpetuating.

A means of finding how dance and its criticism can work together rather than in conflict is proposed in Chapter 2, through intertextual theory. This holds out a promise to criticism as a way of dealing with work that may be difficult to interpret, and which may seem obscure because it demands a change in the habits of watching. Looking first at textual theory, intertextuality is introduced through the work of Barthes and Kristeva, and other theorists. It is shown as a vast discursive field, subject to different theoretical approaches. Before dance can be analysed intertextually, there is need to construct an appropriate theoretical model, and the model of the semiotic performance text is therefore turned to. If properties of textuality can be found within the dance work, then the dance work can make a theoretical shift into a text, making it possible for intertextual analysis to proceed.

With Part 1 providing the theoretical groundwork, the two chapters of Part 2 introduce the work of Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt. The first of its chapters (Chapter 3) presents a biographical account of a choreographer who was born in the United States, and who has spent most of his working life in Europe. It looks at how Forsythe has been influenced both by the choreography of Balanchine and the spatial theories of Laban, and considers how these influences led him to embark on processes of deconstructing ballet. It looks too at the special nature of the Ballett Frankfurt, and at how it functions as a ‘creative laboratory’, working all the time to question dance and its practices. Forsythe's choreography ruptures and subverts: at least that is how it seems if looked at through the eyes of critics who are accustomed to the practices of classicism and modernism. His ironisation of dance's past - particularly in the context of ballet and its relationship with classicism - highlights the dilemma of what can be seen in dance.
Chapter 4 looks in greater detail at how Forsythe works to deconstruct ballet, and at the difficulties that this produces. As he effectively breaks 'hallowed' rules, or the principles of ballet that have for so long been held to be inviolable, he shows that ballet can be released from the grip of classicism, and can enter the discourse of poststructuralism. Through this choreographic approach, the body is no longer compelled to relate to a centralised verticality, but as it explores different spatial planes and trajectories, it becomes harder to read. It therefore produces difficulties for the viewer and the critic, as is illustrated in the examples that compare different critical responses.

The three chapters of Part 3 introduce *Eidos:Telos*, and look at it as text, and then intertext. Chapter 5 discusses the background of *Eidos:Telos* and the difficulties of working with an abstract performance. There is a need for dance criticism to present the dance text to a reader, but it can only do so through description, and through acknowledging that description is both subjective and partial. With a case made for seeing *Eidos:Telos* as text, Chapter 6 looks at how intertexts can be seen to be influential in advance of the text, and how expectation is set up through signs that may be seen as marginal. These affect performance reception, as can be seen from responses by audiences and critics. In Chapter 7, the architext, is proposed as a way of bringing together diverse themes found in *Eidos:Telos*. The architext, as a metaphor bringing together theories of text and intertext, with the architectural and textual structures found in Forsythe's ballet, becomes the means through which *Eidos:Telos* is able to be analysed intertextually.

From this it is proposed that intertextuality can bring criticism and the art work together as equals, for intertextuality is seen to release criticism from the tyrannical hold of the past. It offers a way of looking through the present to the past, and of not standing in judgement. It allows dance and criticism to work together creatively.
One problem that should be acknowledged in this introduction is the
fallibility of the expression 'in dance'. It is fallible because there is no
certainty of understanding what is 'inside' dance and what is 'outside'.
Dance is transmitted by an interpreter who communicates to a receiver,
but the dance that is seen cannot be separated from the interpreter-dancer,
and this means that the borders between dance and dancer are always
fluid. There can be no verifiable distinction between them. Linguistic
usage insists on the convention of seeing through notions of what is 'in'
and 'out'. It is, therefore, impossible to write about dance without
reference to what is seen as 'in dance' or 'out' of it, and in what follows,
these unstable expressions are used frequently.

Notes

1 The information for this section has been gathered from sources that include Forsythe himself and
members of the Ballett Frankfurt (see note in acknowledgements).
2 Publication of Senta Driver's edited volume William Forsythe in the Choreography and Dance series
was due in the Spring of 2000 (for details see bibliography), after the research period had ended.
Driver's generosity meant that I have had access to the work in proof form.
PART ONE

Theoretical positioning

Chapter 1: Critical enclosure

Chapter 2: Interactive text
CHAPTER 1

Critical enclosure

1.1 Introduction

Materialising in language, criticism is a cultural artifact, a way of organising thought relative to an art object. Criticism mediates that which is seen in the object, and since seeing is neither innocent (Gombrich, 1960), nor isolated from external connections, the object is always complex. Many problems emerge from the complexity of seeing and connecting, and in moving towards identification of the main concern of this study, two particular issues present themselves: first, the relationship between criticism and its object and second, the incompleteness of the object. The object is incomplete because seeing is never completed.

This study has grown out of the experience of reading dance criticism and being unable to relate it to the performance in question, because the opinion of the critic has served as a barrier to seeing. What the performance has conveyed may not have lived up to what was presupposed about the performance, and as a result what was ‘seen’ was accounted for by absence rather than presence. It is the distance between dance performance and critical seeing that is this study’s main concern, and in this chapter the problem is examined through looking at the nature and function of criticism, and the difficulties attached to seeing dance. It would seem that there is an argument to be made for bringing dance and criticism into a different kind of relationship.
From a theoretical perspective the notion of completeness in performance, of something that is containable as an entity, is unrealistic. While technically a performance may have a beginning and an end, it has no real point of start or finish. It only shaped itself into a performance through creative processes that were activated during a period of creative processing, and drew from an unidentifiable past, and when it has officially ended, the forces that have been released in performance will direct themselves into an unidentifiable future. Seeing is not solely dependent on physical presence, but is perceptual. Whatever is seen is ascribed, or constructed by an observer. The critic bestows properties on the art object, projecting on to it knowledge and individual experience, and the activity leads to the presentation not of a completed object, but to a selected part of it.

It can be seen that in the need to be selective, there may be problems. One of the problems dominating dance criticism is the stronghold exerted by structuralism and modernism (Carol Martin, in Morris, 1996:320). This means that dance is seen through a particular framework, categorising art and criticism separately (Burgin, 1986), and positioning both in a relationship with a stabilised aesthetic (Harvey, 1990:205). When criticism's mode of operation is reliant on being able to 'measure' what is seen against something else, it can find itself in conflict with the object it seeks to rationalise, where there is no reliable means of comparison.

It is all very well to be able to measure performances of historical dance, where there is a long tradition to relate to, but it is where there is little or no tradition that a conflict emerges. In particular it is postmodernism's critique of the normative in art that challenges conventional procedures of criticism. When the artist ironises the past, and when critical seeing (believing in the importance of a particular history) is governed by the past, criticism is revealed as out of sympathy with the object of its enquiry, before the enquiry has begun. The dilemma is not created by history but by attitudes taken to it. These attitudes create a rift between
criticism and artistic creation, and it is this rift that is the main concern of the present study.

1.2 The relationship between art and criticism

In looking at the perceived division, it makes sense to enquire into the conditions that have brought it about, and to question what kind of relationship between art and criticism might be desirable. It is when the art work is seen to break rules of convention that the reactive critic protests and looks at it through existing values that denote closure. It makes sense to suggest that criticism ought to empathise with the art form, and that (to a degree at least) empathy can be assumed to be part of criticism's raison d'être. Empathy, however, might err on the side of subjectivity, and it could be that 'sensibility' is a more apt term for a relationship through which criticism can approach the object of its enquiry in a spirit of openness.³

The art form and criticism exist in a stronghold of mutual dependency. Yet traditionally, this relationship is hierarchical. While a particular work of art is not dependent on criticism for existence, the art form - theoretically, ideologically and pragmatically - looks to criticism for support. When criticism bestows an appreciative perspective, the art form is revealed to a recipient through a particular context. It emanates from an ideological network that is in part aesthetic and in part social. In criticism the conventional is institutionalised, relative to historically constituted cultural knowledge that is tied to looking at - and seeing - art. When verisimilitude is sought (Barthes, 1987) it takes its authority from existing structures, seeing itself as endowed with legislative powers.

The practice of criticism is linked to the evolution of the arts, and to the philosophy of seeing. When the art that is initiating the seeing expands its horizons, it makes sense to propose that criticism has a duty to reflect these changes. Yet seeing is cultural and habitual, and the modernist approach to seeing and criticising exerts an almost irresistible hold, a compulsion to find attributes of 'goodness' or 'badness' which, when
they are found, are applied as resolution, or ends in themselves.\textsuperscript{4} When criticism that is bound by the habits of structuralism attempts to pinpoint meaning in a multidimensional and pluralist postmodern work, it encounters difficulties that will almost certainly lead to misrepresentation of the object.

The place of theory in the practice of criticism is a matter for continuing debate (Burgin, 1986). Dance criticism often reveals itself as impressionistic, which may lead to aesthetic trivialisation (Shusterman, 1978:312) and is perhaps one reason why it does not command the status of other arts criticism. It is regarded as ‘younger and less diversified than the criticism of most of the other arts’ ... with an ‘existing body of dance criticism [that] appears either embarrassingly naïve or refreshingly straightforward’ (Copeland and Cohen, 1983:424).\textsuperscript{4} The problem with impressionist criticism is that it may reveal more about the individual critic, and how s/he was affected by the experience, than about the art form. When criticism concentrates on emotional response it can, as Denby has pointed out (1986:527-531), prohibit perception. Other art forms such as fine art, music and drama benefit from a long theoretical tradition. Dance’s theories have not (yet) filtered into dance practice in the way that, for example, theory has long been integral to the music practice. Whatever ideologies and beliefs may be drawn into dance criticism, they are likely to be encountered in the practice itself, rather than through reference to a body of theory. The practice of western theatre dance criticism points to a widespread tendency to see dance through values formulated by classical ballet, and to apply the principles of classicism judgementally, regardless of the character or genre of the work under scrutiny. The following quotation puts the problem into context:

\begin{quote}
Western critics have hierarchies, though we may not admit it. Going from the bottom up, we esteem social dancing, pop dancing, jazz dancing, theatrical dancing, concert dancing. Ballet. Classical ballet dancing seems accepted as the crowning achievement of dance art in Western culture. And within that hierarchy, we also tend to respect old work more than we
respect new work, and an ‘accurate’ reproduction of an old work over a reinterpretation.

Siegel in Carter, 1998:92

For Siegel, ‘high art’ is made accessible because of the amount of documentation that can support it (1998:93). Criticism’s historic relationship with ‘high art’ has helped perpetuate the relationship between those who judge and those who are the subject of its judgement. High art, so it is argued, (see Shrum, 1996; Carol Martin, in Morris, 1996), demands a response that is informed by knowledge of historical approval – or aesthetic taste. Aesthetic appraisal, emerging in the 18th century, is the outcome of objective reasoning and recognition in the realm of values, as distinctive from subjective response (see Redfern, 1983 and 1986). The invidiously termed ‘low art’ (which might more satisfactorily be termed popular culture) demands a more immediate and spontaneous response (Shrum, 1996: 43-46). It is where work cannot be readily categorised as either high or low that the status of such distinctions is thrown into question.

Criticism in practice reveals, similarly, a hierarchical division into critics and reviewers. Critics concentrate on high art, while reviewers work with culture that is more accessible. Critics are specialists who address a knowledgeable readership – extending from the scholarly to the journalistic - while reviewers represent public opinion and convey their findings to a more general readership (Copeland and Cohen, 1983; Shrum, 1996). There is a tendency for the reviewing of popular culture to support forces of conservatism and metanarratives, in other words to uphold consensus opinion (Burgin, 1986:152).

There are marked differences between criticising and reviewing. Ironically, the critic can be said to review art, and the verb points to an activity of criticism involving retrospective seeing. Those who are generally thought of as critics (labelled in this way by arts editors of
national newspapers, for example) are more often carrying out a function of journalist criticism. Here too a hierarchy operates, since it is generally broadsheet newspapers that publish art criticism, and seldom tabloids. According to the perceived status of the publication, and of the individual critic, journalist criticism extends across a spectrum of criticism and reviewing. Academic criticism constructs a perspective in order to reveal the art object through a particular mode of perception, and can sometimes be seen to blur the distinction between critic and historian.

1.3 The functioning of criticism

Criticism is a discourse which engenders a meaning and attaches it to a form, the work. It cannot 'translate' the work but merely attaches a coherent set of signs to it.

Pilcher Keuneman in Barthes, 1987:22

The function of criticism is to select an aspect of an art object in ways that communicate to a recipient, usually a reader. The aim of criticism has been summarised by various theorists. For example, it 'tries to explain or clarify the work of art' (Stolnitz, 1960:441); it seeks to reflect 'a facet of the whole from [a particular] angle' (Fergusson in Shusterman, 1978: 315), it rises 'above its object to a point from which it can peer down and disinterestedly examine it' (Eagleton, 1996:119). These aims are not trouble-free, for they presume that the critic is in a position to be able to enlighten a reader in some way. The critic who is unable to account for what is seen can be left feeling 'stupefied' by it. In which case, if the work has to be looked at critically, it may lead to the return of old habits of seeing: to pointing to what is missing from the art work because it does not match expectation.

It is inevitable that critical findings are developed through interpretative processes, and that these involve measures of evaluation. These cannot be tested by any form of scientific measurement, and are themselves open to evaluation (Sontag, 1994:7). The danger of interpretation is that it can move so far away from the object it seeks to make sense of,
that it loses touch with it. Interpretation needs to be held in a conscious relationship, and

must be evaluated within a historical view of human consciousness. In some cultural contexts, interpretation is a liberating act. It is a means of revising, of transvaluing, of escaping the dead past. In other cultural contexts, it is reactionary, impertinent, cowardly, stifling.  

Sontag, 1994:7

The processes of seeing and interpreting performance are unlikely to operate in a logical continuing line. The mind lights on something arbitrarily, through an associative engagement that extends beyond what is physically present. It is unlikely to be predominantly literal. Even where the dance is narrative, there are always other codes at work. 'Meaning is expressed through the organisation of associative symbols rather than through the value of the symbols alone' (Kaye, 1994:80, citing an argument by Langer).

1.4 Judgement as an issue

Looking back at the history of criticism, it evolved, like aesthetic appraisal, during the eighteenth century, when it was a form of reasoning associated with high art (Burgin, 1986:149-153). It targeted judgement, deriving from an alliance with a mythical legislative body – or more realistically from a blending of social, cultural and aesthetic practices. Judgement of this kind, unlike science or mathematics, could never achieve absolute precision and was always capable of producing diverse and subjective opinion. Even when in the twentieth century, objectivity was linked to criticism (Williams, 1988:86), inevitably an element of subjectivity was also involved. When the aims of the artist creator and the critic related to the same ‘authority’ then their relationship could be seen to exist within a certain supportive framework. But when the art work broke through these pre-determined authorities, then the critic applying what Barthes (1987) terms ‘old-style judgement’ was left without a proper foundation for judgement – and this could lead to contemptuous dismissal of the art work.
The alliance between judgement and criticism is upheld so resolutely by popular culture that if criticism does not determine whether or not a performance merits attention, then it is seen to have failed in its responsibility. The point was underlined by an article in The Guardian newspaper that looked at 'the death of serious criticism', and observed: 'one result of postmodernism is [criticism’s] refusal to engage with the work critically (except, chiefly, as a source of jokes)' (Jeffries, 1997: 8).17 The joke that Jeffries understood was that criticism had associated itself with the 'anything goes' school (ibid.), and in doing so had relinquished the power that characterised it. But in making the comment, Jeffries had himself failed to recognise that critical theorists had widened the focus on judgement to propose that 'the task of criticism is to discover forms of validity' (Barthes, cited in Lodge, 1989:63). Anything to do with value has of course a relationship with an authority, but 'forms of validity' moves towards the realm of appreciation (Wollheim 1992: 236) and renders the authority less stern. Searching for forms of validity, the critic can remember Bergson’s view that, 'in philosophy the yes and no are sterile. What is interesting, instructive, and pregnant is to what extent?' (in Chevalier, 1970:171).

This view accommodates postmodernism's problematisation of contemporary institutions, including criticism (Burgin, 1986; Ulmer and Jameson in Hal Foster, 1985). It challenges traditional practices and theories, and is characteristically doubly-coded and ironic, making a feature of the wide choice, conflict and discontinuity of traditions [and revealing a] heterogeneity [that] captures our pluralism.

Jencks, 1987:7

When Barthes points out that 'to criticize means to call into crisis' (1977:201), criticism can be seen by extension to connect to the postmodern enquiry. The implication of calling something into crisis is to position it as the focus of attention, and to look at it from different angles. It is the job of theory to reveal crisis and work with it (Culler, 1997). This might be a neat way of saying that theory and criticism can
work hand in glove, were it not for the problems that arise from the narrowness of prescriptive theory, when theoretical readings and critical perspectives are positioned in inappropriate relationships. The relationship does not have to be inappropriate, if it is discursive, and if theory is used as a means of opening out the enquiry rather than closing it down. The relationship will be discursive if

the function of criticism [is] to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means.

Sontag, 1994: 14 (italics in original, 1964)

In showing the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ of the art work, criticism can move towards the pro-active, and can exercise initiatives of its own that are more in keeping with the postmodern art work. There is a movement transforming criticism, taking it beyond modernism and structuralism to ‘post-criticism’, which presents new possibilities, for

what those who attack post-criticism as “parasitical” have not yet realized is that montage-allegory ... provides the very technique for popularization, for communicating the knowledge of the cultural disciplines to a general public, which the normal, so-called humanist critics claim to desire.

Ulmer in Hal Foster, 1985:106

Montage can be used by criticism as a useful device, allowing it the freedom to search for a new order.

1.4 The nature of dance criticism

Moving now to focus on dance, in its attempts to pin down the non-literal in terms that are literal, the medium of criticism is in complete contrast to the medium of dance. This is perhaps why

writing about dance [is] sometimes seen as deauthenticating, as though analyzing it or theorizing about it ... detract[s] from the evanescent meaning of the movement.

Goellner & Murphy, 1995:4
So there is on the one hand an irony in the relationship between dance criticism and the art form. On the other hand criticism is the means whereby new understanding about dance can be disseminated. This is something that was recognised by British choreographers working in what was known as ‘new dance’, who in 1977 launched a periodical of that name and, in an editorial in the very first issue, asked

what is the point of attempting to explore new ground, if it is then defined through conventional criteria and terminology? New dance needs a new language ... for too long this has been the responsibility of the ‘professional’ critic who has no contact with the continuous process of thought and practise (sic) involved.

Lansley, 1977:1

The magazine had been founded to provide space for ‘new critics’ to air their views about new and experimental dance. These critics were, in the main, very different from conventional critics of the time who were distanced from the practice, believing in the importance of objectivity, and the separation of criticism and creativity. Many new critics were choreographers themselves, whose work was associated with new ways of thinking about dance. New Dance was a magazine that allowed a different and more sensitive relationship to build between criticism and dance.

Jowitt presents a case for approaching the dance work in the manner of an anthropologist engaged in field work who must look on everything in and about the work as part of the investigation (see Jowitt, 1988:7). It is an approach that moves away from the either/or system of judgement, in favour of a more poststructuralist approach. Siegel, who makes it clear that she does not wish to take an anthropological viewpoint, discloses that the pleasure of criticism for her is the breadth of different dance experiences that it brings (1998:93).

Changes in perception come from both the dance itself, and from outside it: some critics have themselves influenced perceptual seeing. In the main the value systems that are held are revealed in the practice of criticism
and not theoretically articulated. There is very little writing on the theory of dance criticism. The American John Martin (1893-1985) was rare among critics in working out theories of dance and publishing his findings. He was writing in an era\textsuperscript{22} when modernism in dance was regarded by critics and public as new, and perhaps alien, when there was no relevant literature to turn to - which is why he took it on himself to develop understanding through theorising about what he found in dance. He became a staunch defender of the newly developing modern dance, and was helped in his own understanding through the perspectives that he was able to bring from music and drama. What he found as meaningful and significant led to the formulation of theories that played an important educative role in understanding modern dance.\textsuperscript{23}

According to Siegel, a critic recording the moment is a self-appointed historian (1985: xv), one who looks to the performance to provide primary source material for analysis. In common with some of her peers she finds that the approach helps

> capture some essence of the dance; our writing is directed towards this rather than to the more cool and Olympian certitudes of critics in the other arts. For us, immediacy and accuracy of observation rank absurdly high, both in what we hope to achieve in our own work and in what we value of others.

Siegel, 1985:xv

Denby (1903-1983) is regarded by many as the twentieth century’s foremost critic of dance (Croce, 1987:334-344).\textsuperscript{24} His writings achieve ‘a level of distinction comparable to that which prevails in criticism of the other arts’ (Copeland and Cohen, 1983:428). His knowledge and understanding came from dance’s history and, significantly, through his ability to connect what he saw on stage to everyday things, as revealed in the title of one of his most celebrated essays, \textit{Dancers, Buildings, and People in the Street}, (1986:548-556). In it he drew attention to two distinctive activities that he saw as central to dance criticism.

One part of dance criticism is seeing what is happening
He was pointing to the challenge of seeing and recognising, and of transforming what had been recognised as it moved from one sign system (dance) to another (writing). His articulation of the problem in such deceptively modest terms was characteristic of his qualities as a writer and of one who believed in the power of simplicity and economy. In advance of a systematic account of intertextual theory, Denby was effectively pointing out that criticism is intertextual. The travel involved in the 'passage from one sign system to another' (Kristeva, 1984: 59) is an essential part of the critical operation, yet is largely taken for granted. It is obvious that the passage that must be traversed in order for the dance to be positioned in a literary context is fraught with complexity. There will be losses and discoveries. Intertextuality as a wide-ranging theoretical enquiry can be seen to have implications for criticism, and for dance in particular, and these implications are explored in the next chapter.

Denby, who wrote for both general and specialist readerships, was able to give everyday names to what he found, working this recognition into vivid and immediate metaphors in ways that enabled his readers to share with him the qualities that he perceived in the dance. An example of this can be seen in his likening of Merce Cunningham's performance, in a solo that he had choreographed called *Mysterious Adventure* (1945), to a 'playful animal'. He proceeded by deceptively simple means to capture the movement, and in doing so revealed something of his technique as a critic.

This creature hops, walks, and bounds with a constant feathery elasticity ... It would be a foolish number but for the fact that it has the curious rhythm - placidly agitated - of a robin visiting a strange bird bath and the unhurried sense of time which such a creature lives by.

Denby, 1986: 317 (original, 1945)
He uses non-specialist words moulding them into metaphors to create an impression extending across the dance. It is impossible to read the passage without a picture springing into the mind of what the dance looked like. It is immaterial that the dance will have struck every watcher differently, for so will Denby's imagery. He creates the impression not because of the words themselves (they are, after all, ordinary) but because of the way he is able to relate them to dance through metaphor.

Denby's style of criticism was evaluative and subjective, but full of insight into what he saw, which is why his style of observing and writing remains something to be learned from. His work has continued to influence critical thinking, and he has been held to be the "spiritual" exemplar of a group of American women who have been nominated as 'the New York School of Dance Criticism' (Theodores, 1996:19). All are drawn to dance by the power of its formal structures. In making a case for the New York School of Dance Criticism and the importance of formalism, Theodores (1996) shows how their value systems are rooted in modernism. She quotes from Greenberg's 'formalist manifesto' and his search for 'what was unique and irreducible' in art, noting the importance that was attached to finding forms that were 'pure' (Theodores, 1996:40). Critics who advocate formalist dance, often do so with a conviction that it is the only kind of work worthy of the appellation 'dance', and that it is the measure by which all dance is to be adjudged. Defending the place of judgement, the critic Arlene Croce proceeds 'on the assumption that evaluative judgements are the sacred responsibility of the critic' (Copeland and Cohen, 1983:429). Croce operates through principles that generate opinionated criticism, as shown in a pronouncement about dance's capacity to deal with issues.

The subjects that dance cannot touch on, such as war, disease, poverty, and death (as a fact, not as a symbol), are the subjects that fascinate Kenneth MacMillan. Add to this list a pervasive concern with sex in its physical aspect, and there is every reason to suspect him of vainglorious ambition, at the most, or opportunism, at the least.

Croce, 1982:392
This points to a critic who sees dance through a specific set of beliefs. She sets her beliefs against the work, dismissing a large part of a choreographic oeuvre, and launching a character attack on a choreographer. She applies judgement ('subjects that dance cannot touch on') as legislation, in a manner underlining her own perception of power vested in the critic. The reader of such criticism may be left wondering about the relevance behind her dogmatic assertions, about what dance 'cannot touch on'. History is Croce's 'authority', and she makes no secret of her allegiance to a critic and a choreographer: to Denby and to Balanchine. In Balanchine she sees the artist as an interpreter sans pareil of ballet in the twentieth century. And here the insular nature of criticism is revealed since undoubtedly Denby's most prolific writing is about the neo-classic and formalist work of Balanchine. Because Croce sees dance through principles of classicism and formalism, she rejects the central European genre of expressionism. Its grotesque forms have no place in her beliefs. This leads her to dismiss choreographers who may be esteemed by other critics, and by the ticket buying public, and whose work may be regarded in some quarters as one of the pillars of Western theatre dance.

Critical practice frequently dismisses works, declaring that they are 'not dance' or 'not choreography'. This too can be seen to draw on ideological beliefs formulated through knowledge of dance's past (and criticism that invoked authority is seldom asked to account for itself). Cohen bases her work on a belief that 'the natural constraints of the medium also limit the range of subjects that can be represented by dance' (1982: 112-13). She too positions dance within particular boundaries, which is why in writing about de Mille's narrative ballet Fall River Legend (1948), she bases her findings on a belief that she knows what is and is not dance. She sees gesture used to characterise a stepmother as

not using a movement to describe the character; it is using a visual device, which is theatrically fair enough, but it is not relying on dance.

Cohen, 1982:113
Again the work is *criticised* because it did not 'measure up' to an ideological position. Her point can be compared to another critic's response to the same piece, to Siegel's complaint that de Mille's works were 'underchoreographed' and 'overdramatised' (1977:52), which is another side of the paradox of knowing where choreography ends and where drama takes over. However, criticism is not necessarily confined to one set of beliefs, and Siegel found something in de Mille's work of wider appeal:

> there is something convincing to me about Agnes de Mille's ballets, a core of American truth underneath all that is disappointing ... de Mille is essentially always making dance about growing up, and that seems to me a major concern, still, of American art.

Siegel, 1977:52

What becomes clear in this passage is that Siegel had widened her focus to acknowledge the place of nationalism in art. Quotations such as the two from Cohen and Siegel help to build a picture of the complexity of the art form, and the potential weakness/inadequacy of critical response when it is tied to particular ideological concerns. It is ironic to think that despite Cohen and Croce's objections, *Fall River Legend* has continued to be performed, as have the MacMillan works depicting death 'as fact'. This underlines not only different perceptions between what artists, audiences and critics see, but the selective nature of criticism.

In looking at critical procedure, what critics make their selection from is carried in memory, where it interacts with other memories. What is remembered will shift as it works itself into images at conscious and subconscious levels, influenced by the context in which the criticism is to be presented, and by changes that affect it over time. Where no concrete evidence remains for criticism to work on after the performance, a critical methodology needs to look at the kind of material that is appropriate for collection. Knowing how the material is to be collected, and what is to be collected, is part of the philosophical issue of seeing,
and recognising what is seen. It may be that particular theories or types of analysis will be found relevant. 33

Notation can be helpful as a memory aide, but few critics are trained notators, and even those who can notate are challenged by the circumstances of notating during a performance - which may be the only time when the material is accessible. 34 A notated score of a dance work can be invaluable for dance analysis. 35 Similarly, a video recording of a work can be a precious tool. But while notated scores and video recordings can supplement criticism of a live performance, they cannot take the place of the live experience of performance, and must be seen for what they are: mediated, or themselves already interpreted, in advance of critical interpretation.

The critical response that emerges out of a single performance captures a relationship between expectation and impression, and cannot escape being caught into a play of (individual) bias. To see any work critically demands detailed acquaintance through constant revisiting of the performance. A first encounter with a performance is unlikely to yield the specialised interpretation called for by criticism. The approach differs from that demanded by a new production of a ‘classic’, where critical eyes will be directed through knowledge of the work’s history. Worton and Still point to the setting up of ‘hierarchical antithesis’ by Barthes, leading to the discovery of

... a fundamental opposition ... between the classic work, which is only plural in its meanings, and the modern text, which can be infinitely rewritten by the reader.

Worton and Still, 1990:20

A critic seeing a single performance of an experimental work may not be in a position to ‘collect’ enough detail for rigorous critical analysis. Surprise at what happens in performance may turn out to be the memory element that dominates everything else. This is where dance’s ephemerality produces problems: complex works need to be watched
many times, to allow detailed memory to take over from surface impression. Yet a production may not continue to be presented - and there are often practical reasons that prohibit continuing attendance by the critic. The point is returned to in Chapter 2.

Nomenclature becomes a particular challenge in the collecting of material for dance criticism. In the performing arts where the spoken word is not prioritised, a difficulty in applying a name to something is encountered. Classical and modern dance have evolved a logic of nameability that allows movements to be named, and even sequences of movements to be linked together under a single name.

In a historicised discipline such as ballet, the conditioned viewer will be able to 'read' some kind of physical organisation through the ability to name something specific. Mention of a term such as 'arabesque' will allow a general, but not a specific understanding. To be able to recognise something and name it aids the task of critical memory, and what is connoted. To name something is to be able to isolate it (Best, 1992:109-110), which helps in looking analytically at the work. It may be a contributory factor within critical methodology. Where names cannot be applied because the dance is non-conformist, criticism is faced with an additional challenge, as can be seen in looking at Eidos:Telos in Part Three of this study.

Critics who claim to have discovered brilliance in, for example, the performance of the dancers, and who simultaneously dismiss the work, expose another problem. If a dancer is regarded as brilliant, then that brilliance must have some relationship to the material that enables her/him to be seen in this way. What the critic sees belongs to prejudgement, to knowledge based on recognising skills that may be technical, dramatic or performative, and for which the work is not responsible, even though it may push them to the fore. Concealed within the claim is a presumption that the dancer can be isolated from the dance. In existing classical and modernist works an interpreter may bring new insight into a role that the critic may choose to analyse. Where
performances of new and postmodernist works are concerned the performer has a unique role to play and the interpretation of that role cannot reliably be compared with any other.

When WB Yeats asked in his poem *Among Schoolchildren*, 'how can we tell the dancer from the dance?', he produced an important polemic for dance criticism. It is a question that cannot arrive at a satisfactory answer, for neither dancer nor dance can exist without the other. Critics however often comment on the role of the performer in ways that suggest they perceive clearly where the dancer takes over from the dance. Coton considered that as a critic his duty was to look not at the role of the interpreter, but at what had been created. In a paper entitled, 'What's the Use of Critics', which was written as an address to the Music Section of the Critics' Circle (before there was a Dance Section), he wrote:

I know that most of us here would agree about the great differences which exist between the two classifications of artists - the *creative* and the *interpretative* artist; and for a long time now I have been a member of that small camp - it is a noisy and very exciting camp to dwell in - of those who believe the interpretative artist to be a very small creature in comparison with the creative artist.

Coton, 1975:159-160

1.6 Seeing the paradox

From the 1960s onwards, when experiments by members of Judson Dance Theater questioned structured division between dance as art and dance as life, criticism was confronted by challenging issues. Work developing out of the Judson period led Croce to attend events that - in her eyes - did not merit classification as dance.

Nondance concerts persist in the seventies, only now they are likely to consist of stylizations of ordinary movement rather than the real, raw thing, and to take place on a considerably reduced scale.

Croce 1978:138
Others would question her findings about the status of movement—whether raw or stylised—and its relationship to dance. Indeed, for Banes the historian, dance was found to command a wider frame of reference.

What makes a movement a part of a dance, rather than simply an ordinary movement, is that it is installed in a dance context. The use of objects (carrying or otherwise manipulating them), improvisation, spontaneous incidents, tasks, games and relaxed time structures all engender new possibilities for dance movements, especially natural movements.

Banes, 1980:17

It was the context in which it was presented that enabled the artifact to be recognised as dance, and this introduced a new climate of freedom, a breaking down of the borders that had traditionally enclosed dance. The body’s relationship with space was changing, for

in *New Dance* the body shapes are not inconsiderable, but those shapes are curving or obliquely angular rather than straight and perpendicular. The ballet dancer’s long, straight line is expressive of what the avant-gardist Yvonne Rainer, thirty years later, called monumentality. Rainer said NO to making the dancer a superhuman, unnaturally big creature.

Siegel, 1985:84

The dancer was changing too, and this climate of diversity meant that there was

redefinition of the dancer as “doer” and the dance as whatever was done—whether that meant performing an impressively choreographed piece of offbeat dancing, sitting still, climbing a wall, reading a text, munching a sandwich, or not showing up to perform.

Jowitt, 1988:310

Croce sought order, and saw metaphor, sometimes pinpointing the dance through a metaphor that refused to recognise the layers of knowledge and experience that went into the making and execution of the steps. Continuing to promote her thesis about ‘nondance concerts’, in the seventies she found parallels with
Conceptual or Minimal Art. The ordered elements in [the dance] often have the look of baby's first steps, which are repeated over and over in wonderment, as if choreographers hoped to discover for themselves the secret of why on earth man dances.

Croce, 1978:138

This was a critical perspective that saw naivety, where what the choreographers themselves were trying to do was to find an answer to the question about identity posed by Yeats, and discover the dance within the performance (Banes, 1980; Johnston, 1996). In her much-quoted manifesto, Rainer had 'scraped away all the accretions of theatricality, egotism, and sentiment that she felt had been smothering the dance art' (Siegel, 1991:73).

I think she not only wanted us to see the step again, but she wanted to feel it again herself. I think Rainer wanted not only to find the basics but to restore meaning to basic activities, to invest as much conviction in the essentials of movement as her contemporaries were investing in the luxuries.

Siegel, 1977:307

Thus the dance was seen as having a function, and it was not a decorative function. Nor was it easy to watch, as Banes observed of Rainer's Trio A (1966). It challenged expectation by refusing to partition the dance into neat segments, thus

the entire four-and-one-half-minute series of constant changes in motion is performed as a single phrase with an uninflected distribution of energy, giving the appearance of a smooth, effortless surface. Yet obviously many of the movement events are quite complex and strenuous. The fact that there are no pauses between the events increases the scope of the effort. The paradox of the dance's appearance is that what looks easy and natural is actually very exacting.

Banes, 1980:45

If the habit of expectation can be broken, then something different can be found within the dance, for

the opposite side of the paradox is that those aspects of movement conventionally de-emphasized, like transitions or
awkward moments, suddenly gain in stature. The difficulty of balance, for instance, is heightened rather than concealed or surmounted when the torso twists back and forth while the single supporting leg bends deeply. The dance fluctuates between letting the labor of its execution appear and disappear. Banes, 1980:45

These last two quotations (which in their original version appear as a single paragraph) show Banes the historian conveying to her reader a sense of what happened in the dance as she perceived it. There is no impressionistic judgement; whatever choices she made are of a detached nature. Factual evidence is used to support description and observation of how what she described struck her. She recognises that the dance is pared down to on-going motion, on the basis that she knows dance that is not pared down. Difference is positioned as paradox. She sees; too, something of what it is that pared-down dance demands of the interpreter (who in this instance is also the choreographer) and sees the deception of simplicity. She points to the enigmatic division between dance and dancer, and in part finds an answer to Yeats's question. The dance is able to be seen because it has not been overlaid with anything (as in the convention of historical dance), and because it has surmounted the individuality of its maker/interpreter. Banes, who is normally categorised by her publishers as a historian, can in this instance be regarded as a critic. She is writing about the work itself.

In her later publication, 'Writing Dance Criticism', Banes looks at the 'filter papers' through which criticism is processed, and draws up a grid showing that elements of description, interpretation, evaluation and contextualisation can be applied in various different combinations (1994:24-25). This extends an earlier argument by Copeland and Cohen that 'description, interpretation, and evaluation' are the operations which in their chosen context can be seen to 'define criticism' (1983: 421). It can be argued that dance criticism has a duty to provide some form of description, to counter the lack of concrete evidence left after the performance is over. In literature, for example, where what is written about critically can be checked against the book, description can seem
pedantic (Copeland and Cohen, 1983:425). Copeland and Cohen point out that description is 'the journalist's forte', which is why many dance writers have experience of working as journalists (ibid.). Description is inevitably biased and partial because of the problem of seeing and the impossibility of a completed reading.

Where the art work removes boundaries from the past, and criticism observes subversion, conflict is revealed. In noting that a work is deviant, criticism ought to possess the knowledge of what it is that it deviates from, and why it should or should not deviate (Lyotard, 1986). The links between art and life that reveal themselves through postmodern enquiry, stress the need for a conjoining of criticism and art, or at least for recognition that they are no longer separated by an impenetrable division. Burgin points to the wisdom of Barthes in his Camera Lucida, and how 'the critical language (theory) ... divides [Barthes] "between several discourses, those of sociology, of semiology, and of psychoanalysis"' (Burgin, 1986:90).

Theory is revealed as unstable when it comes from a past that is itself under critique by the art work. The trend in dance criticism points to the importance attached to individual principles and beliefs (and personal taste) that owe their allegiance to historical dance. Siegel in The Shapes of Change (1985) acknowledges that she did not set out with any theories to prove but in looking at a wide range of modern dance the evidence that she produces can be seen to support practice through a theoretical type of enquiry. Burgin finds that "theory" is generally indicted by criticism as obscure' (1986:89). If it is obscure then it is out-of-touch yet, returning to the point made earlier, common sense decrees that criticism ought to rationalise its relationship with art. The conflict ought to find a common purpose.

