

TO GEST

“ ‘Gest’ is not supposed to mean gesticulation: it is not a matter of explanatory or emphatic movement of the hands, but of overall attitudes. A language is gestic when it is grounded in a gest and conveys particular attitudes...”¹

“The very title of Brecht’s piece, ‘Music and Gest’, is enough to indicate that the gest must not be only social: being the principal element of theatricalisation, it involves all aesthetic components, notably musical ones.”²

If the extraordinarily diverse array of ‘activities’ across all media which comprise performers’ projects of ‘making-for-art’ cannot, as I have sought throughout to exemplify by omission and substitution, be gathered as or reconciled with what contemporary culture takes ‘work’ to be and to stand for, then ‘what’s left’ at the end of the performing process - the ‘things-for-art’ - cannot be gathered as ‘works of art’. If making-for-art is not-work (not the other pole to work - play - but *other-to-work*) then the ‘work of art’ must be set aside in favour of an alternative which ‘speaks’ to the processes by which performings’ multiple and uncountable activities are transformed into the offerings which they abandon. This passage from the multiple into the idiosyncratic particular, which is left behind as its summary residue, effects a succinct gathering which makes reference back to performing but, in the end, stands free of it. What surfaces in this gathering, the residue’s surfacing, is, from performing’s site, its pared down tribute to its deep affinity for that which it would like to join - the Body of Art. *Its emergence as a particular some-thing is a casting off, in hope, towards this Body.*

It embeds whatever the performer has withdrawn from the performing multiple and transformed into what, during the performer’s ‘conversation’ with the emerging tribute, it called for. I have been referring to the offering that emerges from this crystallising process as performing’s ‘gest’. It is constituted only by that which the performer has experienced as absolutely necessary for the offering to make it to the other side. And these little necessities, in the very process of their transforming leap into the gest, leave performing behind; they effect an absolute break between performance and offering. The gest begins its independent life in this process of severance.

‘Gest’, as a noun, points to something which performing gets its materials to carry; they are transformed into bearers, they pass through and across to us as such bearers. And it is here that gest out-performs gesture. The noun has a pedigree, through Lessing, Weill, Brecht and Barthes, separating it from ‘gesture’ as a bodily gesticulation. For what performing does is to compress into its materials what Brecht calls ‘attitude’; this makes what it has to offer ‘social’ in the way it appeals to or invites the response of others. The point of the gest is to suggest (*sub + gerere* – to bear/carry/do) by enticing others into engaging it through what it carries, bears, under or within its surfacing. And certainly the hovering of ‘attitudes’ in the

¹ Bertolt Brecht, ‘On Gestic Music’, in ‘Brecht on Theatre’, translated by John Willett, Hill and Wang, New York, 1975, p. 104.

² Gilles Deleuze, ‘Cinema 2 The Time Image’, Athlone, London, 1989, f.n. 8, p. 315.

subscript of something making-toward-art articulates, sets itself up in, a potential relation to the context of its reception.

But here I want to pick up Deleuze's expansion of gest as the re-marking of time's passage in contemporary cinema - how film discloses its relation to time in the ways it sets up what is passing, what film passes, before us - how it bears time. A gest is the carrying, the bearer, of whatever passes before us, and perhaps passes across to us; through it we pass by way of the film. Transferring it from theatre and film to all the arts requires a further expansion of its sense. Suspending the application of work to performing and its residue draws attention to the transforming-bearing-crystallising processes in which *something other than performing passes into the offering*. The primary 'attitude' that the performer wants to embed in the fragment abandoned by performing is its tribute to, its felt affinity for, Art's Body toward which every gest is aimed. In this way, perhaps we can hear the 'du' ('you'), so frequently addressed by Celan in his poems, as being not some singular 'other', but rather his sense of the assembled multitude - Art's Body - toward which artists send their gests: each gest/poem as thus a yearning to-be-with. The 'you' then becomes not a nameable person, some unifies 'subject' but a 'gathering' that undergoes continuous re-shaping as it retreats from all languaged attempts to ground it in both language and a particular place. Rather it is only ever 'beyond' - 'beyond' becomes its nameless name.

Every offered and abandoned gest thus performs, embeds, a kind of ceremony - it ceremonialises in its passage, in how it passes over to and before us, the possibility of art.³ This is the pledging part of its plight - the promising of what it hopes to offer. Thus the offering is, first of all, the offer of a passage into and through a sharing, a participation even, in this ceremonialising. With luck it will bear its respondents some way towards Art's Body. It tries to do this through the conjunctions-disjunctions of all the little gests which constitute the gest itself. These 'components' are the transformed residues from the uncountable multiple gestures that comprise performing's arcing over from its sourcing to its abandonment of its task. Performing lets the gest go when it feels it has compressed and fixed in its offering whatever it was that coerced it into leaping out of the taken-for-granted of culture towards the elsewhere of Art's Body. And what it leaves can only be the promise of a movement to come. Cut off from performing as only now a hopeful offer, *it remains in, shows itself as nothing but, the infinitive* - a waiting to gest potential movement, waiting to be tensed by respondents' reciprocal performances.

But there are further aspects of its derivation and expanded sense that make its application to performing's remains apposite. 'Gest' is derived from the past participle of the Latin verb 'to bear' - *gerere* - whose usage carried a multiplicity of senses with close affinities to performing. For its sense of carrying also implies bringing forth and producing (as the similarly derived word 'gestation' names the period between conception and birth...) and allies these with to entertain and to cherish. Additionally it is used to mean deportment, carrying oneself, acting, accomplishing, managing, regulating, and willed actions generally. *Gerere* provides the root too for the Latin case of the infinitive called the gerundive or *gerund* which bears the sense of necessity, obligation, of what has to be or happen (as in our familiar word 'agenda' (from *agere* - to do) meaning the things that have to be done). So when these senses of bearing as cherishing, accomplishing, transacting, and so on are tied to the willed

³ I am adapting here Deleuze's take on Brecht's use of 'ceremony' and re-applying it to the gest itself. See G. Deleuze, op. cit., p. 190 et seq.

demand of necessity, then ‘to gest’ seems to ally itself closely with what performing wants to compact into its residues. For it hopes to have instilled into its remnants gestic memorials that might just seduce others into sharing something of what necessitated its own movements outwards toward art.

Opening up a Region for Art’s Gests-to-Come

In modernity’s nascence there is a singular knowing passing gesture that performs and partially constitutes that very nascence. Effectively the tragi-comic performance-display of an all too brief life, it is a life-as-gesture which already realises the peculiar embrangement of the would-be-modern-art-maker with the social dynamic of technoscience. Indeed it makes this the explicit theme of its project. This project was, of course, in advance of our subsequent real experience and understanding of ‘science’s’ intimacy with ‘technology’ – our technoscience. In those distant days science was still held to be separate, pure, in-itself, untainted in its essence by any involvement in the course of its exploratory work with application or involvement with *technē* and its contemporary manifestation - technology. With the benefit of hindsight we may now prefer to consign the conception of such a ‘purity’ to history’s ashes, just as we must do with an ‘art-in-itself’, an art able to sever its connections with everyday life, with the context and circumstances of its making and reception.

There is no need to resurrect or try to resuscitate the memory of the moderns’ life-performance because it has been implicitly (and on multiple sites, explicitly) accepted as such and has actively shaped the dynamic of the modern arts’ moving project. Yet the case for recalling the exemplary quality of this precocious disclosure (effected in the days before even the modern arts’ heyday (always provided we can make believe that indeed they had such a celebratory ‘moment’...)) rests in the attention it draws towards that which is now, in the light-and-dark of modernity’s self-mutations and self-mutilations, absolutely unavoidable for all making-toward-art.

Everything that making-for-art now essays, stands for (without ever offering itself as a stand-in representative of and for), and attempts to ‘bring off’, whether it acknowledges this or not, is condemned to take on that which informs and shapes each moment, conditions the context, of its becoming – the mode of representation within which it now seeks to survive. This mode, as the form of ‘our’ living, sets all of us up, sends making and us on our way. It is that which frames and permeates our ‘going through’. The ‘how’ of our passing-through is engineered by an unboundaried technoscience that has abolished end(s); our ‘end’ is now operationalised as an endless human (but becoming-inhuman through technoscience’s disposal of subjectivity) dynamic - the applied calculative representation, ever more fully aestheticised, of everything-without-end. This ‘everything’ is what technoscience repeats as ‘innovation’; its ‘again’ (and again and again and...) is always a new ‘new’ generated under its rule of calculative control. And whilst it is ‘about’ control (controlling energies in the course of their application to productive-consumption), let us not think for a moment that technoscience’s projecting (ever onward...) is remotely controllable, let alone under any ‘one’s’ control.

A singular gesture, or, more precisely, an enactment of the performing-life-as-a-gesturing, inaugurated art’s response to the unprecedented scale of this social mutation. It transplanted into Art’s Body, or perhaps, offered as a prosthetic, the realisation of life’s (and thus art’s) subjection to technoscientific representation and the consequent vital need for the arts to

confront its implications. It opened up and onto the arts' subsequent multiple fragmented pathways through techno-representation's complexities, by insisting that taking on technoscience required performing to explore and cling to art's difference – its elsewhere-becoming. This early implant into the 'genetic code' of modern performers' emergent faltering self-conception, was the life-gesture of Alfred Jarry. It opened up, and itself exemplified, a performing region within which making-for-art could excavate ways out of representation's ever-expanding means of control. It showed how such excavation would have to re-think continually (thus miming technoscience itself but from within its own strangeness), to re-write, its response tactics. The 'point' of this constant turn back through its performing modes would not be the production of some conceptualised 'theory of practice', but would constitute the very tissue, the real materialised interweavings, of performing's engagement of its circumstance (just as the 'sub-subscription' outlined in the last chapter emerged as a writer's response to the later conditions of techno-representation).

It was Jarry's extraordinary prescience, in the hiatus between symbolism and an instituted modern vision, and even before the turn into modernity's own prolific century, to both recognise what art's coming plight would be and to offer the generative, though necessarily encrypted, seeds of a response to it. He showed in his plural-performing both what the arts would have to take on and the kind of paths performing would have to follow to keep art open as a site for possible performance when drawn into modernity's unstoppable, unanticipatable, careering dynamic of all-change, of engineered metamorphosis-without-end.

Everything turned for Jarry on the dissolution of boundaries, especially the always troublesome and finally unlocatable boundary between art and life. He converted his life into an extended performance whose constituting gestures shuttled back and forth between multiple making modes (as play-wright/designer/director/actor/puppet-maker, novelist, poet, graphic artist, magazine editor). Drawing on elements from all these, he transformed his everyday life into an extra-mural theatre. His 'life-as-performance' refused precisely the boundaries insisted upon by the taste institutions and representational conventions seeking both to place art within everyday categories but distance it from other routine sites of action. By elevating, across the range of his performing life, the dream and hallucination (fuelled fatally in the longer term by drink) over ordinary perception he sets in train practically that desired fusion of the day-night, reason-unreason, already pointed to in Rimbaud's poetics of a reasoned deranging of all the senses. In multiple variants this would become a defining concern of the arts' self-conception. Carrying over elements of his dramatic and literary characters (notably Ubu, Dr. Faustroll, and the cyclists) into his daily activities he reveals both the tenuousness and final indistinguishability of the artifices which jointly maintain and strive to keep separate life and art.