As if enquiring into the dynamic element of criticism, poststructuralism argues:
the most intriguing texts for criticism are not those which can be *read*, but those which are 'writable' (*scriptible*) — texts which encourage the critic to carve them up, transpose them into different discourses, produce his or her semi-arbitrary play of meaning athwart the work itself. The reader or critic shifts from the role of consumer to that of producer.

Eagleton, 1996:119

It is the destabilisation of meaning that therefore assumes critical importance, not a presumed unity but a multiplicity of possible meanings, incompleteness and omissions.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has considered problems inherent in criticism that adheres to conventions of modernism and closure. It has questioned the function of criticism, the status of judgement, and postmodernism’s shift away from a centralising authority. It has pointed to the rift that is created when criticism insists on applying judgemental measures that are not applicable to the art work, and suggested that criticism has a duty to approach the art work not with the intention of finding fault but of looking at in a spirit of ‘sensibility’ and openness. To achieve this what is needed is a theoretical enquiry that looks at the relationship between criticism and the art work, and considers how the past can be brought into a different kind of relationship with the present.

Notes

1 Beardsley points to the distinction between the aesthetic object and the physical object (1981).
2 See the writings on modernism of Greenberg (1961).
3 For supporters of this approach to looking at art, see Sontag and ‘The new sensibility’ (1994:293-304); see also Banes’s discussion of the Sontag viewpoint 1993:247.
4 Another study could focus on exposing the principles of classicism, contextualisation and value judgements. The following example from a recently published essay illustrates the point about how classicism is received.

From the moment [Marcia Haydée] appeared, she concentrated the space around her as a magnet does metal filings. Her great scene of mourning over the slain body of Tybalt was spine-chilling. Even off pointe, in a mime role, this artist is still an assoluta.

Jacobson, 1999:9

In the first sentence the metaphor of the magnet is about stage personality, but equally it is an expression of judgement about interpretation and qualities of interpretation. What is identified as
spine-chilling in the second sentence is the critic’s desire to convey subjective feeling, and a
metaphoric device through which perception can function. The third sentence makes the following
contextualised points: a) pointe work is good; b) mime is not good; c) interpretation that is
empowered by characterisation and strength of personality is also good. These points are held to
principles of classicism. Yet while the work in question - John Cranko’s Romeo and Juliet (1962) – is
based on classical ballet, it is not a work of classicism, but a blending of the genres including
modernism, expressionism and narrative. It is because of the importance attached to classicism’s
idealised beauty, that points a, b and c are still held to be relevant. If dramatic principles were given
priority, then dancing off pointe and in a mime role would not necessarily be seen as relegation. On
the other hand, in any drama production of Romeo and Juliet it is likely to be the youthfully good-
looking hero and heroine that claim the attention.

5 For brief surveys of the history of dance criticism, see Copeland and Cohen (1983:421-430) and
Theodores Taplin (1979:77-93).
6 Based on sociological research, Shrum proposes that 'low art' can be equated with popular culture,
and that it is is readily accessible to mass audiences and is easily responded to. He points out that
despite postmodernism’s breaking down of boundaries, there is evidence to show that the hierarchical
organisation and division of art persists (1996:7-9).
7 For an understanding of the evolution of criticism, and changing relationships between ethics and
aesthetics, see Burgin (1986: 140-204).
8 This was a point underlined by Helen Thomas during a lecture given to dance students at the
Roehampton Institute in December 1993.
9 In Britain there is an organisation called The Critics Circle whose members earn their living through
criticism. There are different sections for different art forms: the Dance Section is dominated by
national newspaper reviewer/critics, most of whom also write for dance periodicals. Because
membership is by invitation only, it is seen as a 'closed shop'. The American Dance Critics’
Association operates through an open membership. It publishes a newsletter, holds regular
conferences, and attracts interest from both professional and academic critics.
10 Banes’s Terpsichore in Sneakers (1980) is an example of the conundrum of what may or may not be
regarded as criticism. The writing in Terpsichore looks at works critically, putting into operation some
of the strategies that she later identified in Writing Dance Criticism (1994:35). Yet Banes (1993a)
is identified as a historian, which points to the blurring of boundaries between critic and historian.
11 Most criticism takes the form of published writing, though of course criticism can be voiced through
lecture, debate and broadcasting.
12 For an anecdote about critical stupefaction see Johnston (1998: 123).
13 For different critical positions on interpretation see: Shusterman (1978); Margolis (1980); Beardsley
14 For discussions on interpretation and rationality see Best (1985 and 1992) and Adshead-Lansdale
(1999b:xii-xvi), and as a 'function of identity' see Worton in Adshead-Lansdale (1999b:x-xi).
15 For discussion of the relationship between art, criticism and society, see Burgin (1996:15-16).
16 For attitudes to the scientifically measurable see Burgin’s discussion on Greenberg’s approach to art
and criticism, and on the formalist project to move criticism towards science (1988:15).
17 For an account of the history of criticism from its 16th century entry into the language, see Williams
(1988:84-86). To follow the evolution of the term 'critic' see 'crisis' in Partridge (1990:130) and
reference to its relationship with criterion stemming from the Greek kriterion (or judgement). For
discussion of what infiltrates judgement see Barthes (1987:30-33).
18 Rodway's essay is useful in outlining criticism's etymological and different critical perspectives (in
19 The term 'post-criticism' is taken from White and examined by Ulmer in Hal Foster, (1985:83-110).
20 The periodical New Dance played a significant role in bringing about a changed climate for dance, but
it was always hampered by lack of funds and in 1988 after 44 issues it folded (see Jordan, 1992). At
the time there was widespread feeling that New Dance's views were partisan, and that the views of the
'open-minded thinkers' who wrote for it were of interest to a small, similarly partisan readership.
21 As Culler points out, to see structuralism and poststructuralism in terms of clear delineation is to
misunderstand the theory of poststructuralism (1983:30).
22 He wrote for thirty-five years, between 1927 and 1962.
23 Significantly, Martin was the New York Times's first dance critic. Copeland and Cohen call him a
flag-waving partisan (1988:428) which in a historical context seems harsh. Dance criticism at that
time was mainly written by music critics, or by critics whose understanding of dance stemmed from
ballet. Though in contemporary terms Martin's prose has an old-fashioned feel to it, some of his
theories remain relevant. Of particular interest is his finding of four essentials in modern dance: substance in movement, metakinesis, dynamism and an openness to new principles.

The frequency with which Croce refers to Denby in her writings is proof enough of her feelings (1978, 1987, 1992). For wider evidence of the esteem in which Denby was held by his peers in dance criticism, and by creators and critics working in other arts forms as well, see the large body of tributes published in four issues of Ballet Review: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter 1984. Croce was, incidentally, Ballet Review's founding editor.

The members of Theodores’s New York School of Dance Criticism are: Arlene Croce, Nancy Goldner, Deborah Jowitt and Marcia Siegel (1996). Given the connections discussed in the previous endnote, not surprisingly Theodores points to Denby as the mentor of the NYSDC. This linear heritage of criticism helps to show how beliefs in the power of formalist dance have come to be perpetuated.

Croce delivers a diatribe against biased and lazy critics in her essay Dancers and Dance Critics (1978:331-338).

In the mid-1990s an essay by Croce entitled 'Discussing the Undiscussable', (in The New Yorker December 26/January 2:54-60), became a cause célèbre for its revelation of conflict between criticism and art. The subject under discussion was Bill T Jones's Still/Here which dealt with AIDS victims. Croce was affronted by a work that broke the perceived dividing line between art and life, and refused to write about it. Her stance unleashed a debate that raged fiercely on both sides of the Atlantic, and was widely discussed and debated by the mainstream media. For discussion of this debate, see Carol Martin in High Critics/Low Arts in Morris (1996: 320-333), and Copeland in "Not/There": Croce, Criticism, and the Culture Wars in Dance Theatre Journal (Summer 1995, vol 12, no 1:14-20).

For discussion of Croce’s principles and beliefs see Copeland in Dance Theatre Journal (Summer 1995, vol 12, no 1:14-20); see also Theodores (1996).

See, for example, Croce on 'Edwin Denby' (1987: 334-344).

For views on Balanchine’s achievement see Croce’s critical writings (1978, 1982, 1987).

That she is esteemed by her peers, can be seen by the inauguration of a Selma Jeanne Cohen Dance Writers Award by the Society for Dance History Scholars in 1999.

For discussion of the function of ideology see Eagleton (1996:117).

Rather curiously, critical practice often refers to the performance in the present as if it can be regarded as existing in the moment.

Siegel is unusual among critics in that she studied ‘Laban’s system of Effort-Shape Analysis and how to look at movement as “an immediate phenomenon”,’ and can draw on these skills to jot down sketched figures during performance (Theodores, 1996: 91-111).


This illustrates a point that Croce makes about ‘lazy’ criticism or ninnyism’ (1978:333-324), by which she refers to critics who praise the artist at the expense of making substantial comment about the work.

In the chapter Everyday Bodies from which the quotation is taken, Jowitt summarises the ideologies of the dance that came out of Judson Dance Theater and its successors, and what it meant to people whose knowledge of dance was threatened by the breaking down of boundaries between ‘art’ and ‘life’ (1988: 303-337).

See also Banes’s comments on the emergence of the ‘thingly nature’ of the material of dance (1980:50).

Nonetheless, there is plenty of evidence elsewhere in Banes’s 1980 Terpsichore in Sneakers of a historian at work.

See also the debate that appeared in Dance Theatre Journal about description and formalism in Copeland (1993) and Adshead (1993-4).

See also discussion about Lyotard on meaning in Sarup (1993:129-159).

For discussion on changing beliefs in dance, and in particular for a questioning of Noverre’s revered principles, and whether they can be regarded as theory or personal taste, see Copeland and Cohen (1983: 1-9).
CHAPTER 2

Interactive text

2.1 From a closed system
2.2 Intertextual openings
2.3 Performance text
2.4 Intertextuality and performance criticism
2.5 The dance context
2.6 Dance and nomenclature
2.7 Methodological synopsis
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Notes

It is the notion of closure brought by traditionalist criticism to non-traditional art forms that is revealed as problematic. The problem is not created by the art work itself, but by critical approaches when they are conditioned by the past. If the very convention that is critiqued by the postmodern art work is upheld by criticism, then seeing is prevented.

Setting out to find a different kind of relationship for criticism and dance, this chapter examines Barthes's notion of how 'work' can be seen to shift into 'text'. It proposes intertextuality as a means through which to approach the problems of conventional criticism, introducing the theory through the work of Kristeva and others. If an abstract performance is to be looked at through intertextuality it needs to be constructed first as a text, and to do this is must be positioned within the discourse of semiotics. Performance semiotics is rooted in theories of communication and reader response. The critic of dance choosing to work with intertextuality is likely to encounter particular problems relative to the nature of dance. Through looking at these, it becomes possible to draw up a methodological approach to intertextual criticism.

2.1 From a closed system

It is through identification of the problems of closure, and an inappropriately narrow perspective brought by the critic to the art work, that a new perspective begins to present itself. For if the problems centre on closure and narrowness, then it seems obvious that some form of opening is needed, and that the answer must be sought in the dance work. The journey travelled from the traditional to the theorised text is central
to Barthes's essay, 'From Work to Text' (in Image Music Text, 1977; original, 1971). In it the 'work' becomes the text of convention, and is looked on as a closed system, or a finished product (a traditional text). The 'text' is seen as a structure of process, or a discursive field that is always available to interpretative activity (1977: 157). It has become 'a weave of signifiers' (1977:159) where meanings cross, and where the reader 'strolls through difference' (ibid.) encountering on the journey heterogeneity, or an irreducible plurality (ibid.). Barthes constructed his theory of the text as a development out of his seminal text 'The Death of the Author' (in Image Music Text, 1977; original, 1966), in which the concept of 'author' was shown to have been replaced by the text. With emphasis placed on the importance of textual activity, the text was shown to be activated by a reader. The text could only come to life through relations and connections worked on it by other texts, that had already undergone a working-through by the writer of the text, who is also a reader of texts (Barthes, 1977; Leitch, 1988; Worton and Still, 1990).

A reader interprets any text through knowledge of other texts and Barthes, who extols the pleasure of reading, desires the reader to be alert to the pleasures afforded by literature, and to be drawn into active engagement with the text. 'The goal of literary work (of literature as work),' he claims,' is 'to make the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text' (1990a:4). This is significant in the present context, for what he is advocating is a change from the habit of reading the text and reducing it to a single signified, to a more creative activity in which the text is regarded as 'writerly' (ibid.).³ To write is to create, to enter a world where the text is borderless, and where 'signifiers can be set going toward infinity' (Leitch, 1983:114). 'The reign of writing crosses all borders [and] critical texts become interesting and energetic "literary" works' (Leitch, 1983:107).

It was through The Death of the Author and From Work to Text, that Barthes was able to show how texts function as projectors of sense and feeling, and as unravellers of meaning. In The Pleasure of the Text
(1990b; original, 1973), he looks at how the text can be seen as an activator of knowledge. Using a particular text to illustrate the process, he explains:

I read according to Proust. I savor [sic] the sway of formulas, the reversal of origins, the ease which brings the anterior text out of the subsequent one. I recognize that Proust’s work, for myself at least, is the reference work, the general mathesis, the mandala of the entire literary cosmogony ... Proust is what comes to me, not what I summon up; not an "authority," simply a circular memory. Which is what the inter-text is: the impossibility of living outside the infinite text ... the book creates the meaning, the meaning creates life.

Barthes, 1990b: 36

His ‘sway of formulas’ points to the activity of seeing, and to textual understanding through ‘circular memory’. Memory is summoned from the past, into a textual present. The infinite text in Barthes’s eyes is synonymous with human life, outside which nothing (known) exists. Textual memory allows entry to new territory, but only in a dependent relationship with other texts, for it is not the fixity of meaning in any text that makes reading possible, but dynamic activity between texts.

2.2 Intertextual openings

In looking at the text in this way it is seen to be paradoxical (Barthes, 1977) because it defers meaning. Where paradox is revealed it is because it is seen in a relationship with some other text or texts that point to difference or alienation. In the art work, it is very often the context that draws attention to difference. An object from another signifying system may reveal itself as strange through not obviously ‘belonging’ to what is expected. In other words, normative order (in the eye of the beholder) is affected. This order in performance can be equated with expectations that are already in the mind of the attender at performance, whether they are conscious, subconscious or unconscious. Everything that is seen in performance is seen because of the way knowledge and experience is able to establish a relationship with something external to the
performance. Inevitably performance is seen intertextually, for it summons the past, and

is precisely a momentary compendium of everything that has come before and is now. Intertextuality calls attention to prior texts in the sense that it acknowledges that no text can have meaning without those prior texts, it is a space where ‘meanings’ intersect. There is no such creature as the autonomous text (or work).

Marshall, 1992:128

All signifying systems communicate through language, and language is recognised as one of many different systems that are communicative (Elam, 1980). The text that is written and read has a dependency on systems other than its own linguistic system for understanding to occur (Kristeva, 1982:69). Semiotics, ‘bringing into the open aspects of meaning ignored by orthodox disciplines’ (Culler, 1990:71), has expanded perception of the ‘text’, and has shown how new perspectives can be brought to ‘cultural phenomena’ (Culler, 1990:70).

It was through research into different signifying systems that Kristeva came to coin the term ‘intertextuality’ in the mid-1960s (Culler, 1981; Roudiez in Kristeva, 1984; Moi, 1986; Worton and Still, 1990). Intertextuality is a theoretical concept that links the past with the present in a relationship in which neither a predecessor text nor a successor text need feel threatened by the other. It does not seek to show that the past was better than the present, or vice versa, but looks at how they are different. Intertextuality becomes less a name for a work’s relation to particular prior texts than a description of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture.

Culler, 1981:103

Intertextuality opens up a space where different texts can meet discursively. Unlike the unified text of convention, which can be seen to
lend itself to interpretation of an ideological message (Lechte, 1990; Eagleton, 1996), intertextuality opens textual borders (Kristeva, 1984:59; Worton and Still, 1990:33/34n). Before presenting intertextuality in a dance context, it needs to be looked at through changing perceptions of the text and its intertexts, and through responses by different theoreticians.

What Kristeva saw as intertextuality laid stress on the 'thetic position', on which every system of communication depends, and the alteration that was achieved by travel between texts. Kristevaan intertextuality was not just a matter of a repositioned text, but a rupturing of a previous text by a successor text (Moi, 1986:13, Worton and Still, 1990:17). Intertextuality was the second of three distinctive phases of Kristeva's work into how meaning communicates, and what conventions underlie dialogue. Initially she turned to research by the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin, finding that he

was one of the first to replace the static hewing out of texts with a model where literary structure does not simply exist but is generated in relation to another structure. What allows a dynamic dimension to structuralism is his conception of the "literary word" as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context.

Kristeva 1982:65

It was the generative action between structures, and the merging of different paths (Kristeva, 1982:69) that was crucial to the early part of Kristeva's research. Initially, she saw textual communication as interaction between subjects, or 'intersubjectivity'. Her subject is a compound one, 'composed of discourses' and can be seen, therefore, as "a signifying system, a text, understood in a dynamic sense" (Worton and Still, 1990:16). What Kristeva identifies in Bakhtin's discovery of dialogism is 'a writing where one reads the other' (Kristeva, 1982:68). The 'writing' to which she refers, and which was regarded by Bakhtin as 'a reading of the anterior literary corpus' (Kristeva, 1982:69), can be
seen to symbolise communicative processing between texts. It was the activity between texts that altered Kristeva's position on intersubjectivity, and recognition that what a sender and a receiver communicate meets or clashes within the text.

Bakhtin's work looked at carnival as a signifying system, and since carnival is made up of many different systems of non-verbalised communication, this has implications for performance. Bakhtin considered how carnival was absorbed into a novel, and saw that the textual activity involved in the transfer affected the status of the novel. It could no longer be regarded as monological, for the novel was polyphonic and dependent on other systems lying outside language, (Kristeva, 1982:68). The codes of one system (carnival) were taken into another system (the novel), and in the process were seen to have been subjected to 'another law', or to a 'writing where one reads the other' (Kristeva, 1982:68).

Kristeva positioned her research in a spatial or 'discursive universe' (in Moi, 1986:37), arguing that within this discourse, processes of signification could be seen to depend on activity between a three-dimensional coordinate: 'writing subject, addressee and exterior texts' (in Moi, 1986:36). Drawing on Freud's theories of the unconscious, and of displacement and condensation, Kristeva discovered that what they overlooked in the activity of the unconscious involved 'a third "process" – the passage from one sign system to another' by which the 'thetic' position was altered (Kristeva, 1984:59). In recognising this rupture between systems, with a text being wrested from another text and presented communicatively through an act of transformation, she saw that intersubjectivity could not account for textual communication, and that it should yield to a more appropriate term, that of 'intertextuality'.

For, any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity.

Kristeva in Moi, 1986:37
It was significant to Kristeva that intertextuality should be identified through textual 'absorption and transformation', and not through representation of one text by another. But as intertextuality came to wider recognition, the rigour of Kristeva's theory began to suffer. Other theorists identified intertextuality through textual relationships stressing influence or 'source criticism' (Worton, 1986:14). Kristeva saw this as the reduction of a complex theoretical enquiry to a level of banality (Kristeva, 1984:60) because it failed to recognise the importance to intertextuality of splitting the semiotic continuum (Moi, 1986:13). It was only where a text had travelled from a prior text to a later text, and had been repositioned by different attitudes and relationships, that it could be recognised as intertextual. In consequence, Kristeva chose to replace 'intertextuality' with 'transposition', maintaining that the new term was more specific in conveying textual activity of transfer and alteration (Kristeva, 1984:60).

Other theorists, however, took a different view and recognised that there could be 'creative alternatives to Kristeva's theoretical position' (Worton, 1986:14). The literature points to debate about what can and cannot be considered intertextual, revealing arguments over, for example, issues of 'influence' (Lack in Worton and Still, 1990:130-142), and the status of 'quotation' or 'reference', given that they are lifted from one text and reproduced in another (Culler, 1981; Worton and Still, 1990). Some theorists argue that the new context in itself will have forced change on it (Worton and Still, 1990). In general what the different approaches point to is the importance of recognising 'functionality' in the context of intertextuality (Worton, 1986:14). Intertextuality is seen as a 'system of interrelationships' made up of 'multiple writings – cultural, literary, historical, psychological – that come together at any 'moment' in a particular text' (Marshall, 1992:122). It is constructed as 'sequences which have meaning in relation to other texts which they take up, cite, parody, refute, or generally transform' (Culler, 1981:90). It is interpreted as 'siren signifiers' that are seen to 'take on a new life in radically new
contexts but retain the character of loans (Worton and Still, 1990:18), or of parodic play (Hutcheon, 1989).

2.3 Performance text

Moving now from the literature on intertextuality, in a performance context it is the relationship between semiotics and intertextuality that needs examining. The abstract text of performance needs to be brought into a position that will enable it to be seen intertextually; it needs to be seen first as text. It is through semiotics that the word can be seen in a network of signifying systems, and that the communicative forces in performance are recognised through a network of systems. Working through textual semiotics, a performance can come to be theorised as a text, and as

a theoretical model of the observable performance phenomenon, to be assumed as an explanatory principle of the functioning of performance as a phenomenon of signification and communication.

De Marinis, 1993:49

It is possible for performance to be theorised as text, so long as it can be found to have certain properties. Chief among these are properties of 'completeness' and 'coherence' (De Marinis, 1993) which enable the performance to be positioned as a discrete 'entity', separated from everyday social exchange. Through this disconnection the performance is able to convey a discrete message, or messages.

What is meant by 'performance' has general and specific meaning. On the one hand it refers to an event, and on the other to a production, and to all that is involved constitutionally in its make-up, both before and after the unfolding of an event. A performance comes into being through an act. It is not a monolithic act but brings together different types of activity and is intended for presentation to an audience. It is dependent on a period of advance processing that is not usually made public, and also on processes that are activated during the performance but are
hidden from public view. A performance can never be precisely reproduced because the conditions from performance to performance will vary (De Marinis, 1993:63).

The condition of completeness to which De Marinis refers is relative to the context of a performance, and to the circumstance of its production and reception. It is observable through 'spatiotemporal demarcation' (1993:58), and normative conditions of performance procedure. A performance can be seen as complete if within a predetermined setting it has a beginning and end, during which communication occurs, transmitted by a sender to a receiver allowing for 'simultaneity of production and communication' (De Marinis, 1993:50).

Communication is normally understood as something that happens between a co-present sender and receiver, during which each can communicate and receive something from the other (Eco, 1984b; De Marinis, 1993). Communication in performance is problematised because it is one-directional but, as emphasised by semiotic theory, performance is by its nature communicative. Thus, despite the lack of mutuality, communication is integral to performance (Elam, 1980; Eco, 1984b; De Marinis, 1993), and is found in acts of communication (De Marinis, 1993). What is communicated is not in the text, but in what the text conveys (Searle cited in De Marinis, 1993:152) in codes that are despatched by a sender and decoded by a receiver.

Cohesion can be observed from the work itself and the 'constitutive elements' of performance (De Marinis, 1993:57). It can be seen through a network of relationships woven through with codes and 'expressive media' (De Marinis, 1993:33/61/66). Codes are not necessarily specific to one performance/production but are part of a wider 'systematic level' of texts (De Marinis, 1993:84). They are configured for individual productions, producing the combination of codes that gives each production its textual coherence and uniqueness (De Marinis, 1993:83). These codes emerge out of
a deep system of relations ensuring the surface coherence of the message; in other words, a structure that accounts for its understandability.

Bouissac cited in De Marinis, 1993:57

The search for textual coherence proceeds on the basis that everything positioned on the stage in performance is endowed with a special power (see Elam, 1980:5-31) or signification. Consequently, the critical process needs to be alert to the different 'textual mechanisms that preside over the production of meaning' (De Marinis, 1993:2).

It is through recognising that the codes of performance are configured in a particular and individual organisation, that another property of the text, that of uniqueness, is identifiable. Other necessary conditions are repeatability and reproduction. While performance will always show slight differences (because where live performers are involved, it is inevitable that there will be difference, and besides the audience constitution is never identical) there must be evidence that an overall structure can be represented again (De Marinis, 1993). A text must also be capable of 'reproducibility', meaning that there must be enough supportive evidence for it to be brought into existence again, after a period when it has not been performed. A dance performance of a postmodernist work is able to be repeated chiefly because it is held in the memories of its creator/s and interpreter/s, though there may be evidence to support it in the way of video recordings, documentation and/or notation. If memory is the chief tool of reproducibility, this is obviously problematic, for not only is it fallible, but dependent on the availability of people who 'hold' the performance in memory.

If a performance can be theorised through recognition of completeness, coherence, uniqueness, repeatability and reproduction, these qualities are not in the performance itself but bestowed on it by a viewer. Both textual and intertextual theory are positioned in the realm of the reader/viewer. Therefore it is important that some thought is given to the realm of the watcher of dance. In looking at the role of the reader, Eco (1984b) constructs a 'Model Reader' as an idealised recipient of the text. The
Model Reader is not a real person, but a theorised ideal in whom there is vested 'a series of competencies' (Eco cited in De Marinis, 1993:167), which enables an idealised reading of a text to emerge (De Marinis, 1993:167). Intertextuality opposes the idea of an idealised reading, or a moment at which meaning is fixed. All the same, the importance of the recipient should not be overlooked, and so it is necessary to search for a domain that is equivalent to the reader's.

A performance unfolds before an audience that is made up of what are generally thought of as either spectators or viewers. De Marinis (1993) nominates a 'Model Spectator' as an idealised receiver of performance. But attached to spectator is the image of a seeker after spectacle, or an image seeking only what lies on the surface of performance. Spectator, argues Augusto Boal, 'is a bad word!' (in Huxley & Witts, 1996: 96) for it dehumanises an individual. Since De Marinis's Model Spectator is theorised, this dehumanisation is of little concern, but Boal's further contention that the spectator is a passive watcher (ibid.) is, and effectively dismisses the case for the spectator in the present context. A competent watcher of performance must be active. There is a further argument against the Model Spectator in whom receptive competence has been vested, for in De Marinis's terms this spectator is capable of receiving the performance text as 'complete communication' (1993:167), but textual theory explodes the myth that there is any possibility of 'complete equality between the competence of the sender and the competence of the receiver' (ibid.).

If the receiver of the text is to be regarded as competent, it is important that s/he engages in active viewing. A viewer might look passively at performance, and might be capable also of looking actively at what lies behind surfaces. This makes the idea of a viewer preferable to that of a spectator. In the domain of the viewer, where a more particular form of seeing is to be thought of in an intertextual context, the adjective 'competent' is useful. A competent viewer can be theorised as a recipient in whom there is vested a willingness to engage with performance. This
specifies neither the kind of competence that will be deemed relevant, nor the type of engagement that will ensue. It does, however, position a competent viewer’s focus on to the performance itself. The idealised watcher of performance needs to be positioned in discursive space.

2.4 Intertextuality and performance criticism

In looking at how intertextual criticism should proceed, it is clearly the text itself that is the starting point. Criticism does not set out to reproduce a performance text, but to make it accountable through commenting on it in some way. The critical processing usually combines aspects of specialist analysis and more general reading (De Marinis, 1993:93). The critic of performance must determine whether the text on which the critical operation depends is to relate to a particular performance, or whether there are grounds for seeing several performances of the same work which can then come to be constituted collectively as a hybrid or composite text. While there is an argument for recommending that the text of a particular and specified performance brings an appropriate framework for criticism, it denies the very aspect that is so crucial to intertextuality: intimate knowledge of the text.

Collecting an abstract text is never simple, and basing criticism on the experience of one performance of a new work may lead to false impressions. As suggested earlier, it is likely that what may register most forcibly is what takes the critic by ‘surprise’, or the things that happen in performance, or thoughts that are attributed, because they are unexpected. Any encounter with the unknown or unexpected can dominate seeing. Only when the surprise has lost its status, and can begin to be positioned as knowledge about the performance, can critical thinking begin to clarify.

There are further arguments against working with one performance, for to single out a performance is to position it in a way that imparts a false value, through seeming to prioritise this performance above others. As
Siegel comments, 'there really is no absolute form of a dance' (1985:xix), or any live performance. If a critic had seen several performances of a particular work, and suggested that just one of those performances had been selected for criticism, it would be impossible for that critic to segregate what was seen in that one performance and forget about the others. Memory is both an essential of performance criticism and an unstable tool, and what is remembered will inevitably alter through time.¹¹

The critic needs to return to supplement memory, but the performance will not be accessible at all times. The most obvious problem is the matter of whether the chosen work is currently in repertory, and this is a factor that reveals differences between critical approaches. In practical terms attendance may produce problems of a temporal, geographical and financial nature in attending a particular performance.¹²

Performances allow the building up of cumulative relationships as part of the critical resource, and these position themselves in the perspective of the 'already read' (Barthes, 1990b, known more familiarly as 'déjà- lu') or the already seen. They are relationships springing from circular knowledge and interconnective memory, and they point to another issue in criticism, that of subjectivity. Moving from Kristeva's subject, Barthes when he analyses a text that brings 'pleasure' encounters not his 'subjectivity' but his 'individuality' as the given that enables his body to be separated from other bodies (1990b:62).

The 'I' which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost).

Barthes, 1990a:10

In other critical strategies, I as writer (and individual) endeavour to objectify individual perception, and to position myself silently (or relatively so) within the text.¹³ In the context of intertextuality it would be unrealistic not to acknowledge the part that personal response plays in
seeing. It is the interaction between the textualised subject, the performance text and perceived intertexts that produces intertextuality.

Dance is interpreted through imagery. An image collects together something seen: it is not the danced moment itself but an attributed relationship. It is a metaphor compounded by context and circumstances. The image can draw together both content and form, and though a postmodern reading would point to the fallacy of imposing a division between them, there is a point to be made. Where a form in dance is recognised, the recognition is obviously connotative. It may be seen to belong to a codified discipline such as ballet, to a mixture of disciplines, and/or to everyday movement. It may reveal a style attributable to a particular school of dance or to a choreographer, and both may be seen in a socio-cultural relationship regulated by particular experiences. Even an apparently simple act such as the way a person walks reveals something about that person's background.14

The form that is seen in performance is read not as body parts moving but as a collective image, and is selected not from a static moment, but through the unfolding of performance. The moment of recognition may be fleeting, and is unlikely to be as a unit of demarcation that can be wrested from other textual relationships through providing clear evidence of a moment of beginning and a moment of ending. Living form can never be entirely stilled, and all shapes have a connecting thread between past, present and future. Seeing in performance occurs as

natural meaning drains from an image, converting it into a vacant form to receive an ideological content, but in the instant we make this observation the literal meaning returns — literal meaning and ideological motivation are caught in a 'turnstile'.

Burgin, 1986: 16

Images have no glorified moment of either completion or presence but they do shape themselves into allusion, influence, inference, reference, resemblance, quotation, symbol and so on. Images leave trace-forms.
These are the 'tissues' and 'mosaics' of intertextuality. They are 'already read' or 'already seen' for

'there is no first reading, even if the text is concerned to give us that illusion by several operations of suspense' since any text is composed from a topos of codes, each of which 'is a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures' and consequently a fragment of something already read.

Barthes cited by Hand in Worton and Still, 1990:82

It is the first encounter with what seems bizarre that produces the shock reaction in the viewer. It may be an ordinary object creating the effect, but it is the context of its presentation – or Brechtian foregrounding - that surprises. The mind searches for the recognisable and is brought up sharply by the unrecognisable. By the second viewing, the surprise may be dulled because it is expected, and because a second viewing of performance is already intertextualised. The performance experience changes as the unfamiliar shifts into familiarity, as the alien drains away.

The text will be seen to stretch across an unbounded grid that will be brought into a structure by the pragmatics of criticism. The possibility of discovering endless intertextual relationships, and the potential freedom that this represents for criticism, needs to be tempered - or positioned in a structure. As will be clear by now, in working intertextually this structural organisation will avoid hierarchy, judgement and resolution. It will search for nodes in the text, expecting to find that when pushed a node will yield to other connecting texts (Barthes, 1990b:36). Rules about how to find these connections cannot be positioned as ends in themselves, since the approach must be governed by the individual text.

It may be that textual relationships that are found will present clues to enable critical structuring to proceed, though a more general proposal can be made through the idea of the 'architext'. Gerard Genette introduces the term 'architext' into his exploration of the text. What he means by this is 'everything, be it explicit or latent that links one text to another' (Worton and Still, 1990:22). More particularly architexts are explained as
the set of categories, such as genre, thematics, etc., which determine the nature of any individual text" (ibid.). The architext is a way of bringing intertextual strands together for criticism and as a metaphor for looking at the text, it suggests itself as a means of rooting intertextual criticism. The architext is returned to in Chapter 7.

2.5 The dance context

In considering how intertextual theory is to relate to a dance context, there are special considerations to be taken into account. Since non-linguistic signifying systems are inevitably revealed through language, as shown by semiotics, and as demonstrated by the Bakhtinian carnival, it becomes necessary to name images. Where there is no obvious name to attach to the image, it may be necessary to bestow names and in doing so to summon up some kind of reference or metaphor. Dance cannot command the linguistic equivalent, or range of nameability of language, and criticism needs to pay particular attention to the problem of naming something and to its identification as an intertext. Even though the dance might seem not to represent anything, it is still capable of suggestion. For example to see allusion in the way a body moves is to make an intertextual connective.

The term 'connective' is introduced to show how a combination of 'sign systems of text and intertext [connects] into new semiotic clusters' (Riffaterre in Worton and Still, 1990:58). There is a subtle difference between connective and connection. A connection sounds self-sufficient as if, to make a connection is enough in itself in an intertextual context. A connective, by contrast, suggests continuing action, an openness between texts that keeps up an active relationship, rather like an electric current running between objects whose power increases as the relationship strengthens, and as other objects (texts) are drawn into an ever-widening circuit.

When a text is consciously looked at through a much wider context, then
it reveals links with a network of complex relationships. Riffaterre explores intertextuality through selected images and by engaging in what he refers to as 'intertextual shuttle' (Riffaterre in Worton and Still, 1990:64), which enables him to turn seemingly ordinary words and expressions into descriptive systems. A passage from a prose poem by André Breton leads Riffaterre to probe a reference to 'a thin red trickle of' liquid that was expected to be water and turned out to be blood (1990:60). Searching behind the text, he finds metaphorical and metonymic associations with the imagery that enables him - as competent reader - to see into the poem's symbolism. The more he looks, and the more he shuttles back and forth between the text and external connectives (such as myth and religion), the more he is able to read into the text (Riffaterre in Worton and Still, 1990:56-78).

Any performance will be approached through marginal aspects such as the style adopted by the marketing strategy drawing attention to the performance. Presupposition and expectation will also feature, through messages conveyed about the text, that are not in the text. The title, for example, has an intrinsic relationship with the text, and the message that it sends out may draw a viewer to the text, as may the reputation of the creators and interpreters, and the place where the performance will be presented, and in whatever marketing strategies are adopted. But none of these is in the text itself. The presupposition and expectation that these different factors plant in the mind of the viewer before the performance venue is arrived at may be supplemented before the performance begins by other factors. Chief of these is likely to be the printed programme, which may be a pointer to what is to follow in performance.

2.6 Dance and nomenclature

An intertextual analysis of dance proceeds, as does any form of intertextual analysis, through 'a process of interpretation' (Frow in Worton and Still, 1990:47-8). Where dance as non-linguistic performance presents a challenge to existing intertextual theory is in the
need to introduce names that may already be intertextual because they relate to something outside the dance. A type of text that could be recognised might, for example, position a choreographer or a named work, or types of dance or types of dance steps as intertexts. To name a work for such purposes might send out danger signals, suggesting that the reference is to an origin, and not to an intertext. It is, however, obvious that it is only possible for intertextual theory to be worked with in dance criticism, if names are introduced. These names need to be seen as intertextual, or as part of the 'speculative creativity of ambiguity' (Worton, 1986:21).

To name a dance text is not to imply that it is a signified, but rather that it is a floating signifier. As an example of this, if a work such as Apollo (1928) is named, there can be no certainty of knowing what its naming signifies. Though it clearly stands for something, for it can be introduced as a name without qualification, exactly what is not clear. In a dance context it would be seen in a relationship with Balanchine. For musicians it would summon up Stravinsky. While it is unlikely that the reference to Apollo would be identified through the designer of the scenery and costumes (originally André Bauchant), Apollo cannot properly be envisaged without its designs. It is certain that memories of performance would be tied to interpreter contributions - from dancers, musicians, conductors, for example.

Significantly, what underpins the ballet Apollo has no identifiable starting point, only innumerable lost origins. While those general origins can be seen to be collected together into a specific first performance in Paris in 1928, the multiple influences that went into its creation as a ballet, the complexity of component parts that were knitted into a very particular relationship, plus the evolutionary life bestowed on Apollo by its choreographer and interpreters - all of whom have brought its past into a relationship with the present - militate against the possibility of relegating Apollo to a single origin.
Where a type of dance can be identified, the naming is possible because the dance belongs in the category of the already seen. To name a dance such as a waltz is to refer to a process of evolution, with awareness that what is seen in the present can be connected to a past. A waltz is a collective image, though to refer to it as 'the waltz' might point to it as a specific image. A waltz might be seen as a simple quotation, a pattern of steps wrested from one context and repositioned in another. It might retain some skeletal evidence of the waltz of history but be radically altered. And both these examples might be seen as intertextual.

To name a dance step usually means that it is identifiable through an existing system. This can be illustrated by looking at ballet as a signifying system and by returning to the image of the arabesque. The arabesque, which is less a step than an organisation of the body, reveals a particular type of alignment (within which there are many variants). Its relationship is traceable back through history to Ancient Greece, but it has evolved out of the interpretation of principles and ideology, and cannot be pinned to a moment of birth. If it has become a cultural symbol, it is only because it has continued its evolutionary progress.

In looking at how intertextual criticism might proceed in the context of dance, the choice of Apollo, a waltz and an arabesque as examples of a work, a type of dance and a dance 'step' are pointers to what follows in Chapter 7 and its intertextual analysis of William Forsythe’s Eidos:Telos (1995).

2.7 Methodological synopsis

The points emerging from this discussion can be collected into a seventeen-point plan, pointing to a methodology through which intertextual criticism can approach performance.
Initially, there is a need to consider:

1) whether the enquiry should focus on a single performance, or on experience accumulated from two or more performances. It is recommended that a ‘composite’ text should be collected together from several performances as a resource for criticism.

2) how material drawn from the dance text is to be accumulated as a working resource

3) whether the dance work can be theorised as a text

4) the part that the textualised subject might play in the critical text

supplementary evidence may be found in:

5) critical writings about the text in question

6) performances of other works in the oeuvre

7) critical writings about these other performances

8) other material suggested by the text in question

the enquiry should consider looking at:

9) the margins of performance

10) performance context (venue, likely audience and so on)

11) marketing strategy

12) title

13) printed programme

in performance, critical procedure needs to be alert to:

14) different signifying systems

15) recognition of a prior text, and how it is affected by travel between texts

16) whatever relationships and attitudes may be found suggesting resemblance to something else

17) nomenclature and attendant problems
These seventeen points should be regarded as points of departure, for any text will bring demands of its own to direct the investigation in particular ways. They do, however, present a basis from which to begin a methodological enquiry into intertextuality, not just for dance but for performance generally.

2.8 Summary

Having looked in this chapter at theories of text, intertextuality and performance text, it can be seen first that dance can be theorised as a text, and that it can then be looked at through intertextuality. The freedom from convention that intertextuality ushers in is a relative freedom, governed by the text and by criticism’s dependency on structured parameters. Released from the impositions of history, intertextual criticism will forge its own procedural logic, as it seeks to identify not the existence of a relationship with the past but acts of transformation between texts.

Whatever perceived divisions there may be between competent viewer and critic, both are seen to exist in a discursive network and both are engaged through intertextuality in the play of meaning. The ephemeral text of performance means that the critical methodology must give special thought both to the kind of material that might be useful, and to the manner in which it is to be collected into a resource. It acknowledges presumptions and assumptions and the part that they may play in performance criticism, thus it challenges one of the main obstacles produced by modernist criticism, the reliance on a legislative body.

Chapters 1 and 2 that constitute Part One of this study have looked at critical convention, postmodern art forms and at the problematised relationship between criticism and postmodernism. Intertextual theory has been proposed as a means by which criticism and postmodern art can position themselves as equals. Performance semiotics provides the model from which a methodology for intertextual criticism can emerge. Able to
encompass both the representational and the presentational, it has special implications for non-linguistic performance – notably for dance. The methodology has emphasised the importance of theorising the performance as text as the means by which intertextual criticism can proceed. Intertextual criticism is held in a relationship with the text. Before the methodology can be tested, however, William Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt need introducing.

Notes

1. The writerly is distinguished from the act of writing, which linguistic theory points to as secondary because unlike speech it is mediated. See Eagleton (1996:113).
2. See also Eagleton (1996:120).
4. The adjective thetic relates to thesis, from Greek, meaning 'a thing placed, hence laid down' (Partridge, 1990:711). It of course present in both 'aesthetic' and 'kinaesthetic'.
5. For a summary of Bakhtin's research into language, and in particular his identification of the two poles of the monologic and dialogic, see Worton and Still (1990:15-16).
6. See also Kristeva in Moi (1986:111).
7. For extended arguments about interpretation of what is and is not intertextuality see different essays in Worton and Still (1990), and in particular see Jefferson, 'Autobiography as intertext: Barthes, Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet', (pp108-129) and Lack, 'Intertextuality or influence: Kristeva, Bloom and the Poésies of Isidore Ducasse' (pp130-142).
8. For discussion of another kind of text, the dramatic text, see De Marinis (1993:15-46).
9. Differing from Eco (1984b) and De Marinis (1993), both of whom give capital letters to their ideal receivers of the text, the term competent viewer would seem to be sufficient without any marks of emphasis.
10. Some theories, however, focus from a different perspective; intentionalism, for example, looks from the creative viewpoint (Stolnitz, 1960).
12. Accredited critics may, for example, expect to be issued with press tickets for a single performance, and on occasion tickets may be given for two performances. It is unusual for complementary tickets to be made available for repeated viewing. If, moreover, the performance takes place in a different country it may be impossible for the critic to keep returning to it.
13. For argument against employment of the subjectivist doctrine in response to the arts, on the basis that all response (including feeling) is cognitive, see Best's *The Rationality of Feeling* (1992).
15. For discussion of theme in the text, see Riffaterre (in Worton and Still, 1990:61).
PART TWO

Choreographer and company

Chapter 3: William Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt

Chapter 4: Forsythescape
CHAPTER 3

William Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt

3.1 The choreographer
3.2 The reactionary Orpheus
3.3 Forsythe’s Ballett Frankfurt
3.4 Shaping the identity
3.5 Diversity
3.6 Ensemble of dancers
3.7 Creative laboratory
3.8 Collaboration
3.9 Improvisation Technologies
3.10 Summary
Notes

Part Two puts the focus on William Forsythe and his company, the Ballett Frankfurt, looking at influences and founding principles. It shows how the work springs from a zest for enquiry into the nature of dance in theatre, and how there is enthusiasm for drawing philosophical and theoretical discourses into a network of influences.

Chapter 3, the first of this section’s two chapters, looks briefly at Forsythe’s background, at the influences of his early years, and at some of his works. In bringing about fundamental changes to ballet and theatre dance, the choreography of Balanchine and the theoretical enquiry of Laban are both seen to have had a major impact on Forsythe. Three early Forsythe ballets – Orpheus (1979), Gänge (1983) and Artifact (1984) - are examined for what they reveal about attitudes to heritage and tradition. They are also looked at through critical response, particularly reactive responses that attach importance to what is seen as ‘broken rules’. An interesting point emerges about how critics can see ‘chaos’, and overlook the evidence of internal choreographic logic. Threaded through this chapter is a sense of the Ballett Frankfurt and how it operates as a multi-national ensemble. This shows the importance attached to creative input and to working collaboratively. It shows too how improvisation is used to generate choreographic systems, and how improvisation can be an important part of performance.
3.1. The choreographer

William Forsythe was born in Manhasset, Long Island (New York State) on 30 December 1949.¹ He grew up, in a home filled with books and music, in an atmosphere of enquiring minds and catholic tastes.² Popular dance was among his earliest influences, and he recognises that from a young age he became aware of the importance of physical culture – and dance in particular - to contemporary America. He learnt his first dance steps through watching Fred Astaire on television, and taught himself rock 'n roll practising alone in the family kitchen (see Sulcas, 1995b:52). He considers himself fortunate to have come to dance through popular culture, so that when later he embarked on formal training, these other influences were ontologically integrated.³

As a child Forsythe discovered a passion for musicals, and for involving himself in any aspect of theatre to which he could gain entry. An event that he singles out in conversation, and which evidently left a lasting impression on him, was the initiative he took as an eleven-year old schoolboy to build a puppet theatre. He offers the information in conversation without comment, as if to suggest that the enterprise left him with a belief in his own ability to combine the practical with the imaginary (and as can be seen later in this chapter, his eye for theatricalising his works continues to depend on these combined talents). He discovered that he was gifted in other ways, that he was 'hyper-coordinated and agile' – and had a facility for movement.⁴ At high school he won competitions dancing the twist and the mashed potato.⁵ His successes seemed to him rather like a teenage passport, for they brought invitations to dance at black gatherings and entry to a wider social world.⁶

At fourteen he was invited to appear in a musical in New York, but had to turn the invitation down, for his parents were not prepared to discuss it on account of the disruption it would bring to his regular schooling. Forsythe’s disappointment was acute, though as it happened his regular
education brought creative opportunities, and as a schoolboy he began to makes dances for musicals.

But not until he went to university - to major in humanities and theatre at Jacksonville University, Florida – did he begin formal dance training. He enrolled in classes for both ballet and modern dance, mainly because his ‘roommate’ had taken the initiative to study dance and he decided to go along too. It was a decisive moment, and just as Forsythe’s aptitude for movement, his enthusiasm for musicals and his awareness of street culture would come to influence his choreography, so his first ballet teacher proved a significant influence. Leon Danelion was a former Balanchine dancer, and in his teaching of ballet he was concerned more with enquiring into its nature, and in particular the relationship with space and time, than with rigid enforcement of rules.

As at school, so at university Forsythe found creative opportunity, and in 1969 he choreographed what he considers to be his first real dance work (Driver and Editors, 1990:95). Dance journalists (for example, Dunning, 1979) have reported that at an early age Forsythe decided he wanted to be a choreographer, and that dancing always took second place. But this conflicts with a declaration by Forsythe about the central role that dancing holds for him. ‘I am, first and foremost a dancer’, he said emphatically in 1998. His words were spoken long after he had apparently ceased to dance in his own works. As he explained to an interviewer he had stopped dancing in 1977, because performing and choreographing ‘were too much in competition’ (De Liagre, 1988:82). Yet two decades later he was dancing in a work that he and his colleague Dana Caspersen created for a video recording entitled From a classical position, and when it was shown on Channel 4 in 1998 the publicity claimed that this was Forsythe’s swan song as a dancer. As he had not actually danced on stage for many years, this was curious, though because it was singled out by the continuity announcer it added a dramatic note to the way the piece was watched. Again in the autumn of 1999 Forsythe broke with his own tradition and appeared in a new full-
length work, *Endless House*. Perhaps what this points to is a fluidity of identity between choreographer and dancer. It is a fluidity that is part of the Ballett Frankfurt’s way of working, where there are often no clear divisions between creator and performer.

Before he could launch into his dance career, Forsythe needed further training, and on graduation he went on a scholarship to the Joffrey School in New York where, rather later than the average ballet student, he embarked on a period of intensive study. An injury to his knee in 1971 was to have notable consequences, for it was during the enforced break from dancing that he discovered Rudolf Laban’s theories of space harmony, and began to read Laban’s *Choreutics* (1966). Laban’s work took him on a journey of discovery into the body’s physical structure and its potential for spatial relationships (Maletic, 1987). Its central theory recognised a kinesphere - or space that could be reached from around the body - in a fixed relationship with the body. Laban in his research ‘drew from many resources such as the theory and notation of ballet, and the geometrical and crystallographical theory of space’ (Maletic, 1987:176). He insisted that no matter how much the body was able to deviate from its central axis and explore different spatial planes, there would always be a return to a central stability. Forsythe’s choreography draws from the Laban model but differs significantly, for the Forsythe body is democratized and its central control is deconstructed. It acknowledges not just one kinesphere, but the possibility of endless kinespheres. These major characteristics of the Forsythe oeuvre are looked at in more detail later.

Despite the late start, Forsythe’s physical aptitude helped him to develop a strong enough technique to be accepted as a member of the Joffrey Ballet 2 (an apprentice company), with whom he danced for approximately eighteen months. During this time he also gained experience from giving occasional performances with the main Joffrey Ballet. When the Stuttgart Ballet visited New York, Forsythe attended an audition for the company. He was the only dancer chosen at this audition,
becoming the last dancer to be accepted into the company by John Cranko. By the time Forsythe arrived to begin work in Stuttgart in 1973, Cranko had died in an accident. Cranko's sudden death (on a plane travelling with the company from Philadelphia to Stuttgart) was traumatic for the Stuttgart Ballet, a company that he had run with distinction. In the aftermath of his death, it became a matter of honour to uphold everything that Cranko had believed in — especially the importance he attached to the production of new work, and the maintenance of a climate of creative opportunity. The Stuttgart dancers were given opportunity to create work (Percival, 1983:230), and where talent was found it was nurtured.

Forsythe took advantage of the openings afforded to aspirant choreographers, and started to make workshop pieces. In 1976 he produced a first work, *Urlicht*, for the Noverre Society Young Choreographers Workshop. (For a list of Forsythe's works, see Appendix A.) It was well received and the following year *Urlicht* was taken into the company's repertoire: as a result, he was appointed a company choreographer (one of three). He was required to produce three works a year, and though the arrangement brought no monetary reward (Dunning, 1979) it did provide opportunity - for both company (which received 12 new works) and choreographer. Forsythe claims that his early works relied on received ideas about form, yet what is clear from reviews is that even from the start his choreography revealed an individual way of looking at dance (Dunning, 1979; Whitney, 1983; Reimer-Torn, 1987).

3.2 The reactionary *Orpheus*

In 1978, Forsythe made *Folia* for the Stuttgart Ballet in collaboration with the German composer Hans Werner Henze. The following year Henze commissioned Forsythe to create the choreography, and the English writer Edward Bond to write the libretto, for a new production: *Orpheus*. This was to be Forsythe's eighth professional work, but it had a difficult birth and there were arguments between the collaborators. Forsythe recollects conversations with Bond, in which
I’d say, where the hell is this ballet supposed to take place?” And he’d say he didn’t know. He kept talking about Rembrandt, but I wasn’t interested in doing dark portraits. Most of my ballets have been based on ideas, but I was confronting two men who wanted to make social comment on a level ballets seldom do. But those comments became the most interesting part of working on the ballet.

Forsythe cited in Dunning, 1979:npn

The experience of working in this way was to prove influential, and Orpheus made an impact, marking a turning point for the choreographer. Reviews at the time noted how Forsythe had conceptualised a mixture of formalism, symbolism, expressionism and pop culture. They drew attention to the originality of the staging of myth as modern-day allegory, and to the representational play with time and place (Kisselgoff, 1979, Jowitt, 1979). They recognised a choreographer who wanted to break away from dance’s monolithic conventions, and who was making a statement that could be seen as a manifesto. There are parallels to be found between the 1979 Orpheus and Eidos:Telos, which followed sixteen years later, and which is also infiltrated by Greek myth interpreted through contemporary mores. In Orpheus Apollo, Hades and Persephone were seen as representational characters. In Eidos:Telos, the place of representation is complex. Something of myth may be sensed through subtle allusion – or it may be missed altogether. Eidos:Telos, as will be seen in Chapter 5, can also be regarded as a choreographic manifesto.

Orpheus was included on the Stuttgart Ballet’s 1979 tour to the US, where it attracted considerable critical attention, much of it judgemental, and negative. The reviews (some of which are discussed below) reveal the instability of such judgements, pointing to the difficulty that critics had in seeing new work and relating to it. While the experience that Forsythe gained from creating a ballet with a team concerned with social comment - in ways that were revolutionary for the Stuttgart Ballet - was to shape his own subsequent career, and to make an impact on the dance world generally, many critics distanced themselves from notions of social
alism in dance, and remained alienated by what they saw. One critic complained that while Forsythe was

often bold and thoughtful in theatre terms, [in his] understanding of deranged human movement – [he] stumbles over trifles. The yawning tunnel to hell isn’t used in a consistent manner, for instance.

Jowitt, 1979:npn

It can be deduced from this quotation that Orpheus’s lack of consistency caused the critic to recognise the value of consistency in absentia. This does not mean necessarily that the critic regarded consistency as essential to every work, merely that attention was drawn to what was not present in a particular work because its absence was noticeable. It was the work that had created the awareness, and in singling out the yawning tunnel (a metaphor underlining the power of visual imagery to enable the reader of criticism to sense spatial organisation) the critic had seen a departure from convention. Jowitt’s ‘for instance’ sentence about the trifle of the tunnel’s inconsistency might, within the body of her writing, have been dismissed as insignificant, had it not been presented in a summarising paragraph - which made the trifle important. Something about the ‘yawning tunnel’ triggered a negative reaction. If Jowitt’s reading found fault with lack of consistency, and if Forsythe’s intention was to be inconsistent, then what is emphasised is the uneasy relationship between criticism and the art work.

Unity is also an issue for Jowitt, who points to the ‘proletariat/ensemble’ and comments, ‘they’re never quite in unison, but they do the same kinds of things at the same time’ (1979). The observation is interesting because it stands as description without evaluation. Nevertheless, in the closing lines of the piece, she finds against Orpheus for what seems to be a curious reason:

The most depressing thing to me about this heavy, rumpled work is the lack of individual response, not in the performing of the ensemble, which is marvelous, but in Forsythe’s concept. They’re a docile, maneuverable, think-alike bunch, whether
humping around in primal camaraderie, agonizing in hell, or aping Orpheus’s amorous manipulations of his spunky, tendrily Eurydice. 

Jowitt, 1979:npn

Once again Jowitt uses metaphor to present a vivid picture of what occurred in the dance, and ‘what was wrong with it’ - *in her eyes*. Her statement, ‘the most depressing thing to me’, functions as subjective judgement. While she chooses to criticise ‘the lack of individuality’, at other times it is the shaping of what she perceives as individuality that offends against what she was led to expect. In Jowitt’s praising of the ensemble’s performance and her lambasting of the material, a further problem reveals itself. The dancers who were regarded as ‘marvelous’ were seen in Forsythe’s choreography, and not in isolation from it. What was ‘marvelous’ involved an intimate relationship between dancer and dance - which returns to the issue raised in Chapter 1 about how it is that the dancer can be separated from the dance. Another point raised in Chapter 1 about how different critics see different attributes, can be reiterated through the reception of *Orpheus*, and through what the first critic found from group scenes, and how a second critic regarded ‘each mass scene of horror’ as 'persuasive' (Kisselgoff, 1979:C25).

In Kisselgoff’s opening paragraph, what seems to have proved persuasive was the context of presentation in New York’s Metropolitan Opera House, because it went against what might normally have been expected to be presented there. *Orpheus*

is a powerful work, more a political theater piece relying on highly directed movement sequences than on choreography and dancing in the conventional sense. Yet as such, it is a compelling staging with brutal imagery that the young people in the audience accepted more readily than the sedate opera-house crowd.

Kisselgoff, 1979:C25

Perhaps it was the particular setting that led Kisselgoff to find that she was watching ‘movement sequences’ rather than choreography and
dancing. It is not easy to determine from her relatively short review, what precisely was meant by this separation of movement, choreography and dancing (particularly as she later refers to the presence of 'conventional dance sequences'). But like Jowitt, she also quibbled over the piece's lack of coherence, ultimately arguing that

in the end, this "Orpheus" turns out to be muddled in its message, largely because the muddle is in the politics of its scenarists.

Kisselgoff, 1979:C25

Thus Jowitt and Kisselgoff are seen to have reached similar conclusions about the work's flaws, but for different reasons. Yet, these verdicts notwithstanding, Orpheus caught the attention of the wider dance world, and brought Forsythe commissions from other companies. Invitations came mainly from European companies, though in 1983 he returned to New York to create Square Deal for the Joffrey Ballet, where he was hailed as the returning prodigal. But Forsythe was no prodigal, for he had been carefully harvesting different cultural experiences, and not only did he create the choreography for Square Deal but he wrote music and designed some of the visual effects. He was a choreographer who wanted to oversee every aspect of his work on stage.

The previous year he had written the music for a work that he called Gänge 1 (1982), and created for the Nederlands Dans Theater. The inclusion of a number in the title could have been seen as a clue that this was a first act and that more would follow, for he often includes numbers in his title to indicate that a work is part of a larger piece. A full-length Gänge – ein Stück über Ballett (which can be variously interpreted as 'Ways or Goings – a Piece about Ballet', Sulcas, 1995:54) followed in 1983, and was created for the Ballett Frankfurt, with new music by Thomas Jahn. It was to have major consequences.
3.3 Forsythe's Ballett Frankfurt

The Ballett Frankfurt was founded in 1945, and had developed as a municipal ensemble that presented a repertory of ballet classics and works by contemporary European choreographers — and an occasional Balanchine ballet. Forsythe's relationship with the company began in 1981, after his former colleague from Stuttgart, Egon Madsen, had signed a three-year contract as director.²¹ (For a list of Ballett Frankfurt directors, see Appendix B). Madsen invited Forsythe to mount two works on the company *Time Cycle* and *Seit 1 – Love Songs – Alte Platten* (both created for the Stuttgart Ballet in 1979 and given in Frankfurt in 1981).²² It was these that led to the commissioning of the full-length *Gänge*. Forsythe was fortunate in that he was given a nine-month period - an astonishing length of time in contemporary economic terms — in which to create it. What came out of this intensive period was, to say the least, controversial, and *Gänge* left audiences radically divided between those who stayed to the end (the minority), and those who left at various points during the performance (the majority). Critical response positions *Gänge* as a multimedia work, in which speech and grammatical structure play as important a part as conventional dance steps ... It dealt with the relationship of the dancer to his society, showing the fundamental roots of dance and how the image of a dancer had changed in modern times.

Langer and Sikes, 1986:49

This passage does not explain why *Gänge* was controversial, but reaction needs to be gauged in the context of its time, for the audience was conditioned to classicism and modernism, and the new work was experimental and postmodernist. It used a combination of movement, speech and technology to rupture balletic tradition, taking *Swan Lake* as its model and targeting the ballet’s dramatic ‘artificialities’. These were examined through a double perspective involving artifice and realism, which meant that not only was the dramatic rationale brought into focus, but so too were the different pressures that this put on the performers.
Gänge included one scene in which the curtains parted to reveal a stage emptied of everything save a tape recorder playing bland pop music. For many audience members this was the straw that broke the camel's back and they departed, angered at the apparent meaninglessness of Gänge.

Soon afterwards Madsen mounted Cranko's 1972 version of the more conventional Swan Lake. However, the route back to the classics was a direction that no longer interested Frankfurt's Cultural Ministry, and when Madsen's term of office ended in 1984 - and he transferred to the Royal Swedish Ballet - the Ballett Frankfurt sought a new director. Gänge had whetted appetites, and an invitation was issued to Forsythe to take on the directorship. Forsythe was not at the time thinking in terms of directing a company, but the lengthy rehearsal period - and all that he had been able to achieve during that period - helped persuade him (Kirchner, 1984:4). He accepted the invitation and, in 1984, became artistic director of the Ballett Frankfurt, launching a period that would transform the company's reputation, and position it as an international force in dance.

The major event of Forsythe's first year was the December premiere of a new full-length work Artifact. It is a work categorised by the choreographer as one of his 'ballet ballets', which is an expression he attaches to works that have a closer relationship to conventional ballet logic than some of his more radical creations. The 'ballet ballets' can be mounted more readily on other companies, where the dancers are not accustomed to his interrogatory methods.

Artifact requires a large and skilled corps de ballet of men and women. They must be able to perform virtuoso steps and complex, off-centred movement, and be able too to reproduce (in what is clearly a classically inspired scene) the linear patterns of classical ballet, notably at a point when men and women are lined along the stage's three sides to frame a quartet of solo dancers. The choreography's speed and muscular organisation challenges the soloists who, as they work in partnerships,
are tested in the dexterity of balance and weight changes to arrive at physical extremities of movement. The audience senses the dancers taking risks, and feels the kinetic force. No longer are ballet's preparatory positions used to 'announce' types of movement that will follow. There are no preparations, every movement is valued in its own right. No longer are the devices of climax as a point of arrival used to direct the audience in its looking. Instead, there is continuing and diverse activity everywhere allowing no privileged positions on stage.

Artifact has three central characters. The Woman in Period Costume and Man with Megaphone call attention to themselves as they weave in and out of the dancers' patterns, engaged in their own declamatory monologues, and in non-responsive 'conversation' with each other. Though the words themselves can be understood, they cannot be made sense of contextually. But the sound of the characters' voices, their performative qualities, and the paths that they follow in movement, weave themselves into the work's atmosphere. The third character, who in Frankfurt is nameless, but who is called 'Mudwoman' in the Dutch National Ballet's production, does not speak, but her silent walks across the stage add to the atmosphere.

For a viewer coming fresh to Forsythe's work, Artifact can still (a decade and a half after its creation) seem radical, both in its movement style and its use of non-comprehensible speech. The knowledgeable Forsythe viewer seeing Artifact for the first time, will find connections with other works in the oeuvre, both in movement and theatricalisation. There is emphasis on fragmentation, and on the abrupt cessation of scenes terminated by the sudden falling of the curtain (a point returned to in the next chapter) and on the extraordinary effects that can be built by speech and lighting. The loneliness of characters who speak and who are locked inside their own interior worlds can be seen time and again in later works. The Woman in Historical Costume might be seen as a forerunner to the lone woman who appears in Act 2 of Eidos:Telos. The Ballet
Frankfurt has revived *Artifact*, in several subsequent seasons, and it continues to be danced by other companies.\textsuperscript{29}

In the decade and a half of his Frankfurt directorship, Forsythe has created a steady stream\textsuperscript{30} of new works on his company.\textsuperscript{31} He has made his reputation through his ability to keep discovering more about dance's potential - and his dancers and his audiences (in Frankfurt and on tour) expect him to keep producing new work. He runs his company with a zest for enquiry, never letting any aspect of creativity grow static. When a work is brought back into the repertory after it has been absent for some time, it is subjected to detailed and continuing re-examination. Even after the first performance of a revival, the questioning continues in subsequent rehearsals. While each performance is regarded in its own right as vital, so it is also seen as part of a process of discovery, and because of its `constant reworking' (Wilkins, 1998:21), in one sense it is never finished.

As if the commitment he makes to his own company and to the continuing production of new work were not enough, from time to time Forsythe also accepts a commission from other companies. Somehow he manages to fit this into his increasingly demanding schedule.\textsuperscript{32} But the work that he creates for other companies will usually serve the Ballett Frankfurt in the long term, finding its way into the repertory in a redeveloped form.

### 3.4 Shaping the identity

A dance company's character is determined by its artistic policy, by its creators, performers, performing style and approach to theatre. Forsythe's approach to theatre, and his questioning of the status of dance in theatre, has forged his reputation and made him much sought-after by other dance companies.

The name Ballett Frankfurt is of course an umbrella title that extends across a multi-national ensemble, and involves not just dancers but other
artists, technicians and administrators as well. A battalion of individuals contributes different skills, creating at one level stability and continuity and, at another, constant disruption. A glance at the names listed on credit sheets for different productions underlines this oscillation between stability and continuity. While on the one hand Forsythe surrounds himself with a creative team of dancers, composers and other artists, on whom he relies for contributions to most of his productions, so from time to time he brings in creators who are new to him to work on a new production. He often works on projects with architects, including Daniel Liebiskind (Forsythe has, on occasion, lectured to students of architecture).33

Whereas in a conventional ballet situation there are dancers and choreographers, Forsythe the postmodernist is interested in breaking down divisions. He believes that his dancers have a right to participate in the creative life of his company, and to contribute ideas of their own. It is largely through their knowledge of the types of enquiry pursued by Forsythe, and their ability to develop it in particular ways, that the dancers are able to play such an important collaborative part in the life of the company. Beyond what all the dancers contribute, individuals sometimes play a more prominent role as choreographers, making works of their own for the company’s repertory.

As an indication of the importance attached to creativity – and diverse experience - from time to time dancers will be granted leave of absence to take up either choreographic commissions, or invitations to perform with other companies. Sometimes too they will take time out to pursue different types of work; recently there have been examples of dancers performing with a rock group, making video films and designing costumes and sets for a production by another company.

The work of the Ballett Frankfurt is by no means confined within a single organisation, but has made a much wider impact. There are far more companies trying to commission a Forsythe work, or at the least acquire
an existing ballet, than can be accommodated. Only a few of Forsythe's colleagues are experienced enough to be able to teach his ballets, and they cannot be released from their regular work for long periods. According to a list supplied by the Ballett Frankfurt (1998) Forsythe's works are in the repertoire of 44 other companies.

But the demand works both ways and, pressurised as he is, Forsythe somehow manages to be knowledgeable about the work of other choreographers, and to maintain active interest in a few whose mode of investigation may have some similarities with his own. He is interested in work that brings rigorous questioning to the normative or the conventional. From time to time, he commissions an outside choreographer to make a work for the Ballett Frankfurt.

While these outside commissions are relatively few, it is even rarer for an existing work to be mounted on his company. The last occasion was in 1991, when Patricia Neary produced Balanchine's *Agon* (1957). It may be that Forsythe wanted *Agon*’s choreography to become part of collective memory, a memory that would be shared not only by the dancers who were cast to dance in it, but by dancers who watched as well. Perhaps it was a work that he wanted specially to revisit.

Balanchine’s influence can be seen to permeate not only the spatial dynamics of Forsythe’s choreography but the company’s performing style as well. There was a time when Forsythe was thought of as Balanchine’s choreographic heir, as can be seen in reactions to *Behind the China Dogs*, which Forsythe created for New York City Ballet in 1988. One critic noticed how it suited Balanchine’s dancers and their style of moving, and how it underlined subtle connections between the younger choreographer and his mentor. The critic found within it ‘quotations ... but without a hint of plagiarism’, and proceeded to make a connection with a particular work through an intriguing but enigmatic phrase: ‘*Agon* is its sponsor’ (Fischer, 1989:28). *Behind the China Dogs* was created three years before the Ballett Frankfurt danced *Agon*, but the
observation suggests that the ballet already figured prominently in Forsythe’s imagination (whether or not Forsythe had actually made a reference to it in *Behind the China Dogs*).

In 1983, shortly after Balanchine’s death, Forsythe had created *France/Dance* for the Paris Opera Ballet, which was recognised as a tribute to Balanchine. At least one critic thought that it included ‘direct quotations from Apollo’ (Dunning, 1988). It is not Forsythe’s habit to lift passages from another choreographer’s work, but what is seen can be deceptive. According to Forsythe,

> in *France/Dance* I took ... motifs from *Apollo* and reorganized them ... it’s good to know ballet, but the gist of the whole piece is the organization of the human body as an art form.

Quoted in Driver and Editors, 1990:96

So in the choreographer’s eyes, what he had done was to take material from Balanchine’s ballet and work with it in his own way. What the critic saw connected to her memory of *Apollo* and filled in the gaps of what was missing. This is an example of choreography whose thetic position had been changed, as in Kristeva intertextuality (Kristeva, 1982:60).

The critical observation coupled with the choreographic comment returns to an issue raised in the previous chapter: the complexity of knowing how to recognise a quotation in dance. If the choreographer’s account is accepted, then it suggests that *Apollo* was seen as a connective in *France/Dance*. *Apollo* was not presented in a direct quotation, but something of its character was recognisable through absence – and the issue is returned to in Chapter 7. In these connections with the Balanchine works, Balanchine is positioned not so much as a man but as a creator of works: in other words as a text. The Balanchine text reveals itself through functioning intertextually in the work of Forsythe and his Ballett Frankfurt.
3.5 Diversity

In every aspect of both creativity and the running of the organisation, there is diversity. Interdisciplinarity, montage and fragmentation typify Forsythe's work, with different artistic, cultural and social elements woven into many-layered networks. There is often no immediately recognisable logic to the stream of ideas, 'characters' and objects that pours out of his ballets. Play between the representational and the presentational was seen in the 'characters' in Artifact in speech and movement that at one moment served as characterisation, and at the next contributed to the texture of the piece. The diversity that features in every work is revealed through continuing activity and where change occurs it can be ushered in by subtle, sometimes imperceptible means.

Diversity is apparent in the different contributions made by members of the Ballett Frankfurt in responsibilities that reveal their versatility. Talents are sometimes used unexpectedly. For Alie/n(a)ction (1992), the spoken text was written by Forsythe (its choreographer), in collaboration with dancers Dana Caspersen and Stephen Galloway, and a dramaturge, Steven Valk. Forsythe also created the lighting, and Galloway designed the costumes. One of the company's pianists, David Morrow, was cast in a major performing role, in which he sat in a focal position on stage throughout the first act. For a period of 25 minutes and 40 seconds, he counted aloud the passing seconds: the numbers might be ordinary, but his performance made a drama of them. He counted in rhythmic measures but from time to time played with both the rhythm of his delivery and its dynamic character. Sometimes the counting became urgent and threatening, and the volume and precision of his delivery injected menace into the performance. Sometimes he broke away to introduce numbers from outside the regulated order. This did nothing to affect the underlying pulse from which the dancers take their movement clues. But by swinging between real and theatricalised time it revealed a conundrum in attitudes taken to time. The choreography in Act 1 of Alie/n(a)ction is based on 'spelt out' real time, and on a pointed relationship with measurement of pulse and dramatic impetus. What the
steady pulse of the counting permitted was space for rhythmic embellishment and opportunity for the blending of both ordinary and theatricalised movement. There was no longer a clear distinction between them.

3.6 Ensemble of dancers

Returning to the character of the ensemble of dancers, and looking at three seasons, in 1997/98 and 1998/99 there were 35 dancers, and 32 dancers respectively listed on the Ballett Frankfurt's roll, whereas by 1999/2000 the number had risen to 37. These dancers do not conform to a 'type', and there are few similarities in physicality, personality and movement style to be found among them. Forsythe is not interested in selecting dancers because they fit a predetermined mould nor, when a dancer leaves does he search for a replacement with similar looks and talent. He is concerned with individuals. There are no 'cloned' dancers in his company — nor, incidentally, is there an associated pedagogical organisation producing a steady supply of newly trained apprentices, as there is with most conventional ballet companies. Dancers find their own way to the Ballett Frankfurt, hearing on the 'grapevine' about both the nature of the work and how the company operates. There are no formal auditions, and those who make enquires about the possibility of joining the company, and whose background experience makes them sound potentially interesting, are generally invited to spend several days with the company, during which time they participate in class and discover from the back of the rehearsal studio something about the manner in which the company works.

Forsythe's dancers are mainly culled from a ballet background, and continue to receive a daily ballet class that is conducted on traditional lines. The rest of the working day argues against that tradition, rupturing rule-bound habits embodied by years of training. There can be no definition about what it is that persuades Forsythe to hand a contract to a dancer: it is a matter of individual chemistry. He prefers (with rare exceptions) to choose seasoned dancers.
What I look for, in my dancers, is to see their experience of dancing, not at how they perform “the choreography.” In some ways, I don’t even understand it as choreography any more, just as interpretation.

Forsythe quoted in Sulcas, Summer, 1995a:8

What he seems to require from his dancers in performance is dancerly experience, not an imposed act of performing. Of course performing is a self-conscious act, it can hardly be otherwise where an audience is known to be watching.

Attitudes to the manner of performing are important. The balletic convention of self-referential spectacle, and the ballet dancer’s expression of smiling ease - intended to suggest to audiences that the outer and visible harmony of the dance is a manifestation of inner harmony - is challenged. The Frankfurt dancers do not wear smiles as masks in performance: their expressions often seem to be neutral, for where no expression is imposed, faces can mirror the intensity of internal focus and expressions. The dancers will smile when they are exhilarated, but their features are not generally composed into attention-seeking expression. There are exceptions. In *Isabelle’s Dance* (1986), for example, some of the dancers smile in a manner that indicates the vacuity of the characters they play. At moments too, everyone on stage beams brightly while belting out a song. These are ironic expressions though, for in these (unusual) larger-than-life characters, *Isabelle’s Dance* mockingly captures the artificiality of the stereotype.

In *Isabelle’s Dance*, as in every work, Forsythe demands — and gets — an exactness of execution in performance, which audiences recognise as a quality of precision even without access to the work’s coding. What leads critics to single out the dancers for praise while attacking the choreography is that they see broken rules. Seldom do these critics clarify what they understand as the division between interpretation and
creation, and how dancers can excel when they are seen through broken rules.

Forsythe's choreographic configurations are compounded of a mass of detailed organisation of human form. These unite the dancers in their differences, and reveal to audiences that the dancers share knowledge about the dance that they can relate to an internalised logic. The point can be illustrated through an example from ballet, and the danse d'école. Conventionally, the dancer about to execute a pirouette positions torso, limbs and head into a preparatory moment of stillness, from which the impetus and the physical organisation will be generated, enabling the pirouette to be executed from a 'lifted' body. The audience can 'read' what is expected from this, and can also read when things go wrong for the dancer - if perhaps s/he fails to deliver the intended number of pirouettes indicated in the preparation and impetus. The reading is through knowledge of the rules governing ballet. Since, however, the rules that govern Forsythe's codes cannot be compared to anything else (and individuals execute different tasks), viewers are not in a position to anticipate what will follow. There is no measuring stick through which to establish success or failure in execution, for it is irrelevant.

Forsythe often refers to the quality of performance produced by the dancers (of whose achievements he is proud) as 'integrity', a word that seems to bring together not only accuracy of physical organisation, but also attitude of mind. The form that is produced through this 'integrity' derives from shape, trajectory, dynamic and rhythm, and suggests itself as purposeful. The viewer senses something of conceptual intention in the style of execution, no matter how confusing the diversity of the on-stage activity might seem. For

with the best dancers, you see a large number of very tiny moments, and you feel that nothing is held back, that they are showing you all the experience that they have accumulated. Those people who actually go to those infinitesimal moments of time, and experience the kind of dancing that that arrival
induces, are very aware of life's fragility, and are fully aware of the fullness of life, which includes dance.
Forsythe quoted in Sulcas, Summer 1995a: 8

3.7 Creative laboratory

Forsythe's works show an appreciation of the history of dance movement, while dismissing puritanical attitudes. There is no division into high or low, or good or bad, or art that is removed from life, for the choreographer is an interweaver of signifiers, exploding notions of fixity in order to find the forgotten, lost or yet-to-be-discovered. The dances are never without irony, a sense that the past has no right of entry into the present unless it is interrogated. He works in the belief that anything can be used as material for dance (Sulcas, 1995a:7), bringing discourses to the creative laboratory, as he calls it, from ideas found in his cultural, theoretical and philosophical reading and from everyday social interaction. Ideas will sometimes continue to brew for long periods, and may be released into creative activity through an unexpected experience, or through the pressure of a deadline.