But, inflecting all these activities, providing a concisely astute but simultaneously seemingly absurd context for them, was his early articulation and subsequent fragmented modifications of a kind of key to his and to, perhaps, the coming arts' proliferating project. It was a key, however, crucially and *necessarily* lacking a specifiable relation between a goal and the means for achieving it: he named this key, “ *'Pataphysique* ”. Anticipating here subsequent comments on this 'science's' name, I preserve for the moment Jarry's original French coinage and note in passing the derivative “ *'pataphysicien*”, in reference to a character – Dr. Faustroll – from his literary writings. The issue of the name's translatability is, of course, crucial for its subsequent 'life', for conventions of 'faithful' translation require the translator to 'know' what it 'meant', what founded its sense, within the language of its origin. And

translation has to consider more than words, for punctuation marks, and spacing more generally, may function differently between languages; for example, in French an apostrophe marking the absence of a letter or letters is used conventionally before a vowel (plus the breathables ‘h’ and ‘y’) not a consonant. Could it be that the ‘point’ of Jarry’s founding coinage of the ‘science’ of “...’*Pataphysique*” is to confound all such foundings (which are after all what our making of sense, the constitution of ‘meaning’, depends on absolutely)?

Jarry proposes *’Pataphysique* as a science which, in the paradoxical perversity of its stated goal, abolishes the possibility of any ground on which either it or any science-as-we-know-it (our taken-for-granted familiar generator and reassuring guarantor of those empirical knowledges we use in the attempted instrumental control of the ‘natural’ and ‘social’ worlds) could ever establish itself. From the often terse fragments in which he outlines *’Pataphysique* and which seem to give it a conceptual identity, something strange is set under way, something that not only collapses the very possibility of the emergence of such an identity, but may even get in the way of being on the way towards anything which we might gather with confidence to our conventions of science.

Introduced in his earliest published writings (Jarry was only 20) in 1893, *’Pataphysique* undergoes qualifications, shifts of emphasis, rephrasings, in its subsequent unpredictable reappearances. In 1898 in a text not published until 1911, some four years after his death, he defined it as ‘the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments.’ As ‘the science of the realm beyond metaphysics’ it was to study ‘the laws which governed exceptions’, its aim being ‘to explain the universe supplementary to this one.’ Indeed he claimed that the laws already discovered in this ‘traditional universe are themselves correlated exceptions ... or ... accidental facts which, reduced to scarcely exceptional exceptions, don’t even have the advantage of singularity.’⁴ Perhaps we can take the ‘advantage of singularity’ as a reference to art’s absolute commitment to the particular, the singularity – difference – of each gest. And perhaps we can also take it that the ‘universe supplementary to this one’ (the ‘this’ here is elusive for it can be read as referring both to everyday life and the text in which this statement occurs) was Jarry’s merging of the everyday and art. The merging occurred through the perceptions generated by dream and hallucination as the imaginary within which everything had an equivalent reality, no matter how monstrous or dissonant. Such equivalence, when extended to language and, specifically to writing and literature, indirectly anticipated de Saussure’s theory of the sign with its principled claim of the arbitrary relation between the signifier and the signified. For Jarry, the equivalence implied that there could no longer be any privileged, and thus authoritative, reading of a sentence’s, and thus a text’s, ‘meaning’, for ‘the relation of the verbal sentence to every meaning that can be found in it is constant.’⁵ The claim of this constancy plunges our conventions of ‘meaning’, as the site and means through which we can reason our way to valid value-rankings and judgments, into disarray. It turns meaning-making into the tension of a play of multiple singular meanings; all interpretations of an X (text-thing relation) are, in the permanent undecidability of their arbitrary drift, equally (in)valid. Claims to ground and privilege true judgments are suspended from the outset.

⁴ Alfred Jarry, quoted in Roger Shattuck, ‘The Banquet Years’, Vintage, New York, 1968, pp. 241-242.

⁵ Op. cit., p. 240.

Language, as it emerges through speaking and writing in the conventions of grammar and syntax, but approached in the paradoxical 'light' of hallucination, is taken as an open generative space-time bearer. In this opening, attributed 'meanings' arise from the free-play characterising the interpreter-responder's relation to the text/thing. This relation owes as much to the responder's erotic and specific ties to the text, to the specificity of the circumstances of interpreting, and thus to the peculiar attentiveness through which this lives, as it does to the text's/thing's attributed properties. Each text's/thing's life in 'meaning' might then be dependent upon its potential as a generator of multiple response. When perception is inflected by dreaming, reason by its derangement (recalling Rimbaud), the process of general conversion that writes itself through and shapes the perceiving is one of a general fungibility – substitution and displacement. *It proposes that everything can be something else, including its opposite. Identity is bracketed, deferred.* And any emergent context-bound conversion practice, of either maker or respondent, operates aside from a rule or hierarchies of value. All attributions of meaning and value thus arise from the always situationally specific desire and interest-led needs of the attentive interpreter.

And a, perhaps the, defining feature of the arts' life under modernity is the rapid growth and spread of a network of 'interested' art-controlling institutions. This network's project is to find ever new more 'effective' ways of integrating the arts (performing and its gestic) into the surrounding culture's daily life. We have seen how the phantasmagoria, the capitalised dreamworld, of the latter is sustained in a now thoroughly aestheticised consumptive production cycle whose momentum is carried along by the huge investment in and reliance upon the work of technoscience. For technoscience every thing is of interest, of possible relevance to the dreamworld project, only as its machine-potential: a thing's technoscientific value lies solely in its potentiality as a machine or machine-part. Grain of sand, wave, particle, bacterium, dream-image, word, sound, space, whatever, everything is represented by technoscience according to its machine contribution. Along with everything else art is subsumed under this anarchic but general rule. This is the set-up-to-come whose challenges to art Jarry anticipates so perceptively through his *'Pataphysique*.

So the point of remembering Jarry and *'Pataphysique* is, hopefully, neither some quirkily nostalgic gesture nor the submission of an alternative re-historicising of the arts' modernity. Rather it is offered as a suggestion, a gentle reminder perhaps, that art-making and the know-how that invests and carries it through, knew from modernity's earliest days, and aside from all extrinsic aestheticising, precisely what it had to take on and do in the struggle to maintain an outside possibility of secreting shreds of alterity. Performers not only perceived, clearly enough, the crisis that was already defining the situation of making and its reception, but their performing often seemed to display a prescience anticipating precisely the exorbitant transformations in both the significance and the form of representation that soon enough defined the dynamic of modernity itself. This is exactly what Jarry's gestic show, and their 'spirit', their utopic hope for art, surfaces in multiple guises across the playful plurality of modernity's' multiplier. His science of *'Pataphysique* is already a gesture that recognises the urgency of taking on science and taking it out of itself, of turning, bending, its machining from its programme into the matter of art's unreasonable feel for what matters. He staked this as art's responsibility and task.

Nascent modern makers could see (this defined the origination of their response to modernity-as-flux) that their art-making had to explore and to try to find ways to keep on making (and thus celebrating itself) in the maw of the flux. At stake was art's continuity:

could art still be made which retained fragments of independence, its difference, in a homogenising, hybridising culture? For, in engaging art's possibility, performing, in its necessary confrontation with the dissolution of existing securities, boundaries, edges, grounds, and identities (its own and others'), lived out, lived within, exemplified, art's self-displacement. This is what its making performed. It had nowhere to go, nowhere to return to, no retreat. It was left with the residues of its self-questioning. All these could do was to seek an open relation to both art's past and future. Performers could not 'know' whether their things were 'still' art, though they committed themselves profoundly to this vision. Certainly the remnants of performing – its gests - wanted to remember something of art (how it had been), but only if that something could convincingly assert that art had all along been, at heart, self-questioning, self-experimentation (as well as a kind of self-appreciation where the self was that attributed by makers to art and not to themselves): each gest's hope was to suspend the maker's self entirely and have art's 'self' take its place. Performers no longer knew whether they were 'right' in this assertion (there was no 'tradition' to give them this authority), but that was the chance they took. And from then on something had to spark through modern performing, to charge it and keep it going in the face of modernity's storm, its permanent crisis of machined metamorphosis without end.

The Dense Intransigence of 'Pataphysique as Performing's Guide

In a very specific sense Jarry's offer of art, as an intertwining of performance and '*Pataphysique*', is the arcing of just such a charge across the arts' subsequent performing. What performers have done and are doing secretes, rehearses endlessly (necessarily because modernity, even in its post- phase offers no end to itself), tests out the possibilities of this strange combination, puts it to the test aside from conceptualising, entirely as a matter of performing, of how it performs. Performing has risked, and continues to risk, itself to try to find out whether its pursuit of its situation, its circumstances, through the combination still, despite the monstrous changes undergone in modernity's name, meets its plight's needs.

This is not, however, a matter of explicit affiliation or acknowledgment. Clearly there is not, nor has there been, a 'Jarryism', although groups (such as the *Collège de 'Pataphysique*, Oulipo, Outrapo, and the London Institute of 'Pataphysics) have provided rallying sites owing their inspiration to '*Pataphysique*'. Rather, what Jarry offers, through his exemplary singular life-gestures, is a display of both what performers were condemned to take on, as the defining condition of their struggle with and within modernity, and what kind of activity performing has to be as a response. Yes, as already discussed, performing and its offerings have had to show, to expose, themselves as performances of the good of art's hoped-for alterity, its attempted differentiation and separation from everything else in culture. But the necessity and direction of this separating performance arises precisely from the routine effects of the fusing of technoscience and capital through general aestheticisation. The socio-technical machineries emerging out of this fusion generate and sustain our commonsense world. In it our daily life is a life of utterly taken-for-granted relations whose ordering occurs through a systematics of representation. This is the medium (the proliferating plurality of media) and the conduit for all the processes that ensure a generalised, though always finely balanced (as a self-modifying dynamic reliant on monitoring and negative feedback as its resources) and constantly threatened, stability. And the role of technoscience in 'developing' these organising processes, this re-modelling of representation, has become ever more explicit and crucial to the shaping and literal powering of the dynamic. Performing-for-art, like every other kind of activity, is caught up within and dragged along in its deranging (it accepts, works within, no fixed range) catastrophic train.

Unlike everything else, however, making-for-art's very point is to reflexively feel and imaginatively make its ways out of its situation (the realities of representation). The only way performing can seek to become otherwise is by going through representation and offering as its performance something that breaks out on, at, representation's surface. Running across and sinking into all surfaces of daily life, representation's machineries are the real products of technoscience. They are unavoidably what making-for-art takes on in each of its gestures. Implicit in its necessary turning back on and through its situating conditions is performing's urge to take on and break out of representation's controlling restraints. For these work incessantly to appropriate the arts' things and fix them in webs of alien meaning. Thus the challenge of rupturing representation's controls, while caught up within its manifold, emerged as performing's defining project. And this project is exactly what Jarry pre-figures in his commingling of performance and *'Pataphysique*. Anticipating the scale and unavoidable centrality of science's emergent cultural role, he recognises that art's gestures have to take on technoscience. Indeed this is what their situation condemns them to, for whatever they do is already framed by technoscience's increasingly dominant dynamic.