The Frankfurt dancers are experienced in letting go of what their past has taught them about rules embodied in physical memory. Not every dancer will reveal an independent gift for choreography, but while working with Forsythe in the studio, each will be engaged in a particular type of enquiry. The rules that become operative during the creative period present the dancers with tasks. In the way they are executed, the different tasks can be seen to have an intrinsic relationship, and to drive the dance onwards. It is because of instances when no two dancers are working at the same task that critics so often refer to moments of chaos on stage. Where there is no discernible pattern, then it is regarded as chaos, and chaos is not generally held to be a desirable characteristic of theatre dance. To see chaos when different dancers move through different forms, and in different directions, may be to ignore evidence that something must be controlling the stage action, for without it the dancers would bump into each other, or the activity would grind to a halt.
If the focus shifts away from individual action to take in the whole picture, what can be seen is that in the disunity there is a controlling power. At times what can also be sensed is that asymmetric movement from the group functions kaleidoscopically, as if the movement of forms (in all their differences) is operated by this central and unseen power. It is a power that relates to the choreography’s inner logic. Every work seems to spring from a form of logic that has been codified into a system. Though dancers may not obviously relate through eye contact, their timing during diverse passages of action and stillness seems to be meticulous. They interact as if with antennae attuned to minuscule visual and aural signals.

All the ballets have a structural framework, within which there is often space for improvisational passages and creative freedom. The choice of what may be danced, and how it may be executed, is, however, directed by rules and codes particular to the piece in question, making demands about spatial progression, and connected to specific tasks or game-play. In Act I of *Eidos:Telos*, for example, large boards are posted in the downstage wing spaces (out of audience view) containing lists of possible tasks to be interpreted. The improvising dancer can choose from these tasks, and can integrate that choice with ideas taken from other images seen on a specially made video film that also runs in the wings. These tasks (listed in Appendix C) can only be understood in the context of *Eidos:Telos*’s rules, and they allow dancers to engage in improvisation briefly, when for a few seconds they become soloists or duetists (or part of a small improvising group). The moment of choice, and its execution may be rapid, and when the improvisation is over, the individual again becomes part of the group.50

The viewer may not recognise differences between structured and unstructured movement, but will sense the intensity of the performance. It is in the nature of improvisation to insist on keeping performance energy lifted. The dancers need to be alert at all times; they must concentrate intensely rather than relaxing into what is known and
rehearsed until it has become embodied, automatic memory. Improvisation demands mental and physical acuity, not only from the individual improviser but also from others on stage. In the rehearsal that customarily precedes virtually every performance there will be issues to be discussed, perhaps arising out of the previous evening's performance, or because Forsythe has decided to introduce cast changes. When another dancer comes in, the difference in performance will not be so much because of radical changes to structured movement but in the way different dancers react in improvisation. As they work in solos and in different partnerships, improvisation may momentarily affect the interior chemistry of the work.

It is not only the dance that is improvised but also, from time to time, the music as well, and even the lighting. Sometimes music and lighting work together in improvising relationships. Forsythe often sits in the front stalls close to members of the audience and, aided by earphones and a microphone, directs the lighting. The company's resident composer, Thom Willems may also work with him, directing players on stage or in the orchestra pit.

3.8 Collaboration

The expectations that are put on the dancers that they should contribute to the creation of the ballets, is linked to a belief in the value of setting up creative situations that will enable ideas to bounce back and forth. It is a belief that might be traced back to Forsythe's predilection for involvement in every aspect of theatre. The main creative thrust comes from encouraging organic development from those who are involved in the day to day life of the company, and are therefore attuned to its creative ethos. The company's previous resident composer and pianist, Eva Crossman-Hecht, for example, wrote the music for Isabelle's Dance. Forsythe collaborated on writing the songs. It was then that he discovered, to his surprise, that his dancers were able to sing, and in subsequent productions they have often been required to sing.
Forsythe’s versatility in conceiving, choreographing and writing text for *Isabelle’s Dance* is typical of a man who seems to be able to turn his hand to any creative aspect of a work. He has regularly written text, lyrics and music for his works, and also designed costumes, set and lighting. Indeed, the quality of lighting – often emphasising extremes of light and dark – is an important part of the company’s identity. It can be controversial, especially when movement is hidden in shadows. In *Enemy in the Figure* (1989) the lighting is revealed as process, since there is a powerful spotlight on stage which the dancers rush around during the performance in an act of urgent repositioning. At times all the energy of this light focuses on a dancing figure; at other times the energy changes so that the dance is seen in silhouette. The lighting plays many games with shadows and elongated shapes.

Willems began writing music for Forsythe with *LDC* in 1985, succeeding Crossman-Hecht (who died in 1989) as resident composer. Forsythe finds that Willems’s rhythmic structures enhance the dance’s motor energy,

> the structure keeps tension, forces the dancer to listen. I’d say that Thom really trains the dancers’ ears.

*Forsythe, BBC Radio 3, March 1999*

Willems has made a major contribution to the company’s identity. The kinds of relationships that are set up between the dance and the music vary, ranging across interdependency and independence, and at all times the dancers must listen intently to the music, even when they might appear to be dancing without reference to it. Whatever the relationship, the music is always a vital part of the performance texture.

### 3.9 Improvisation Technologies

Though Forsythe is most often the named choreographer, in some works he shifts from a position of single authority and is named within the collaborative network. He becomes, therefore, an enabler, encouraging
colleagues to contribute ideas of their own, and as a result the choreography becomes denser. He has explained his role saying,

I try to deconstruct their [the dancers'] pre-conception of over-idealizing any authority figure. I find that disabling ... I'm an initiator, and that's delightful – he who invents the game but not necessarily the rules.

Forsythe cited in Littler, 1991:C6

With this questioning of the conventional division between creator and interpreter, there is a shift in the status of choreographer. Interpreters operate within a network of creative equality. This ties in with Forsythe's belief in choreographic purpose: choreography is, he says, 'a vehicle for the dancer'. His methodology has been collected together into a four-gigabyte digital recording called *Improvisation Technologies*. It provides a tool for initiating dancers who are new to the company into some of the underlying aspects of the work. Forsythe as lecture demonstrator on the recording makes frequent reference to Laban's theories, and the viewer sees that

while acknowledging the promise of Laban's system, William Forsythe explodes it by reassigning its centers [sic] infinitely throughout the body. Forsythe assumes a whole array of kinespheres, as it were; each is entirely collapsible and expandable.

Baudoin and Gilpin, 1999:2

In the digital recording the Forsythe 'array of kinespheres' is contrasted with the Laban model, and laser beams are imposed to demonstrate how the Forsythe dancing body connects into a shape. Thus the organisation is revealed in a spatial logic. Forsythe's deconstruction of ballet's grand scale lines discovers different kinds of linear relationships. These may arise through instructions involving outward movements from the body such as 'extrude', 'extend', 'slide', or actions that turn in towards the body such as 'fold in' or 'collapse'. (His names make interesting connections with the problem of nameability discussed in Chapter 1.) Laban referred to movements emanating from the body's centre in an outwardly direction as 'scattering' or (in reverse) 'gathering' (Maletic,
1987:83), and the terms were adequate for his purposes. But they are not for Forsythe's deconstruction. No longer are the movements expected to sustain a relationship with verticality and turnout. Forsythe has freed the body from its central constraint, enabling any part of the body to lead. This democratisation leads to a new dialogue with gravity, and in doing so has led to the discovery of multiple kinespheres.

Forsythe presents his rationale for finding and using new planes and directions.

In rotating inscription it's very important to be able to differentiate very quickly between a point and a length which forms a line, because the lines form different kinds of shapes and make a different kind of body mechanic.


His term 'rotating inscription', seems to link what is inscribed in the body (by whatever means of training and inclination) with choreographic values tied to his own belief in the importance of experimental discovery.

Planal relationships become significant, because they are different from the relationships that are automatically expected. They may involve parallel alignment between limbs and/or parts of limbs. If, for example, the two lower arms are lined up from the point of the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, not only will the limbs be seen in a parallel line but there will also be a planal relationship in the space outside the body. This can be played with in different ways, keeping the initial position but altering its spatial positioning and its relationship with the rest of the body through dynamic and cumulative force. The line is outside the balletic canon, achieved through physical and spatial connectives that involve a different distribution of tension. While knowledge embodied through repetitive ballet training is still with the executant, rules have been overthrown by the carrying out of tasks that are external to the dance. Thus the movement for the dancer is no longer one in which something of the inner being is linked to the creation of spectacle. The mind of the dancer is focused on a purpose.
3.9 Summary

In examining the work of Forsythe and his company, various ways of accounting for its complexity have emerged. The choreography has been seen to be concerned with diversity and expansion, and with setting up interrelationships between dance and other art forms, rather than with perpetuating values from the past, and focusing on essentialism. The choreographic enquiry is always open to new ideas, and to finding inspiration from a range of influences. Improvisation also makes a major contribution, as an important tool in the creation of new work, and in the development of processes of deconstruction. These processes help to shape the character of the work, but can create a misleading impression when they guide the watching eye to seeing something that is not present. Though Forsythe's ballets are seen as 'disordered', there is always an underlying logic, but the organisation is difficult to see because of the rupture with tradition, and because of the alteration to normative practices in dance. Forsythe's work can be seen to belong within the discourse of post-structuralism, but little attention has been paid by dance criticism to the challenge this brings.

Notes

1 The information about Forsythe's background comes largely through personal communication on various occasions, notably from a lengthy discussion we had in Antwerp, March 1998. It has been supplemented with information from various published reviews, interviews and essays mostly found in the Ballet Frankfurt archives. Sulcas (1995) gives what may be the most detailed published account of Forsythe's formative years. Forsythe reveals useful background information in his interview with Driver and Editors (1990).
2 Forsythe's father ran an advertising company. His mother sold silverware at Bloomingdale's, De Liagre (Spring 1988:82).
4 ibid.
5 Louis Scheeder's paper Let's Twist Again, given at the Society of Dance History Scholars 1999 Conference (but not published in the Conference Proceedings), discussed the infiltration of African dance into American popular culture. Many of Scheeder's comments could be related to Forsythe's background. For example, there seemed to be a link with Forsythe's awareness of the importance of his dance culture comparable to Scheeder's comment about the American dance culture and the 'energy that yearned for expression'. When he referred to the 'mashed potato' through the expression to the dance's 'grinding, swivelling ankles', I was reminded of the opening shots of Forsythe's television Solo, and of the way the camera focused on Forsythe's rotating footwork. While at the time there were obvious ballet connections to be seen in the way the feet kept sliding into and out of fifth position, the activity in the feet may have been inspired by the mashed potato.
6 This information came from personal communication (June 1998); we did not complete the discussion about the kinds of gatherings to which he was referring.
In 1971 Mr. Forsythe learned dance notation, studying at New York's Dance Notation Bureau, which propagates key ideas of Laban, the Central European movement theorist and the father of German Expressionist dance during World War I and after. The overtly Expressionist strain in Mr. Forsythe's work is thus more closely related to the source than once apparent. In a telephone chat, Mr. Forsythe said his reading of Laban's theories on "space-harmony" were a key factor in his choreographic approach to "Time Cycle". "I was interested in a theoretical orientation to space and 'Time Cycle' was almost purely constructed from that".

Kisselgoff, 1982:8

Maletic points out that Laban worked with a modified view of ballet (1987).

For discussion of Cranko's sudden death, see the account by Percival (1995:228).

I am grateful to Leslie Krumwiede of the Stuttgart Ballet for supplying this figure, and details of the works Forsythe made for the Stuttgart Ballet - which are included in Appendix B.

Orpheus received its American premiere at the Metropolitan Opera House on June 25 1979. Four days earlier another Forsythe work, the one-act Handel Concerti, was given for the first time in the US. It had been commissioned by Marcia Haydée as 'a classical work' (Dunning, 1979).

Two reviews have been selected for analysis in this context; what should be remembered was that both had to conform to certain practical requirements such as word counts and speed of delivery. These factors are taken for granted by readers, but they obviously have bearing on how the review is structured, and on what is included and excluded.

For the retrospective reader the review reveals how even in his earlier years Forsythe was questioning the place of unity in dance, and breaking apart the convention - as he has continued to do.

Forsythe had staged Love Songs for the Joffrey Ballet earlier in 1983.

Discussion in Brussels (June 1999) with Gisela Sneidee (former dancer with the company, now stage manager) and Margot Kazimirksa (pianist), both of whom were involved in Gange, suggests that Forsythe's music for Part 1 was retained, though they cannot be absolutely certain.

Forsythe describes Swan Lake as the company's 'mainstay' before he took up the reins (in Driver and Editors, 1990:89). It is clear, however, that in a repertory that included 20th century choreography, works by Balanchine were often danced.

It has not been possible to determine how much these works were altered in the transfer to another company, though given Forsythe's habit of constant change, it seems likely that they would have been developed.

Further discussion with Sneidee and Kazimirksa (see endnote 20) reveals that it was loud and 'difficult' for an audience to comprehend because it was unlike anything else that had been seen in Frankfurt — or anywhere else. The working operations of drama in dance were examined through talking about Swan Lake, and looking at both public and private aspects of it. Kazimirksa was positioned in a 'wagon' outside the theatre with a vocorder, which enabled sound to correspond with movement on stage. The dancers wore microphones, and she remembers the sound of shoes and scraping chalk. The pas de deux of Act 2 developed as a double-sided drama where the dancers performing the roles of Odette (Sneidee) and Siegried discussed different aspects of their characters, and how they as dancers felt about executing different movements. The curtain lowered at the moment when Siegfried lifted Odette into a high lift, and when it rose again, Odette was seen sprawled on the
floor and launching a verbal attack on Siegfried for ‘dropping’ her. There was some political play between the ‘white’ Odette and the ‘black’ Odile.

The general esteem accorded to Forsythe and his Ballett Frankfurt by the western theatre dance community does not take account of artistic constraints forced by the economic situation. Forsythe has talked openly about how in 1986 he decided to make a musical (*Isabelle’s Dance*) in order to make money for the company. The company has a reputation for charging high prices for foreign tours; there have been occasional cancellations when an insufficient profit would result (see discussion by Wesemann, 1996). Budgetary matters are discussed in Driver and Editors (1990).

There is some discrepancy over events during Forsythe’s first year in Frankfurt. Records issued by the Ballett Frankfurt in 1997 credit him only with the creation of *Artifact* for the company, while referring to *Berg AB* as a film that he made for the Vienna State Opera Ballet and *Steptext*, made for Aterballetto (and emerging out of the material for *Artifact*). In 1998 the programme published for the Ballett Frankfurt's season at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, listed (obviously with material supplied by the company) only *Artifact* and *Berg* (for Vienna) as works made by Forsythe during 1984. Heil, 1986, however, refers to Frankfurt premieres in November for *France/Dance, Berg AB* (film) and *Say Bye Bye* (for photographs see pp 283-284), and for *Artifact* (world premiere) in December. Heil records the premiere of Steptext as 3 January 1985.

Information included by Royal Ballet Principal Dancer Deborah Bull in a paper she gave on 28 November 1998, at the Sadler's Wells Study Day that focused on the work of William Forsythe. The Ballett Frankfurt was at the time making its debut appearance at Sadler's Wells.

As mentioned in endnote 26, some of *Artifact*’s material was worked into *Steptext* (1995), which Britain’s Royal Ballet has presented in repertory since 1995. See Appendix D for: William Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt: first performances and/or first appearances made in Britain. For the record, during Kent Stowell’s tenure as director, the Ballett Frankfurt visited the Brighton Festival in 1979.

To stand in line with other dancers might look straightforward, but is in reality a complex operation.

In 1999 the Dutch National Ballet presented the full-length *Artifact* at the Edinburgh Festival. The Ballett Frankfurt’s most recent revival was of *Artifact II*, given in Antwerp in 1998.

The comment ‘steady stream’ is an inconvenient generalisation, but no figure for the number of works made per year on average can be arrived at. There are no averages. In some years only one work is listed, but it may be a full-length piece in three acts. In 1995 not only is *Eidos:Telos* included (which has three acts, one of which was made in 1994), but also four other short works.

It is hard to arrive at an accurate figure of how many works Forsythe has created. If the list that was included in the 1998 programme for the company’s last appearance at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, is taken as the basis for calculation, then the number is 59 (approximately because of various recylings of existing pieces). The total is misleading in various ways because it lumps together one-act works and full-length works, and does not always distinguish collaborative work. It is, moreover, flawed, for it includes only 9 Stuttgart works (omitting *Handel Concerti*) whereas he made 12 for that company. For Frankfurt, he is listed as having made 30 works — to which the 1998 two-act *workwithinwork* should be added, together with the 1999 collaboration *Faust II*. Further research is necessary before a full choreochronicle can be produced. (Incidentally, when the contract with the Châtelet came to an end in 1998, Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt signed a new contract in France, undertaking to give regular seasons in Bobigny, a suburb of Paris, from 1999.)

At the start of the 1998/99 season, for example, he created a new work for Alessandra Ferri and the company of La Scala, Milan. In 1999 the Paris Opera Ballet presented in ‘An Evening of Forsythe’, that included two new works, *Woundwork* and *Pas/parts*, sandwiching a revival of the 1988 *In the middle, somewhat elevated*.

During the creation of *Eidos:Telos* the architect Mark Goulthorpe conducted a project with his students from the design unit at the Architectural Association that was aimed not at some sort of literal appropriation of form, but rather to ask questions as to the manner of Forsythe’s deconstruction of classical ballet — the how and why rather than the thing itself. For it seemed to me that a deconstruction of ‘classical’ tradition is underway in architecture, burdened by a similar sedimentation of historic expectation, and I thought vivid parallels might emerge from the deft and critical creativity of Forsythe’s productions.

Goulthorpe, 1998:1

Given the demands on his time, it is obviously hard for Forsythe to see many performances of work by other choreographers; however, he hears on the grapevine of a choreographer whose work might be of
interest. He also receives a steady supply of video tapes from choreographers wanting him to see their work, though in reality finds little time to sit and watch these tapes. In 1998 he mentioned that he had heard about the work of the British choreographer Rosemary Butcher, and that he was interested in her work. I duly delivered a video tape of her work, but saw from the mass of videos in his office, how hard he found it to break from his own work and spend time watching videos.

The British choreographer Jonathan Burrows was commissioned to create a work for the Ballet Frankfurt in 1997. Called Walking/music, the music was by Kevin Volans, lighting by Michael Hulls, percussion by Robyn Schulkowsky.

In 1999, the Ballett Frankfurt’s web site (http://www.frankfurt-ballett.de) listed 22 ballets that are ‘at the moment not in the repertory’. These included both Agon and Burrows’s Walking/music as well as several Forsythe works. Nineteen works (including Forsythe’s Big White Baby Dog (1986), Gâge (1983), LDC (1985), Love Songs (1979), Pivot House (1994), Pizza Girl (1986), Say Bye Bye (1980), Time Cycle (1979)) were described as ‘no longer in the repertory’. Such lists help to build a fuller picture of company policy.

For example, a headline in the Daily Telegraph asked, ‘Successor to Balanchine?’, in the review that followed Kathrine Sorley Walker considered Forsythe’s In the middle, somewhat elevated, and alluded to the ‘debt’ Forsythe owed to Balanchine, in particular to Agon and The Four Temperaments (1946) (17 February 1992:13). For discussion of how critics who revered Balanchine dismissed the choreography of Forsythe, see Chapter 4 of this study.

Fischer (1989) points to speculation about the possibility of Forsythe taking on the directorship of New York City Ballet after Balanchine’s death.

Alie/n(a)ction was revived in the 1998/99 season – during this study’s research period.

Thom Willems, resident composer, created the score, using music by Schoenberg.

In a personal communication (1998), David Morrow revealed that these different sequences of numbers are improvised - this was not apparent to me, nor perhaps to the audience.

Many behind the scenes activities rely on skills provided by former company dancers, who have chosen to stay on after their dancing careers were effectively over to take on other responsibilities; Gisela Schneider, as mentioned, is stage manager. Urs Frey is general manager. Frey operates the lighting cues at performances. Nicholas Champion, an Englishman, is in charge of the video recordings and collection. From time to time Forsythe will cast his former dancers in productions. Champion, for example, often takes speaking roles.

In 1997 he was talking openly about reducing the size of the Ballett Frankfurt. For 1997/98, there were 37 dancers, but when at the end of that season two women left, Forsythe did not seek replacements. He was by then in the midst of a major structural reorganisation that would allow him to diversify his output, and to move away from the theatre as institution. He had renegotiated his contract with the Stadtstheater dividing performing time three ways, between the Stadttheater, the Operhaus, and TAT - a building on the other side of Frankfurt where his company already performed, but where the new arrangement would enable him to move away from the structural imposition of formal theatre. In Autumn 1998 an Australian dancer (Prue Lang) working in Europe spent a week working with the company, doing class and learning snippets of the repertoire in rehearsal. Forsythe offered her a contract which she accepted for May 1999. I do not know the circumstances behind the contract, but the arrangement appeared to have superseded the idea of cutbacks.

For discussion about the process of auditioning, see Caspersen in Driver (2000:25-39).

Classes that I have watched tend to have a strong creative element, in other words the ballet masters Kathryn Bennett and Glen Tuggle work imaginatively to create interesting enchainments and avoid setting the routine sequences that are normal in some ballet companies.

For discussion of the philosophical approach explored by Forsythe and his sometime colleague, the architect Daniel Libeskind, see Baudoin and Gilpin (1999).


This compares with Cunningham’s much-quoted comment about the suitability of any kind of movement for dance (see Lesschaeve, 1985:39).

This is a view traceable back to classical order, and to the visual conventions rife in dance since the proscenium arch was installed during the seventeenth century.

Forsythe has said, again in personal discussion (in 1998), that because of the virtuosity involved he finds ‘cadenza’ to be a more fitting word than improvisation, for it takes into account rather more the skills of the soloist to bring mental and physical acuity to working with existing material.

With Crossman-Hecht, Sara Neece, Stephen Saugey.

For comment on how Forsythe found out about his dancers’ singing talents, see Driver and Editors, (1990).
When asked in an interview why he lit his works, Forsythe replied: "Because it's cheaper". Why do you obscure your dancers in pools of dimness or darkness? "I think of them as alternatives to light". Elsewhere he has said "shadow is that which permits imagination" (Meisner, 1995:50).


Forsythe has not relinquished his position as sole choreographer, and at the end of 1998 choreography for the new *workwithinwork* (of which the second part is named *Quartette*) was credited to him.

His comment was made in a personal communication, June 1998, but he has made the point frequently in interviews.

In 1999 part of this was issued as a CD-ROM.
CHAPTER 4

Forsythescape

4.1 Ballet, deconstruction and relationships
4.2 Alienating factor
4.3 Critical response to selected works
4.4 Love and violence
4.5 'Aboutness' and landscape
4.6 Summary

Notes

In the landscape of Forsythe's ballets, reference, connotation and innuendo connect and clash, making it hard to say with any certainty what the ballets are about, or what they signify. Indeed, even to refer to them as 'ballets' is to impose something on them that may not be valid, given the challenge that Forsythe issues to ballet as representation. This chapter continues the argument about his relationship with ballet, looking at his critique of it, and at what has collected itself into a logic of performance in the late 20th century. Through looking at his deconstruction processes a fuller picture begins to emerge about the characteristics of Forsythe's work. What is also seen is how the work can alienate people, and divide critical opinion. Critics who react to Forsythe's rupturing of tradition dismiss it without question, but others find that they are able to look perceptively and see both what is in the work, and begin to understand something of the enquiry into dance. This prompts a suggestion that the work can be perceived through a wider frame, or changed orientation.

4.1 Ballet, deconstruction and relationships

Ballet can be seen to have essential properties that reveal themselves in flowing movement and in a spatial articulation emphasising harmony and balance. The body is lifted by the breath extending buoyantly through the musculature and, by extension, into the dancer's ontology. For the non-specialist, ballet is conventionally (but falsely) looked on as a unified entity that reached its apogee in its classical period through the work of Marius Petipa (1818-1910). Probably the balletic image most readily conjured up is that of a group of graceful women dressed in white tutus to symbolise swans. The image represents a particular period in history,
underlining the Petipa heritage of the nineteenth century, and it is this that has produced a logic (or the logic, as many think of it) of seeing ballet and an attachment to notions of formalised movement linked to classical ideology. Ballet has, however, also evolved in the 20th century, and in the process has freed itself from classicism, widening its interests and testifying to changing structures in society. Though it has retained its reputation as elitist and 'high art', with many ballet companies believing that they have a duty to maintain their classical inheritance, it has expanded through the work of some choreographers into modernism and, on occasion, postmodernism. (It has also in the hands of some directors of ballet companies moved closer to the worlds of popular art/entertainment.)

What remains dominant, however, is ballet's academic form, or the danse d'école. Choreographers who have sought to introduce 'change' into ballet have usually worked through imposing something external on to it, rather than through alteration of its fundamental principles. These principles need to be considered, in order to understand what it is that Forsythe has achieved through deconstructing academic form.

Balletic form underlines verticality in a relationship with the horizontal, stressing turn out from the hips and sequential ordering through five basic positions of the feet. The feet move in a complementary relationship with five positions of the arms, producing a complex organisation through the body of tension, counter-tension and contrary motion. Movements emphasise proportion and line, and a harmony that depends on balancing opposite lines, curves and tensions. The gaze is used as both embellishment and aid. It gives the movement a finish, and helps with achieving counter-tension; when, for example, the arms are held in a ports de bras, and the eyes look along one arm the pull against the other arm is emphasised. This draws attention to alignment through opposition. It is revealed through the ebb and flow of movement, and held in climactic poses.
The Forsythe aesthetic releases line from any centralising dependence to enable alignment to occur between (any) body parts. Limbs are no longer constrained within a particular ordering of motion, and the gaze does not function in a specified relationship with the body. It has become 'disfocused' (see discussion in Sulcas, 1995:58), and opposition is no longer a priority, so the eyes of the dancer can go with motion. Ballet deprived of its muscular opposition can look very different.

The attitudes to formalised beauty, so important to conventional ballet, are deconstructed by Forsythe in his search for what lies hidden behind the finished effect. (Since beauty is part of philosophical discourse, the terms are used here in relation to the ballet aesthetic, and refer to a simple level of harmony and unity.) There is a moment in Solo (the 1997 work that Forsythe created and performed for television) that people equate with the look of a lunatic, because of the way the dancer’s head hangs to one side, with the opposite shoulder raised, and with a release of normal opposition leaving one side of the body to hang limply. The movement is without harmonising and balancing proportions, and so is read not as formalist but as representational. If looked at through distribution of energy, weight and counter tension, then other alignments are seen to stand out.

In deconstructing balletic principles, Forsythe worked with the Laban model, looking at the spatial organisation of the icosahedron and the body’s reach into the kinesphere. His concern was, and is, to discover forms emerging in the body when it is no longer pulled back to its central axis, and when it is no longer hierarchically organised but able to be led by any physical line or point.

Forsythe shares Balanchine's belief in the powers of the human form, but his forms more obviously draw aspects of the cultural, artistic, social and philosophical into them. His frequent use of grotesque and distorted form moves in the direction of expressionism. Expressionist traits can be seen from time to time where there is intensity and exaggeration, as was
suggested in *Orpheus* and in the caricatures in *Isabelle's Dance*. What these darker edges of human life propose points to a belief shared with the painter and writer Wassily Kandinsky, that 'every harmony and every discord which springs from the inner spirit is beautiful' (Kandinsky, 1947:23-24).

Though he depends on his dancers to work with highly trained (and therefore elitist) skills, Forsythe has wrested ballet out of its elitism, to reposition it in an area where the aesthetic and the social (everyday action and vernacular coding) can co-exist. In the new lexicon, shapes are plastic and opposition de-hierarchised.

There is a moment in *Steptext* (1984) in which a lone woman stands facing the audience and engages in a 'gestural' sequence moving her arms repetitively into different shapes. The action is curious, for the movement seems to be denotative, suggesting that something is being 'said', particularly because of the communicative suggestion in the dancer's eyes as she gazes directly at the audience. But what it is that is being said cannot be accounted for by literal meaning for the moving of the arms into geometric shapes that are repeated over and again mitigates against it. Clearly, as the movement continues, the viewer's initial reaction in seeking to pin literal meaning to the moment gives way to recognition that the choreography must be urging sight of something else. It is the form of the movement that is itself the focus, but ironically it is a form that draws attention to itself through gesture. The Forsythe form is a generator of content (Kisselgoff, 1988), but all form is underpinned by subtexts and representation to something, no matter that modernists might seek to prove otherwise.

In conventional classical dancing, action and movement in the legs are prioritised over the arms, though in a dependent relationship. The separation of gesture from a linguistic relationship is in accordance with Forsythe's belief that dance can be led by any part of the body. The sequence in *Steptext* reveals itself as formalist, and points to 'the
primacy of dancing' that is so often said to be absent from Forsythe's work (Stuart, 1987:41). But this is another irony, for because of its proximity to gesture – and all that gesture represents – the movement may not be seen as dancing.

Spatial expansion emphasising plasticity of torso, height and breadth of limbs and planal projection are key components of Forsythe's choreography. The force of energy generated into large-and small-scale activities highlights the complexity of configuration and patterning. It is impossible to watch without an awareness of spatial implications. Typical of work in the 1990s, bodies extend outwards with skilled muscular control, and the outward trajectory is contrasted by a folding in of limbs and torsos back towards the skeletal frame. The flow of motion pulls or pushes the folding body out of its central alignment so that it falls into unexpected positions, for example on to the ground with one limb tucked under another. The triangular point of an arm bent at the elbow may find itself balancing on the ground while tucked under a bent knee. An action like this forces the body into a realignment of its ballet-trained forces, so that body mass in a relationship with energy and flow exposes the reconfigured lines, curves and angles that have led to critical findings of chaos.

While all dance engages in a dialogue with space, the intensified use of energy in deconstructed forms underlines the metaphor in Forsythe's work. In, for example, *The Second Detail* (1991) the space resonates with vibrant form. *The Second Detail* was created for the National Ballet of Canada, and later in 1991 re-emerged as act one of *The Loss of Small Detail* for the Ballett Frankfurt. In it Forsythe proposes spatial 'contestation' as a major concern. His stage is covered in a space-emphasising whiteness that extends across the floor and along all its 'walls'. The whiteness is expanded across space by the doubling up of the walls that are twice their normal height and continue out of sight up into the stage flies. This effect might have dwarfed the dancers, but because the movement is expansive and dynamic, there is an impression
of massed energy radiating out into space. The body seems no longer intimidated by space or, through extension, by infinity. The viewer is encouraged to experience the metaphysical and the metaphoric implications of seemingly unlimited space.

The proscenium arch or its equivalent allows ballet its geometry, and an essential theatrical perspective. Forsythe's organisation of dance in space is often equated with architecture (as is Balanchinean form, see Gans, 1993:31). It is an architectural order in which volume, density and mass, and combinations of fracture, distortion and alienation, tease out dance's representational and epistemological problems. Where Balanchine achieved 'a new mode of spatialization' (David Michael Levin, 1983:124) through a dependent relationship with a proscenium frame, Forsythe's 'spatialization' proclaims that the dance can be viewed from any point.

A feature of the staging is that from whichever part of the auditorium the works are viewed something different is revealed. Instead of balletic framing devices that, through linear organisation of both individual body and group patterns, point the eye in a particular direction, the viewer is freed to roam across the action; but the density of the dance and the multiple activities of the dancers are impossible to see all at once. Nor does the staging allow every aspect of performance to reveal itself at a single viewing. Those who watch in the stalls and look 'face on' will see a different picture from those who watch upstairs in the circle and who, on looking down on to the stage may, for example, see patterns on the floor. These patterns are invisible to viewers seated at stage level, but may colour the work's reception for those who see them.

4.2 Alienating factor

There are works in the Forsythe oeuvre that at times are seen to pay homage to Petipa, notably Artifact and Alien/a(c)tion. They do so by challenging codes of the 19th century, inviting the eye to look across at
an alignment that diversifies the form and favours non-symmetrical organisation.

This is recognisable in the final minutes of *Alie/na(c)tion*, in a scene that can be regarded as Forsythe's homage to the Petipa-Ivanov *Swan Lake* of 1895. The homage is to the corps de ballet of swans, and the Forsythe dancers are positioned in a geometric pattern in lines of four. They execute slow *ports de bras* that appear to resemble Ivanov's choreography for Act 2 of *Swan Lake*, yet they do not depict swans, and their movement is not unified; nor is it organised as a framework for a centrally positioned Swan Queen and Prince. It is the ensemble itself that is the focus. An order is established initially from which groups constantly divide and reorganise. Change is activated by individuals breaking away to set up new patterns and timing. The audience perceives the alertness of the dance, and notices that each individual has different responsibilities that are vital to the larger pattern. The eye that takes in these moving patterns is drawn less to the movement of the legs, more to the way arms are extended into space in ever-changing alignments (the characteristic noted in *Steptext*.) Like snow crystals, there is a continuing revelation in evolving pattern.

These closing minutes of *Alie/na(c)tion* are but a fragment of the three-act work. But allusion and irony make them appear intertextually powerful. It is the relationship between the known and the unexpected that creates the effect, or the comfort of the one and the unexpectedness of the other.

In their differences, Forsythe's works demand active viewing. They refuse to allow the viewer to sink into passivity by returning to more familiar dance territory. This is a point that was underlined in a question asked by a member of the public who had seen a performance of *Artifact* by the Dutch National Ballet at the 1999 Edinburgh Festival, and turned up to a lecture on the choreography. 'Does Forsythe always introduce text into his work?', he asked, 'I find it so disruptive.' Understandably,
he was disturbed because he had expected a performance of ballet, and whatever it was that he had envisaged, it did not include speech. Because his expectations were so disrupted, he was left feeling alienated.

4.2 Critical response to selected works

Critical response to Forsythe's choreography can be divided roughly into two camps: those who oppose the work (and invariably position their findings within a structuralist framework, where objective knowledge mingles with subjective opinion) and those who approach in a spirit of empathy. The point was illustrated in Chapter 3's discussion of *Orpheus* in connection with differing viewpoints between critics and artists. Included in the artistic positioning was reference to the responses by directors of dance companies. Directors are not critics in a formal sense; but their response is critical to the art form, and belongs within criticism's discursive network.

Criticism is by no means always discursive, as can be seen from looking at writings on Forsythe by three of his compatriots, and their different approaches. Croce's essay *Wise Guys*, in which she considered *Impressing the Czar* (1988) was published in *The New Yorker* (1989), and was aimed at a general, culturally informed readership. Forsythe's *Follies* by Otis Stuart (1987) and Senta Driver's *Two or Three Things That Might Be Considered Primary* (1990) were both written for the specialist periodical, *Ballet Review*, and both scrutinised *Artifact*, while Driver additionally brought other works into her frame of reference.

Croce and Stuart, as seasoned critics, positioned themselves in the detractor camp, producing opinion rather than discourse. Driver looked at the work not as a regular critic but as a choreographer, which gave her a perspective on the work through which she looked discursively. At first sight of *Artifact* she realised that its layers were too complex to be grasped at a single viewing. She explained in a letter to her editor (that was published) that she would not feel qualified to write about *Artifact* until she was in a position to have seen enough performances to know it
and to begin to look at it properly (1990:81). How many performances
the other two critics saw is not recorded, though they make it plain that
they went to *Artifact* with expectations that erected metaphorical barriers
between the work and their reception of it. Driver perceived Forsythe’s
work as a bridge. Crossing the bridge armed with her own knowledge,
she found herself entering a new world.

Croce in an opening statement made her point of view known with the
announcement: ‘though I don’t like the work of William Forsythe, I think
I understand why other people do’ (1989). She had positioned herself as
‘authority’. The main thrust of her essay was to compare the
choreography of Mark Morris with that of Forsythe, men whom she
nominated, ‘the two most talked about choreographers of the eighties’.
But in comparing the choreographers, she positioned them within a
hierarchy through which she came to champion one and oppose the other,
arguing that, ‘Morris makes dances’ because ‘ideologically he’s a
classicist’ whereas, ‘Forsythe makes aerobics classes gussied up with
ballet terminology’. Making her meaning crystal clear, her disapproval
surfaced strongly in the invented word ‘gussied’, and she built on it with
phrases such as it is ‘art-about-kitsch recycled from the sixties’ (1989).
As in the examples of her work seen in Chapter 1, she was seen to uphold
her belief that ballet could not accommodate social realism, finding in
*Impressing the Czar*, ‘the stabbings don’t add up to anything – they’re
just part of a generalized climate of violence’ (Croce, 1989).

The work was criticised too on account of the many disparate threads that
refused to allow it to be seen as a single meaning.