In the face of this challenge art had no option but to re-invent itself as a quasi-science, a cata-science, an experimenting running alongside but in absolute difference to science. But art-as-science could only do what the radicality of the situation (modernity as the permanent crisis of the 'now', the 'is') called for by turning science out of itself. Performing would be the 'science' whose 'object' (both subject matter and target) and 'method' (the know-how and the reflexive turn combined) were to perform that which was other to science as it was conventionally practised and understood. Performance and *'Pataphysique* (performing-as-'pataphysical) were to display art's science-aside-from-science, art-as-'patascience, a science breaking out of and undoing itself in the process. Perhaps the most each performance could hope for would be to leave behind fragments showing its attempted rupture of the logos of representation, of the ground rules for forming the knowledges sustaining technoscience's systematicity. These rules would always be at work, 'behind' and sustaining the entire 'apparatus' of technoscience's theoretical-practice, in the languaged ways technoscience sought to conjoin its conceptualising with the matters ('nature' as a bottomless resource for productive 'work') from which it constitutes its 'object of knowledge'. Art's performances might just, under the 'right' conditions (the need for trusting respondents willing to give themselves up to the remnants) be able to point to the surd of the a-logos, the catalepsy, of the Nothing of that which encases the all too meaningful world of representation. By standing aside from any privileged reading, *'Pataphysique* equalises interpretations, and thus casts both science and art as performances adrift in and moving across and through each other in a common medium, a medium without boundaries enabling any final separation of performances. Performance becomes the play of differences in advance of any value other than this play.

Certainly Jarry's gnomic paradoxical sketch notes for *'Pataphysique*, often occurring within the context of his wider 'literary-dramatic' practice, can in no way be taken as a conceptual frame for 'explaining' the extraordinary multiplying plurality of art practices under modernity's continuing rule. But they do, retrospectively, provide a kind of *unheimlich* home, an outside site, for this self-exiling crowd that is always already hostage to the powers of representation. The thrust of Jarry's notes, their imploding unfixable 'sense', point to what it might be that continually draws (seduces...?) performers toward their own unplaceability, a region where they may just make representation dissolve a little.

The strange truncated congeries of irreconcilable terms proffered by Jarry, keeping their absolute distance from any grounding site for a planned programme of action, of methodic research-into-knowledge, gesture, nevertheless, towards what art might be taking on in trying to outwit representation on its own terms. Apparently mimicing an analytical mode of self-presentation, his *'Pataphysique* almost immediately suspends any coherent space within which we might be tempted to try to gather their 'meaning' as recipe for the performance of art (or anything else). As elements in a rhetorical gesture, a performative, in the service of art they do, they perform, what they appear to want to show – that art is to be had only where no (common)sense may be. The 'science' will be in that experience of not-knowing, the undoing of knowing, a leading out or withdrawal from, for which a gest's gesturing is responsible: the knowingness of knowing one doesn't know - how this becomes intrinsic to performing's know-how. This, *'Pataphysique* seems to say-perform-show, is what art's self-exposure is about. And it is the name of this a-conceptual (though utterly thought-full and far from acephalous) 'science', this de-discipline, which, in its self-suspension, perhaps even self-dissolution, gives its own game half-away.

What does this name perform both in Jarry's texts and in its subsequent 'use' by its protagonists and antagonists? Is it a label for a possible fieldless field and trajectory of exploration-to-come? Could it, simultaneously, be both coming into and undermining its ownmost?

Above all, in its very patent weakness (it allows, for it has no option according to its rule of equivalence, all-comers to treat it how they like) it is very heavily defended. So heavily that, like an unassailable barbican that protects itself by withdrawing, it simply will not be taken. It ex-cepts itself. Nor does it want itself to 'take', to appropriate, anything. In its recession from all attempts to grasp it, to give it an identity, we soon begin to recognise that even referring to it as an 'it' is entirely problematic. For, as withdrawal, recession, disappearance, it does not, cannot, 'take place'. 'It' has no interest in taking over some place in order to establish and defend a secure ground for a programme-to-come. If 'it' is given a place this is always a place set up according to the interests of the place-givers setting 'it' to work there, according to their own analytic and aestheticising interests. In 'its' retreat 'it' anathematises, or at the very least suspends, place as we know it. It seems that the 'science' 'it' offers would be entirely devoted to displacing.

Even though it is to be the 'science' that 'studies the laws which govern exceptions', it makes an exception of itself, exempts, ex-cepts, itself in advance from whatever laws some might think of generating in its name. It begins, then, by showing us that it is the exception that both confirms and undoes its own rule. In this, of course, it draws our attention too to a constitutive feature of every named domain of scientific or other inquiry – that the name, in pointing to such a region, seeks to suggest its coherence and identity, rests on something which nothing within that field, nothing done in its name, can explain; it comes from elsewhere, beyond the field to whose boundaries it gestures and seeks to control. Through such acts of privileged self-exemption, such gestures of withdrawal, a field's supposed identity is undone and the vagueness of its 'limits' are radically exposed.

But the title *'Pataphysique* does much more (and perhaps infinitely less) than this. For, irrespective of the direction in which interpretations and translations may seek to take it, something seemingly trivial, very small (so small that it is frequently not only overlooked but

also omitted), gets in the way, something that lays waste every attempt to even articulate, to say (though not to write) it. And it may be that this tiny obstacle is also intrinsic to what we have come, however haltingly and disquietingly, to recognise in that very vagueness and necessary exteriority to our understanding, as the arts of modernity. The obstacle is that little mark that precedes the ‘word’ *Pataphysique* as a written text, and as you will have remarked here, it already appears bare, exposed, lacking, without it...

Is this so-positive mark, that can only appear graphically (it cannot, lacking all equivalence, be spoken), a punctuation mark? Certainly it punctures from the beginning all attempts either to fix the ‘meaning’ of the sequence of letters (*pataphysique*) that follow it, or to take the ‘word’ (but is it a word...?.... only if, against all the evidence, we, in our usual hurry, so decide) – *pataphysique* – as the name of a definable field of inquiry. In the ‘light’ (and the wake and the space immediately in front of and surrounding it) of this mark we cannot even assume that the letters following it do constitute a ‘word’, although as a pronounceable sequence they offer all the appearance of such. If we do take it as a punctuation mark then, far from offering us a guide to its own identity or function, its enjambment with the letters leaves us suspended irresolvably between multiple possibilities.

In its allotted position the mark mimes the work of punctuation, while avoiding, as part of this mime, a specific punctuating function. In its utterly passive resistance to ‘meaning’, it punctuates, punctures, punctuation itself by severing it, in spite of its enjambment, from the sequent letters. For, despite its appearance as a conventional punctuation mark, it offers us only itself-as-mark. It is a mark that could either have multiple referents (punctuation marks) or no referent other than the spacing that it performs in its pre-fixed conjunction with the P.

In the unspeakability that its graphism performs it shows phonetic writing’s active absencing of the very voice that, as the textualising of meaning, it relies on absolutely. While insisting that *’Pataphysique* can only ever be written and must remain unspoken, silent, it nevertheless sets it down after the mark as a phonetic sequence that has to be spoken aloud or to oneself to generate any ‘sense’ at all. It confounds the representation of ‘sense’. Each time we so pronounce it, sense appears to be somewhere thereabouts, but in the very pronouncing it teeters and evaporates. And, if we do try to constitute the mark as really, all along, a ciphered punctuation mark that has to be decoded if we are to find the ‘true’ sense of *’Pataphysique*, then the mutually exclusive alternatives immediately stymie any such search. We reach a ‘stalemate’ (a *’pat*’ in French...or in German, homophonically, a *’patt*’).⁶

Could this para/cata-punctuation mark be an apostrophe, the conventional function of which is to mark an omission, usually of letters, but also, in the case of the possessive genitive, to mark the absence of words denoting possessive ‘belonging to’? But in *’Pataphysique* it is jammed up against a consonant enabling no obvious candidate to fill in for an omission. And, if translated into English as *’Pataphysics*, the typographical convention of the possessive genitive for a plural noun would be to leave a space after the apostrophe rather than running the two words together (the horses’ *Pataphysics*, rather than, the horses’*Pataphysics*, or the horses *’Pataphysics*...). In the context of a speech or a poem, an apostrophe is, recalling its Greek etymology (*apo strephos* - a ‘turn-away’), also a turning away from a text’s main concern to address someone, something, absent; it enacts an aside to the text’s thrust. If such

⁶ Perhaps we can take Duchamp’s gesticulations, remembering his deep involvement with chess, as themselves performative ‘stalemates’.

literary apostrophising marks an absence, then, here strangely enjambed to the P, but perhaps marking the absence of a preceding interruption or aside, it seems to invite us to insert that (whatever) whose absence it may be marking. Yet it gives us no clues as to where to begin to look for the ‘right’ restoration. Our substituting options range from treating the entire history of the world as the unspeakable absence short-handed by the mark, to offering something absolutely specific but unknowable, some random substitution for a now lost content.

Perhaps it could be read as a quotation mark inaugurating a quotation beginning with the word Pataphysics; but if so there is no matching quotation mark to close the quote and this could not account for the quirk of reversing the mark’s ‘form’ (for typographically it shares the same shape as a quotation-ending apostrophe). With the enjambment it hardly seems likely to be marking the closure of an absent preceding quotation, for why might one jam such a quote up against what followed it? It might even be a dysfunctional raised comma or a comma fallen from a (missing) line above...

So once we do attend to this unnamable mark, once we read *it*, rather than avoiding its ungiving and unforgiving blankness and just rushing along to pronounce Pataphysics on its own, as if it were completely unattached, we are confronted with a field-force of resistance that does, all too graphically, qualify what follows it. It does something to and with *’Pataphysique*, but we don’t know what. Perhaps it entirely undoes the sequence that follows, making that succession unclaimable, a conglomerate without justifying links. Except that, thanks to the mark, the science of *’Pataphysique*, in not remaining plain, speakable, pataphysics, is marked out from the beginning in its difference as something phonic allied to and dependent on a silent graphism. *’Pataphysique* is, it seems, that science, exceptional to science as we thought we knew it, that hovers, resolutely irreconcilable, in-between ‘worlds’.

Perhaps this, then, is what Jarry’s texting performs: it offers us the Body of Art as that exceptional hovering that makes a gap-between without ever taking (a) place. It enacts itself, holding itself (or, rather ‘its’ absence of a coherent centering) together and apart through making immiscibles almost combine. Writing and speaking, sighting and sounding, extension and process, distant and near, are brought up against and alongside each other in and as art’s gestures.

That this is hard for instruments of sense-making (meaning) to deal with is shown in the common response of those wonderful but phonetically governed resources – dictionaries. *’Pataphysique* (in French and in its translations), if allocated a dictionary place, is invariably entered as if it began with a ‘p’. Unsurprisingly (for this would throw the entire dictionary logic aside) it is rare for the mark to appear as prefix in dictionary entries. After all if it were an apostrophe it might be more appropriately entered amongst the ‘a’s’... Blind to, or deliberately suppressing, the confounding implications of the mark’s inclusion, dictionaries thus place and define it as if it were *pataphysique*, and they often confound the problem by making the first capitalised letter in the sequence (P) lower case. Yet, of course, alphabetical sequencing offers no space for punctuation marks without transforming them into their phonetic name. In *’Pataphysique* the unnamable mark, recognisable as mark, but an exiled mark, spaces itself aside from any alphabet, any sounding out. It confounds what, unthinkingly, we may take as the space (spacing) of writing.

At the very least the mark must make us pause before and test out the phonemes that follow it to see if they can give us a purchase on its qualifying gesture. Tiny, almost nothing, perhaps

even performing Nothing in its definite undecidability, this conjunction of mark and P, through what it sets before and opens up for us, is Jarry's world-shaking gesture without precedent. It simultaneously inaugurates an elsewhere for the art to come, and points to how this elsewhere will be art's response to the real-world forces (technoscience-capital) shaping its circumstances, the context in which it has to make its way. For, from within art (Jarry as writer-dramaturge-performer) it effects an implicating of art with science, thus gesturing towards a nascent project – an as yet open and still empty possibility of an otherwise-science. In the fragmented ways Jarry himself enacted and exemplified it, it was already an art-full knowing-how whose utopic point, its destiny, is to lead science, and thus the culture ordered by and around technoscience, astray, out of itself. As a performative, saying by doing, it shows (does-says) both the necessity of its proximity to and the difference that art might make to technoscience. For the latter is constitutionally prevented from making any such move for itself. Jarry's convoluting of art with science in this exceptional way inaugurates a trajectory, a moving plane, for all the art-making performances to come under modernity. Underwriting all the movements, 'isms', schools, groups, individuals, manifestoes and similar gestications, it points to an inner dynamic, a force-field of attractions and repulsions, what has held together in an always fragile (in)coherence, the extraordinary array of differences that subsequently comprised modernity's art-making. And it floats this necessarily across an unknowable region, a some-where unboundaried in terms of our space-time measurement conventions. It is a regioning locatable only as the performance of metamorphosis itself – art as a movement of endless exploratory undoing of its circumstances, its contextual dependence.

Thus the mark effecting art's taking up with science (the *-physique*/physics following almost immediately) is the precedent, the directing fixing pre-fix which comes from nowhere, hovers over nothing identifiable. It is a silence over an absence – the unnamable that confounds, holds up (as both permanent support and infinite delaying tactic) everything that might follow it. After this gesture, art, in complete silence (secrecy?) and on its own terms, can be read (but not heard) as taking on science. Art henceforth becomes, insinuates itself unbeknownst as, an otherwise-science, the very point of whose a-conceptual terms is the avoidance of all conceptual-analytical (structural) attempts at placement or identity-conferral, let alone any causal-determinate, probability-dependent chains of association, or ties to functional productive projects for the transformation of nature-culture. There is not much here to destine art for its subsequent academic 'career'...

What, then, of the letters, the phonemes, following the mark, that eventually seem to point to, to take us right up to the science Jarry attached to art's abysmal silence? Between and conjoining the mark (art) and *physique*/physics (science?) are p a t a, pa-ta, pat-a, pata. As 'pata' it seems to mime, to echo, other prefixes of Greek origin (meta, cata, and para for instance). And 'pata' in its transfer from its original Greek to its Latin use meant an 'edge' or 'border' being used in a variety of place names, Apollo, for example, being given the surname 'Patareus' after the town of Patara which housed his oracle. Perhaps this oblique connection to the ancient Greek cosmogony was hinted at in Jarry's definition of his project as 'beyond metaphysics' (a meta-metaphysics that lay at the edge or borders of physics just as the letters graphically preceded it?). Laying the mark to one side we might thus be tempted to read pata as doing the work of this doubling of beyond – pointing to that which was the beyond of the beyond-of-physics. But other affinities of pata crowd out any such simple imposition. And, remembering the phonetics of the French original, the 't' is a homophone for the 'th' of 'pathos' in which the 'h' remains silent. Perhaps the subsequent

physique/physics is being qualified as a feeling-suffering, even a sick diseased body/process/practice inviting sympathy, a sympathy already pre-fixed by the mark of art. And *pata*, in its various Greek and Latin etymons hints not only to edging, but to opening, exposing, and to a body's foot, and even, perhaps, by extension, to paternity (to 'pater's' *physique*/physique or physics...). Also echoing these is the impressing amazing shock of 'pat' in 'epater' which might just knock physics off its perch, set it back. Or again, should the mark denote an absent 's', the homophonic 'th' of 'spath' with that silent 'h' again, might, as a crystalline mineral spar, be easily extended into a spear with which to lance physics or, at the least, to spar, have a spat, with it.

It seems as if Jarry with his 'pata' is not only forestalling any closure or restriction of the prefix by simple substitution or translation. Rather it performs an opening that encourages an unclosable plurality of possibilities. Its very point as gesture is to show by this unreadability, by the necessary ambiguity of its untranslatable specificity, that, in this art-as-science, the relation between art's mark and science has to be kept open as a zone of free-play. The 'science' of art's response to science, being the 'science' whose 'object of art-full know-how' is the 'exception', can only proceed by being, on each occasion of making, itself exceptional (aside from all rules, laws, generalisations and typifications). For its point is to show the particularity of its response to the conjunction of its desire for art and the situationally specific contingencies within which it has to act. Jarry perceived acutely that science had now become crucial to the quality of these contingencies. It was what art had to take on, however obliquely, if it was to be true to its situation, its plight. But by seeming to direct us, in his compound 'Pataphysique, towards a specific science – *physique*/physics – Jarry further frustrates attempted fixings and localisings of the proposed science. For 'physique' in French is homonymically both physics as a sub-specialism of natural science and physique – a body's perceptible condition and development.

While retaining the reference to nature of its Greek etymology (*physis*), 'physique' stubbornly resists an unequivocal translation into the physics of the natural sciences. It hovers between the body's appearance and analysis of its and nature's supposedly fundamental constituting processes. Held up in this way we cannot make an unambiguous move on behalf of Jarry's science from appearance to reality. 'Pataphysics (note the phonetic-graphic shifts and losses in its seemingly straightforward translation) thus ensures in its very compounding that we are forever disposed and dispersed between irreconcilable possibilities.

Even if we do hold to '*physique*' as the practice of the science of physics, we know from the outset that all prefixes effect modifications, re-routeings, of what they supplement. Here " 'Pata' re-directs physics, as the analysis of nature's elementary matter and processes, towards necessarily unmarkable zones and paths. This science of imaginary solutions, already incomprehensible, is made even stranger by its apparent detachment from any definable realm of either analytical or practical problems (other than those 'beyond metaphysics'). Yet physics itself was already a nascent techno-physics and was soon to become ever more intimately intertwined with the political-economic interests focussed around the management of modernity's dynamic (and especially the relation between political and economic power and the control and application of energy sources). Thus, while physics has been ever more deeply caught up, and unavoidably so, in the practical technical problems of its application, 'Pataphysics seemed to perform an inversion and a displacement of just such technoscientific projects. For if the exceptions, whose governing 'laws' it seeks, constitute a universe 'supplementary to this one', then the imaginary solutions constituting the focus of

'Pataphysics (its 'objects of knowledge' as 'know-how') could have no connection with the very real interests investing in physics. Indeed as, for 'Pataphysics, it seems to be the solutions that precede the problems, then it is a science without a problematic, and, as such, is unique, itself the one exception among the sciences.

However obliquely, Jarry is showing us that this science whose objects, imaginary solutions, are already exceptions, is none other than art. As imaginary solutions, art's objects are virtual because they 'belong' to a universe 'supplementary' to our everyday reality (that is to say, they 'belong' nowhere-in-particular). And is not art that very performance which symbolically attributes these objects' properties to, in Jarry's phrase, their 'lineaments'? Is not every performing precisely the shaping, setting down, and sending forth, something (its imaginary solution) in the lineaments, the characteristic features marking out the particularities, of a medium or media? Performing's struggle is exactly to release something, the distinctive qualities of whose lines ('lineaments') mark it out as an exception to any rule of use. *And this very struggle is performing's only, its defining, problem.* It does not exist outside of, in advance of, its doing. It is the performing itself that is the first-and-last, the only, problem of making-toward-art. This problem does not, cannot, emerge from, and is not a response to or development of any conceptual framework; unformulatable, underivable, it is this 'from nothing' that causes all the trouble, is the only problem –*but only for the performer alone.* In art it is the gesticulations, the imaginary solutions, that come first (all the conceptualising, the aesthetics, come afterwards). But they only come first in the course of an eternally problematic performing. For this being-performed is a 'searching (and waiting) for' that seeks to loosen the ties, to disaggregate, to dissolve (as a solvent on the way to a solution), the 'things' that first set it on and continue to hold it to searching's track. They are the inescapable things binding it to art. If it is lucky something will be released by the performance that will provide a temporary solution, a brief dissolution, of their unreasonable (circumstantial) ligatures.

Making-for-art, then, is this perverse two-in-one whose only problem, its defining trouble, is that it has to search for what makes the search itself a problem. And what makes the searching such a problem throughout modernity, and never more so than 'now', is the trouble of finding something left, some fragment, some supplement, of and for art in a world (this one...) whose machinery works without end to withdraw art from itself, to hybridise it, to erase the boundaries that might just keep it as an exception (to everybody else's rule), as something over there, just out of reach. Jarry's proposed science is, then, nothing less than art itself. It is for an art-to-come whose performing might just be able to constitute an otherwise-science, a performance setting itself aside from and showing it as an exception to the insistent ruling dynamic of calculative reason's work in the service of extreme representation.

Ex-Ception... Under Appropriative Re-Ception's Placing Work

In this strange insecure underwriting (from the mark showing its origin as an absence through the scattered possibilities of the subsequent phonemes) Jarry's '*Pataphysique* draws us into the challenges faced by all subsequent making-toward-art. For, installed in the word's heartless heart is the very unfixability intrinsic to our experience of modernity itself – the unstoppable dynamic of change, managed ever more explicitly in the drive of capital's technoscience. It shows us that performing has to be acutely attentive to both its absent origin and to where it is (to its experience of the circumstances enveloping it). In this attention to its surroundings performing sees that *it has to begin in the midst.* In their discussion of 'the refrain', Deleuze and Guattari draw on Dupreel's theory of 'consolidation' which argues that

‘life’ goes not from ‘a center to an exteriority’ but from ‘a discrete or fuzzy aggregate to its consolidation’, and they relate this to creativity. Consolidation implies,

‘...that there is no beginning from which a linear sequence would derive, but rather densifications, intensifications, reinforcements, injections, showerings...’

Further, consolidation,

‘is not content to come after; it is creative. The fact is that the beginning always begins in-between, intermezzo.’⁷

This in-between is exactly where art lives out its plight through its consolidation of the intensifications in whose midst it ‘finds’ itself. From within this absolute intimacy with things, this being-in-amongst, being immersed, its (‘Pataphysical’) hope and aim (quite distinct from those of the technoscience that now orders our days) is to ex-cept itself, its gestic. The only law sought by performing’s so peculiar science is the rule of the one-off, the singularity, the this-one, for which it is searching demonically on every performing occasion. This ex-ception emerges, if performing gets that far along the way, as the gesture which the gest performs on its release in the face of representation. It has to try, against all the odds, to hold to, to offer and show itself as this thing alone in its particularity. But *it does this knowing full well, as a result of its ex-posing turn, that the machinery of representation is set up to transform it into one of a kind, a typification, an example.* It is initiated into culture through processes whose point is to collect and locate it within articulated knowledge frameworks (structures of and for interpretation). Such structures are now diluted and diffused through the cultural body by the machinery of generalised interpretation. Designed precisely to find, abstract, and construct the knowable in the midst of the unknown, the frameworks live through their placing and classifying activities to which everything is subjected.