> Forsythe’s whole point is that seemingly related things are
> unrelated; randomness rules, irony is all, any interpretation fits.
> Croce, 1989:npn

Where Croce found fault with randomness, or the work’s failure to
resolve itself, Stuart was dissatisfied with *Artifact* because ‘the content is
inevitably ambiguous’ (1987:42). Stuart constructed his viewpoint on a
perceived difference between American and European dance values."
Knowing Forsythe to have been nurtured in one continent, and
accommodated in another, he invokes cultural expectation, explaining
that what he anticipated from the choreographer was work that brought
continental difference into harmony, and in this way could be seen as 'a
truce'. What, he discovered, however, was that

unfortunately, the only remotely American aspect of Forsythe’s
work is the high-tech gloss of its finish ... In every other
regard, Europe has won his talent.
Stuart, 1987:41

Why his findings should centre on 'high-tech gloss' becomes clear when
he opines,

for Americans, secure in the clarity of Balanchine, Graham,
Cunningham, and company, Forsythe’s stage pictures posit hell
on earth, literally – chaos objectified.
Stuart, 1987:42

The importance that he attaches to clarity and organisation is manifestly
rooted in the past of choreographic mentors. Where 'chaos' interferes
with desirable, longed-for clarity, the dance has been made untenable,
 hence his 'hell on earth' metaphor. But in this attitude lies a proposition
that the dance can exist as a finite entity because it has been brought to
fruition by Balanchine, Graham and Cunningham. His argument fails to
take account of how dance can survive if it is locked into the past, and if
 it is always reliant on imitation of the past. He can only dismiss the
multicultural and the multidimensional, and the value prized by
choreography that moves into wider fields of influence.

This kind of criticism supports a widely held view that dance is only
dance when formal qualities reveal themselves as paramount. There are
nearly always formalist elements to be discovered in Forsythe’s ballets,
and a work such as Steptext is highly formalist. But the form is
sometimes so distanced from convention that it may not be recognised
for what it is. What is recognised instead is that Forsythe the American,
who might have been expected to emulate the named mentors of 20\textsuperscript{th} century dance, has been ‘corrupted’ by European mores, with most of his works straying at times towards expressionism.

These findings contrast with the approach of Driver as she strives to find common ground for what she sees and cannot reconcile with her own experience and knowledge. She makes an interesting point about her perception of the responsibility of criticism, for she is daunted by the need to ‘précis ... an evening-length work so artfully complete on its own’ (1990: 81). Her choice of the term ‘précis’ suggests that she is thinking about how to represent the work in summary form, and the impossibility of doing so. Her comment that the work is ‘artfully complete’ is of course hyperbole, and a pun on its title. But her enthusiasm is clear, as are her reasons for responding in that way, and for what she discovers of energy and vitality within the choreographic enquiry itself. She observes that

as a woman rushed onstage from the left, someone else emerged from a freestanding barrier at center to shoot off right, echoing and extending her path: working the essence of “glimpse” both as entrance and exit.

Driver, 1990:81

In pinpointing what she labels the ‘essence of glimpse’ she reveals a powerful juxtapositioning of ideas, combining a sense of what happened in the movement (though not in any precise way), how the audience looked at it, and how the glimpse is something more complicated. As discussed earlier, dancers’ eyes affect the dance’s musculature organisation. What Driver uncovers in the work remains markedly different from that of her compatriots. Against their findings of disunity and disorder, she sees that Forsythe

gives his public a series of revelations about the powers of the body, the geography of the space around it, and the potential of ballet vocabulary.

Driver, 1990:82
She is not preoccupied by violation of rules, but she is concerned with trying to comprehend what it is that the choreography imparts. She recognises that Forsythe is reorganising priorities normally expected of the dancing body, and that

as he expands the ballet d’école [he finds] ways to enrich the known steps ... He is not devising stunts for one-time use in a ballet-du-jour ... He is forging extensions for the grammar he inherited, permanent enhancements for what he wants to say. 

Driver, 1990: 82

This leads her to recognise Forsythe’s ability to ‘articulate’ through dance, for

what he wants to say is that the body has exceptional powers: that force does not automatically imply hostility; and that the center [sic] of this work is responsibility.

Driver, 1990:82

She brings this same kind of rationalisation to a much talked-about device in the Forsythe canon, that of slamming down the curtain while apparently the dance continues out of sight. To bring down the curtain, as happens many times in Artifact, is a device with an ironic twist, for it appears to refute the purpose of theatre by cutting off the act of communication. People are irritated by it. Stuart thinks of it as ‘a slap in the face’ (1987:41). To be robbed of vision in this way leaves a hunger, Driver claims, recognising that it is a loss that refreshes the senses, and brings a longing for the dance to be returned (Driver, 1990:81). Forsythe has acknowledged that the curtain-lowering is part of an exploration into theatre that critiques the normative (Driver and Editors, 1990:86-97), and it is surprising to find that critics do not want to enquire about the statement that the descending curtain makes. It brings to the fore the philosophical issue of knowing when the dance can be said to be present and whether it really continues out of sight. In reality when the curtain rises again, the dancers are seen to have repositioned themselves, so they must have had to rush into new positions. The audience meanwhile might have experienced the dancing continuing in the imagination.
4.3 Love and violence

Forsythe is fond of taking people by surprise, as revealed in his comment about the music used in *Love Songs* (1979) and what it suggests

> probably everyone has heard these songs [by Aretha Franklin and Dionne Warwick], so they automatically move, knowing where the music is going to go – and suddenly the dancers break away. I'm using the device of irony.

Forsythe quoted in Whitney, 1983:29

But irony can offend when it goes against expectation, and *Love Songs* has provoked accusations that the work glorifies violence, that it is misogynist and an insult to the dancers. It is the flung trajectories of the women's dances that has led to the casting of Forsythe as a misogynist.

*Love Songs* has to do with women's anger. It's a suite of dances, mostly solos and duets, that focus on women, and because it uses a lot of flailing paroxysmic movement that doesn't make the women look attractive some observers concluded that its intentions were anti-feminist.

Croce, 1987:148

Those same movements can also produce a sense that the violence is for a representative purpose,17 because Forsythe

fills the stage with characters who express their love through hate, who vent their anger, frustration and desperation while the object of presumed affection stands coldly or menacingly in the shadows.

Kisselgoff, 1983a

The violence that repels some people is recognised through the habit of watching, and not looking beyond the first reaction. Yet as Kisselgoff asked when watching *Say bye-bye*, the 1980 successor to *Love Songs*

for what is violent in "Say bye-bye?" [sic] There is no literal depiction of physical abuse. Rather it is the entire atmosphere - a combination of loud sound, high-energy flinging movement and stylized lack of feeling among the characters – that
constitutes an assault upon our genteel ballet sensibilities. "Say bye-bye" sports its alienation motif with the spiffiness of a new-wave rock group. Its powerful imagery is nonetheless a condemnation, not a glorification, of the mindless joyless gaiety it depicts.

Kisselgoff, 1982:8

Journalists and critics have often drawn attention to what the dancers might feel about having to depict violence, as shown in the following passage:

in none of the choreography I've seen by Forsythe could I discern any honor done to the dancers [who] are shown in his choreography not as dance artists but as stunt-deliverers – whamming out steps as isolated feats on the disco floor of Armageddon.

Macaulay, 1988:80

The article from which this quotation is taken is from an essay published in the New Yorker (and delivering judgement to a general readership), which discusses Forsythe's choreography in several works and declares it to be 'vile' and 'superficial'. When in the same essay, Macaulay also presents his findings after looking at a display of classical dance which he likens to 'champagne in the desert' (1988:82), the value systems that are in operation reveal themselves. The relief that the champagne classicism brings is because of the 'vile' taste left by the Forsythe works. This again is criticism (by a British critic) allied to the formalist school. When Macaulay sees 'stunt-deliverers' and 'whamming' steps, he is not considering the place that such movements might have in the work's larger context.

The dancers are honoured by the choreographer's attitude, which releases them from dance's conventional restrictions, and entrusts them with personal responsibility for what they dance (Whitney, 1983). Dancer Leslie Carothers made it clear that she and her colleagues felt able to take responsibility for themselves as characters, and approved the stance taken by the choreography, for in her eyes, "all the women are very strong. They're fighting back" (Carothers in Whitney, 1983:29). The view that
dancers cannot take responsibility for the choreography they execute may be part of dance's historic convention, but in Forsythe's works it can be seen as patronising. *Love Songs* is no longer danced by the Ballett Frankfurt, and in the light of subsequent works, its depiction of specific relationships belongs to an earlier, more overt style of narrative in the Forsythe oeuvre. But, as has been seen, the later choreography is often dramatically-styled.

In looking at critical response, the intention was to build on points already made about how seeing operates within a network of relationships. What is seen by the individual critic is through textual knowledge, and what the reader of criticism understands is also textual. What is noticeable in the extracts that have been included is the potency of metaphor. Even where a critic obviously dislikes a work by Forsythe a metaphoric response can prove telling, as in Macaulay's 'disco floor of Armageddon' (1988:8).

4.5 'Aboutness' and landscape

Forsythe's works are situated in a discrete environment where time and place are never recognisable, making it seem as if they belong to another world. These are worlds in which the familiar mingles unaccountably with the unfamiliar, where the viewer needs to discover an orientation through which to come into a relationship with the work. If intelligibility is sought primarily through language, language is only a part of the performance experience, which may also include sensual, emotional and kinaesthetic response. This underlines the critical conundrum of communicating what happened in the dance. Literal meaning cannot usually be applied to Forsythe's worlds, which need a productive force to serve as a matrix of perception and appreciation (Bourdieu in Harvey, 1990:219), or a metaphor for seeing 'aboutness'.

Returning to an expression used at the start of this chapter, 'in the landscape of Forsythe's ballet' lies a metaphor for worlds that cannot be explained. The concrete, the abstract and the poetic mingle in the
landscape, as suggested by the following discussion of landscape - which might almost have been written about a Forsythe work.

If one notices one's immediate visual field, what is seen? Neither order nor disorder. Where does the field terminate? In an indeterminate peripheral zone, none the less actual or unexperienced for its indeterminacy, that shifts with each movement of the eyes. What are the contents of any given sector of one's visual field? A heterogeneous collection of substances and shapes, neither incomplete nor especially complete (except for the singular totality of figures or moving things). Some new art now seems to take the conditions of the visual field itself.

Morris in Harrison and Wood, 1992: 869

A landscape can be seen peripherally, and without structural constraints, and all landscapes have individuality, and extend across an intricate web of colour, tone and texture. The landscape of the imagination is not tied to time or place. It can, indeed, serve as a matrix of perception and appreciation, and help the critical operation as it swings between the familiar and the unknown.

For the purpose of this study, and the need to find perspectives that break habitual seeing, the heterogeneous landscape can be moulded into a more specific shape through the coining of a term: the Forsythescape. Developing out of landscape, the Forsythescape, is able to serve as a perspective for seeing performance. The first two syllables point, of course, to a particular choreographic evolution; but the textualised Forsythe is positioned in a relationship with a non-partisan third syllable. It is the 'scape' that allows the physical, or the outer manifestation, to be seen in combination with an inner condition. The scape denotes an open view. The competent critic looking out on the Forsythescape is released from irrelevant rules and can be freed to the unfolding moment of performance.
4.6 Summary

Forsythe's critique is directed at discovering what may lie behind and beyond ballet. He uses ballet not as a fixed entity, but in the way of an encyclopaedia within which is to be found a continuing source of material for re-examination. The new physical geometry that emerges in his choreography acknowledges the changing nature of ballet, and of theatre. Those critics who are unwilling to enter into the spirit of his enquiry, preferring instead to see ballet merely glorifying its past, reveal an odd lack of curiosity about their art form. Through introducing the Forsythescape, a different kind of seeing is invited, one that looks at the work through a wider frame, and invites discourse. This effectively frees what is seen from the strictures of structuralism, encouraging viewer and critic alike to look openly at the work – and at the Forsythe ballets.

Notes

1 Ballet as a term that has evolved over a period of four centuries cannot be summarised adequately in a footnote. However, the essays collected together by Copeland and Cohen in What is Dance? (1983) address the issue. Note in particular section IV 'Genre and Style' (pp225-366).
2 The popular image of Swan Lake is adjudged through its commercialisation and reproduction of images from the ballet on artifacts.
3 An example of reaching out with classical ballet to contemporary society can be seen in the production of The Nutcracker that Derek Deane devised in 1997 for his company English National Ballet, in which he introduced devices such as the mobile telephone.
4 See Lawson (1979) and The Principles of Classical Dance for an illuminating discussion of how these principles operate in ballet. Note also how points are underlined in the photographs by Anthony Crickmay of Anthony Dowell.
5 'Lunatic' is the word that, in my experience, is most commonly produced whenever people are asked to watch Solo and to comment on what they see.
6 For a discussion of Brecht's Gestus, which can be shown to connect to this gestural sequence of Forsythe and the suggestion of "not, but" (as in not content but form; not closing down but opening out), see Diamond (1988:89).
7 If the importance of the proscenium arch for classical ballet was ever in any doubt, those doubts were dispelled by the Bolshoi Ballet's 1994 season at the Albert Hall when the company performed on a purpose-built stage with a thrust and without a framing proscenium. Because the five positions of feet and arms had no relationship with the geometry of the proscenium arch, an essential clarity and centring of the body was lost.
8 For discussion of how such devices affect reception see 'Theatrical Communication: codes, systems and the performance text' in Elam (1980, Chapter 3: 32-97).
9 The talk was one that I gave on The Choreography of William Forsythe at the Queen's Hall on 18 August 1999 during the Edinburgh International Festival, linked to the Dutch National Ballet's performances of Artifact.
10 During the quarter-century (beginning 1973) that she was writing for the New Yorker, Croce was regarded as one of its most distinguished critics. See, for example, Copeland (1993).
11 When a comment of this nature is made it can generally be assumed that the reference is to ballet, and that American ballet is idealised as formalist – or synonymous with Balanchine. This ideology does not 'rate' European dance because it is expressionist, and the view is widespread. Indeed, as referred
to earlier, there is a school of criticism that argues against the place of expressionism in ballet, and examples are to be found in all three of Croce’s collected volumes of criticism (1978, 1982, 1987). See also Theodores, (1996).

12 For discussion of violence and catharsis, and how dancers feel about the choreographic approach, see Whitney (1983).

13 In the critic’s concern for what the dancers as human beings might feel, he does not consider the factual evidence of how the dancers came to be members of Forsythe’s company and the length of time that they have served. Thus the dancers might be seen to have different opinions about whether or not they think the choreography honours them.

14 Culler (1975:142-3) makes a point about levels of generality that can have obvious relevance for dance criticism. He cites the brief phrase when “we ‘walk to the store’” as an example that denotes action and purpose, rendering unnecessary description of the minutaie of detail involved in that walk to the store. His summary is as telling as the fuller, more accurate description of what the walk involves.

15 For discussion of different kinds of feeling and reason that may arise in response to performance see Best (1985 and 1992).

16 Landscapes are a favourite image of choreographers. Mary Wigman, for example, called a 1929 work *Shifting Landscape*, and the work of the contemporary British choreographer Rosemary Butcher often draws attention to aspects of landscape.
PART THREE

Eidos:Telos

Chapter 5: The Eidos:Telos text

Chapter 6: Building identity

Chapter 7: The architexts of Eidos:Telos
CHAPTER 5

The Eidos:Telos text

5.1 Introducing Eidos:Telos
5.2 Creative systems
5.3 Towards the dance text
   5.3.1 Skeletal outline
   5.3.2 General and specific characteristics
5.4 Testing for textuality
5.5 Summary
Notes

Part Three is devoted to a single Forsythe ballet, Eidos:Telos. This becomes the model through which to test the problems of criticism in a postmodern context, and to pursue a potential solution through intertextuality.

Chapter 5 introduces Eidos:Telos, looking at its history and at generative systems that Forsythe and his colleagues developed during the creative process. In discussing the problems of how to present the ephemeral text Eidos:Telos is presented first as a skeletal framework, and through the barest factual outline. This is followed by descriptive interpretation, which is found to be important, and is explored by looking at both general and specific characteristics. This provides a basis from which it becomes possible to move on to the issue of whether Eidos:Telos can be theorised as a dance text.

5.1 Introducing Eidos:Telos

In July 1994, Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt presented a new one-act work at Frankfurt's Opernhaus, entitled Self meant to govern. Its on-stage cast included six dancers and a violinist, which was modest in relation to the size of the ensemble. But Forsythe saw the work as significant for bringing together complex ideas that he and his company had been generating for many years. In the six months that followed the premiere, two further acts were created, the first introduced very different material, which was distributed among a speaker-dancer and twenty other dancers, and the second developed the movement from Self meant to govern using
twenty-four dancers. In January 1995 these new creations were linked to *Self meant to govern*, and presented as a new three-act work. It was called *Eidos:Telos*.

Forsythe's regard for *Eidos:Telos* was underlined by his decision to present it on significant touring dates. Following the 1995 Frankfurt premiere, the Ballett Frankfurt toured *Eidos:Telos* in Europe and Canada; it was revived in the 1995/96 season, and again in 1997/98 when, after performances in Frankfurt, it was presented in Paris, for a second season, and in New York. Forsythe has a following in Paris, where he has presented annual seasons since 1989. In New York *Eidos:Telos* was the sole work given by the company over a six-day season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Those six performances signalled Forsythe's return to his home city after an absence of nine years, and he needed to build a following. *Eidos:Telos* became effectively a choreographic manifesto, or a statement of belief that brought his past into his present.

According to Forsythe, *Eidos:Telos* took two years to create, but the real time involved in gestation needs to be seen in relation to evolving enquiry and the actuality of an ensemble sharing ideas and experiences daily over many years. It was because the company was steeped in knowledge about the development of choreographic systems in the past, and the importance of collaboration, that it was able to generate the codes, rules and partial texts that formed the character of *Eidos:Telos*.

When Forsythe began to concentrate on what became *Eidos:Telos*, he had been working for around nine years to develop his *Improvisation Technologies*. It was work that grew out of a one-act ballet made in 1986 and entitled *Die Befragung des Robert Scott (The Interrogation of Robert Scott)*, in which he and his colleagues began to look deeply into the nature of dance, and at how words were associated with movement. Accordingly,

> we developed the notion of kinetic isometries, where the dancers tried to register an exterior and interior refraction of
movement in their bodies, and proceed according to the ‘reading’ that they achieved of their own states. Suddenly, mental agility had to be equal to physical agility, and that was really important.

Forsythe cited in Sulcas, 1995b:57

His point is complex, and I interpret it through a quality that is discernible in Eidos:Telos where, on occasion, the dance seems almost to become transparent. It is a feeling that comes from looking at movement that is so plastic and so focused that there is no longer any sense of an outer, presentational body. The deconstructed body has let go of its borders, and become seemingly ‘edgeless’, as if there are no divisions between the inner and the outer, or between dance and dancer. The dancer-gaze has been turned inwards, and the movement appears to emerge in response to inner thoughts and feelings, as if concentration is on the dance itself and not on any thought of displaying it as spectacle. The effect is of a channel being opened up into each dancer’s inner being. This is not to argue against points made earlier about the impossibility of seeing division between dance and dancer, merely to try and suggest a particular quality found through Forsythe’s work.

There are various reasons why, out of all Forsythe’s creations for the Ballett Frankfurt, it was Eidos:Telos that was selected as the model through which to test out intertextual criticism. Initially, it was hearing of the mixture of dance and speech, and the blurring of divisions between them, that made it seem an apt subject for intertextual criticism. Yet at the first performance I attended, it was evident that there were other reasons as well stemming from its heterogeneity, and the difficulty this presented to interpretation. For what was revealed was multidimensional, plural and diffuse, an inexhaustible tissue or galaxy of signifiers, a seamless weave of codes and fragments of codes through which the critic may cut his [sic] own errant path.

Eagleton, 1996:119

Eidos:Telos defied not just conventions of dance but of theatre too. At one moment it suggested itself as a formal enquiry into movement, at the
next it was giving out a complex range of other ‘messages’ linking it to issues of a philosophical, cultural and historical nature. If there were hints to be found that *Eidos:Telos* would be diverse and complex, it could be seen in the following programme note:

> Take an equation, solve it; take the result and fold it back into the equation and then solve it again. Keep doing this a million times.

Forsythe, cited in Ballett Frankfurt, 1998: 18

Forsythe’s ‘equation’ seems to connect to ideas of the unbounded text, which is ‘experienced only in an activity of production’ (Barthes, 1977:157), and ‘equation’ becomes synonymous with the text that is always waiting for the return of writerly activity. *Eidos:Telos* can be seen as a ‘methodological field’ of ceaseless activity, a textual weave that continues to generate meanings (ibid).

From the start of *Eidos:Telos*, viewer attention is drawn to the importance of the creative team of collaboration. This is evident both in the performance itself, and its stream of ideas, and the printed programme which lists different types of creativity, including: composition, sound processing, written text, design, dramaturgical research and video production. (For list of credits, see Appendix E.) Forsythe is credited not as choreographer, but with taking overall charge of ‘Concept and Organisation ... in choreographic association with the ensemble’. This suggests that *Eidos:Telos* evolved organically and democratically under Forsythe’s overall guidance, and that it grew out of the company’s identity. (For easy reference, whenever in the following pages the choreographer is referred to the name ‘Forsythe’ appears, and in this context Forsythe should be regarded as textualised.) Forsythe was, incidentally, also responsible for the design and lighting, though he is not credited with this in the programme.

In performance itself, there is evidence of collaboration between art and technology and the theatricalisation of lighting and sound. What cannot be accounted for is how the collaborative process functions, and what
unseen hands or technological devices and pre-programmed technology work together with the performers to create the effects. *Eidos:Telos* is, in Barthes's expression, 'a collective summa of individual imprints' (1973:17), as revealed by enquiry into the creative process.

### 5.2 Creative systems

While information about a work's creation is not usually part of critical knowledge, this section examines the background of *Eidos:Telos* from the creative perspective. Some of this is privileged information gathered during the research period, but it can be regarded as a textual resource, and legitimate for intertextual criticism.

Early on in the creation of *Eidos:Telos*, the company's resident researcher Heidi Gilpin (at that time) was commissioned to make a selection of written and graphic texts. The texts were bound together and distributed to the dancers, in what Gilpin referred to as a 'conceptual handbook'. In a preface she suggested that it included a range of material 'that is directly and indirectly related to the production: fiction, poetry, philosophy, mythology, science, architecture, cultural studies' (Gilpin, 1995:1). Even without access to the texts, her list gives an impression of a dense collection of material. The handbook contains more than a hundred pages of essays, papers, drawings and diagrams, most of which are highly specialised. I understand (through discussion with Ballett Frankfurt dancers at various times during 1998), that it was 'dipped into' during the creative process and that some of the ideas were taken into the studio where they were developed into concepts, systems or tasks for *Eidos:Telos*.

Forsythe commissioned a text for Act 2 from his dancer-choreographer colleague, Dana Caspersen. She turned for inspiration to various sources including feminist writings - notably on the myths about Spider Woman that were culturally specific to her North American origins - and produced a monologue. Caspersen herself presents it in performance.
Forsythe has said that *Eidos:Telos* is an investigation into memory and image, and what the body retains as motor imagery. There is an accepted ‘dancerly logic’ relative to understanding that becomes embodied within the individual through years of training. Initially, what is held in muscle memory relates to an externalised image of the body in space. When a movement has been repeated often enough, the dancer no longer needs to engage in active thinking to produce the shape: the body remembers the feeling of what it must do. What became associative memory for *Eidos:Telos* was generated through Improvisation Technologies, and through ideas from texts in the Gilpin handbook. *Eidos:Telos* drew from mathematics and geometry, The dancers were already cognisant of rules for the processing of algorithms (a rule-based procedure aimed at solving a particular problem); fractals (from the Latin for ‘fragment’ or ‘broken’ and taking account of irregular shapes), and isometries (involving transformation of a shape or a size). Caspersen (in Driver, 2000:25) explains that through a period of working with algorithms, fractals and isometries they have come to be ‘translated’ to the medium of the body. They had become integral to the dancers’ understanding, and embodied in memory as movement strategies. These strategies are used in *Eidos:Telos* in both structured and improvised movement, and built into a system known as the ‘Alphabet’.

The Alphabet is a device enabling images to be codified and recalled, bringing to the dancers’ minds a discrete movement form that can be ‘written’ by the body carving out space in different ways and directions. This was not the first such systematisation - for *Alie/n(a)ction* in 1992 had evolved out of a 27-letter alphabet - but its scale was large. *Eidos:Telos*’s Alphabet took each letter of the regular alphabet, made an image-word out of it, and gave it various supplementary connections, which led to the production of a total of 127 images. Every image came with a history. ‘A’, for example, stands for ‘Abe’ or Abraham Lincoln, and its associative images are: Hat, Xylophone, Beard, Shot, First Ring, all of which, in some way, evoked memory and movement imagery that the dancers could relate to the late American President. The letter V
symbolises 'Versace', the Italian designer (who had created designs for Forsythe's 
Marion/Marion (1991) and Herman Schmerman (1992))
verse's liking for pizza and his extensive use of zips in the clothes he
designed were built into the imagery.

All images in the Alphabet are able to be subjected to various tasks such
as fragmentation and inversion and linked to other Alphabet imagery.
'Hat' is perhaps the simplest image through which to describe a detail of
the process. For the dancers mention of 'Hat' signals that two hands must
shape an imaginary top hat in the air in front of them; the image
originates from studio discussions about the type of 'Hat' that President
Lincoln wore, which is how it can be said to have a particular history.
'Hat' might be cut in half or turned upside down, or positioned in a
different spatial relationship to the body, or used in an isometric
relationship with another dancer. The Alphabet is therefore a mnemonic,
and it gives the dancers a logic of understanding on which every
performance of Eidos:Telos is dependent. The audience knows nothing
of either 'Hat' or 'Abe'; it is irrelevant to what is communicated by the
image, even though it is an essential part of the senders' code.

As an operational system the Alphabet has links with other aspects of the
performance, including a video recording that runs in the wings and
creates coded images for the dancers to respond to when improvising,
and the improvisatory tasks listed in Appendix C. Forsythe's
choreography is based on the premise that it is possible to feel the
effect(iveness) of systems, without comprehending the means by which
the choreographer arrived at them. The viewer will not know what
questions the choreographer asked, or what principles were adhered to,
but will experience the effects.

5.3 Towards the dance text

Moving from the creator perspective, this section turns to issues of
reception. Before intertextual analysis of Eidos:Telos can proceed, the
reader of this study - who may not have seen Eidos:Telos - needs to be
presented with a structural framework, and some idea of what it is that could be said to give the work its unique character. This cannot be provided as concrete evidence, it can only be presented through interpretation and, as pointed out, Eidos:Telos is open to multiple interpretations. The obvious way to proceed would be through description of some kind, but since description can only ever be selective and evaluative it is problematic. It would seem that Eidos:Telos, as with any performance art, can only be presented through a combined mixture of (minimal) fact and (maximum) interpretation, and any interpretation must be acknowledged as subjective. With this in mind, and without precipitating the intertextual analysis in Chapters 6 and 7, the following strategy has been adopted.

First, Eidos:Telos is presented in a skeletal outline emphasising numbers of participants and avoiding movement or performative description. This is the closest that it is possible to approach the performance through (relatively) neutral terms and without subjective reference to 'happenings'. Second, a brief list of general characteristics allows the work to be seen in a relationship with a genre. Third, specific characteristics put the emphasis on movement and metaphor, and can be seen as subjective interpretation. What this three-stage strategy is intended to provide is the means for a reader to envisage something of the performance. At the same time it serves as a way of testing some of the issues discussed in Chapter 2 and determining whether Eidos:Telos can be theorised as a dance text. The skeletal outline makes it possible to ask whether Eidos:Telos can be found to contain properties of completeness. Coherence, uniqueness and repeatability are tested in 5.4 through characteristics and elements of performance. Where there might seem to be a clash with description introduced as part of the intertextual discourse in Chapter 7, that chapter has been given priority and the material has been excluded from Chapter 5.

Before embarking on strategic description, 'I' as textualised subject must justify the basis through which I am able to make the approach.
During the research period I was able to 'collect' material from attendance at twelve performances of *Eidos:Telos* in Frankfurt, Paris and New York, plus three performances of *Self meant to govern* given in Brussels as part of a triple bill. Supplementary knowledge was built up through attendance at performances of Forsythe's work wherever possible (details listed on page 209), and through watching company class and rehearsal. I was able also to talk to Forsythe and his colleagues informally, and to spend time searching through the company archives of press cuttings. It was clear that I could not write about one performance only, and forget about the other experiences, nor could I have held in memory enough detail to be able to write about the first experience of seeing *Eidos:Telos* in any way that would be other than superficial. There is too much happening in *Eidos:Telos*, with too many layers of form, too many conflicting representations. At each performance I jotted down notes; they were in the main trigger words, or reminders of what was held in memory, and would not be understood by a reader for they were reminders of perceived images. While the notes would be the closest possible way of presenting relatively unmediated response, as codes they would serve little or no purpose. Thus it is obvious that some mediated description and characterisation was needed. What follows therefore is a combination of facts and impressions, edited from notes made during performances that were 'fleshed out' soon afterwards as 'diary entries'. (Notes and diary entries are from time to time included to illustrate points made.)

5.3.1 Skeletal outline

*Eidos: Telos* is, as already made clear, organised into 3 acts, none of which lasts longer than 30 minutes, and with intervals separating Acts 1 and 2, and Acts 2 and 3. (It should be noted that though the Ballett Frankfurt programme makes reference to Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3, to maintain a distinction between *Eidos:Telos* and Parts One, Two and Three of this study, the *Eidos:Telos* 'Parts' are referred to as 'Acts'.)
Outline of on-stage performers:

**Act 1:**

duration 22 minutes 19 seconds (as recorded in Frankfurt, 21 March 1998)

- 6 dancers; 1 violinist

**Act 2:**

duration 26 minutes 3 seconds (21 March 1998)

  **first section**
  
  - 1 speaker/dancer; 1 violinist; they are present throughout the act, and are alone on stage for the first 15 minutes
  
  **second section**
  
  - entry of single waltzing woman
  
  - entry of lines of ‘waltzing’ dancers (20 in total), some of whom subsequently also speak

**Act 3:**

30 minutes 49 seconds (21 March 1998)

- 8 dancers at start
- number rises later to a total of 24
- reappearance of the speaker/dancer from Act 2 in closing minutes

**Offstage in all three acts:**

- 3 trombonists, positioned in the upstage left wing who make occasional appearances on stage, walking as a trio to centre stage and then moving back again

- 2 computer/synthesiser musicians, positioned in the orchestra pit with technological equipment

- composer (Willems); lighting designer (Forsythe), positioned in the stalls
Improvisation operated off-stage:

- Willems and Forsythe relay improvised cues in the music and lighting to musicians, dancers, and backstage staff, with the aid of microphone and earphones
- Joel Ryan generates improvised sound on computer

In structural terms, *Eidos:Telos* is seen to unfold across an approximate two-hour period, in a given space. It seeks to communicate, by means of a sender transmitting the object of the theoretical enquiry to a receiver, allowing a 'simultaneity of production and communication' (De Marinis, 1993:50). It is dependent for coming into being not only on performers, but also on predetermined requirements of space, environment and technology. The first curtain of the first act rises on a stilled tableau and Act 3 closes on a scene of apparent chaos. When the curtain falls on this scene, it is a signal that, after performers and viewers have acknowledged each other in the conventional manner of bowing and applauding, the performance is over and the audience should leave the building. This is evidence of a beginning and an ending, or of completion according to normative theatrical practice (De Marinis, 1993:58).

### 5.3.2 General and specific characteristics

Among general characteristics that may be found in *Eidos:Telos*, the following suggest themselves:

- Mixing of skilled and pedestrian movement
- Use of structured and improvised movement
- Diverse action with evidence of a hidden order
- Use of spoken text
- Hints of metanarratives
- Ambiguous relationship between movement and speech
- Multi-media
- Functional designs
- Mixing of music, natural and technological sounds
- Non-representational time, place
- Foregrounding of objects
- Juxtaposition of animate and inanimate objects
While this selection of characteristics could be applied to most of Forsythe's work, and does not identify the individual character of *Eidos:Telos*, what can be seen in the list points to a postmodern 'advocacy of difference, pluriformity, and multiplicity' (Bertens, 1995:8). In proposing that *Eidos:Telos* is categorisable as postmodernist a genre connection is brought into play, weaving a thread of cohesion which can be constructed as textuality (De Marinis, 1993).

The following pages are organised to show specific characteristics that may be found in *Eidos:Telos*. It should again be stressed that the information is selective and subjective, and that every viewer will see it differently. The material is arranged as follows:

**Act 1**

*is represented in a three-page chart. Information is positioned in boxes in a visual display that is intended to create a picture of diverse, non-linear action. Observations range across description, general characteristics and metaphor; they are open-ended and arbitrary.*

**Act 2**

*includes an extract from Caspersen's text for the monologue, and an outline of general characteristics for the waltz.*

**Act 3**

*is again a chart with information presented in a square box display to indicate diversity and density of action.*
Design
2 elasticated wires (parallel)
5 'clocks' (like plates on stand)
metronome (front)
indexical display (back)

Dress
grey-blue-brown tops and shorts or leotards;
socks worn, sometimes with shoes underneath

Notes, Act 1:
*Self meant to govern*

Start
tableau
man walks forward; violinist begins playing
pulse and rhythm pronounced;
other dancers remain in position.

2 men engage in syncopated movement
emphasising openness of body and
alignment between them. 1 man falls
abruptly to ground

woman enters jerking legs and arms

high energy in a darkened setting

dancers use space as if air gives them buoyancy; as if it
holds their legs in the air or supports them when they jump

diverse activity;
moments of unity occurring between 2 or 3 dancers

emphasis on impetus charging through
the body
violinist plays violin along wires, imitating motion of dancer's body.

devices:
- canon
- unity
- recurring motifs
- repetition
- fracturing
- inversion

beginnings and endings of movement dissolve – energy is picked up elsewhere.

Notes, Act 1: Self meant to govern

Characteristics:
- counterpoint
- opposition
- empowered energy through musculature
- control
- abandonment
- alignment of bodies/movement/outward trajectories

effects made by limbs never isolated, but reveal energy distribution, and different degrees of tension and relaxation through rest of body.

bodies twisting in space at speed – eye catches countless configurations.

man walks forward; positions arms; spirals abruptly down on to floor.

forceful impetus
- abrupt
- spatial
- open

group of upstage dancers kneel abruptly on 1 leg and face downstage right, arms in open 5th. Momentary suggestion of 3 Muses of Balanchine's Apollo.

emphasis on:
- shoulder
- elbow
- flexed/pointed feet
upstage, 3 trombonists walk to centre and back

Notes, Act 1: Self meant to govern

5 dancers line up behind wires and execute motif sequence: resemblance to Greek chorus

5 dancers stilled along front of stage, suggestive of Greek frieze

knock forehead and turn: use speed and force

shaping of (imaginary) ball in space, contrasting with flung arms and abrupt pauses; hands often spread out flamboyantly

bodies hyper-active frantic moves private reveries arms swing open torso twisted arms circling arms

small detail movement emphasising joints

crescendo and fortissimo from trombones

forward walks courtly bows movement of hips caused by rhythmic body propulsion

loud violin music merges with computer-generated sound. Quality suggests evil: reminder of Paganini's pact with the devil
Act 2

Spider Text

This is a spiders voice, then this voice is a spiders. Now, when I return from underneath, I return to an island, and I return tasting dirt and salt and dark, and then she takes my eyes and turns them, and sets me spinning.

And spinning, I look at what I had not seen, I look dark, I look away, and then I look where this spiders heart is looking, and then I'm leaving, down.

I'm leaving following where I look and I'm looking down into the open earth.

And it begins quiet, and then it begins breathing, it begins in the earth and there, under, lies the dark center of the eye.

Far away I slip through this point where, looking, I'm reflected. And I'm woven through dark, I'm woven open, woven, torn through that point, and I return from underneath. Dark, under, down. I have been down under.

Here, down, from under, I go up. Together from under I come up with this weaving heart, and I turn to a break in the clouds.

And now my mouth has opened, I've opened my mouth, and I'm swallowing so Little bits of underneath have I swallowed, so that I must return.

And I return dark, return breathing, return screaming, and so I go up, leaving where I look, and then I see, bright, what I thought I had left for the last time. Now up, I'm looking following where I left, I'm looking down into the image of that dark eye.

Here, with eyes from over, I look at what I had not seen. I had been down, woven dark under. Here, opened from under I go up, together from under, I come up with this weaving heart.

My eyes lift and drop and I look again, and I see with these eyes, and I see clouds and stars and flowers.

Dana Caspersen, Eidos:Telos, 1995

Caspersen's poem is reproduced from the Ballett Frankfurt's 1998 programme for the Théâtre du Châtelet Musical de Paris. It is not the complete monologue.


\textit{Act 2}

\textbf{The Waltz characteristics:}

- movement deriving from social dance
- performed with ballethicised style
- line of single dancers (not couples) progresses from stage right to left
- other dancers enter from downstage left and upstage right
- stage filled with patterns of dancers waltzing
- each sequence of the waltz step is performed with a directional change
- when the movement goes forward the head pulls back against line of arms
- when the movement goes backwards the head leans/projects forwards
- initially the arms transfer through quick passage through balletic 1st position
- later the arms transfer through 5\textsuperscript{th} position
- little jumps and swirls embellish the basis steps from time to time
- arms lead the way
- mostly the arms move together \textit{in a balanced line}
- movement is unified by men and women alike

\textbf{Dress:}

- men and women sport skirts with bustles (legs and feet are largely hidden under the bustles)
- men wear strongly coloured 'frock coats'
- women wear pale vests
MOVEMENT CHARACTERISTICS IN ACT 3

Information arbitrarily arranged to convey suggestions about action, character, metaphor, relationships, nomenclature and so on.