In the course of the journey from performers to gatherers and classifiers (archivists...) art’s gestic are transformed, through the latter’s typifications, into accredited, named and placed members. From their emergence as, hopefully for their performers, ex-ceptions, they pass into acceptance as con-ceptions that prove the iron rule, the guarantee of knowledge-making’s interpretive work. Caught up, in their inherent weakness, in the play of the -cepting they are unable to offer themselves as anything but sus-ceptible. For the success of knowledge-construction, the routine work of response and re-ception, is founded and eternally renewed through its taking over (of whatever-things) according to its own interests. The point of this appropriation is to convince its audiences that it has established and secured the terms through which *the place of everything can be calculated.* Whatever its realm (the specific set of the objects of knowledge it gathers and interrelates) it seeks to confirm, through the iterability of its methods and rhetoric, that it knows and can show how its objects of knowledge take place. This -cepting of place is its founding work. And simultaneously, every performance of its calculative task reaffirms the place that it has taken for itself as a site of now taken for granted cultural authority.

Yet it can only claim to show how its things take place (conceptually, instrumentally, and perhaps experimentally in the natural technosciences) by having already ruled both what ‘place’ (and thus ‘a’ place) ‘is’, and also what counts as ‘taking’ (-cepting): the cuts it makes show ‘place’ as the site within a conceptual network where a thing (its – the interpretation’s – thing) comes to rest in order to be, to remain, the thing that ‘it is’ (as a conceptual ‘object’). ‘Place’, as this ground constructing work of each technoscientific ‘discipline’, enables the

⁷ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, ‘A Thousand Plateaux’, Athlone, London, 1988, pp. 328-329.

affirmation, the acceptance, of any 'thing's' identity. It is where it will be stabilised and be able to live up to, to hold to, its name. It thus enables conceptualising, as the naming-placing of an object of knowledge, to construct and maintain a set of relations, a structure-in-process, that defines its bounded 'field' of operations, a field distinguished by the cut, and thus abyss, its name makes between itself and other knowledge-fields, its and others' speech (logos, -ology). It is precisely the spread, the mingling, and the generative effects of such fields, together with their routine re-organisation of everyday activities around a world-representing machinery, that Jarry's *Pataphysique* both anticipates and seeks to distance itself from. In taking on science and turning it 'back' through itself via his inversions, he reconstitutes it according to his and art's requirements. Opened, stretched, out in this way *Pataphysique* points to the necessity of keeping alive art's possibility as a turning aside, away, from any place to which the surrounding cultural interests seek to allocate it.

Any turning away, any interruptive cut, now has to be done from somewhere (the allocated 'place') already deep within representation's folds, within the appropriating organisations' day-to-day operations ensuring the public emergence of some of performing's gests. The machinery works to ensure the arts' indebtedness for their only opportunity for appearing and surviving; they live on within the evolutionary (art as a continuous tradition) narratives that so carefully put them in their places. But to hold on to fragments of a "Pataphysically" energised desire for otherness in such a context obliges making to turn itself out, to turn 'against' what it is endlessly and routinely required to become. To except itself, in order to make for the other site bequeathed it in the moderns' legacy, it has to undergo, to put itself through, a significant transformation. At the least it has to develop tactics which acknowledge the tension defining its everyday life: to make for some kind of without, while carried along, represented, by organisations whose goal is to fix its withinness on their terms. The moderns' reflexive turn, with its focus on the celebratory questioning relation between subjectivity and the tradition's legacy, falls well short of the subsequent institutional fate of art under extreme representation.

In facing up to appropriation and hybridisation it is no longer enough for performing to turn back through a presumed 'self', as if its secret (the source of the cut that would make it decisively singular, an exception) is lodged somewhere 'within' this self. For this self has itself been, is being endlessly, torn apart and undergoing continuous reconstruction as a constitutive feature of modernity itself. Constantly prostheticised (and thus re-presented) by modernity's machinery, we are not what we were. And this 'not' is definitive of the experience of living through modernity, for the point of the programme of continuous technoscientific experimentation is precisely not to inaugurate a new singular identity. It is, rather, to break down *without end* its objects and reassemble them (us) in *ad hoc* (always just for the time being) forms, according to the intertwined demands of the research's organising concepts and the practical interests of its supporting institutions.

Performing's only recourse, if it is to maintain anything (however small) of its outward drive, is to find ways of implanting waving elements that perform distancing: it has to insert that which might still just show its distance from both the kind of identity constructed by technoscience (subservient to representation's consumptive-production), and the now lost and scattered singular self of tradition. The challenge is to show that its gests are not beholden to the demands of calculative thought and institutional ends, *even though it is bound to them for its very survival*. Condemned to begin with and within their language and forms, it has to find ways of performing that move beyond and aside from these and, in the process, interrupt the

machinery's temporary but authoritarian fixings of self and identity. The context-specific tactics of such performing-otherwise may run the gamut from pretend alliances to outright confrontation; thus embattled, performing can only make-out through pseudo-alliances to which it commits itself as the only way of taking on its trap. It can only make-toward-art by finding ways of disengaging, however temporarily, representation's hold over it, of releasing itself and thus, potentially, its respondents, from the insinuations of the taken for granted knowledges that underwrite its relations to world and to others. Somehow it has to find, undo, and show its undoing of, some of the ways its own and Art's Body have been and are being continually re-assembled and sent on their way by alien interests. In order to release elements that might just make off, temporarily, to a not-here-in-this-way it may need to encourage rents, tears and holes across its surfaces, the surfacings that are its always tentative syntactic formings.

Ex-Ception Takes on the Machined Flow of Standing-in-for

The targets of this aside-and-out-of-itself would be those constituting tracks of representation's *modi operandi*, its appropriating frames and processes, upon which performing had become dependent in the emergence and development of its practical know-how. Dependence here refers to the initially inevitable unquestioning reliance on facilities, resources, materials, processes, and interpretations that, remorselessly permeating the sinews of performing, inflect the qualities of its emergent gests. They will be matters that facilitate and serve the current phase of representation's overarching project – *the unstoppable revolutionary proliferation, through the collusion of capital and technoscience, of the means of standing-in-for, of the displacement and controlled mediation of 'the present' as transmissible information, in and as an imaging-sounding-texting-informing.*

These means are focussed currently on the development of machineries for the transmission and reception of 'information' (currently dominated by digitised codings of presence/absence) across every corporeally derived and experienceable medium – audio-visual-nasal-haptic-(un-)conscious-genetic. The representational project is to find ways of standing-in-for every corporeal dimension of 'sensing-thinking-relating': experiencing-existing – the feel of relating and the relay of feeling. Through its machinery these are transposed into the 'signs' of 'sense', now in the form of digitised relayable information. Our knowledges are constituted in these sense-making substitutions: Language is re-formed under digitisation as the bearer of discrete signs of information which can be sent on their way virtually to wherever (anywhere where there is a re-ceptive machine). Corporeal-becoming is displaced, turned into information-bearing signs through machined processes of substituting-representing designed to re-present life, but only virtually.

The entire machinery of now digitised representation is dependent on the generation, and the supply as a continuous controlled constant flow of energy (electricity as heat-light, as *power*) to the representing machines. Sense-as-digitised-readable-information emerges 'from' this flow through the most acute control of 'switching'. Programming, as the production of digitised signs, works by the diversion, the re-direction, of the flow through its junctions where the current alternates between 1 and 0, on-off, presence-absence. Whatever is transmissible (seeable-hearable-touchable) emerges out of this digitised conversion. Representing 'lives' in and through this seemingly instantaneous sending; it occurs at a speed far beyond the sensing and willed manipulating capacity of our corporeal bio-energy. To offer us the readable hearable signs the flow has to be maintained, held very steady, so that we can recover them at the so slow speeds of our bio-energy. The inhuman time-speed of the

electricity-silicon circuitry is manipulated – machined – to enable us to make our sense of what we see-hear through the seemingly fixed digitised signs.⁸

This flow is thus the taken for granted condition of the maintenance of all sites and processes of contemporary power and work. It is representation's formal possibility and its actuality as we now 'live' it. It fuses us with representation: such is the enormity of systematic and extreme representation that simultaneously shapes and confronts performing (and everything else). Our 'everything' is sustained on its terms even though in our real corporeal becoming (the pathos – pains-joys – of our everyday life) we feel absolutely separate from it. Nevertheless it couldn't be more proximate; its waves pass through us without cease.

Any retention by performing of the ability and drive to risk itself, in the face of and against the technoscientific charge and its alliances, is a tribute to the vision developed by the early moderns through their perspicacity and feelings for art's nascent possibilities. They saw exactly where the challenge to art was coming from and dedicated their making to discovering and testing out the idiosyncratic know-how of their medi(a)um. The cunning of their emergent visions, already inaugurated and pre-figured as a matter of tactics in *'Pataphysique*, situates performing's struggle in the closest proximity to representation's systematics; they take on representation's machinery obliquely in order to drain it off, draw it out of itself, and dissolve in the transposition to art's elsewhere: to point beyond the calculative to other possibilities for becoming. Art stakes itself between the inhuman speed of the calculated flow (as the flow of calculation itself?) and the feelings of our context-bound bio-becoming. To remain as art, to hold to possible grains of its 'as-such', it has nowhere else to go.

If Jarry opens us toward an emergent art-as-a-cata-science, he does so in a performance that shows this ex-cepting science as unnamable. It is an otherwise-science whose 'domain', with its know-how, its objects of meta-knowledge, is precisely already several. Unidentifiable, without identity (though for art this is not a lack and thus something it is 'short' of), beyond and outside of knowledge and metaphysics, making-for-art immerses itself in the play of naming itself, detaching its 'selves' from the possibility of being identified with, and thus being named according to, a 'field' and an object of knowledge. It refuses the identity of a 'logos', while taking on, exploring, the relation between calculative logos and the pathos of our bio-becoming. We have seen already that, in the multiple it offers, Jarry's 'naming' - *'Pataphysique* - enacts a turning aside from any singular gathering. In doing this it draws us into both its own ex-cepting and into the very 'thing' art-performing has to confront and to challenge as its condition of survival – the machine, the machinery-that-represents.

As coinage, invention, apparent combination of different (incompatible?) elements gathering a surd-science of one-offs, performing projects itself forth from the "'Pataphysical" lineage. Each one-off aims to be a singular founding confounding performance that remembers art as possibility in trying to move out of and beyond what has been done in and gathered under its name by the machinery of representation. It seeks to make its gesture-for-art effective, to ex-pose itself as this gesturing, in its residue – its gest. But what it gestures is undecidability.

⁸ The issues raised here concerning the consequences of the now routine digitisation of representation for the 'life' of performing and its gests are considered at greater length later; see p. 476 et seq.

As itself homophonic pun, '*Pataphysique* gestures toward a region without foundation where an in-between science tries to live-on, survive, quite ex-ceptionally, in and through paronomasia. *The only 'science' that can get going, get on with its 'life', in performing undecidability, in making as the bringing-forth of undecidables, is art.* For art and its gesticulations are the remembrance and the doing of an in-between on behalf of a not-yet. They hover in a desert of betweens, holding together, temporarily, undecidables. In the homophonic homographic pun that is '*Pataphysique* we are suspended, doubled, multiplied, between the visible (seeing and the gaze-becoming-reading), the sayable (hearing, speaking, ear and mouth), and the touchable (writing and the 'physical'). Singly or in combinations, these may generate visceral affects through the quality of performers' and respondents' attentive engagement. They emerge quite independently of and are not tied to the machined sustenance and form of digitised signs. To get 'anywhere' with such a gesturing we (performers and respondents) have to -cept ourselves out of the monologues, the identities, of everydayness, into the 'wherever' of an unboundaryable multiple. To pass into this multiple is to be drawn together into the conjuncting-disjuncting flows, streaming along in their otherness, to perform the very con-tracting that is art's task. Art, as the unidentifiable always-more-than-one, holds (and 'holes' as secret refuge) itself up in the nearness (para-) of names (onoma) that can never coincide in a 'one'. The many gathered in every performing emerge 'together' in the singularities effected, each time differently, as this compounding composing gesture. But the gesturing, what the performing has released as its offer, in its very ex-posing, deposes, discomposes, itself. As the doubling up of manyness, it withdraws, ex-tracts, con-tracts, itself out from identity.

Perhaps, then, in showing us art in this way, in offering us this more-than-one, '*Pataphysique* as readable hearable gesture effects performing's separation from the machine, from the machinery (material and social) through which science eternally technologises itself in its ferrying back and forth between speculation, research-grounded conceptual knowledge, and the 'practical problems' (institutionally defined and managed) of everyday life. Through its gesticulations art shows us that it cannot be subsumed within rule, system, reasoned structure, or identity. Rather, in its effects it withdraws us from our containment in the institution of the machine, and the machinery of institutions through which our everyday lives are routinely worked out. What the arts offer us in the faces of the machine and of the systematics of planning, designing, fixing and reproducing (from which every machine emerges), is the trajectory of a process that, as performance, passes perforce (the all too real contextual demands) by way of the machine. It passes through the machine to insinuate, hopefully, a gesture that wants to show a beyond that is beyond the machine's grasp. To do this it has, as happens with its relation to the name, to be both very near and infinitely distant, right next to and in-volved (turning inside) with the machine(s), but absolutely elsewhere, withdrawn from its place and use. It gets right up to the machine, perhaps clamping itself temporarily to its outside, turning it out of its functionality into a surd machine, in order to point up the absurdity of its own containment there, the absolute mismatch of itself and machine.

But of course it can only do this *in passing*, as an inclusive tactic necessary to its parlous living-on. As aggregates of 'one-offs', the gathered gesticulations, in the weakness of their 'intermezzo' status, can never perform a Trojan horse tactic that enables their peers to take over the 'city' (machine). The 'escape' each gesture seeks to embody somewhere within its folds, the desert to which it points, is always a virtual withdrawal arising in the thought-feel of a respondent's being taken out of circulation (ex-cepted) by it. The point and hope of the gesture, then, is to show the how-why of its otherness to the machine. As gesture, its *telos* is to

persuade, through the performer's know-how, the machine to give itself away, to accept that, in passing, it is being devoted in spite of itself to a subliminal confounding of its founding functions. In diverting, here and there and every now and again, the machine from its programme, its one-track, the gesture's pointless (because mired in its own weakness) point is to make the machine pointless, to open up its latent multiple, to decline paronomastically.

Every machine thus becomes for art a site of potential punning. It offers opportunities to turn the oneness of its informational frame and dedicated programme out of themselves toward the undecidability from which art may emerge. Performing's challenge to itself is to find, disclose, and celebrate the latent manyness which the one of the machine's plan, its dedicated life, is designed to occlude. Constructed and set to work to serve, to represent, an interest external to their routine functioning, machines dedicate their applied productivity to a here-and-now use. But art makes for a utopian, perhaps a para- (or "'Pata-...') utopian", ...not-yet. In the face and teeth of the machine it feels, through and as its own surfacings, its way toward whatever traces of not-machine are secreted within it. Its searches devote its seeing-hearing-touching-tasting to prising fragments of the multiple that every machine bears within itself, despite the designer-maker's best efforts to produce single 'minded' functioning. Necessarily falling short of perfect functioning, unable to eliminate 'troubles', strains, stresses, fractures, interferences, wearing-out (everything its bi-polar logic would consign to the 'chance' that is the obverse of its own 'necessity'), and, above all, 'feedback', every machine is open, vulnerable, to art's converting performances, in which machine-fragments may be drawable into the play of a gest aside from any end other than itself.

As we now routinely live within its life-framing dynamic, the machine exemplifies the performance of representing and the representation of performing. It is the great enabler bringing off, precisely through the smooth (enough) functioning (yes, even the bureaucracy-machine, though prey to multiple dysfunctions via the tension of the formal-informal conjunction, functions smoothly *enough* most of the time to ensure its self-maintenance) the more or less rational relating of means to end(s). As art's point under systematic representation is to find ways out, to offer otherness-occasions, performing dedicates itself, by developing an always idiosyncratic know-how, to an estranging intimacy with the very things that are its anathema. Its making tries to be a paradoxical loving embrace of the very thing it seeks to anathematise. Each making performance is condemned to develop this perverse intimacy in response to the unique circumstances in which it finds itself. It takes on, worms its way into and out of, those parts of the representing machinery most immediately bearing on its feelings for art. Knowing-how entails a delirious idiosyncratic diagnosis of its own plight – the specific ways its own project is in thrall to machinery.

But the only point of this diagnosing turn back through its own resources is the experimental constitution of a gest that might just show its hope for the other-than-representation. Performing's irrecusable need is to contrive a gesture that might bear a glimpsable trace of this otherness. And precisely as contrivance, the emergent gest, the thing-for-art, shows both its closeness to and its distance from the machine and machining. For it echoes and shadows machine functions in the very process of undoing, dispersing, them. It performs a machining which effects a cata-machine – the gest that disintricates the machine's oneness, identity, and installs plurality in its stead.

Art's only hope under systematic appropriation is a brief severance from its bind, and the slight possibility of secreting a weak charge of otherness that the systems of interpretation

and enclosure might just pass over as unreadable or of no interest (to interpretation's systematised interested needs organised around 'critical distance'). The vague chance of living this double life is what art is now left with. It is all that can sustain it where public 'presence', appearance for a possible public, is guaranteed only by fulfilling its imposed role as functionary. Survival depends upon a doubling, multiplying, play that outwits the very machinery that makes it available in the first place. But it is an outwitting by withdrawal, effected by a withholding, a holding back, an encrypting of something either so weak or possessing a charge of a different kind of energy to that powering representation's machinery and critical interest. This other, art's congenital weakness, would undo machinery's controls by opening onto the altogether strange 'pleasures' arising from an ontological break out of the relative certainties and securities of knowledge. Collapsing into ambivalence, released into the near free-play of vagueness, of irresolvability, entails a move out of everydayness, but one in which one is carried along, buoyed up, by the art-thing's liveliness, the seducing movement of its reverberations. Such moving occurs, without ever quite taking place, on the outside of the machine's controlling criteria of decidability and identity.

Yet such is the exorbitance of the machinery's technical facility, the analytical and appropriative skills put to work in and by its systems and operatives, that makers face a high risk of failure. For even the uselessness of undecidability can be dragged into representation's service as itself an exemplar of the breadth of the latter's 'tolerance' and benevolence, of the receptive 'openness' which its objects of knowledge allow for (just before operating their violent closures...). And extreme representation may provoke extremity of 'mood' among makers.

Living-on Within the Machine

Under the rule of extreme representation performing is haunted by a double threat. It risks failing art by having to subject itself to the possibility of instant appropriation and absorption. But it also risks institutional rejection, non-appearance, and thus failure to enter the zones where its gest hopes to make the slightest of differences. Caught within the fold of these threats performing is provoked (in the weakness of the '*s'expose*') to its own extremities, of both gesture and mood. The particularity of the obsession required to sustain a vision of art's otherness in the face of the threat, necessarily generates gestures that are 'about' the extremity of surviving within this fold. It's a tight spot. The gestures that are exposed to and sent on their ways within representation's channels perform, display, art-as-extremity – art pushing itself beyond its limits (beyond what it takes art to 'be and be for') by having to try to encrypt itself, seal itself off somehow, while remaining confined absolutely within the machinery and on its terms. For this performance has to be carried through in the know-how that, simply by virtue of its appearance under representation, its participation in the info-spectacle, it is already on the way and subservient to hybridity. Aiming for the *witz* necessary for survival, each gest combines uncombinables of mood defining the perversity of its predicament. Because the diagnosis of the crisis-condition is always acute, always very pressing, the gest cannot but reveal the extremity of the moods that coursed through the performance of its making. Deep melancholia and manic laughter, or whatever-mix, survive together for a time through the specific *witz* that conjoins and strings them along according to situational demands.

In trying to sustain performing within the hollow threshold formed by multiple over-lapping cultural segments, performers are thrown into and fitted up, played out, in the irreconcilable tension between the need for absolute withdrawal and enthusiastic performance and

participation in the info-spectacle. The emergent gests shimmer with the vibrations, the *moiré* effect, of these extreme disjunctions of feeling and mood. Survival, fired by these tensions, describes an arc of brief scintillation followed by the fading charge and slide out of the little limelight it may be afforded. No need any more for the staying power and longevity of ‘masters’ and ‘master-pieces’, of exemplary stars in the firmament, only for the machined assurance of continuity, of instant recruitment, temporary celebrity (possibly...), succession and replacement...

But, hemmed in by the reality of appropriation, performing is driven to contrive gests whose very point is to shape and hover in the fold of their doubling. Irrespective of shaping mood, performing seeks to re-generate itself as an inevitable engagement by withholding. Machination is precisely the emergence of tactics within performing that move between concealment and patency. Performing-as-machination tries to keep something in reserve in the very process of attracting through what is patent at and as its surfacing. Thus inflected by machination, performing’s paradoxical project strives to withhold by what it makes explicit as its seductive surfaces. It may thus seem that this takes it toward allegory. Yet the drive of its performance is to form surfaces whose doublings do not simply give way, erase themselves, in favour of locatable sub-texts (the thing’s allegorical ‘meaning’). This is not the intrigue of a machination seeking to generate a code-bearing surface that would lead, seduce one through, to its hidden core of meaning before itself vanishing. Performing knows that it has to challenge itself (and thus its respondents and possible appropriators) to find the otherwise-terms for a gest that might draw one through itself toward its others. Yet it also knows that these terms of an ‘outside’ cannot be narrated and fixed into a feelable ‘readable’ decidable order or hierarchy. *It is not setting a problem with a findable answer.* The value (the secreted sub-text) that allegory hopes to found and draw one towards is nowhere to be found. Under the aegis of machination the gesture still hopes to both seduce and draw one through the qualities of its surfacing, but it draws toward a disquieting region of slippage, merging, identity exchange, and disappearance.