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Continuing to look at specific characteristics, the following observations can be made about the different acts:

**Act 1**
The dominant effect emerging from Act 1 is of a formal movement enquiry through which aspects of modernism (seeking to define its own conditions) and classicism (in the underlying principles of form) are to be seen. Movement for the six dancers is knitted into a tightly woven, dense texture emphasising clarity of style, and articulated energy. The dancing bodies, though they may momentarily unite in space, are seldom unified or harmonised, and where classical form is momentarily glimpsed it is seen as incomplete or fractured – in other words unity has been interrogated. Where movement is concerned with flowing through the body, rather than with the arrested moment, the influence of modern dance is recognisable. There is emphasis on outward and inward movement trajectories, and on spatial planes that can accommodate multi-directional movement to take in the labile and the mobile, symmetry and equilibrium, tension and contrary motion. I notice quite often that the opening out of torsos, and the counter tensions below the waist bring reminders of how the breath is used to energise the body in ways that are suggestive of martial art forms and yoga.

References that could be called ‘content’ emerge from within the dance itself in fleeting on-stage relationships that occur between performers, including one between the dancer and violinist crossing between theatricalised drama and social realism. Objects on stage that bear a marked resemblance to upright ‘plates’ are prominently positioned so that the viewer is led to wonder about their status and whether they are representational. Their circular organisation seems to refer to something indeterminable in relation to the dance. Not every member of the audience will be close enough to see that the ‘plates’ have a clock-like face and hands, with letters of the alphabet instead of numbers. Similarly, there will probably be few people who can recognise that the rattle-like sound with which Act 1 begins is actually the first activity of a specially
organised ticking clock, and that the movements of the hand contain coded information relative to the Alphabet. If these foregrounded objects are not recognised as clocks, and it is never obvious that the dancers refer to them in any way, then perhaps they will be seen as abstract design. On the other hand, because they are positioned in a circle, the clocks seem to be symbolic.

**Act 2**

In this act, two distinct sections are discernible, though there is no break in activity to separate them. In general terms these can be labelled as: spoken monologue with movement; a choreographed waltz with dramatic elements. Because of the complexity of this act, rather more is offered in the way of description and interpretation in this section.

The mixing of words and movement makes curious connections with philosophical aspects of doing, being and saying. While the spoken text is rife with metaphor and reference, the movement, gesture and on-stage ambience varies between suggestions of the functional and the emotional, and there is no obvious way of knowing how to relate to them. At one moment it is as though various metanarratives are being positioned, but in fragments that make it impossible to separate them out so that ideas merge. The words introduce strong images such as 'spider'; 'she/I; 'ranks of the dead' without explanation, and in ways that assume they will communicate something. They are not introduced through a context that provides the viewer with a rationale. The movement varies in its relationship to the spoken word. At times its purpose seems to be for embellishment - a poetic way of endorsing what is said - and at other times it is conveyed as embodied expression. At moments the woman who is the solo performer suggests the psycho-physical pains of childbirth. Her body contracts, as if convulsed by pain, but it is not personalised, or related in a way that suggests individual pain. Something about the setting as a non-identifiable space, and the position of a non-identifiable woman/character, points toward pain that is representative of archetypal suffering.
The second section of Act 2 starts as a woman (Allison Brown, at all performances I have seen) waltzes on to the stage from upstage right to the centre, where gradually a shift in style occurs. She is first seen through movement that is filled with grace and youthful energy, then her body shrivels and shrinks until she takes on the image of what can be described as an old ‘crone’. It can perhaps be seen as a bridging passage, spanning from the monologue to the waltz. Or perhaps there are deeper reasons to be discerned, about how the human condition changes through time. The crone disappears as waltzing dancers enter in a long line from the downstage right wing. This is the start of a section that lasts about 10 minutes, during which the waltz-like movement continues as the first line of dancers is joined by other lines approaching from different directions. Choreographic patterning positions the dancers at times in lines of ‘crossing’ fours, and at other times all order is abandoned and the stage is a sea of waltzing dancers. Caspersen, remains on stage during the waltz, seated on the ‘box’ beside the violinist and, from time to time, continues her monologue. When she refers to ‘the ranks of the dead’, because the stage is darkened, and the figures are seen through half light, there is a suggestion that the setting is Hades, and the waltz is a dance of dead spirits.

After a while, a man begins speaking like a petulant child, as if to suggest that he feels victimised. If the waltzers are to be seen as ‘the dead’ then he is the lone protester among them. ‘I’m fuckin’ dead, man’, he moans in a self-pitying voice indicating that he thinks he has been taken before his time. He goes on to utter the most threatening obscenities he can think of, issuing threats about how he would like to wreak revenge on members of his family. Straight afterwards he switches out of this mode, and takes on the personality of a ballet master, engaging in rhythmic counting through which he issues orders to the assembled dancers into a line. Ironically, where the obscenities brought no reaction from the dancers around him, his instructions about where to move to are heard and obeyed. But diverse incidents that follow the man’s speaking, where snatches of speech are heard from other dancers speaking in their different native tongues, bring to mind a type of Pinter play in which
speech carries on regardless of whether anything is being communicated. At times they are reminders of the concentrated focus of a Beckett play, in which everything extraneous has been rejected, and all that remains is the concentrated texture of performance (described in Whitelaw, 1996).

After all these mood swings, from waltzing dancer to sunken crone, from the man who is both petulant child and ballet master, to characters talking in different language, another complete change occurs at the act’s end, when a man who was one of the waltzers enters in a short skirt and begins to sing 'amour' and dance about in light-hearted, flippant vein. The Caspersen figure joins in with the singing, so that the scene begins to resemble an off-duty moment when two members of the company are simply having fun and vying with each other in their singing. Act 2 has demonstrated how it is that Forsythe’s work can be referred to as polysemic, multidimensional – and cannot be reduced to a single meaning.

Act 3
From the opening tableau, as soon as the dancers begin to move, it is clear that this act has returned to a more formal movement enquiry. Eight dancers break into independent activity, emphasising shape, rhythm, impetus and different movement planes. There are many different types of ‘echo-carrying’ action. At one moment, for example, a figure folds over the body in a fleeting movement suggestive of Nijinsky’s *L’après-midi d’un faune* (1912). At another, connections can be seen between the animate and the inanimate as one dancer extends a leg into arabesque in close proximity to waist-level wires. Attempts to focus on an element such as shape can only be ‘read’ in conjunction with what happens contextually, through relationships and alignments. There is no division or break between group or individual activity. Soon the numbers of dancers increase until there are 24 on stage, and the action becomes so diverse and dense that the resultant forms, with their precision and speed seem to produce physical organisations that the human eye has never encountered before. In some ways this act is the hardest to ‘see’ for its
detail can seem unyielding, and members of the audience can feel alienated enough to leave without seeing it through.

5.4 Testing for textuality

What emerges from these descriptive-interpretative accounts of *Eidos:Telos* is that the acts are different in structure and form, and that there may be difficulty in seeing how they connect. But a way of dealing with the difficulties that this brings to the critical analysis of a work has been proposed through semiotics, and through the structuring of an abstract performance as a text (De Marinis, 1993). Through drawing on the semiotic model of performance, where the principal properties of a text are found to be completeness and cohesion (De Marinis, 1993), *Eidos:Telos* can begin to be identified as a text. Evidence of completeness has already been pointed through the skeletal structure (above), on the basis of the structuring of three acts that unfolded through time and within a particular space. According to normative theatre practices, *Eidos:Telos* had both a beginning and an ending (De Marinis, 1993) and in this sense could be regarded as having properties of completeness.

What is harder to determine is the property of coherence. It is easy to watch all three acts of *Eidos:Telos* and to emerge without a clear idea of why they are connected, and feel uncertain about how they are linked. An underlying network of relations may be sensed, but determining whether the three acts can be seen as 'belonging' together is by no means straightforward. For each act is so richly detailed in movement, sound and theatricalisation, that each *feels* self-sufficient, and could (arguably) stand alone as a text in its own right. Indeed, *Self meant to govern* has continued to be included from time to time on triple bills with other works, though the other acts of *Eidos:Telos* are never given in isolation.

In testing whether or not coherence can be found, it is logical to search for 'constants' between acts. The first and most obvious constant is presented by the material evidence of the design, and therefore through
visual effect; the second in the aural components. The design in all three acts features wires strung across the stage. The two wires that in Act 1 stretch horizontally across the upstage area are barely visible to the audience, except when the light catches them - and at the moments when the dancers pluck them, so that they become prominent through a resonant ‘hum’. Acts 2 and 3 are more complex in designs where thick black wires strung across the stage in a geometric network, and in an organisation that variously includes theatrical equipment such as a lamp and a video monitor hanging high above the stage. The design shows itself as both functional and aesthetic, and ‘colours’ the way the performance is looked at, giving rise to thoughts about why the wires are there and what purpose they serve.

My own interpretation of the wires is to see them first as static geometric forms that complement the live forms of the dance, and then to think of them as a metaphoric web of influences. For while Acts 1 and 2 do not apparently belong together in movement terms, there are visual and aural links. Acts 2 and 3 are also separated in movement terms, but brought together by the reappearance of Caspersen, in the closing minutes of Act 3, affecting the character of an act which until that moment had seemed to put its focus on the dance. It is in the final minutes that suggestions of a cycle about life and death suddenly emerge as a possible metaphor of purpose and fulfilment, as if providing an interpretation for the titular *Eidos:Telos*. But this is to anticipate what follows in the next chapter.

For the moment, the concern is with searching for possible constants that enable the coherence to be identified between the different acts. The skeletal outline (above) suggested that there were musical constants to be found in all three acts, notably in the music provided by three trombones and in the computer sound that the two musicians positioned in the orchestra pit generate for all the acts. On entering the auditorium most members of the audience will catch sight of the technological equipment displayed in the orchestra pit, and will know to expect high tech effects. The presence of the two computer musicians in the pit is a sign of some
kind of continuity. The trombonists, who are generally positioned out of sight off stage, provide strong links through the sound they produce, and through the drama of their presence at moments when they march across the stage and back again.

The on-stage presence of the violinist creates connections between Acts 1 and 2, though the music that he plays in each act is different. In the first act there are clear connections with Stravinsky's *Apollo* (discussed in Chapter 7): but there is no obvious reference to Stravinsky in the succeeding act, where Willems's music for the violin is woven into a computerised soundscape that seems to include howling wolves and twittering birds. In Act 1, the violinist participates in the action walking about the stage, and from time to time engaging with the dancers. Throughout Act 2 he remains seated on a chair close to centre stage, where the lighting positions him in shadows. In the main his role is formal, his proximity to the dancers emphasising relationships between music and dance. However, sometimes he lends dramatic presence, as when he begins to play fast and furiously, compelling a dancer to keep up with him.

In searching for coherence in the choreography, it has already been made clear that similarities in the movement material are discernible in Acts 1 and 3, though they are put to very different usage. These only begin to reveal themselves through acquired knowledge of *Eidos:Telos*, for initially the connections are obscured by the density of activity in Act 3 which, so I believe, can seem like a barrier to seeing the dance. In Act 1 each of the six dancers takes responsibility for individual structured and improvised material, occasionally coming together briefly for a group dance and engagement in shared 'motifs'. In Act 3, where up to 24 dancers may be on stage together, the emphasis is on ensemble activity in both structured and improvised movement, and in the sharing of material between groups of twos, fours and eights, and the connections that are made between members of the groups.
Continuing to look for evidence that positions *Eidos:Telos* as a text, what became evident in the semiotic model was that both repeatability and reproducibility were necessary conditions (De Marinis, 1993). Evidence showing that *Eidos:Telos* is capable of being repeated over a given period, and that it can be reproduced in subsequent seasons, was provided at the start of this chapter and reference to performances in Frankfurt and elsewhere. The absent text is able to be repeated because of what is held in performer memory. It is brought by collective performer memory into an unfolding present.

Though intricate detail differs between performances, the structural organisation is repeatable over the same duration of time, and in the same setting (or its equivalent). This gives it the capability of coming into existence over different passages of time, and in different spaces (provided that spatial and technical requirements are met). In this way *Eidos:Telos* is able to maintain a relationship between ‘a constant and its variants’ (De Marinis, 1993:17) which is part of its textual structuring.

The ‘shaping’ of *Eidos:Telos* is affected by the circumstances of each performance, including where it takes place, which dancers are cast, what kinds of reactions are caused by different personalities, and what is ‘discovered’ by performers during improvisation. Undoubtedly, the place of improvisation within *Eidos:Telos*’s overall structure adds an aleatoric dimension, and enhances the *individuality* of each performance. This contributes to the establishment of ‘uniqueness’ which is also important to textual construction.

Looking at the condition of reproducibility, it is not likely that any other company could reproduce *Eidos:Telos* because its systems have been built up over years, and because there is a dependence on improvisation, and on primary source material held in motor memory by the team of creators and interpreters. The skills that are summoned into action by each performance are achievable only because of the ‘language’ that has been positioned as an ever-growing corpus of discursive material. Each
performance fulfils De Marinis's (1993) condition of uniqueness, for the
performers can never reproduce precisely the same performance and the
constitution of the audience differs at every performance. In this way it
begins to shape itself as a 'Ballett Frankfurt' text.

The computer generator Joel Ryan is present with his assistant
throughout the performance, and at all performances Forsythe directs the
lighting and Willems the music. These three contribute to the
evolutionary character of *Eidos:Telos* and, through their improvisatory
input, to the particular character of each performance. The performers
who reappear in the different acts supply various links of coherence,
though the complexity of their performing persona – when the
implication is sometimes formal and at other times dramatic – positions
them somewhat ambiguously.

*Eidos:Telos* is able to be reproduced largely because of what Forsythe
and his colleagues hold in memory. This memory is particular to
*Eidos:Telos*, its generative period and its performances and, in more
general terms, comes from years devoted to developing the
choreographic enquiry and to building procedural memory. Where
conventions are so distanced from the normative, and where notation
cannot be turned to as a partial text (as it cannot for *Eidos:Telos*),
collective memory is one of dance's most powerful tools for
reproduction. The structured choreography of *Eidos:Telos* could be
'pieced' together because of the way movement is able to trigger
memory, and because individuals in the group are able to step in when
memory proves fallible.\(^6\) During an early rehearsal of *Eidos:Telos* in
1998, I watched a group of dancers working to recall the Alphabet after
*Eidos:Telos* had been absent from the repertoire for several months,
details that were forgotten would suddenly be recalled by different
individuals. On this basis too, the material that would be called on in
performance for improvisatory tasks, was also being positioned in the
dancer's motor memory.
Eidos:Telos presents itself as a partial text in video recordings, for every performance in Frankfurt is filmed and also, where facilities are available, when the company is on tour. But the single static camera that is aimed straight at the stage does not capture all levels of action. Moreover, the lighting that on stage is dramatically dark for most of the duration of Eidos:Telos, obscures movement detail, and the single microphone cannot pick up every detail of the sound score, or the spoken text. As a partial text, the video recording is obviously limited, but equally it is an asset to textual reproduction.

5.5 Summary

Codes generated by the company were seen to have been shaped uniquely both from the effect produced by the Alphabet, and through different performative and theatrical aspects of all three acts. Forsythe’s premise was found to be based on a belief that what an audience experience in performance is not dependent on comprehension.

Eidos:Telos was envisaged as a model through which to test intertextual criticism because of its mixture of dance and speech. Recognition of heterogeneity, with a galaxy of signifiers and a seamless weave of codes underlined the difficulty of interpretation. Complex messages, with links to philosophical, cultural and historical issues, set a challenge for criticism. The different characteristics of dance, music, design and theatricality in the three acts could be seen to be linked into a giant interconnecting web.

The thrust of this chapter is on interpreting Eidos:Telos rather than on its presentation through factual evidence. It was through the interpretative evidence that the performance could begin to be theorised as a text. Eidos:Telos was shown to have properties of completeness and coherence. It was seen to be structured out of a unique organisation of codes, and able to be both repeated and reproduced. On this basis Eidos:Telos could be constructed as a theoretical dance text, and it was this that made it eligible for intertextual analysis.
Notes

1 There were it is true appearances by a trio of trombonists, and by the stage manager, but these were only fleeting.
2 Forsythe in conversation often singles out Eidos:Telos when talking about what he regards as significant – a point noted on the Ballett Frankfurt’s web site (1999).
3 Numbers vary slightly. For example, in Antwerp in 1996 22 dancers appeared in Act 3.
4 Whether at home or on tour, all performances are important to the company. The suggestion that some performances are significant relates to the possibility of attracting more specialised audiences (including critics, company directors, choreographers and dancers), whose response is likely to make an impact on the wider dance world.
5 The time devoted to generating Eidos: Telos would have been intermittent, for during this period Forsythe’s wife, Tracy-Kai Maier, was dying of cancer. It is a tragedy that undoubtedly affected his creativity, both in terms of the works he made and what went into them, as he suggests in conversation. He made relatively few works immediately prior to Eidos:Telos: Quintett and As a Garden in this Setting Part 2 (both 1993) and Self Meant to Govern (1994). After the premiere of the full-length Eidos:Telos in 1995, he evidently experienced a resurgence of creative energy, producing in that same year: Firstext (a collaboration with Dana Caspersen and Antony Rizzi for the Royal Ballet) and Four Point Counter (for Nederlands Dans Theater) plus, for his own company, Invisible Film, Of Any If And, The The (collaboration with Caspersen) and Solo. By the end of 1996, with six new (or reworked) short works to his credit as well as a major full-length piece (Sleepers Guts) and a substantial one-act work (Hypothetical Stream), it could be said that the period spent developing the systems for Eidos: Telos was the metaphorical equivalent of planting seeds in fertile ground.
6 For a discussion of codes as systems of organisation within the text that can be regarded as general or specific see, among others (Eco, 1979; Culler, 1983; Elam, 1990; Frow in Worton and Still, 1991; De Marinis, 1993). Zelinger in Preston-Dunlop (1979:15 and 18), offers a provisional discussion of dance codes as systems of signification, pointing out that it is the knowledge of codes (whether aesthetic or social) that aids the interpretation of dance.
7 In the 1998 Paris programme for Eidos:Telos, Forsythe’s quotation is attributed to an interview he gave to Sulcas (January 1995). The attribution does not appear in the 1998 Frankfurt programme.
8 The interview with Sulcas was in 1995; she used parts of it in various articles, and kindly let me see the full unpublished transcript, where this comment by Forsythe appears.
9 Caspersen and Forsythe worked closely together (‘over a long period’, according to Caspersen, personal communication, June 1998) to shape her role in Part 2. In their discussions, particularly in their use of Greek myths, the place of representation was a continuing issue.
10 Personal communication, summer 1998.
11 ibid.
12 These summaries have been arrived at with the aid of the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1990) and the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1997). For discussion of how these terms are worked into the company’s modus operandi, see Caspersen in Driver (1999:25-39).
13 See Caspersen in Driver (1999:30).
14 This kind of access would not automatically be granted to critics, I was fortunate in finding that Forsythe is interested in critical response, and that permission was granted when requested.
15 Slight variations in timing can be noted between performances.
16 In looking at reproduction, I am concentrating on the choreography and ignoring other aspects of reproduction. While it is evident that some aspects of the performance such as the music, design and lighting are recorded in notes form, notation and/or on video recordings, these specialised areas are outside the scope of the present study.
CHAPTER 6

Building identity

6.1 Prior to performance
6.2 Programming expectation
6.3 Receiver response
6.4 Summary
Notes

Even before the curtain has risen on a performance of Eidos:Telos, intertexts will be active, and intertextual messages discovered in the margins of the text will have begun to build expectation in the mind of the viewer. These messages can turn out to be beneficial when they point the viewer towards perceptive engagement with the performance, or they can 'block' seeing and bring disappointment.

This chapter examines how what is marginal to the text helps to construct textual identity, and how the text's reception is affected by what is presupposed and expected. The main messages that surface in advance of Eidos:Telos are to be found in the title itself, in the printed programme, and in critical response. It is to these that attention now turns.

6.1 Prior to performance

Any text sends out signals that act as messengers in advance of the text itself. These messengers travel via various direct connectives such as title and programme, and indirect devices such as marketing strategies and criticism writings. A performance text is not usually encountered casually, and so the messenger text acts as a persuader to build the case for attendance at performance. The recipient will respond to the message by relating it not to sender intention, but to personal experience.

Looking at marketing strategy, an advertisement placed in the New York Times (4 December 1998), advertised Eidos:Telos as part of the Brooklyn Academy of Music's existing 'Next Wave Festival', displaying
'Ballett Frankfurt' and 'William Forsythe' more prominently than 'Eidos:Telos'. It can be assumed that the advertisement was designed as a result of negotiations that took place between Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt, and the host theatre. Interestingly, the image used to draw attention to the performance was that of a three-quarter length cut-out photograph of a woman wearing singlet and bustle, and shown with arms outstretched (as in the Act 2 waltz). The woman in the advertisement might be seen as graceful and modest, and these symbols (however they were interpreted), would start to build identity about what would follow in performance. But whatever was seen subsequently in performance, it is unlikely that a viewer would emerge with thoughts that gracefulness and modesty were primary concerns. It could be asked, therefore, whether Forsythe and his colleagues had deliberately set out to attract a conservative audience to an experimental festival. On the other hand, it is hard to know how it might have been presented to show some of the elements that, as will be seen, shocked some people.

Where title or image arouses interest, and a commitment is made to attend Eidos:Telos, then the mind begins exercising at different levels of consciousness and unconsciousness, to anticipate what kind of performance might follow, and what, for example, can be 'read into' the title. This will be associated with whatever is known about the reputation of the creators and the circumstance of the performance. Titles are promises that adjoin themselves to a chain of historical connections. They are on the margins of the text, for they are not the text itself, even though they are interconnected. Eidos:Telos is a title that might suggest itself at first encounter as impenetrable, a signifier without a signified, conveying scant information about what 'eidos' and 'telos' could be expected to communicate in performance.

Like any title, Eidos:Telos belongs in a network of texts, of which William Forsythe, the Ballett Frankfurt, and the theatre where the performance takes place are also a part. It might be seen to point towards philosophical attitudes taken by form (eidos) or purpose (telos). But all
dance texts have some kind of a relationship with form and are directed towards a purpose, and so in advance of seeing the work, that line of enquiry leads nowhere. Perhaps *Eidos:Telos* was chosen because of the rhythmic assonance of eidos and telos. Forsythe had, after all, acknowledged that it was the sound and not the meaning that mattered in his 1992 work based on an American vernacular expression, *Herman Schmerman.* Perhaps those who knew *Herman Schmerman* would expect to find links in *Eidos:Telos* with its high energy dance, and the unforgettable duet between a man and a woman wearing short yellow skirts. Another Forsythe title, *The Loss of Small Detail* (1991), hinted at the enquiry underlying the work, offering a message about the effect on dance of repressive techniques, and of the consequent ‘loss of subtle but significant things like personal inflection or private intonation’ (Levin, David J, 1992:130).

The reviewer in the *Village Voice* saw *Eidos:Telos* as an inscrutable title (Reardon, 1998:149). Anyone acquainted with the history of Forsythe and his multi-national company, would not be unduly surprised by such apparent inscrutability, and would know that the choice of two Greek words should not be read as literal meaning. Knowing that the one certainty about a Forsythe ballet is that it cannot be accurately anticipated, it is inevitable that *Eidos:Telos* would produce surprises. It would be bound to weave characteristics of the Forsythe style into a text that had its own distinctive character, bringing the philosophical and the physical into some form of contemporary sensibility. If *The Loss of Small Detail* pointed to underlying processes, then so might eidos and telos.

### 6.2 Programming expectation

The printed programme also contributes to expectation. But as an adjunct to performance rather than an essential, its position is anomalous. Programmes have a curious function and usage, for they are not invariably read before a performance, or even obtained by everyone present. They may be used only as an identifier of names of those
involved in the creation and performance, and then dispensed with. Even though they may be turned to as a useful record after the performance is over, they cannot be relied upon as essential information. Nonetheless, a programme is something that is expected from theatre going, and substantial background information is often included in programmes for performances categorised as 'high art'. Works of a more popular nature will not generally command lengthy programme information. Postmodern performances yield many different types of programme, sometimes attaching great importance to what is contained within programmes.

Dance criticism pays relatively little attention to programme content, rarely investigating how what is conveyed in print might be seen in a relationship with the performance, and only drawing attention to programmes to make disparaging remarks. There is a widely held view that a dance performance ought to be self-sufficient, and that if the dance needs to be explained in some way then it has failed, and some writers were quick to condemn the *Eidos:Telos* programme. For the 1995 Paris performances ‘extensive program notes (eighteen pages)’ provided ‘little insight to the meaning’ of *Eidos:Telos*, claimed Scholl (1995:13). In New York, Barnes recalled, ‘one of Forsythe’s early mentors, John Cranko, maintained, no ballet should need a program note’ (Barnes, 1998:15). Looking at the programme for *Eidos:Telos*, and the six pages that presented themselves as ideas for philosophical contemplation,\(^5\) he observed

\[
\text{the disparate elements [of *Eidos:Telos*] are glued together by perfectly nonsensical and pseudo-philosophical program notes that could be a quite clever parody were they not clearly meant to be taken seriously.}
\]

\[\text{Barnes, 1998:15}\]

Conditioned Ballett Frankfurt audiences know to expect programmes that differ in size and style, according to creative perceptions about the work.\(^6\) The 48-page programme produced for the Frankfurt performances of *Eidos:Telos* is distinctive in both style and content.\(^7\) Long and narrow, it
6: Building identity

is as thick as a small book with a wash of textured yellow on the front and back cover, and a mass of small black diagrams covering the lower half of this cover. The paper inside is thick and of good quality, with notable spaciousness allowed by the visual display of words. A mass of fact and philosophy spreads across pages whose contents range from musical notation to quotations from Forsythe, and include dictionary entries and a chart calling itself ‘Choreographic System, Eidos: Telos, Part 1’ (bold in original). Also included are extracts from three literary works: Matter and Memory (Bergson, 1991, original 1896); The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony (Calasso, 1994); The Living Gods of Haiti (Deren, 1970, original 1953). The titles alone could be seen as individually curious (in context), and a curious mixture.

Yet though the Frankfurt programme might seem to promise explanation, there is little ostensibly that is able to be interpreted in a direct relationship with the performance. A viewer searching for enlightenment about how to ‘read’ the title, would encounter explanatory entries for ‘eidos’ and ‘telos’ and a host of related words as well that, rather than narrowing the scope, expanded it. To me it suggested a possible relationship to the performance text as a perceptual basis through which to look, not only at Eidos:Telos, but at dance performance generally. This can be seen in the following passage:

So what did they want? To be recognized. Every recognition is an awareness of form. Hence in our enfeebled modern vocabulary we might say that the way they imposed themselves was first and foremost aesthetic. But in a sense of the word which, with time, has been lost: the aesthetic of a mesh of powers concentrated in a figure, a body, a voice.


In reading this in advance of the first Eidos:Telos performance I attended, I felt that the point of it was directed at dance’s power to communicate, and to extend that communication beyond what can easily be articulated. There was perhaps a connection to be made with another
extract that appeared several pages later in which the following observation was made.

There is no perception which is not prolonged into movement ... The training of the senses consists in just the sum of the connections established between the sensory impression and the movement which makes use of it.  


Here was a suggestion of the relationship between seeing and perceiving. *Eidos:Telos* might draw attention to the importance of form, and to what the viewer might be made aware of through it. It might be a form whose meaning could not easily be encapsulated in language, but could be perceived through the bigger perspective of form relatable in the Platonic sense to birth. If eidos is seen as form coming into being, then the obvious connection to make with telos is to regard its relationship with the purpose of life. These are big themes for dance to tackle.

Following on, several pages after the Calasso and Bergson extracts, were dictionary-style definitions for *eidos* and its derivatives (*eidolon, eidetik* and *eidophor*). These can be read *through* what had already been seen in the earlier entries.

**Eidos** [Greek *eidos*: something seen; form; akin to]: The formal content of a culture, encompassing its system of ideas, criteria for interpreting experience, etc. Form, Plato's term, the permanent reality that makes a thing what it is, in contrast to the particulars that are finite and subject to change.  

Ballett Frankfurt, 1998:15

So eidos could begin to be envisaged through the Calasso/Bergson discourse on form and perception, and through the attention drawn to the metonymic aspect of Platonic form. This proposes that physical form should be looked at through a wide focus – which is perhaps a clue relative to looking at *Eidos:Telos*. The programme notes are not content to rest with this one entry, but continue to offer definitions for: *Eidolon, Eidoloclast, Eidograph, Eidouranion, Eidetic* and *Eidetic Reduction*. *Eidolon* had already been pointed to as the ‘mental image’ lying behind
‘the idol, the statue, the simulacrum, the phantom’, and shown through mythological connections (Calasso, cited in Ballett Frankfurt, 1998:11). This might be taken as a sign pointing to the place of imagery in Eidos:Telos,

It is likely that the reader of the programme will be alerted to familiar names. I noticed references to Helen, Odysseus, Hades and Persephone, and to phrases such as, ‘the ranks of the dead appeared to Odysseus in Hades as a throng of women’ (Calasso in Ballett Frankfurt, 1998:21). Helen was referred to as ‘the embodiment of ... beauty hatched from the egg of necessity’ (ibid). Of Persephone, who travelled the earth and the underworld, it was said that she ‘seems to have controlled the activities of the spirits of the dead’ (unattributed, Ballett Frankfurt, 1998:29). In performance I looked for Helen, Odysseus, Hades and Persephone but, needless to say, did not ‘find’ them in any sense that might have been interpreted as representational. But if Helen was not a visible figure, then perhaps aspects of embodied beauty were to be seen in the dance, and the waltzing dancers in Act 2 were (as already suggested) ‘the ranks of the dead’. Perhaps this same act’s technological effects of sound and light were meant to be interpreted as the flight of Persephone between heaven and earth. Perhaps a reason for the programme including the following extract was tied to an idea about seeing from different positions:

the sun-door and the tree-root are the same thing in the same place, seen now from below and now from above and named, by the seer, for the moment of seeing.

Deren, cited in Ballett Frankfurt, 1998, 9

The sun in Greek mythology is linked to the identity of Apollo, and Apollo comes to attention in the programme, and a double page spread of music notation, with four bars of Stravinsky’s score for Apollon musagète (1928) appearing opposite 22 bars of Willems’s score for Act I of Eidos:Telos (1995). Because the Stravinsky notation was positioned at the start of the programme, and because it was a direct quotation (rather than a reference to something), there was reason to expect that the music would also in some way be linked to the ballet Apollon musagète.
The programme, it seemed, was positioning a framework for looking at the performance through metaphor and imagery. There was some sense emerging of the possibility of discovering relationships, and if there was a relationship with Apollo, then what needed to be anticipated was in terms not only of the form of eidos but the purpose of telos. The programme offered the following clues:

**Telos** (n.) [Greek]: end, purpose, ultimate object or aim. Also: perfection, completion, death.

**Teleology** (n.) [from the Greek telos, limit, end + logos, reason, science]: explanation by reference to some purpose or end. Aristotle’s account of teleology was that a full explanation of anything must consider the material, the formal, and the efficient causes, and the final cause – the purpose for which the thing exists or was produced.

Ballet Frankfurt, 1998:34-35

As with ‘eidos’, ‘telos’ and ‘teleology’ could be taken as referring to a philosophy of dance, and to relationships between seeing and experiencing. Again the point could be related to through another quotation, this time about how sense stimuli are communicated:

Our nervous system is evidently arranged with a view to the building up of motor apparatus linked, through the intermediary of centers [sic], with sense stimuli; the discontinuity of the nervous elements, the multiplicity of their terminal branches, which are probably capable of joining in various ways, make possible an unlimited number of connections between impressions and the corresponding movements.

Bergson, cited in Ballet Frankfurt, 1998: 15

This passage returns to the link between movement, perception and recognition, which can be referred back to the first Calasso quotation about ‘recognition of form’. Perhaps the programme was looking at how it was that Calasso and Bergson could share such connections, given the different periods in which they were writing, and in doing so looking at the implications for dance. The reader is left to tease out connections from this in relation to what is revealed in performance, or to ignore them.
The programme also named Act 1 as *Self meant to govern* (the original title from 1994). It is not a title that is advertised in advance of performances of *Eidos:Telos*, and only encountered in the programme. But it is worth considering whether it can be found to have significance. *Self meant to govern* is a phrase that occurs several times in Calasso (1994), though not in any of the quotations that appear in the programme. The only interpretation that I could find relates it in some way to the activity in Act 1, or *Self* as it will now be referred to. It could be seen as a message about the responsibility vested in the dancers. I arrived at this through encountering the following passage:

> the capacity for control ... the ability to dominate oneself, to govern things, the sharpness of the eye, the sober choice of the means to achieve an end – all these things detach the mind from those powers that came before Athena, give us the impression of using them without being used by them.  
> Calasso, 1994:230

Possibly this is a message to the dancers about how to become detached enough in performance to surrender individuality to the challenge of improvisation. It is a passage that can be seen also to link the sharpness of the dancerly eye to the eye of criticism, perhaps sending out a message to the critic about the importance of detached seeing.

### 6.3 Receiver response

In focusing on receiver response, it is worth reflecting on the kind of influences exerted by the messenger texts functioning as persuasion. Reviewers who regularly write about dance and theatre would possibly only respond sub-consciously to messages in the title, and would expect to watch *Eidos:Telos* as a matter of course as part of their regular responsibilities, though presupposition might surface in their reviews. Dance critics with their more specialist approach would base their decision to attend on direct or indirect knowledge of Forsythe’s other work for the Ballett Frankfurt. A handful of critics would be drawn more or less automatically to any new Forsythe work.
Without carrying out an analytical survey, knowledge of audience response to *Eidos:Telos* is only available empirically, and in the immediacy of support that can be witnessed at a performance (a point endorsed by De Marinis, 1993). What I observed from audiences at *Eidos:Telos* is that Act 1 has usually produced modest applause. After Act 2, applause tends to be louder and more enthusiastic, as if those who watch have been held by what they saw; but the enthusiasm is tempered, doubtless by a sense that what has been conveyed cannot be satisfactorily interpreted. In the final minutes of Act 3, the ensemble dancing intensifies as live and computer generated music combine into an amplified crescendo. This swelling of both the visual and the aural affects audiences releasing, at curtain fall, a torrent of clapping and cheering. In comparing Frankfurt with Paris and New York audiences, it seemed that the enthusiasm was most vociferous in the choreographer’s home city. These were not audiences apparently cheering with pride at their compatriot’s return for, so far as could be seen, they were attuned to the moment of theatrical impact.

They had laughed delightedly at the moment in Act 1 where a male dancer incongruously sat down and ‘stuffed’ his legs under the flooring, so that for a moment he was visible only from the torso upwards. Possibly that laughter signalled relief at the light-hearted respite after the overall seriousness of tone. During Act 2, they had also laughed when the man started shouting verbal obscenities. It was evident that jokes in the local vernacular (for example: ‘I’m going to tear up your metro card’) were relished.10 By the end of Act 3, loud cheers and extended applause suggested unbounded enthusiasm.

While it was not possible to observe reaction in different parts of the auditorium, in New York I was aware of people departing in protest during the Waltz scene of Act 2, shocked at what they heard in the scatological text. Usually too a few people exited during Act 3 - presumably because they felt alienated by its relentless barrage of movement.
Returning to the semiotic text, in the eyes of those who left, the performance had ended without achieving completion or textualisation. The act of 'staying the course' could be seen as an acknowledgement of completion, and those who stood and cheered were demonstrating recognition of cohesion. What was recognised as cohesive would be attributed to many different things, but could be seen most particularly through the cumulative impact of the performance. It could be argued that the climax of Act 3 might in itself have provoked the enthusiastic response, but the impression I had from listening to conversations afterward, and looking at 'body language' was that it was the cumulative effect of all three acts that had thrilled them with its power. It was this that brought the immediacy of response.

Criticism is not immediate but rationalised, as can be seen by surveying the response to *Eidos:Telos*. Boxberger, writing in the specialist publication *Ballet International*, responds through notions of metaphor.

> Two key concepts of Greek philosophy set in relationship to each other, that of giving a form to something and of bringing it to completion ... Becoming and Dying are the threads of a piece in which technology and theatre, reality and myth, autonomy and entanglement hang together in a web of complexities.

> Boxberger, 1995:20

It may be that she found concepts within the performance that led her to discover 'Becoming and Dying'. It may be that her response to Platonic form was directed by clues pieced together from the title and programme, that enabled her to bring a particular perspective in her looking. She produced an argument for cohesiveness, finding that no matter how different,

> the three parts of the piece appear, they are bound together with an internal logic that drives the material hither and thither and thus creates its own causality.

> Boxberger, 1995:20
Her summarizing 'hither and thither' has a double application, serving to provide an analytic metaphor and at the same time a metaphoric suggestion of activity. Referring to the Act 1, she found suggestions of secret orders from which they draw their visible stimuli, the dancers come together and glide into solos and duets, creating images of changeability, growth, rest, remembrance and continuation.