To be withdrawn from representation’s securities on the terms of such an-allegorical gests is to become a missing person, scattered into a no-place. Delirious though this may be while the performing runs its course, as a no-place it is with-out, outside of, the means of everyday subsistence; it can offer no instrumental help. Yet, and this is always art’s concomitant hope, one may return to the everyday from the gest on different terms to those on which one left it for the latter’s seductions. To be doubled up, turned out, out-pouched, by an art-thing may initiate one into a para-geometric progression without bounds carrying off the one into the many which always lie low and latent within the one. When machination comes off it converts one into the many of a joyfully insecure knowing-feeling which perceives in no time at all that the real difference, while yet-to-come, is just over there, absolutely proximate.

Just how near this paradoxical real is is perhaps foretold in Agamben’s parabolic tale of the halo as the inessential supplement added to perfection.⁹ Following Benjamin’s parable of the tiny displacement needed (but unachievable in advance of the Messiah) to begin a completely new world, Agamben considers this displacement in terms of the halo. The displacement in which ‘everything will be as it is now, just a little different’, is accentuated in the halo as a ‘zone in which possibility and reality, potentiality and actuality, become indistinguishable.’ Perhaps art’s doubling machinations set out to effect their project by just such a minuscule

⁹ See G. Agamben, ‘The Coming Community’, op. cit., p. 53.

dislocation. In art's case, of course, the tiny difference 'occurs' (without ever quite 'taking place'...) very much on this side of the Absolute whose current figure, within which art and the rest of us are thoroughly mixed, is precisely extreme-representation, which still leaves us far from any paradise.

As our all too embracing concrete Absolute (though we cannot see it, we cannot 'see', let alone get, beyond it because our very seeing is seeing-courtesy-of-representation) the latter leaves us adrift, whiffless of paradise. Yet it still has (it has to put up with, find a way of dealing with) art's gestures as its inessential supplements. Troublesome (sometimes even delightful) they nag away, leaving everything seemingly exactly the same but (and this is art's only hope) ever so slightly (imperceptibly?) different. Art's gestures seek to effect a hairline, imperceptible, fracture in the surface of the real (always already in representation) through whose gap they slip away, simultaneously throwing that surface ever so slightly out of alignment with itself. In their syncopating they hope to install a minute fault-line whose as yet unseen break may just bear within itself the promise of a cataclysm to come. And the slightness of this potential difference occurs through know-how's sleight (its speed)-of-hand via its unique, context-specific, hands-on 'feel' for its materials. Its machinating doubling gestures may just enable identity and difference to slip into and through each other now and again, without ever being able to settle back convincingly and absolutely into themselves. Approached as an inessential supplement (excessive to the absoluteness of our current reality), art abolishes at a stroke all the '-isms' arguing for some kind of direct 'lines' of contact or relation between an art gesture and some referent reality which it is claimed to be figuring (representing...). This slightest difference opens up a void which is crossable by no naturalism or realism, no response-model grounding itself in a reflecting, copying, miming correspondence, no isomorphic relation. All have to be set aside in order to face up to the consequences of the difference opened up by the inessential supplements.

Over there the machinating drive, focussed unequivocally on performing a gesture in search of its own one-off rule, tries to split the surface of things with its risky self-apostrophising, its doubling back through the labyrinth of its own metamorphosis. On returning it hopes to be alive enough to register its responding gesture, to offer something that shows its respect for and its struggle with its own undecidable unfixable limits. For these are what every such search continually stumbles up against. Non-plussed the searcher is held up in between the security of something felt through and the vague limits ever-receding beyond the grasp. Trapped at the extremities within this double pull, simultaneously both open and closed, again recalling Duchamp's single door hinged between two openings, performers search for something that will display, be 'true' to, the ambivalence to which their journeying condemned them. This experience of being held back draws all performing, at the extremities, into the necessity of the doubling gesture, the gesture trying to register the tension of performing-in-between, suspended in the fold between the felt out and the contourless 'there' of the limit. Precisely as the unfigurable this can only be alluded to indirectly by pointing, perhaps, to 'where' and 'how' a 'something' is withholding itself, is receding. Such a conjunction of pointing and retreat, a receding showing, is what machination challenges itself to put together. This is its supplement to, its break with, the surface of ordinary becoming. That this has to occur through a knowing-how, a tactics outside of and suspending all strategy, is guaranteed by the all too obvious fact that strategy is the appropriative way of the machinery of systematic representation. The latter's 'field of operations' (the gathering together of every 'where') is assembled precisely through calculative assessments of relations within some putative (theorised) 'whole' (a 'level' of reality represented as a virtual system).

We now live within and on the terms of a routinely maintained global representing machinery. Modernity now accomplishes and sustains itself in the practical achievement of an unprecedented form of life which puts life itself in question, in abeyance. In the interdependent relations of its dailyness, life is steadily ceded to the calculative. 'Getting a life' (and thus sur-vival...living-on) requires dependent participation in networks of relation whose persistence and movement are secured through processes of extreme representation, usable but only at ungraspable speeds, formed ever more explicitly under the interests of technoscience. Its multi-media channels of exchange that distribute our commonsense, are managed ever more explicitly through the controlled flow (the programming) of information. This finely tuned but unstoppable (except through a catastrophic (for it and probably for us) energy failure) flow recreates the virtual whole of the system in every 'moment' of its passing through us. In this passage we come to exemplify its strategy which is nothing less than the securing of its own endless proliferation. This strategy of self-reproduction guarantees that its tactics focus on representing, recreating, everyday life as the permanent site of a calculated exchange of work for the seductive pleasures (diminishing though these may be in their repetitive sameness) of 'new' modes of stimulation, comfort and security (for some, always only for some, but held out as the universal necessarily desirable goal). The primacy of work in this drive entails a risk assessment of the likely balance between expenditure in work (of all resources and energies) and the return as a joint achievement of a surplus, an excess (a profit) and a self-maintenance of degrees of comfort.

Now, contemporary systems management makes self-monitoring a prime function. To survive it has to become reflexively accountable. For every sub-system within the teetering global 'whole' the procedures for researching and monitoring (accounting for and being prepared to modify) its own functioning are as important as the products and services it generates. Its productivity is dependent upon it simultaneously turning itself into an object of knowledge. It maintains itself by moving back and forth through different levels of communication. *It thus becomes its own research topic.* Through this self-research project, the monitoring of its performance (its energy-expenditure) is figured in the ceaseless loop(ing) of feedback, in which the system arcs through and across, endlessly probing itself as a repository of calculable information about itself and its relation to its performance context (everything that it touches...). Revolutionised in scale and speed by the computer and the continuing transformations in digital technology, the feedback loop constitutes a new 'level' in the functioning of systematic representation (each particle of processed encoded information standing for complex real actions at another level of communication/action). Abstract virtual summary-images – models - of the functioning of the entire system can be generated virtually in no experienceable time at all. Our relation to such systems (including their relations to each other), constituting the drifting movement of the global (economico-politico) 'whole', metastasises continually without our being able to recognise the implications of such changes.

It is transformation-without-precedent in which our relations to time (to the tension of the tenses through which we live) and to place (to what is seeably, recognisably, locatably 'there') are thrown out of all conventional securities. Yesterday and today lack all fixity, their patterns and shape being subject to constant reformulation in the light of new data that is already out of date by the time we receive and try to interpret it. When everything is available as a potential resource (Heidegger's 'standing reserve') for reconstitution and assimilation as information into the feedback loop, then nothing is fixed, everything trembles. Past and

present become infinitely malleable, re-presentable. Simultaneously the empirical conventions of ‘distance’ are effectively abolished as barriers through the speed of transmission and the seeming indifference of information to context.

Yet context, the absolute specificity of circumstances (everything that, standing around, enfolds and permeates each ‘action’) is precisely what the arts under modernity have cherished, explored and sought to celebrate in and as its ‘particularity’. The ‘*s’expose*’ that is art’s gest is the attempt to excise from the flow, however briefly as a ‘this’ that is ‘passing away’, the absolutely particular, the difference the momentary might make in offering glimpses of what is quite beyond us. For it is this particularity, fixed, rendered and materialised through know-how’s conversions in the making performance, that might just abrupt in its difference our immersion in the flow of everydayness, offering us a fragile and temporary connection with the otherwise toward which art seeks to turn itself. Performing’s own machinations, condemned like all of us to pass through the representing machines, seek ways of exposing and holding to the particulars that the machines (programmed to live by the general, the typical, the rule-guided, the reproducible/copyable) are blind to, cut off from by their functionality.

Holding to the Particular

Responsible to and for this otherwise, performing sees clearly enough that its tactics, machinations aside from any holistic framing strategy, have to be focussed exclusively on the maker’s relations to the particular ‘pressures’ that define its circumstances. The otherwise ‘evidence’ that performing finds and brings back is always circumstantial. Thus the perennial challenge and question is how these particulars can be selectively translated, or (as will be explored shortly) *transliterated*, in ways that might keep alive art’s pledge to open onto the elsewhere of a not-yet. In going for this, performing risks returning - every time and yet again - with an always-already, a thing assimilable to the known and placeable, something so close to what has already been gathered and culturally fixed that its possible difference is elided into the familiarity of a secure knowledge. And, in a culture where the representing machinery seeks to frame and programme its things through the construction of a ‘style’, making-towards-art is under permanent extreme pressure to conform to this requirement.

But if we approach making-toward-art now as the unending opening out and exploration of Jarry’s ‘otherwise science’, as the rendering of particularity – performers’ driven responses to the conjoining of their feelings for art and the specificity of their circumstances – then the resulting gests emerge from what ‘goes on’ at this threshold. And if what ‘goes on’ is exactly the dispersion of the conceptions of typicality, repetition, and, more broadly, methodology that inform both everyday life and the routine practices of technoscience (notwithstanding the claims of Feyerabend and others that, in the end, in contemporary science ‘anything goes’), then it might seem perverse to try to gather what performers do around such a shared process. For, as the search for the situated exception, performing seems to demand the suspension of all grounding guiding rules of procedure. But, whilst it eschews all models, I want to suggest that it does approximate to, while necessarily never quite coinciding with, that specific and seemingly perverse form of translation called transliteration.

A Necessary Detour Through Transliteration

In transferring something (but what? meaning?...patterns, grammars, syntaxes, images, feelings, sounds, rhythms, rhymes, syncopations, X’s...? all these and others are crucial concerns for all translating...) from one phonetic language to another, from a ‘foreign’

language to a ‘mother’ tongue, conventions of exchange, substitution and transformation are routinely established that allow translation (of conversation and speech (spoken or transcribed) and texts) to ‘occur’ in a relatively trouble-free way. But art’s gests (with poetry as the critical case allowing us to raise issues common to all the arts) stop the seemingly effortless routines of translation in their tracks; they derail translation as the assumed lifting of a ‘meaning’ from one language and dropping ‘it’ into another. For each gest is already a ‘multiple’; it is activated across N dimensions. There may be as many intertwined and stratified ‘languages’ (to be translated) as there are dimensions and qualities.