Boxberger, 1995:20

Possibly the idea of secret orders stemmed from evidence in the programme of a *Choreographic System*. Capitalised words were displayed in boxes and linked by directional arrows, as follows:

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LETTER/IMAGE/CHAIN OF ASSOCIATIONS/WORD/ ASSIGN MOVEMENT TO WORD/PERFORM LETTER/ ISOMETRIES OF LETTER/OR OF UNIVERSAL MVT./ RANDOM LETTER ACCESS BY PROXIMITY/SPELL NEW LETTER WORD, CONT ON TO NEW LETTER/RANDOM ACCESS BY PROXIMITY/FURTHER MODIFYING/ANALYTICAL OPERATIONS/SPELL ANY OBSERVED PHENOMENA, OPERATIONS ON LETTER MOVEMENT/ CONTAMINATE WITH NON-ALPHABETIC MATERIAL/ CONTAMINATE NEW MAT. WITH ALPHABET/ SPELL NEW MVT/ LETTERS OF WORD.
Ballett Frankfurt, 1998:41
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While something of the overall idea of the kind of tasks that were associated with the *Eidos:Telos* systems can be gained from this, much is locked into coding that cannot be understood without insider knowledge. The system does, however, set up ideas about external tasks. But, as Boxberger saw, writing retrospectively about the metaphor of executing the dance, these tasks were part of a bigger idea, for

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the dancers and also the dance find themselves caught: between the known and the unknown, what's past and what's to come.
Boxberger, 1995:20
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It was as if she felt the dance had not delivered itself into the present, as if *Eidos:Telos* was a promise of something yet to come. Her approach
through metaphor was helpful in presenting conceptual ideas as a framework for seeing. But it was at the expense of description, for she never disclosed how it was that 'Becoming and Dying' were revealed, or were able to be sensed from watching *Eidos:Telos.*"

Kisselgoff also found evidence of conceptual magnitude, observing 'a leitmotif of death and birth' and an intense rage against death' (1998:1). She did not, however, explain what led her to these findings apart, that is, from returning briefly to her familiar theme that 'much of Mr. Forsythe’s work is about order and disorder' (ibid). Her reader could expect to find work that deals in formal organisation that is either about order or disorder. But having set this idea up, Kisselgoff seems to contradict herself in a comment through which she adjudges *Eidos:Telos* to be 'uneven'. Unevenness in relation to a work whose acknowledged 'aboutness' involves disorder is an odd juxtaposition. The reader is caused to wonder about the means by which the judgement can be arrived at, and what it is that the work conveys that makes unevenness such a bad thing. She then makes a comment that is even more confusing, and undoubtedly based on what she expects to find in dance generally:

concept has it over choreography in this evening-long piece, but organised chaos, indisputably, reigns at the close.

Kisselgoff, 1995:n pn

What the critic understands from the term choreography, and how choreography can be seen as separate from concept, are thoughts that hold the attention. Indeed, all Kisselgoff's findings are relatable to what she expects in the way of order, as can be seen in her remarks that *Eidos:Telos* 'suffers from an overload of ideas ... and the choreography has little of the expected richness' (ibid). As opinionated findings, 'overloaded ideas' and 'expected richesses' are judged against something else (in the critic's mind). Scholl, who looked at *Eidos:Telos* from a viewpoint similar to Kisselgoff's came to an even more puzzling
conclusion, arguing that 'in *Eidos:Telos* there is virtually no choreography (organized movement) to speak of' (Scholl, 1995:14). He seems to be suggesting that choreography is nothing more than organized movement and is divorced of all conceptual connections. He goes on to say:

the ballet has something for everyone but those who came to see dancing. It makes a pass at every “ism” of our century, stopping short of the formalism that might have saved it. It is longest on pretension.

Scholl, 1995:14

If he fails to see the formal investigation into dance that is the main feature of Acts 1 and 3, and if he cannot even see the waltz section of Act 2, then it is clear that he had expected something quite different from *Eidos:Telos*, and that his attention was drawn to what was not there. It is plain that, despite Forsythe’s boundary-breaking experimentation, critics still find it necessary to frame the object of criticism through what history has taught them about dance. Act 3 evokes the following response from a French critic who, acknowledging the difficulties of this act, finds impact in the physical presence of the dancers and a curious idea of ‘homogeneity’:

"la force de cette dernière partie est la présence sur scène de toute la compagnie, qui confère une vraie homogénéité à ce tableau."

Ruegger, 1995:npn

(The impact of this last act comes from the presence on stage of the entire company, who confer a real sense of homogeneity in this tableau.) It is hard to understand how homogeneity was seen. Certainly it is not suggested in the following passage which also refers to Act 3, and its closing minutes, where

a miked cord suspended across the stage gradually comes to act as a magnet for the dancers, who approach and retreat from each side, while an ever-changing series of solos, duos, and trios proliferates on the margins. Drawing squiggles and angles
in the air with their bodies, the dancers mesh in and out of complex arrangements, like individual atoms creating fleeting forms of new matter.

Sulcas, 1995c:106

This passage combines to give a reader a sense of structure, an indication of what the movement looked like and, through using everyday words such as 'squiggles' and 'angles', an understanding that the stage was filled with different activity. Sulcas goes on to discover reasons for the title, seeing in

the final, haunting image of human frailty ... a world that is larger, richer, more mysterious, and more frightening than we allow ourselves to imagine points to the two poles of the title. If eidos is the essential, necessary form of something, and telos is its end or purpose, one of Forsythe's achievements in this work is to show how fragile are the boundaries between contingency and completion, and how both elements can coexist in every moment of the dance.

Sulcas, 1995:106

There is a sense of Sulcas's engagement with the work itself, and of how she has worked to rationalise Eidos:Telos in her own terms. Through encountering this other 'world' she has woven titular and programme philosophies into her critical looking.

6.4 Summary

The above quotations were selected from a mixture of reviews for a general readership and criticism for a specialised readership. The specialised writings were all relatively short (taking up at most less than two pages of the publication), and emphasised the interpretative metaphor at the expense of descriptive evidence about the movement. This leaves a gap in understanding, for the reader of criticism needs to be able to envisage not just metaphor as a framework for seeing, but something of what supports the metaphor, and in particular what the dance looked like, or may have looked like according to critical interpretation. Without it important elements are overlooked.
In looking at both audience and critical response to *Eidos:Telos* what was seen was not just that prior texts condition seeing, but that expectation which is initially positive can shift rapidly into negativity, as demonstrated by audience departures and critical dismissals. Whether the objections were directed at the material of the dance, the obscenity of the language, or the programme's contents, the protest was a barrier to seeing. What had been anticipated was that beliefs would be reinforced, not confronted. This was recognised by those viewers who rose spontaneously to their feet at curtain fall. The messages that they had taken to the performance had worked perceptively allowing openings to new experiences. The actions showed that their feelings were affected, and that whatever had been found to be irrational was swept aside by the power of the performance.

They had recognised in *Eidos:Telos* an uncontainable world, or a Forsythescape that could not be collected together into a neat summarising statement. They would no doubt recognise that the programme offered itself as both a work to be held in the hand, and a text or a discursive field (Barthes, 1977) that could be returned to for further discoveries about the ephemeral dance performance. A critical response to the performance that returned to the issue of the programme, and asked, ‘but to what end?’ (Scholl, 1995:14), revealed precisely what the critic had failed to grasp. There is no end.

**Notes**

1. Because marketing is also an intertextual pointer, it is worth mentioning that in 1998 *Eidos:Telos* as a title was displayed on boards outside the Opernhaus in Frankfurt, but in the context of other seasonal titles, and not in any way that drew attention to itself. It was also announced in the regular marketing brochure that is shared by opera and drama companies appearing at the Opernhaus, but again it was not given any marketing emphasis. In Paris, it was advertised as part of the Ballett Frankfurt’s season of three different programmes.

2. Personal communication (June 1998).

3. In the event connections could perhaps be made with occasional moments in *Eidos:Telos*’s Act I.


5. It is generally the presenting theatre that directs the style and scope of a programme, not the visiting company.

I have only seen the March 1998 programme, but am told that the original 1995 programmes were similarly styled.

Partridge in his etymological dictionary positions *eidetic; eidolon* – under the entry for *idea*, pointing to kinship with 'that which is seen, hence the form or shape, hence a figure; whereas its dim, *eidolon* an image in the mind, hence a physical image, hence an idol, is retained in erudite E, its derivative adj *eidetkios* becomes E *eidetic*, esp in Psy' (Partridge, 1990: 303-2). Eidos is generally more easily located in dictionaries than telos, for which the printed programme includes just two entries (in both German and English).

1995 is the date published in the programme against Willems’s score, suggesting that Willems may have revised his 1994 score for Act 1 of *Eidos:Telos*.

Vernacular variations are introduced to take account of the city in which the performance is given.

Boxberger’s piece is compressed into four medium-sized paragraphs – though whether this was her choice or her editor’s is not revealed. The point is relevant in trying to consider whether these four paragraphs forced the critic into a compromise situation, or whether she felt she had communicated what she wanted to say in such a short space.
CHAPTER 7

The architexts of Eidos:Telos

7.1 Introduction
7.2 Apollonian connective
7.3 Spider's web
7.4 Balanchian-Bauschian-Forsythian waltz
7.5 Aesthetic text
7.6 Summary
Notes

Absent textual traces exert a force. One of the difficulties in watching Eidos:Telos is the use it makes of different texts, and the continuing play of allusion, reference, resemblance and so on that is part of the experience. In considering how these forces might be shaped as intertextual criticism, Genette's notion of the architext (Worton and Still, 1990:22) suggests itself as a metaphor for collecting texts and intertexts. Architexts are creative structures that take account of structural design and creator initiatives. The 'architext' is used in this chapter as a metaphor for bringing together ideas from the literature on text and textuality and aspects of Forsythe's work, with its emphasis on architectural and textural structures. It is because Eidos:Telos has been positioned as a text that it is possible to introduce the concept of the architext.

This chapter identifies four architexts, and examines them for evidence of intertextual relationships. The intention is to show how intertextuality can bring a useful perspective to seeing Eidos:Telos, a text that is always complex, and frequently obscure.

7.1 Introduction

In working with the concept of the architext, and bringing together collective findings from Eidos:Telos, four architexts present themselves - not directly, but to my personal experience, and through the way I chose to bring together many different textual strands. I have called these architexts: Apollonian connective, Spider's web, Balanchian-Bauschian-Forsythian waltz and Aesthetic text, and can account for them in the following ways. Apollo announces itself through the musical quotation in the printed programme, and is connected to by music played in Act 1. The Spider's web is a metaphor suggesting itself both through specific
references made to a spider (but enigmatically and obscurely) during the spoken monologue in Act 2, and through the geometry of wires that makes the design prominent not just in this act, but in all three acts. The waltz that also features in Act 2 is recognisable as a familiar type of dance, and seems to carry echoes not only of the choreography of Forsythe, but of Balanchine and Bausch as well. If Balanchine and Bausch are seen to influence Forsythe, then what is suggested by this architext is evidently paradoxical, for their choreographic values are completely different. Because the architexts so far have concentrated on Acts 1 and 2, the Aesthetic text focuses on Act 3, and points to particular modes of seeing. But it is no surprise to find that what is discovered in this act is seen to have relationships with the other acts. It is for this reason that the Aesthetic text, like the Apollonian connective, the Spider's web and the Balanchinean-Bauschian-Forsythian waltz can be presented as architexts.

Every architext is an interpretation, and the four reveal themselves very differently. The approach in each section locates them first through context and through analytical description (expanding, where necessary, on Chapter 5), before moving on to look at what is revealed intertextually. What will be seen is how description and intertextual analysis become intertwined.

7.2 Apollonian connective

It is the programme's inclusion of four bars of musical notation from Stravinsky's Apollon musagète that at the start of Eidos:Telos leads the viewer to expect to make a connection with the ballet Apollo (1928). What is continually asked but never answered in The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony is, 'where did it all begin?' (Calasso, 1994:3). The question is intended to throw light on histories that have been wiped away by time, suggesting that wherever knowledge is encountered, its beginnings cannot be accounted for. Though the quotation does not appear in the Eidos:Telos programme, there is the possibility that since it was in a text that was key to Eidos:Telos's creation, its influence filtered
through. Forsythe and his team might have looked at *Apollo* and asked, ‘where did it all begin?’ The question can be applied to *Self*, and to what is recognisable in it.

By the time the curtain rises on the first act of *Eidos:Telos*, some of the audience will have seen the four bars of musical notation from Stravinsky’s *Apollon musagète* in the programme, and be expecting to make connections with the Stravinsky/Balanchine *Apollo*.

The notation suggests itself as a sign, a pointer to what is to follow. The first obvious connection that can be picked up is in the music of *Eidos:Telos*’s first act, where 30 bars of the Stravinsky score are threaded into Willems’s score and can be heard as melodic and rhythmic references. It serves as a trigger to memory, yet the 1928 *Apollo* that appears to be recognisable in *Eidos:Telos* is not seen because of any direct representation, but through a ghostly echo that never emerges into the present. The ghost as it continues to hover over Act 1, induces longing for a return to the past to fulfil the memory. But the longing is frustrated. 'But where did it all begin?' (ibid.) and, to take a lead from Calasso’s rhetoric, what is encountered in the performance experience through this memory trigger?

In order to trace the argument for the *Apollonian connective* it is necessary to set the scene, and to reintroduce some points made earlier in Chapter 5. The curtain for *Self* rises on a tableau, with the six dancers and violinist variously positioned on stage. A man who stands left of centre, face-on to the audience, breaks the stillness by walking forward. His few successive steps are brisk and rhythmic; the music played by the violinist is similarly brisk and rhythmic. The movement - a matter of about eleven steps, though the number varies - may be forgotten in the light of the activity that follows.

The first action by a dancer in a full-length ballet could be expected to make some kind of statement, for the moment is of course prominent in
terms of theatrical positioning. It is also purposeful, in that it moves the man from one position to another, and progresses to a relationship that enables a movement from the Alphabet to be executed together with another man. But it is also anti-climactic in its ordinariness, at least in terms of what might be expected from a company called the Ballett Frankfurt. As other dancers begin to move, the first man is absorbed into the rhythms and patterns of the dance.

Fragmented rhythms, inverted harmonies and snatches of melody played by the violinist on stage in Self, plant memories of Apollo in the mind, and what is heard summons visual imagery. It makes Self rather like a jigsaw puzzle, for which the viewer hearing one piece of aural evidence is compelled to keep searching for the missing visual pieces. Apollo's choreography is, however, never revealed by Self in any way that might be recognisable as, for example, a direct quotation. The resonant sound of the music makes it impossible to let go of the idea of Apollo. But Apollo is not present. Perhaps it is alluded to so subtly that it is seen because it cannot be separated from the convention of seeing 20th century ballet. Perhaps it is experienced as metakinesis, or the invisible transfer of movement travelling from interpreter to the emotion and senses of the viewer (Martin, 1989a).

Midway through the act the dancing rhythm of the man who made the opening walks comes into another kind of contact with the violin music. The violinist seems to have become devil's advocate, his fast and furious playing driving the man into a dance of frenetic instability (or loss of uprightness) It is a moment of mini-drama emphasising relationships between music and dance, musician, dancer and the power of the rhythmic drive. The expression on the dancer's face suggests both infiruation, and enjoyment at being pushed to physical action. The interaction and the insistent relationship in which dance and music find themselves, with the music appearing to drive the dance, is antagonistic. The dancer marches to the violinist (who by then has dropped to his knees) and makes a game of trying to stop him playing by snatching at
his bow. The violinist plays on wildly, and the game makes a tactical shift. The man plants a kiss on the violinist’s head, and the music quietens. The man walks away, as a woman walks over to the violinist to become the beneficiary of this changed mood.

The woman silently takes hold of the violinist’s shoulder, as if he were her dancing partner, and engages in a supported adagio sequence of *developpés* and *arabesques*. As the violinist plays slowly and gently, it becomes apparent that music and dance have arrived in harmony together, so that they seem to ebb and flow on a single breath. It is at this moment that the actual dancing takes on qualities that relate to *Apollo*.

At every performance, I am profoundly affected by this moment of harmony for it seems to capture, as nowhere else in *Eidos:Telos*, the *Apollo* connection that I had been led to search for. The memory of the Balanchine/Stravinsky *Apollo* is made to feel intensely precious because it is a denied presence. I long to return to the full memory, which in absence has connected so deeply into my being, but recognise that in the Forsythe oeuvre neither nostalgia nor sentiment has a part to play.

Diary, 1998

The woman’s adagio has provided a moment of recognition, a remembrance of *Apollo* as a symbol. Her movement brings to mind a phrase in which the impression created by Terpsichore in *Apollo* was pinpointed in the comment, ‘her whole body is coordinated to beauty’ (Balanchine, Mason, 1984: 25). But the mood is soon broken by the woman who, with an air of defiance, changes the emphasis by marching away from the violinist to flick on a metronome positioned at the front of the stage. Its pulse is fast, and this is picked up by both dance and music which become livelier and more emphatic, or closer to characteristics conventionally thought of as Dionysian.

As if enraptured by the change of pace, the dance becomes vigorous and pulsating. The movement takes on a fractured quality; phrases start and stop abruptly – akin to thoughts half spoken. There are suggestions of balletic courtliness in baroque-styled bows, but as hips are released and the upper
body folds forwards ballet’s verticality and contrary tensions are undermined.

Diary, 1998

Within the reference to ‘courtliness’ behavioural suggestions are lurking, a sense of Psyche inhabiting the movement, as indicated in an other observation by Calasso. Apollo, who in Greek mythology was the god of light and youth (and sometimes identified with the sun), also had a darker, warrior-like side. As Calasso interpreted it, referring to Dionysus and Apollo:

one is the weapon, the other uses the weapon. Ever since they appeared, Psyche has been running back and forth into the arms of first one, then the other.

Calasso, 1994:208

This too is a quotation from *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* (Calasso, 1994) that was not included in the *Eidos:Telos* programme, but may have served as a creative thread. The baroque-style is expected of conventional ballet, and might be seen in a relationship with Apollonian grace and elegance, but only as one aspect of Apollo. The other reveals itself through subversion, through a fracturing of the movement, by the deconstruction of the rules of historic form. The idea of fracture is relative to wholeness, and in this instance to Apollo (the God) as a unified whole.

The Apollo summoned into Self recalls authors, genre and a work of seminal importance, for Apollo is synonymous with a fixed point in 20th century dance. It is a moment of definition in the art of neo-classicism. It is an authority, an origin. But it is not presented as either an authority or an origin, and it is possible to watch *Eidos:Telos* and remain unaware of the hovering Apollo. I observe:

the dances are not ostensibly Apollonian, but something about their theatricalisation causes thoughts of the muses. When for example four dancers descend on to one knee and open their arms
out out above their had, I imagine these are the muses paying homage to an invisible *Apollo*.

Diary, 1998

It is through shuttling between texts, that evidence of intertextual connectives begins to build. The Balanchine *Apollo* is an interpretation of myth absorbed into a system of classical ideals, and shaped into sparse, restrained neo-classic form. The ballet has a prologue in which Leto is depicted giving birth to *Apollo*, but in the main ballet that follows it is the form that is paramount. Though the dancers are identified (in the programme) as Apollo and three of the muses, Terpsichore, Calliope and Polyhymnia, their characters are symbolised through the dance itself, and not by gesture or reference. However, four objects - a lute, a lyre, a tablet and a mask - underline this symbolism. Apollo himself is personified as a virile male whose half-naked body glows under white lighting that gives him a godlike appearance. He is presented as idealised manhood.

This compares with Forsythe's *Self* in which there are no named characters nor is there a godlike hero. The six dancers are equals, and if one comes briefly to prominence it is usually because the movement claims viewer attention in the face of activity continuing elsewhere. Forsythe also works with objects, but where Balanchine's objects are tools of art, Forsythe’s are tools of time.

Time is suggested by the on-stage objects that from a distance look like plates but from close proximity can be seen to resemble clocks - though with letters and not numbers on their faces. As the hands move round dials within structured time, coded messages are conveyed to the dancers. Where audiences for *Apollo* are able to 'read' the message encoded in the lute and the ballet's context, audiences for *Self* are given no means of deciphering the 'clocks'. Things are different when the metronome at the front of the stage is activated by a dancer, for the sound is amplified and is heard by all, and the dance visibly changes from slow to fast. The metronome underlines theatricalised time, and the urgency of executing movement that must start and finish according to the dictates of pulse.
This is in contrast to the electronic display of numbers at the back of the stage that monitors the passing minutes, as if silently commenting on the passing of life.

If aspects of time, rhythm, metre and pulse are examined in *Apollo* and *Self*, then it is clear that theatricalised time is important to both ballets. But where the dances of *Apollo* are seen to divide into sections with clear demarcation of starting and finishing points, it is not possible to separate *Self* into different dances. For theatricalised time is shown (by the indexical numbers) to be ruled by real time, and part of an on-going process. *Self* also draws attention to the processing of music on-stage through dancerly activity. The dancers pluck one of the wires stretched across the stage, and the resulting sound resonates through space. Forsythe sees this as a moment when the entire stage becomes like a 'huge lyre' (in Driver, 2000: 52). His lyre therefore becomes the property of all the dancers, whereas for Balanchine it was a gift presented by *Apollo* to Terpsichore, as goddess of the dance.

*Self* reveals no privileged zones on stage; nor does it attempt to define the movement through Balanchine's geometric symmetry. It shows, however, creative (and interpretative) absorption in aspects of the wider Balanchinean text, in the spatial breadth of arabesques and the shooting extensions of the *pas de chats*, for example. It is not just space, speed and virtuosity that spell Balanchine, but also the particular lift in the arms, the steely length extending across the broadened back and from shoulder to elbow. No other school of ballet presents grandeur in the body with quite the same driving energy.

*Self* features a recurring phrase in which the dancers link into a horizontal line and move from side to side, through a sequence made up of a small *développé* on a rise, a *glissade* and *pas de bourée*, with the extended legs flicking out to the side and then folding back again. It is a ballet sequence with a difference, the movements are not precise and finished but continuous. Arms, moreover, are not held out to indicate space around
the body but, with the flicking leg, bend into the body. Because this sequence can be identified as a motif, every time it is executed it feels significant, as if particular meaning is to be read into it.

What comes into my mind through watching the motif is not Apollo but a moment in the second act of Giselle (1841), where in a sequence of repeated movements starting with a sustained développé on a relevé that creates an arc of movement, the sorrowing Giselle and Albrecht cross from side to side of the stage and back again. What I recognise is not an exact transfer of movement or mood from Giselle into Self, but an imprecise echo of shape, pattern and sound. The connection is underlined by a phrase in Willems's music that sounds like a tiny refrain in Adam’s music, coming from a note sustained across an arc of sound, before its release into two dotted notes.

When the hovering Apollo and Giselle are looked at associatively with the gloomily lit stage on which Self is played out, it begins to seem as though Self is conveying something about death and loss. It is an idea that can be connected in three ways: first, with the Apollo ‘whose theme is creativity itself’ (Taper, 1987:99); second, with the high-energy dancing in Self that, if it can be said to be about anything, might be seen as a declaration of life; third, with the concept of eidos as Platonic form coming into being, and with telos as an ending, or death.

There is another link discernible, for in holding on to the idea of Apollo, and failing to find it, but continuing to be aware of the connectives, a different Balanchine-Stravinsky work/text comes to mind: Agon. This 1957 ballet, formalist, abstract, neo-classical, is concerned with the place of power in relationships. The relationships in Self frequently suggest power-play, physical authority and combat. It can be seen when two men fleetingly contest each other’s strength and dexterity. They are so different in build that the power expressed in their bodies, in fast, directional-changing, keen-edged movement feels as if the moment arises directly from the encounter and not, as so often in dance, as ritualised
learning. The two men improvise, and what is sensed as combative suggests itself not only as part of the theatrical character of the piece but that it may have something extra to do with a more realistic competitive streak between them as colleagues. What is suggested combatively differs from performance to performance, and is affected by cast changes. When at other performances a man and a woman replace the two men, they do not seem combative but sympathetic to each other - but their courtly elegance also carries hints of Agon.

Forsythe has claimed that the steps taken by the man who is the first to move at the start of *Self* give *Eidos:Telos* an Apollonian opening. It is seen in the measure and balance of his walk. This is not the Apollo of Balanchine, for the movement and its interpretation is neither heroic nor godlike. Nor is it the Apollo that can be traced back to Louis XIV, through images of the Sun King. Forsythe's Apollonian movement is measured, which is an aspect of the balleticised image, though the image is deconstructed and in the process has become functional and closer to the everyday. I find another link.

Seeing *Eidos:Telos* in New York turns out to be even more useful than anticipated, for it yields many unlooked-for textual connectives. Manhattanites hold themselves upright, with open chests and weight distributed back on their heels. The typical walk is laid back but speedy, as if intent on a purpose. The purposefulness suggested by a combination of body posture, weight distribution and speed is echoed in the dance, except that when the dancer body moves forward the weight is forward on the foot rather than back on the heels. The first action in *Eidos:Telos* resembles, as I now see, the walk of a Manhattanite.

New York Diary, 1998

In summary, it is the relationship between the *Apollo* of the past and the absent *Apollo* of the present. In the absence of the one text, and its hold over the other, there is both desire for the past and reaffirmation of the mysterious power of the dance. The dance has progressed, able to do so because of its history. Through shuttling back and forth between *Apollo* and *Self* the performance can begin to be read intertextually (and this
shuttle underlines the importance of being able to return to the performance again and again). Sights and sounds become the fruits of associative memory, projecting in the imagination back into the past, and enabling the mind to engage in play between texts. The activated memory works with expectation. *Self* lifts the conditioned viewer metaphorically on to the edge of the seat, in further expectation that sight will be matched to sound.¹¹

Forsythe draws attention to the nature of appropriation – and rejection. He produces School of Balanchine and strong connectives to the spirit of *Agon* but not Balanchine's *Apollo*. In his mind the mythical Apollo is present, but as a deconstruction of Balanchine's that takes him closer to the mythical past and the contemporary present.

### 7.3 Spider's web

This section looks at the first part of Act 2 in which multiple texts are introduced through signifying systems that range across language, dance, movement, music, sound, lighting, design and computer technology and incorporate concepts from mythology, nature and culture. If *Self* emphasised formal movement structures, this act weaves a complicated web of connectives. It contains elements of representation and narrative, but what is represented is only a fragment, and the narrative sequencing is non-linear. At one moment it is possible to identify themes and metanarratives, and at the next it seems that words and movement are devices for creating atmosphere. This produces a conundrum for a viewer seeking to make sense of what is seen. Before looking at the spider's web, something of the imagery that emerges from the act is described, extending the discussion in Chapter 5.

As the curtain goes up, a complex stage set is glimpsed through darkened lighting and geometric wires, and the impression created is of isolation and distance from everyday life. Out of the shadowy upstage darkness the figure of a lone woman (Dana Caspersen) comes gradually into sight. Walking slowly and purposefully, she moves to centre stage to utter
strange words: ‘this is a spiders voice, then this voice is a spiders [sic]’, Caspersen (1995). Because the words are unexpected, they colour what is seen in this act. Spiders are alien to dance.

Caspersen, her voice clear and resonant, starts speaking from the back of the stage, gradually emerging out of the shadows. It is some while before she is distinguishable as a small woman with short blonde hair dressed in ankle-length skirt of orange velvet, and with a bustle that the light continually catches. Her upper body is naked, so the image she presents is significant. Perhaps the bared breasts and the long skirt are intended to make her appear matriarchal, a woman who has control over something. However, the woman seems to owe her identity to several different texts. What is all the more confusing is her connection to the spider.

Spiders are objects of derision and fear, perhaps because of their form or because the way they either creep or scuttle across surfaces. Some breeds of spider are poisonous. The ‘tarantella’ dance was inspired by the antics of people ridding themselves of poison on being bitten by a tarantula. In Eidos: Telos there is no resemblance in words, movements or gestures to a tarantula. The woman’s movements are slow, though the measured tones of her voice increase, becoming louder and more frenetic.

The opening lines of the monologue set the spider up as a continuing image, blurring the division between speaker and spider’s voice; later the separation proposed by the word ‘this’ (as in ‘this is a spider’s voice) has been replaced by the personal pronoun that does away with division, ‘I come up with this weaving heart’ (italic added). But the play is over the identity and the relationship of the speaker/dancer with the symbolic spider.

But she is not always concerned with spiders, and in a beguiling tone, Caspersen announces: ‘I must attend now to the clouds’. As she speaks, she catches hold of a cord attached to a white square of material that hangs from one of the wires, and pulls the white square along it. The
inference in her words and actions is clear. She wants the sheet of material to be seen as part of the natural world, over which she has authority.

At another moment, she seems to be in the agony of childbirth, and while her contractions are a recognisable symbol of birth-giving as a life-threatening force, there is no reason to suggest why her ‘character’ might be suddenly giving birth. She might be seen as an archetypal woman in whom an unseen aggressor has planted in her womb the seed of continuity. Yet perhaps the image is not to be read as childbirth, but something more closely connected to the dirt and dark and the need to be separated from it. In the programme’s reference to Persephone, ‘goddess of the Underworld’ and Demeter, her mother ‘who looked for her all over the world, after she had been captured by Hades’ (Ballet Frankfurt, 1998:29), the idea of their separation is linked to pain and suffering. Later, she picks up lengths of what looks like folded yellow cellophane – actually about 50 yards of lighting gel (Forsythe in Driver, 2000:44) – scrunches it up and ‘stuffs’ it into the frame of the large black lamp that is positioned as part of the stage design. The sound of this ‘scrunching’ is amplified, and the colour of the gel intensified by the lighting. The image is of fire, and the raging of sound and light points to hell fire.

If the image of the spider is taken to be a continuing progression in a production that does not necessarily respond to interpretative logic, then some lines later, there is a suggestion that the woman has metamorphosed into a ‘spiderly oneness’. She says:

\[
\text{together from under, I come up with this weaving heart.}
\text{My eyes lift and drop}
\text{and I look again,}
\text{and I see with these eyes}
\text{Caspersen, 1998}
\]

The contextualisation of this spider (the spider is alluded to as ‘she’, and at times as ‘I’) and her thoughts makes it stranger still. It is evident that the text is rooted in symbolism, the spider after all is not presented as a
spider but as a metaphor. But while there is reference from time to time to the 'heart', suggesting a part of the spider symbol that may be capable of caring and feeling, the poem underlines the darkness of alienation, 'I return tasting dirt and salt and dark', Caspersen (1998). This is a line delivered in a rush of freneticism and hysteria, as if the dirt, salt and dark must be eradicated.

This is not the poetry of romantic longing; it is far removed from images of beauty. The line: 'I return tasting dirt and salt and dark' (Caspersen, 1995). can be seen in direct opposition to classical values, and to the Apollonian connective of Act 1. The hysterical delivery, the movement's imbalance and asymmetry, the bared breasts of the woman suggest that the woman's fear has been pushed to the point of psychological disturbance/imbalance. Exactly why the spider woman should be fearful to the point of psychological disturbance/imbalance is not easily accounted for by the context.

Throughout these episodes Caspersen's voice is vibrant, monotonous, piercing. She whispers beguilingly. She becomes matriarchal, her tone implying that she speaks for all women. She grows wild, frantic in speech, then softer with a voice that haunts, as when she refers to 'my spider heart'. At times it is the textured sound that holds attention, for the mass of impressions is too diverse to be fitted to conventional logic. To the viewer the performance text can seem like an assault on the system, since the imagery emanating from the words, movement and delivery (timing, dynamic, intensity) feels significant and yet withholds their meaning. Perhaps there is, after all, a hierarchical code: perhaps it is the style of delivery, the meshing of movement and words, rather than its content, that is delivering the meaning.

One of these relationships is innuendo, for as Caspersen articulates words, so she moves – or, vice versa, the movement precedes the words. Her delivery, and her fragmented sentences that weave in and out of sense and poetry, suggests in part that she is enacting an ancient ritual.
Her action, as when she pulls the symbolic white flag along one of the wires, points to something practised for generations. Her world is dreamlike, or surreal. The spider is a symbol of darkness and of effort, and of killing.

It is through metaphor that the spider's web stretches across a surface, suspended between boundaries. To grasp the wider implications of the expanded text it must become measurable by the conditions of 'a sequence of sentences of utterances "interwoven" structurally and semantically' (Wales, 1990:459). Weaving utterances structurally and semantically, with the horizontal intersected by the vertical, and with the two dimensions linked in their spatial organisation by a complex amalgam of signs - or 'interwoven messages', De Marinis (1993:49) - produces three-dimensional imagery. In this way the text is freed from surface limitations.

In examining different concepts and ideas threaded through the Spider's web, parallels can be found with the literature of the text and attitudes taken to interpretation. As with Barthes's generative text (1990b:64), so there is more to be discovered in the tissue of ideas in Act 2. For it is a text of

perpetual interweaving [and] lost in this tissue – this texture - the subject unmasks himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web.

Barthes, 1990b:64

It begins to seem as though Eidos:Telos might have been designed as a paradigm of intertextuality, both for those whose ideas were woven into it, and for those who watch the performance and find a continuing conundrum and, at the same time, further revelation.

7.3 Balanchinian-Bauschian-Forsythian waltz

There is an enigma pointed to in the title of this section, for Balanchine's neo-classicism, and Bausch's social realism position themselves at
opposite extremes of dance in western theatre. Linking them to Forsythe in this way might also appear curious, given the individuality of each choreographer’s style. The connections develop in Act 2, out of sounds that begin during Caspersen’s monologue, building up the skeletal rhythm of a waltz through distant muffled drum beats. As the sound grows louder, a line of waltzing dancers crosses the stage, and so begins the waltz sequence that dominates the second half of Act 2.

Characteristics are revealed through aural rhythm, visual patterning and stylistic attributes. The music is in three-four time with emphasis on the first beat; the dancers harmonise with this rhythm, taking a wide step on the first beat followed by two smaller steps. As they do so they change directions, letting their bodies execute a graceful, lilting sweep at each wide step accompanied by a half-body turn. The two smaller steps establish the new direction and re-establish verticality. As the waltz progresses, arms lift from the side of the body up to 5\textsuperscript{th} position, and the height allows the impetus for the next downward movement. In this way \textit{Eidos:Telos}'s waltz is seen to follow time-honoured conventions from the metonymic ballroom. And Balanchine comes to mind, especially in the graceful swoops of the dancers and their clarity of style.

Other lines of waltzing dancers enter, and the stage becomes filled with patterns that are not organised into a straightforward kaleidoscope but into asymmetrical groups. The dynamic is not entirely shared, since the line coming in from the left emphasises the first beat, whereas dancers clustered at centre stage make softer acknowledgement of the beat. There is fractional differentiation between the groups over the speed of movement. Pattern and organisation never fall into the familiar unity and harmony of a typical waltz group.

The waltz has an association with history. It retains a link to eighteenth-century Vienna, reaching its apogee in the nineteenth century through the music of the Strauss family – and in the ballets of Tchaikovsky.\textsuperscript{12} The waltz is probably seen in romantic terms, and choreographers such as
Ashton (La Valse, 1958) and Balanchine (Liebeslieder Waltzer, 1960; La Valse, 1951, Vienna Waltzes, 1977) have made works that are associated with the waltz's Viennese origins and at the same time contain evidence of the socio-cultural milieu in which they were working. Conventionally the waltz is a social dance signifying ease between heterosexual couples; it has been used romantically by many ballet choreographers.

In Eidos:Telos's waltz men and women are similarly dressed in skirts with bustles, and performing identical steps, a reminder of a Bauschian world. It is a parade revealing an identity that is jointly composed of theatricality and realism, or so it seems. The connection is endorsed later when individual dancers start speaking in different 'mother' tongues, and with an intensity that suggests what is being spoken about relates to the speaker's own life. Like Bausch, Forsythe seem to be enquiring into the nature of the performing persona.

When in this scene the man who has been seen as a petulant child, and who issues 'dire' threats to his family, begins counting in a sing-song rhythm, '1,2,3,4,5,6', the dancers pause momentarily as if heeding a command to rearrange themselves in a different order. From a changed position they begin waltzing again. There is a suggestion that instead of dancing silently and formally through ritualised patterns, there has been a shift and that they are now following instructions issued by the man, just as they would in a rehearsal.

The man continues to count, and the dancers respond by running into what seems to be prearranged positions on the stage, as part of a general pattern change. Lines of dancers cross in different directions, embellishing the waltz's simplicity with jumps and more emphatic arm movements. There is apparent unison between the lines, though the actions within each line are different from any corresponding lines (the arms now seem to observe ritualised patterning as, for example, they proceed through crossed wrist positions (reminiscent of Swan Lake), and
into a balletic port de bras with extended arms, backward line and momentary stillness.

In another 'non-hearing' vignette, a woman breaks out of the dance's pattern and launches into a dialogue with an imaginary film crew. She behaves as if she is issuing directions for action and discussing operational problems, with a tone that verges on desperation. The dancers around carry on waltzing.

The activity increases, as Caspersen continues speaking, and dancers keep running and stopping. The sound grows louder, added to by sudden 'blasts' from the off-stage trombonists on the first beat of each bar of music. The voices speaking in different mother tongues become more urgent. Lines of dancers move from side to side swinging their arms using a small galloping step to propel them, and to ensure they keep up with the regularity of step-rhythm. Where the impetus on the waltz's first beat had been down the gallop step now puts the impetus up in the air on the first beat. The stage is emptied. Dancers run from right to left, group into the centre and waltz out of it.

The waltz is significant for many reasons. First, it is a familiar dance form, added to with balleticised style. Second, it proves easier to watch than any other part of *Eidos:Telos* because it involves lines of dancers (in changing patterns) executing (generally) unified action. Rhythmic familiarity together with ease of watching harmonise, and act as memory triggers to a historic past. This past will no doubt relate in various ways to each member of the audience.

Forsythe's staging of the waltz ironises convention. First there are no couples but lines of waltzing individuals, of men and women whose skirts give them an identical style of dress (though the tops are gender differentiated). Second the beat that accompanies the movement is not the carefree beat deriving from Straussian images of the waltz, but suggests itself instead as both pulsing heart and death toll.
The effects are alienating because of the context of the piece. Like Bausch, Forsythe conveys an impression that what happens has been developed in a relationship with the dancers' personal experiences. The effects feel like an extension of individual personality, though when different dancers take on the different speaking parts, the similarity of approach (though it is not identical in detail) shows this to be an aspect of theatricality. It is the dark side of the waltz that forges the Bausch connection, echoing the darkness of the spider scene. This contrasts with whatever is assumed about the conventional waltz, and with the visual evidence of the Balanchine style of dance.

7.4 Aesthetic text

Because up until this point, there has been concentration on textual interplay in Acts 1 and 2 of *Eidos:Telos*, this section puts the focus on the last act. What soon becomes clear is how in subtle ways it connects to the other two acts. Act 3, like its predecessors, begins in stillness, with a tableau that bears a resemblance to the Act 1 opening tableau, though this time there are eight rather than six dancers. The stillness of the Act 3 octet of dancers is emphasised in the accompanying silence. The dancers break out of the tableau establishing their own rhythms first moving in a measured, shared pulse even though everyone is involved in different activity. Soon each individual begins dancing in a different rhythmic and spatial pattern.

Elements from the *Eidos:Telos* Alphabet of Act 1 are reintroduced, but in a radically different organisational structure involving dancers working in groups, and emphasising inversion, reversal, segmentation. Shapes are forceful and odd, patterns are irregular; trajectories away from the body, fold back into themselves. Points or lines made by body or limbs carve out the space around the body, or under it. At times five dancers position themselves in a tight diagonal line and place hands on the buttocks of the dancer in front to propose a moment of unity and order within diverse action. Two men engage in a duet, mirroring each other. They become fulcra, holding on to each other and pulling away – and revealing a point
of perfect balance between them. They dance different little steps together, they lift each other, they push each other around. A man moves through a quick sequence of *plié a la seconde*, *endedans* turn and *chassé* into *second arabesque allongée*. The sequence is relaxed, and without climactical pointers, and is variously picked up by other dancers who keep changing direction.

This emphasis on pulse and rhythm can be likened to orchestral play, where every instrument begins with the same rhythmic structure, then diversifies. Here it is dance that is woven together in the same spatial structure, through different patterns of movement. It has already been pointed out that members of the audience can find themselves alienated because the eye is not led to moments that collect the dance together. The critic must keep going back to the material to discover what the diversity reveals about aesthetic values. From my own experience, it was only after attendance at perhaps three performances that I began to tune into aspects of what was happening when the stage was filled with dancers all moving differently. It was possible to see unexpected relationships and alignments, and to recognise in the chaos that critics had identified (Kisselgoff, 1999, for example), an underlying order.

This revealed itself in many ways. A dancer positioned on one part of the stage would, for example, echo the rhythm of a dancer moving on a separate part of the stage. An individual in a group might raise an arm, that would be connected to by an arm raised in a different group. From twelve dancers engaged in different activities, several would suddenly leap into the air or simultaneously clap hands. Alignment emerged in sculptural partnerships that connected the stillness of a dancer standing to the stillness of another dancer lying down. A canon would start up as one dancer executed a brief sequence of steps and others followed.

A sequence producing a particular connection occurred when a man at centre stage turned a fast *pirouette en dehors*, finishing with an outward flourish into a balanced *arabesque*. With the impetus of the arabesque he
flung his arms wide, and arched his torso in a moment of symbolic fearlessness. From there he stepped backwards in a lunge, curving one arm in front and with hand fisted, lowering the other arm behind. The image was that of the brave hero, first in action, and then (in the lunge), in repose. This was a reminder of the heroic manhood of Apollo. Where earlier Self had seemed deliberately to avoid suggestions of Balanchine's idealised manhood, suddenly what was emphasised in the shapes made by this Act 3 dancer, was a dependency on balletic principles. But it was only emphasised associatively through the absent trace as a continuing force.

However, this image of the hero can be developed through other aspects of ideal form, and through looking beyond Apollo to an earlier representational period. In drawings found in *The Antique Greek Dance: after sculpted and painted figures* (Emmanuel, 1927), figures are presented in poses that stress a balance of line and curve running through the body. Though these figures reveal contrary motion in the body, it is not the counter tension of ballet. The Forsythe aesthetic can be seen to have links with an older form of antique Greek dance. *Eidos:Telos* is though characterised through attributes of contemporary life, by the power of the movement, the sharply regulated impetus and the extremity of positions arrived at by the limbs.

To point to sequences such as the pirouetting man risks creating a false impression, for movements are passed at far greater speed than it takes to read the description. Moreover, it should be emphasised that these movements were observed from a video recording of a particular performance (Frankfurt, 21 March 1998), and would not be presented identically at other performances. However, it is only in isolating occasional moments that it becomes possible to look intertextually at the movement.

What the Forsythe aesthetic searches for, as it joins stylised and non-stylised action together, is something that both celebrates dance's
virtuostic powers and, at the same time, brings it closer to everyday life. When a dancer needs to move from one part of the stage to another – as with the Apollonian opening of Self - the movement can be presented as an ordinary, everyday walk, taking up ordinary measures of time. There is no need for the walker to be turned into an elitist hero.

To take another instance, what may look from the waist downwards like a balletic pointe tendu never achieves the expected position with all parts of the body arriving in a pose of complementary opposition. In this instance, Forsythe’s arms follow after the legs, driven by an impetus that is just as emphatic as the impetus in the legs, and rejecting the contrary tension that conventionally runs through body and limbs as each pulls away from the other, to go with the flow of motion. If it is the left leg that is extended in the tendu and the left arm is also lifted, it reveals an alignment based on correspondence, not opposition. In a ballet aesthetic this can look so awkward that it would be read as ‘error’. In Forsythe’s aesthetic, the movement activates a different set of principles.

Notions of beauty are accepted as paramount in ballet, but are very seldom subjected to rigorous critical examination. Forsythe’s attitude to form, and formalism, testifies to another kind of beauty. It proposes conventional measures of unity, symmetry and balance within a deconstructed network in which all aspects of the human form and psyche are valued.

For example, in Act 2 of Eidos:Telos, when Caspersen has reached the end of her long monologue, the woman (referred to on page 122) enters from upstage right, dancing a solo waltz. The breadth of her movement as she travels downstage draws attention to rhythmic control, precisely shaped motion, lightness of body and arms, and tranquillity of inner expression. She epitomises beauty of grace and flow. Then her waltzing ceases and she sinks into herself. Her upright musculature crumbles, and she is metamorphosed into an old crone. She snaps her fingers, wriggles her body and croaks, in a voice squeezed with age, ‘luck be a lady
tonight’, and the audience laughs at the incongruity. But there is a point to the incongruity, made in relation to the transience of beauty, and the importance of recognising other aspects of the cycle of life. At this moment, words that appeared in the programme spring to mind (see also pp135-6):

So what did they want? To be recognized. Every recognition is an awareness of form. Hence in our enfeebled modern vocabulary we might say that the way they imposed themselves was first and foremost aesthetic. But in a sense of the word which, with time, has been lost: the aesthetic of a mesh of powers concentrated in a figure, a body, a voice.

Calasso in Ballett Frankfurt, 1998: 7

Now that it can be related to the on-stage action, What this passage draws attention to concerns not just form but humanity. I read this moment as an exhortation to find value in different forms and to be alert to what may be concentrated by experience in a ‘figure, a body, a voice’.

Where in parts of Act 3 there is no sound, the lack of music does not produce silence, nor is stillness every really stilled, for both have an energy that pulls the focus in their direction. Wherever silence is noticeable, footfalls, thuds, squeaks, stamps, and swivels from the dancing feet make a prevailing sound. Where motion has ceased, there is alert stillness, always relative to action elsewhere, and drawing concentrated forces to itself and its spatial positioning. Silence and, by extension, stillness, ‘imparts ... an added power to what was broken off’ (Sontag, 1982:183). The dancers are visibly listening as they lie, or kneel; they bring meditative qualities to their stillness, and sometimes the very act of stilling in the midst of high action brings suggestions of oriental calm.

Towards the end of Act 3 there is mounting activity, as sound and motion swell. The trombones introduce reminders of the weird animal sounds of the previous act. Caspersen enters and stands silently upstage. Hers is a strong, silent presence. She belongs not to the Act 3 Forsythescape, but is a reminder of the narrative strands from Act 2. If the programme pointer
to Persephone is taken up, then she can be seen to stand looking out on the living – a point that is emphasised through the liveliness of the dance – in contemplation of the dying. Perhaps she stands midway between heaven and earth.

In the closing minutes some of the dancers form diagonal lines, facing each other on either side of the upstage wire. As one line of dancers walks towards the wire and plucks it, the other line backs away, and then the action is reversed. The dancers set up an ebb and flow motion that, while they stroll back and forth, is calming against the frenetic activity that continues around them. There are parallels to be found with the previous act’s waltz, where lines of dancers flow towards, then pass each other. The waltzing lines had emphasised style and ornamentation, where the Act 3 lines are more relaxed – though the dancers are precise in their rhythmic organisation. Caspersen, with her skirt wrenched from her, but clinging behind her like an after-birth, scrabbles along the floor convulsively, as if reliving the moment of birth.

As a crescendo of sound, and dramatic switches in darkened lighting, fills the stage, some critics see this as the apocalyptic moment (Kisselgoff, 1998). The aesthetic text as montage, with its range from classical high art to contemporary sensibility, is delivered.

One of the most useful discoveries to emerge from the aesthetic text is the importance of seeing connections through alignment. For it is this that holds the clue to dealing with the difficult aspect of multiple kinespheres, the mind is released from its compulsion to see the dance through order. In finding the relevance of alignment to making connections between diverse order, it is possible to perceive what can initially only be sensed, the presence of underlying order, and its communicative power. This was what audiences felt when they stood and cheered *Eidos:Telos*, acknowledging as they did so, the power of a new kind of performative order. This at least was how I interpreted their response.
7.5 Summary

_Eidos:Telos_ is positioned in a discursive space, where meaning is destabilised through the creative questioning of signifying systems. The four architexts are not confined within specified moments, but are revealed as thematic strands, or reverberative forces running through. These forces are neither fixed nor stable, and cannot be shaped into a summarising conclusion. The referent always disappears, allowing no single reading of _Eidos:Telos_, only openness of interpretation. In challenging the status of representation, _Eidos:Telos_ proposes that new alignments and relationships are able to be seen, bringing new understanding of what can be understood by textual coherence in performance.

Developing out of the methodology, this chapter has explored a named work (_Apollo_), proposing that it should not be seen as a fixed origin but as a text itself. It was through raising questions about what it is that _Apollo_ signifies, and how it was seen to exert a force on _Self_, that intertextual activity was recognised. The use of the word 'spider' linked language and dance, and in doing so pointed to correspondence between word and movement and to moments when instead of connections, there were suggestions that atmosphere was building through a weaving of aural and visual textures. In isolating a type of dance through the waltz, there was emphasis on how familiar and unfamiliar elements had been blended. This revealed the waltz as evolutionary, but it was the radical changes that had been wrought that pointed to intertextuality, or a change of 'thetic position' (Kristeva, 1984:59). The _Aesthetic text_ worked with the problems of nameability, and the difficulty of collecting diverse activity into images.

Through studying these four architexts greater sense can be made of the title, and in particular the idea of telos as death. For death has been seen as a continuously hovering presence. It was sensed in the ever-present but never materialising _Apollo_; it was suggested by the image of the spider's web designed to trap unwitting prey; it was emphasised by the
muffled drums that sounded like a death knell in the waltz. In the closing moments of Act 3, at a point when the intensity of the dance appeared to emphasise the force of life, the entry of the Caspersen figure was like a harbinger of death. Here was a return to the image of Persephone, silently standing — as if awaiting the moment at which she would again control the spirits of the soon-to-be dead. Yet Caspersen-Persephone is herself caught into a cycle of life and death, and must always travel between earth and heaven.

What the architexts have provided is a means for working with the text. In Adshead-Lansdale's terms the critic is able to become a 'co-creator of a mobile text, breathing new life into a dancing text (1999:21).

Notes

1 The impact of Apollo, and of how it shapes seeing, is referred to by Susan Manning in a discussion about the work of Merce Cunningham.

Consider Septet, choreographed in 1953. Cast for men and women, the dance makes reference to Balanchine's Apollo. In one section three couples perform three simultaneous duets; in another section three women surround one man, as the three Muses surround Apollo in Balanchine’s work. Given the dancers' neutral performance quality, it is hard to know whether to read the allusion literally - 'see how interestingly Balanchine intertwined human bodies' - or ironically - 'see how Balanchine choreographed male privilege'.

Manning, 1998: 36

In offering different options for reading the Cunningham work, and for responding to the 'attitude' taken by his choreography, Manning is dependent on acknowledgement of Apollo as seminal. She is therefore able to use the earlier text to contrast with the text in question, and to convey visual/conceptual ideas. She positions her argument in the realm of readership rather than creativity, leaving unexamined the issue of whether Cunningham was influenced by Balanchine's work. Nevertheless the passage includes tacit suggestions about intertextual influence.

2 There is an argument to be followed through in relation to citation and quotation given that steps such as arabesque are particular to both texts. But an arabesque is particular to every ballet, and therefore stronger contextual reference would be needed — about type, and about why the movement could be seen to be characteristic of Apollo as opposed to ballet generally - before an arabesque could be identified as particular both to Apollo and Self.

3 There is a retrospective irony in reading about complaints made at the time of Apollo's premiere that the ballet did not conform to pre-conditioned ideas of Apollo. See Balanchine and Mason (1984:26).

4 The adagio sequence is improvised; the two ballet terms deployed descriptively are used as indicators of the type of movement that is fundamental to each performance.

5 The diary extracts that appear from time to time in this chapter are taken from notes that I made at the time of seeing different performances of Eidos:Telos.

6 See Riffaterre in Worton & Still (1990:56-78) for discussion of how authority is vested in a precursor text.

7 The reference to the ‘main ballet’ is because Apollo is generally presented nowadays without its prologue.

8 For discussion of Balanchine and geometry, see Gans (1993: 40).
It was Forsythe who pointed out that the men were improvising, personal communication Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris (June 14 1998).

Personal communication, see endnote9.

In writing about Forsythe's work *Same Olde Story*, Kisselgoff comments: 'since the movement themes were based on fragmentary gestures from George Balanchine's seminal ballet "Apollo," the work obviously had something to do with history' (1988).

The waltz is believed to derive from the old German Landler, and in the eighteenth century caught the imagination of both Haydn and Mozart. (see Scholes, *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 1972: 1110). Both Scholes and Doris (1997: 49) point to the waltz's relationship with rolling and circling. Partridge (1990: 791-2) traces the derivation of the term through 'voluble' (which in its secondary meaning can be seen to involve twisting) and refers to the rolling about, thus emphasising the notion of spatial expansion.

I have seen two women in this role, Helen Pickett and Crystal Pite. Both are Americans and speak with clear, resonant voice. Somehow the theatricalised urgency is made to belong to an American stereotype, to a type of woman who is used to having her demands met.

The idea of using the orchestra as a metaphor for seeing came from discussion with several of the Frankfurt dancers who explained that the company likened this section to orchestral play.

As Best observes, 'terms such as "beauty" appear very little in informed discussion of the arts' (1992: 51).
CONCLUSION

Chapter 8: Intertextual criticism
CHAPTER 8

Inter textual criticism

Criticism involves an act of transposition from the art work to its own medium and inevitably leads to 'a new articulation of the thetic' (Kristeva, 1984:60). But in dance criticism, as pointed out, very little theoretical attention has been paid to the transition from what is seen to how it is critiqued. This study set out to look at the distance between dance performance and critical seeing, and identified as problematic the type of performance (the object of criticism) that was made up of multiple sign systems. It was suggested that where criticism could discover no single, unifying meaning, a new relationship between criticism and the art work was needed.

In searching for a means to bring them into this new relationship, intertextual theory was introduced and explored through the discourses of poststructuralism and semiotics. Positioned within reader, or viewer reception, intertextuality was shown to be concerned with looking behind normative practices in order to dismantle value systems that were traditionally thought of as inherent in art works. It provided a way of looking through the art work to a space beyond, and in doing so it avoided the problems associated with imposing external judgement on the art work.

One benefit seen to emerge through intertextual analysis was a repositioning of past texts bringing them into an equalising relationship with present texts. No longer would a prior text stand in judgement against a present text; instead the newer text could acknowledge its debt
to the earlier text and at the same time sustain an identity of its own. Neither the text of the past nor that of the present was put in a position of hierarchical superiority, and criticism could acknowledge – and welcome – the differences between them. Moreover, intertextuality avoided the problems revealed in modernist criticism, and could work with both 'presence' and 'absence'. Where absence from something was noticed, it was not seen as a shortcoming or a failure of the present to match up to the historic past. It could be acknowledged, and identified as intertextual travel.

There is potential for intertextual criticism to change critical convention and, in moving away from notions of an overriding authority, so it can tackle difference and deviation and engage in the 'speculative creativity of ambiguity' (Worton, 1986:21). The text that it works with is a borderless web capable of spinning out endless connectives. The dance text can be returned to again and again, in the knowledge that new meanings await discovery.

In building a methodology for the intertextual criticism of dance this study uncovered a number of problems. Among them was the need to ensure that intertextuality was upheld as a complex and multi-faceted theoretical enquiry when working with systems that were not language-based, but which for critical purposes needed to be transposed into language. Criticism relies on nameability, and on working with 'names', but to name a work should not be seen as an origin, or end in itself, as if this alone fulfilled a critical responsibility of communication. A name that is introduced intertextually needs to be seen as a 'connective', and subjected to rigorous interrogation with the intention of discovering texts that are dormant but are nonetheless crucial supports to the text in question. This was an approach that was tested in Part Three of this study with its references to the Balanchine/Stravinsky Apollo. In particular the Apollonian connective (Chapter 7.2) was introduced to show aspects of what lies hidden behind Apollo, and to suggest how these other texts had
worked their way into Forsythe’s text. In this way a special case was argued for dance and its nomenclature.

The text of performance criticism can be likened to a vast uncharted territory, and to a land mass (the performance) awaiting the activity of a cartographer (the critic). Before the cartographer can begin to turn the land into the codes that will enable it to be turned into a map, the details of contour and gradient and all their unexpected undulations must be known. There will be mountains to be climbed and valleys to descend; some of the shapes will feel familiar early on in, some will take longer to get to know. The cartographer-critic must keep returning to the strange land, to become familiar with the details that will be transformed into a critical map.

It is in looking at this map that the non-representational landscape comes into view. This is the landscape of the heterogeneous performance text where time may be non-linear and place non-specific. The new critical approach can survey the landscape without feeling driven to rationalise it. The landscape can be experienced through seeing that is partial and perceptive.

Forsythe’s ballets are intertextual, revealing relationships or external allusions. They dismantle conceptual oppositions to reveal what might have escaped attention in dance and wider cultural and social practices. Thus memories are triggered in the viewer but, as has been shown, memories are not always exact. To deal with problems of memory and understanding, a strategy for looking at Forsythe’s ‘difficult’ choreography was introduced. Developing out of ideas pertinent to the landscape, the term ‘Forsythescape’ was coined. It was used as a metaphor for a lens with wide-angled vision able to look out over the complex dance text. The ‘Forsythescape’ is seen to symbolise a position of relative impartiality in the context of Forsythe’s work. It is a concept that can be adapted to circumstance, and used as a means through which to look at the work of other choreographers.
In this study, the first to look at a single text by Forsythe in depth, one of the difficulties that was pointed to through *Eidos:Telos* was the use to be made of different texts, and how they were to be collected together and shaped as dance criticism. The architext was proposed as a metaphor for developing thematic strands as creative structures. The four architexts identified through *Eidos:Telos* did not attempt to stabilise seeing but embarked on a journey, encountering on the way texts and intertexts. Ambiguity and obscurity became a part of this journey, or the experience of performance. It became possible to sense hidden logic and detailed choreographic structure underpinning the performance, and affecting its reception.

Criticism cannot isolate itself from the past, and a postmodern reading needs to ensure that whatever it is tied to is able to function discursively. Instead of confining seeing to pre-existing opinion, it is able to focus on the text. Intertextuality uses expectation and experience in a non-hierarchical discourse. Thus the critic can turn to the past, in the same way as the choreographer and can observe not culpability, where the text deviates, but recognition of the journey travelled from past to present. Intertextual criticism is writerly criticism, able to function creatively.

Of course there are arguments to be raised against the validity of intertextual criticism. Intertextuality’s discursive space could be pointed to, with claims that it is too vast to be tenable for criticism. It could lead to unwarranted freedom, and thereby be seen to reduce the role of criticism, or relegate it to the ‘anything goes’ school. Moreover, the selection of certain texts from within the latecome text, to the exclusion of others, might lead to the accusation that intertextual criticism is not sufficiently inclusive.

Yet in dealing with these issues, somewhat ironically intertextual freedom is seen to be countered by critical responsibility. The texts that are selected automatically install parameters in the discursive space, and whatever freedom intertextuality is able to work with it is in relation to
Intertextual criticism is no more exclusive than any other form of criticism for, as has been pointed out, criticism is by its nature partial. It cannot represent the work: it can only present a perspective on the work. And the text will always guide the relationship with the intertexts.

While intertextuality is seen to be most relevant where a text is multidimensional and multi-coded, intertextual readings can also be applied to conventional texts, enabling attitudes perceived as having solidified in the grip of tradition to be 'unpicked'. For example, a work such as the Petipa-Ivanov *Swan Lake* that has attained classic status, and an identity that is part of cultural convention, can be opened out through intertextual explorations of the cultural and social texts that gave it life. Another approach might be to look at what lies behind its identification as a classic, and at the factors that have made it revered. Choreographers such as Matz Ek (in 1986) and Matthew Bourne (in 1996) have, after all, applied intertextual readings to *Swan Lake*, and it follows that criticism can enter into the same kind of game.

In summary, intertextual criticism moves away from the need to arrive at finish or resolution, offering a means of looking at dance critically, and of bringing dance and criticism into a relationship of equality. It provides a perspective that enables criticism to work with the changing values in art, and to approach the experience of 'otherness' or 'strangeness'. It can acknowledge what it is that speaks to individual experience, summoning it into play as a means by which to set up and steer a logic through conceptual breadth and indeterminate meaning. It can approach diffuse elements and different discourses in performance not just recognising the textual network that allows them interdependent relationships but welcoming them. It can greet the breaking down of boundaries and the deconstruction of representation, empowered by strategies developed from the text to release that which lies dormant. In this way the critic can find that s/he has won for her or himself a heady but tempered freedom.
akin to that earned by the artist. Intertextuality releases criticism from the bondage of history, and ushers it into the era of postmodernism.

Notes

1 As made clear by Culler (1981), it is impossible to bring in a precise division between poststructuralism and structuralism.

2 Suspended between presence and absence lies Derrida’s discovery of the play of meaning as ‘supplement’. For discussion of this see Leitch, (1983:165-252) and Norris (1991:32).

3 Ek’s 1986 interpretation of Swan Lake was created for the Cullberg Ballet, while Bourne’s 1996 version was made for Adventures in Motion Pictures.
APPENDIX A: Choreography by William Forsythe*

1976
Urlicht ('primeval light' or 'first light') (pas de deux)
Noverre Society Young Choreographers Workshop
(joined Stuttgart Ballet's rep 1977)

1977
Daphne, Stuttgart Ballet
Bach Violin Concerto in A minor, Basel Ballet.
Flore Subsimplici-Suit, Stuttgart Ballet

1978
In Endloser Zeit (From the Most Distant Time), Stuttgart Ballet
Traum des Galillei (Dream of Galilei), Stuttgart Ballet
Aria de la Folia, Stuttgart B, Montepulciano Festival, Italy.

1979
Orpheus, Stuttgart Ballet
Love Songs, Stuttgart Ballet
Time Cycle, Stuttgart Ballet

1980
Joyleen gets up, gets down, goes out, Munich Ballet
Schade: Dass Sie Eine Hure Ist ('Tis Pity She's a Whore), Montepulciano Festival, Italy
Famous Mothers Club, solo for Lynn Seymour, London gala
Say Bye Bye, Nederlands Dans Theater
(shown New York City 1982: NDT tour; popular culture mixed into speech, lighting, music)

1981
Die Nacht aus Blei, Berlin State Opera
Whisper Moon, Stuttgart Ballet
Trancredi + Clorinda (Events 1,2,3), Stuttgart Ballet

1982
Gänge 1, NDT
1983
Gänge – ein Stück über Ballett ('Goings or Way – a piece about ballet'), Ballett Frankfurt (com. Egon Madsen)
Mental Model, NDT
Square Deal, Joffrey Ballet

1984
Berg AB (film), Vienna State Opera.
Artifact, Ballett Frankfurt

1985
Steptext, Ballett Frankfurt
LDC, Ballett Frankfurt

1986
Isabelle's Dance, Ballett Frankfurt
Skinny, Ballett Frankfurt
Die Befragung des Robert Scott (The Interrogation of Robert Scott), Ballett Frankfurt

1987
New Sleep, San Francisco Ballet
Same Olde Story, Ballett Frankfurt
The Loss of Small Detail, Ballett Frankfurt

1988
In the middle, somewhat elevated, Paris Opera Ballet (com. Nureyev)
Impressing the Czar, Ballett Frankfurt
Behind the china dogs, New York City Ballet
The Vile Parody of Address, Ballett Frankfurt

1989
Enemy in the Figure, Ballett Frankfurt
Singerland, Ballett Frankfurt

1990
Limb's Theorem, Ballett Frankfurt
1991
*The second detail*, National Ballet of Canada, (com. Reid Anderson)
*The Loss of Small Detail*, Ballett Frankfurt

1992
*ALIE/N A(C)TION*, Ballett Frankfurt

1993
*The Mind Machine of Dr. Forsythe* (Video installation), made Frankfurt;
premiered Antwerp
*Quintett*, Ballett Frankfurt
*As a Garden in this Setting*, Ballett Frankfurt

1994
*Self meant to govern*, Ballett Frankfurt

1995
*Eidos:Telos*, Ballett Frankfurt
*Firstext*, (with Dana Caspersen, Tony Rizzi), Ballett Frankfurt
*Invisible Film*, Ballett Frankfurt
*Of Any If And*, Ballett Frankfurt
*The The* (with Caspersen), Ballett Frankfurt
*Four Point Counter*, Ballett Frankfurt
*Solo* (for video film, danced by Forsythe)

1996
*Six Counter Points*, Ballett Frankfurt
*Sleeper's Guts*, Ballett Frankfurt

1997
*Tight Roaring Circle* (with Caspersen, for the Round House, London)
*From a classical position* (with Caspersen, video film, danced by Forsythe and Caspersen)
*Hypothetical Stream 2*, Ballett Frankfurt

1998
*Opus 31*, Ballett Frankfurt
*small void* (with dancers from Ballett Frankfurt), Ballett Frankfurt
*Quartette*, Ballet of La Scala, Milan
*Workwithinwork*, Ballett Frankfurt
1999

*Woundwork*, Paris Opera Ballet
*Pas./parts*, Paris Opera Ballet
*Endless House*, Ballett Frankfurt

2000 – scheduled

*DJamesDJoyceDead*, Ballett Frankfurt (with Needcompany)

*Sources include: Ballett Frankfurt programmes; Driver 2000; Nederlands Dans Theater: [http://www.euronet.nl/users/cadiWF.html](http://www.euronet.nl/users/cadiWF.html); sundry press cuttings*
The company's first performance took place on 21 September 1945. It was listed as Tanzabend – a mixed evening of choreography by the director Hans Helken using music by 10 composers.

This list is reproduced (with slight adaptations) from Helga Heil's Frankfurter Ballett von 1945 bis 1985 Stuttgart, Konrad Theiss Verlag GmbH: 1986:5
The following lists of tasks directing improvisation are positioned in the wings on either side of the stage during the performance. Dancers make choices from these lists about what activities to select in improvisation passages in Acts 1 and 3. Choice is determined by the alphabetic systems.

Displayed in the wings beside the stage right proscenium arch

**LEFT COLUMN**
- Launching off body part
- Level shift
- Matching limbs
- Observe and execute
- Observe and wipe
- Point extrusion/collapse
- Retrograde/Reverse sequential order
- Re-assignment of limbs
- Rotating inscription
- Re-Distribution/spatial

**RIGHT COLUMN**
- Shearing – Parallel
- Oblique
- Sliding
- Soft Part launching
- Trajectory Extension
- Writing/Brushing
- Wipe
- Draw
- Stamp
- Indicate
- Press
- Tap
- Dot
- Squeeze
- Dragging
- Weak Object Represent
Stage Left

LEFT COLUMN
Alphabet isometry
Amplification
Arc & Axis
Approachings
Avoidance/Retreat
  Bridging
Brushing/Wiping
  Collapsing
  Extension
  Folding
Prolongation
  Inclination
  Extrusion
  Point to line
  Line to plane
Fragmentation
Form retention

RIGHT COLUMN
Generative Isometry
APPS Hand retraction
  Hand heel heart
(B) Inverse Isometry
  Iteration
  Where it was/is
  What it was/is
orig & unorig. Orientation
  Inclination extension
  Interior point analyses
  Knotting

These lists are reproduced with permission from William Forsythe, who also checked to ensure that the details were updated and incorporated recent changes.
Forsythe and the British Connection

List includes British references to: first performances of ballets by Forsythe; appearances by Forsythe or members of the Ballett Frankfurt; connections through television and radio. Where appropriate details of first performances are included at the end of the entry.


1981 BBC2 Omnibus: *When the Dancing has to Stop*. film about Lynn Seymour included *Famous Mothers Club* solo. Director: Vanya Kewley.

1989 BBC2 Dance International: *A Night at the Joffrey* – programme included *Love Songs* danced by the Joffrey Ballet. (1979, Stuttgart Ballet.)

1991 Extract from *In the middle, somewhat elevated* danced by members of the Frankfurt Ballet (Tracy-Kai Maier and Brian Reeder) for CRUSAID Dance for Life, Gala, devised and produced by Gillian Lynne in association with Lean Two Productions at Her Majesty’s Theatre, Haymarket, London. (1987, Paris Opera Ballet.)

1991 *The Loss of Small Detail*: Issey Miyake’s costume designs included in the exhibition *Beyond Japan* at the Barbican Art Gallery.

1992 *In the middle, somewhat elevated*, Royal Ballet, ROH.


1993 *Herman Schmerman*, Royal Ballet, ROH (1992, New York City Ballet.)

1994 *Herman Schmerman*, Royal Ballet's Dance Bites repertory.

1995 *Firstext/Steptext* Royal Ballet, ROH. Choreography for *Firstext* by Fórsythe, Dana Caspersen and Antony Rizzi, commissioned by Royal Ballet. (*Steptext* 1985, Aterballeto.)

1995 BBC2 Solo choreographed and performed by Forsythe (dir: Thomas Lovell Balogh, for the Sylvie Guillem series *Evidentia*. Producer: Beatrice Dupont, RD Studio Productions. (Repeated 1977.)

1996 *Steptext* in the Royal Ballet's Dance Bites repertory.

1996 Channel 4 *Just Dancing Around*, documentary. Director: Mike Figgis.


1997 BBC2 *Steptext* performed by Royal Ballet. Editor: Ross MacGibbon.

1998 *In the middle, somewhat elevated* in the Royal Ballet's Dance Bites repertory.


1998 *The The* (collaboration with Caspersen) performed by members of the Ballett Frankfurt (Christine Burkel and Jone San Martin) at Queen Elizabeth Hall, London for *As It Is* – part of an evening programmed by Jonathan Burrows on 9 July. (1995, Holland Dance Festival, The Hague.)


1999 Dutch National Ballet presented *Artifact* at the Edinburgh Festival, Edinburgh Festival Theatre. 15-18 August.


2000 scheduled appearance by the Ballett Frankfurt and Needcompany at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. *DjamesDJoyceDead*. Collaboration between actors and dancers of Needcompany and Ballett Frankfurt; concept and direction: Jan Lauwers. 9-10 June.
APPENDIX E

Eidos:Telos –
credits, as listed in the Ballett Frankfurt’s programme,*
11 and 13 March 1998

Concept and Organisation: William Forsythe, in choreographic association with the ensemble
Music: Thom Willems
Computer Composition: Joel Ryan
Assistant: Dirk Haubrich
Concept, Text and Speech for Part 2: Dana Caspersen
Costume: Naoki Takizawa, Stephen Galloway
Dramatic Research: Heidi Gilpin
Computer-generated Programme: Michael Saup
Videoproduction: Richard Caon
Videoassistant: Mark Spradling

First performance: 28 January 1995, Opernhaus, Frankfurt
Most recent revival: 1998, with performances in Frankfurt, Paris and New York

Act 1
Self meant to govern

Christine Bürkle, Nik Haffner, Thomas McManus, Emily Molnar, Ana Catalina Roman, Andrea Tallis.
Violinist: Maxim Franke

Act 2

Speaker: Dana Caspersen
Stefanie Arndt, Regina van Berkel, Allison Brown, Francesca Caroti, Veronique Gaillard, Laura Graham, Francesca Harper, Irene Klein, Helen Pickett, Jone San Martin, Maurice Causey, Noah Gelber, Thierry Guiderdoni, Nik Haffner, Anders Hellström, Fabrice Mazliah, Tamás Moritz, Pascal Touzeau, Sjoerd Vreugdenhil, Aäron Sean Watkin.
Violinist: Maxim Franke
Trombonists: Christian Dembowski, Daniel Scherf, Mike Tetzner

Act 3

Stefanie Arndt, Regina van Berkel, Allison Brown, Francesca Caroti, Veronique Gaillard, Francesca Harper, Irene Klein, Emily Molnar, Helen Pickett, Crystal Pite, Ana Caralia Roman, Jone San Martin, Andrea Tallis, Maurice Causey, Noah Gelber, Timothy Couchman, Thierry Guiderdoni, Nik Haffner, Anders Hellström, Fabrice Mazliah, Tamás Moritz, Pascal Touželau, Sjoerd Vreugdenhil, Aäron Sean Watkin.
Trombonists: Christian Dembowski, Daniel Scherf, Mike Tetzner

* German titles have been translated


- **Beyond the Images: William Forsythe's New Evening 'Six Counter Points' in Ballet International.** No 3, 1996:16.


- **Graph: Writing the Body in Ballett International.** No 3, March 1999: 28-29.


Kirchner, Birgit. Good theatre of a different kind in *Ballett International*. Vol 8, August 1984:4-6.


_______ When a Choreographer Settles into a Formula in the *New York Times*. 3 July 1988a:npn*.


_______ The system and the speaking subject in the *Times Literary Supplement*. 12.10.1973:1249. (See also Hawkes, 1983:124.)


_______ The Mastery of Movement. Plymouth: Macdonald & Evans, 1980 (Originally, 1950.)


_______ Dancing to his own tune in The Guardian. 22 April 1995:npn*.


Morris, Gay, ed. Moving Words. London: Routledge, 1996. (See also references under Martin and Siegel, 1996.)


______ The Green Table and Café Muller in Dance Now. Vol 1, no 3, Autumn 1992b:34-41.


Confounding expectations in *Dance Theatre Journal*. Vol 13, no 1, Summer 1996b:22-25. (Forsythe's Solo.)


_____ *Bridging the Critical Distance* in Alexandra Carter (ed) *The Routledge Dance Studies


________ Against Interpretation. London, Sydney, Auckland, Bergvlei


________ Channels for the desire to dance in Dance Magazine, vol LXIX, no 9, September 1995b: 52-59. (Including references to Eidos.)

The continuing evolution of Mr. Forsythe in *Dance Magazine*, January 1997: 35.


Whitney, Mary. Prodigal Son: after ten years abroad, William Forsythe has returned to the Joffrey fold with his supercharged brand of choreography in *Ballet News*, Vol 5, no 1, October 1983:


*On occasion a work by Forsythe is named after a review. NB For radio and television presentations see Appendix C.*
APPENDIX J

PERFORMANCES BY THE BALLETT FRANKFURT SEEN IN THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

1997

30 October-1 November  Isabelle’s Dance  Opernhaus, Frankfurt
November 14-15  The Loss of Small Detail  Opernhaus, Frankfurt

1998

March 13-14  Eidos:Telos  Opernhaus, Frankfurt
March 27-28  Duo
The The
Artifact II
Of Any If And
Desiegel, Antwerp

June 13-15  Eidos:Telos  Theatre du Chatelet, Paris
July 9  The, The  Queen Elizabeth Hall,
July 10-12  Self Meant to Govern
Hypothetical Stream 2
Quintett  Theatre de la Monnaie, Brussels

October 23/25  workwithinwork
Quartette  Opernhaus, Frankfurt

November 24-27  Hypothetical Stream 2
Enemy in the Figure
Quintett  Sadler's Wells, London

December 2-6  Eidos:Telos  Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York

ALSO SEEN (1999)

August 16-18  Artifact - performed by the Dutch National Ballet at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre, during the 1999 Edinburgh International Festival