In phonetic language, taking poetry as the paradigm case, and quite apart from the vexed issue of ‘meaning’ and the ‘feelings’ constituting both making and response, we can note the complexity of the uncountable interrelations of even the ‘things’ for which we believe we have a ‘name’: tone, rhythm/metre, syntax, rhyming, onomatopoeia, alliteration, neologisms, compounding of words, and so on, to say nothing of writers’ ways of interrupting these modes of *poiesis*. In art the qualities we might attribute to each gest, whether as its performer or its respondent, are constituted in and as the activity of our relating to it. This is its pledge, how it plights itself to us: to be no more and no less than the singularity of its one-off language. And our relation to it is put together in the very ways it seduces and ‘teaches’ (shows) us how to ‘read’ it, how it draws us through itself. The awesome challenge facing translation of any art-full gest (a poem, novel, play, painting, object, melody, and so forth) into another (foreign?) language, is whether it is possible to transfer, and thus to reproduce, *to represent* (as a ‘standing-in-for’), the life of this showing in any other language at all. For it requires the translator to find and extract the ‘equivalent’ one-off language (as the only ‘responsible’ response to an ex-ception) as *a potential that already resides somewhere* in the foreign language to come (to its aid).

To turn the qualities, the waving-elements of this one-off, into a different ‘kind’ of language (an interpretive language of ‘accounting for’, for example) also requires an ‘equivalent’ one-off language of translation: a ‘language’ that, just this once, effects a substitution of alternative terms for some of the terms of the thing itself as we ‘experience’ them, (terms for a language of response rather than, say, for the actual language of its one-off performance). All interpretation has already accepted this challenge and is convinced it is up to it. Of this process of translation Blanchot writes that, ‘... it is the perfect act through which what was nothing when it was inside emerges into the monumental reality of the outside as something which is necessarily true, as a translation which is necessarily faithful, since the person it translates exists only through it and in it.’¹⁰

Yet under extreme representation translation seems to be everywhere, inescapable. It is as if it is no longer recognised as a challenge but rather is just something that we do and live by. If translation names a process of ‘carrying/bearing’ (-lation) ‘across/over’ (trans-), then, wherever a sense of language, of signification, of coding, is explicitly or implicitly used to account for a form of activity or a medium, the possibility of translation is also implied, the possibility of moving something from one site/ language to another. Images (drawn, painted, photographed, filmed, mimed...), sounds (musical, human-corporeal, zoological, atmospheric...), movements (danced, theatric, vehicular...), objects (all designed repertoires such as buildings, clothes, furniture...), processes (bio-genetic, meteorological...), and so on

¹⁰ M. Blanchot, “Literature and the Right to Death”, in ‘The Work of Fire’, Stanford University, Stanford, 1995, p. 305.

– all may be formulated, represented, as (if they were) ordered as a language and thus interchangeable with, substitutable for each other. And, indeed, digitising technology (the now dominant ‘means’ of machined representation) is put to work exactly on this premise; through its provision of a common method of coding it provides for the mutual (but virtual, always machine-dependent) exchange/substitution of every codable thing. Universal translatability is now our virtual reality... but only according to the terms selected for programming into the machine’s binary logic code of presence–absence. If art were locatable as polar it would be at the opposite pole to this binary logic. But of course it is not. It is somewhere else altogether – becoming-otherwise.

Might transliteration help us to move toward this ‘somewhere else’?

If translators are committed to trying to stay ‘faithful’ to their relation to the to-be-translated *gest* (a poem or a whatever-thing-for-art) then, as already suggested, the explorations that translation involves obviously have to move outside the supposed phonetic equivalent at the level of ‘meaning’ (assembling lines that ‘mean’ according to, for example, dictionary definitions of the original’s words). All the dimensions that seem to have contributed to the *gest*’s ‘sounding out’ call for inclusion (representation?) in the translating activity in order to do ‘justice’ to, to be ‘faithfully responsive’ to (and thus responsible for) its substitution in the ‘new’ language. Both the event of making (performance) and of reception (attentive response) meet tangentially in and as its being-sounded-out. *Transliteration of a phonetic ‘text’ begins somewhere (anywhere it can make a ‘start’, get a hold of something...) in this in-between zone.* And it confronts, tries to find a way of re-convening, the matter of ‘faithfulness’ on a somewhat different site by beginning, by grounding itself in, not ‘meaning’ but ‘sounding’, in the materialised sounding that has to occur (either aloud or ‘silently’ to oneself) for the poem to begin to become an ‘event’. To be faithful is to begin with the letter’s (or the phoneme’s) sound-in-context. Transliteration is the process of replacing the letters or characters of one language with ‘those of another used to represent the same sound.’¹¹ It is to ‘write (a word etc.) in the characters of another alphabet.’ Seeking to write a letter, phrase, or word in the characters of another alphabet it hopes to capture the sound (tone, timbre) of the original in the substituted language of transl(ite)ration. In the case of writing in ideographic languages, such as Chinese or Japanese, there may be no clear substitutions available; invention is required!

Using the Latin (‘littera’) for ‘letter’ or ‘written symbol’ the word ‘transliteration’ modifies translation by its focus on the conventions for pronunciation within each language. That such conventions only operate within wide tolerance limits is made clear by the considerable regional and complex cultural variation in ‘accent’ and ‘inflection’ in specific languages. Within these conventions it seeks to effect a transfer of equivalent sound by imitation. It thus operates a literal onomatopoeia where the sound ‘reflects’ (or ‘bears’ – the ‘-late’ of translate) the ‘sense’, *this ‘sense’ being the sound-figure itself* with all its resonating affects. It establishes its equivalent substitution on the basis of sound. It ‘listens to’, sounds out, the text to be transliterated by re-sounding, and thus re-writing, it according to how it might sound phonetically *if it were already in the transliterator’s own language (the mother tongue...)*. Carried out ‘to the letter’, such sounding out would produce a phonetic alphabetic equivalent in the language of destination. And where languages in larger cultural-geographic regions share much common etymology (as in the legacies of Greek, Latin, Norse, etc. across

¹¹ See the ‘Compact Oxford English Dictionary’, Oxford University Press, London, 1993, p. 2088.

European languages) near-common soundings may also bear closely related signifieds/meanings. It is almost as if transliteration is energised by a dream, an intuition perhaps, of the possibility of a universal language that might somehow be vested in the re-sounding crossing over from source-letter or phoneme to its new phonic (and written) home: the hope that the sounding will embed not only something of the literal ‘meaning’ of the original text, but also something of the feelable circumstances of that text’s emergence.

Transliteration in its ‘pure’ form is thus a distinctive way of approaching every phonetic text as already multiple because of what it offers to acutely attentive pronunciation. For it can be re-sounded according to the phonetic conventions of every other phonetic language, and especially to those sharing some common etymological and alphabetic resources. It generates something that cannot be reconciled in any way with conventional translation, *for it does not claim to produce a precise equivalent at the level of ‘meaning’*. But it does offer a strange ‘other’ that drifts in the gaps between the different sites and concerns of conventional translation. By giving primacy to resonance, it generates an equivalent that is irreconcilable with what we conventionally take the goal of translation to be. This equivalent is in an undeniable but entirely problematic relation to its source when considered according to criteria for assessing adequacy at the level of ‘meaning’. For it figures something new, a gest (a text that figures an action) that releases a relation-in-difference. It is a gest hinting at other kinds of relation than those turning around equivalence of meaning.

By risking itself to the primacy of the figuring performed by re-sounding, transliteration shifts the entire question of what a source text ‘is’, what it is ‘for’, and what might be generated from it. And it performs this while remaining nevertheless faithful to what the source itself offers. Recalling Jarry’s ex-cepting, it draws us away from the common ground of ‘good common sense’ and toward the unsettled and unsettling otherwise-planes and -territories shaped up in the course of the arts’ explorations of their media’s possibilities. In giving primacy to a text’s sounding (its resonance) what transliteration thus transfers (translates) to the language of translation is something excessive to dictionary definitions. It transfers a complex of potential feeling-significance. In its re-sounding it registers a performance that re-founds the text on its phonemically generated musicality; the cadence, how the text ‘falls’ (into line...) and, through the metrics of its symmetries and syncopes, effects an equivalent-in-difference. This inverts the relation of conventional interpretive practice by making ‘meaning’ a derivative of the feelings borne within the resonance of the ‘saying’. In effect it ties meaning to, makes it depend upon, the always contextually specific performing of its resounding qualities. This inversion enfolds it within and seems to place it at the farthest ‘edge’ of *poiesis*, where it rubs shoulder with, for example, concrete poetry. Yet its hope is still to find something of the original text’s intended (or unintended but nevertheless actively ‘there’) signification embodied within its resonance. It wants poetic (and language-originating) significance to be drawn forth from this re-sounding.

This, I suspect, is precisely what the American poet, Louis Zukofsky, sought to grapple with, celebrate, and show in his transliterative rendering of the complete poems and fragments of the Latin poet, Catullus. In collaboration with his wife Celia (a musician who undertook extensive preliminary translation, collated alternative possibilities, and mapped the poems’ scansion), Zukofsky approached the Catullus corpus with both a reverent faithfulness to its absolute particularity (in both its often erotic and self-ironic modes), and a determined commitment to turn it into something quite new, something responsive to his own sensitivities and the situation of late-modern poetics and language in late twentieth century

American and European culture. The result is a collection of poems quite unlike anything else in the canon of contemporary poetry. Either ignored or dismissed by classical Catullus-scholars, as a bizarre diversion contributing nothing to either understanding or appreciation of Catullus's poetry, the Zukofskys effect a post-Joycean celebratory exploration of the inter-face between languages, very different cultures, and poetics.

Approaching Catullus's oeuvre as a contemporary poet long associated with 'objectivist' (the term was drawn from his own writings by other poets and subsequently applied to a loosely affiliated group of poets with varying concerns) poetics, Zukofsky recognised its potential as a vehicle for exploring and furthering his own long-held over-riding concern to show poetry's close affinity with music. Across his preceding poetry, music, often in the figures of Bach and his son, the violinist Paul, is a touchstone for his writing. It was thus crucial to the project to stay very close to the metrics of the originals in rendering them into contemporary American-English. Faithfulness to the source is thus vested in the intertwining of resounded phonemes and metre.

But while transliteration is crucial to Zukofsky's Catullus-project it is necessary here to install and emphasise the 'almost' as its prefix. For Celia's translations of the originals' range of reference and possibilities of construction and sense, is a vital resource across the project's development. Zukofsky drew extensively on these in his transposition of the poems. The result is indeed a collection held together by a commitment to the resonances generated by transliteration, but these resonances are often helped on their way through picking up on the more conventional resources of dictionary translation. In this process Zukofsky's own researches into the resources of American-English enabled him to generate the most extraordinary hybrids. Transliteration certainly rules, but never purely, for the flexibility of Zukofsky's process allows him to introduce whatever is necessary from other sources to release his utterly personal response to the challenge to poetry of moving back and forth between languages. If Pound (as a friend and early mentor of Zukofsky¹²) faced a similar problem in his approach to the ideograms of Chinese poetry, Zukofsky shifts the requirements of faithfulness and equivalence onto very different terrain indeed. And the key to his almost-transliterations is provided in the terse but telling introduction to the only dual-language edition of the collection. The Zukofskys prefaced the Cape Goliard Press edition with the following:

'This translation of Catullus follows the sound, rhythm, and syntax of his Latin – tries, as is said, to breathe the 'literal' meaning with him.'¹³

In this they interrupt their self-placement within 'conventional' translation by emphasising their following of the sound. And the radicality of their procedure is amplified through the way they attempt to relate to Catullus – to be *with* him in the very act of his breathing, the act in which, for them, the 'literal' meaning resides. When we read their 'translations' it becomes clear that the literal meaning is not the meaning of conventional interpretation. It transfers the poems' significance for them (and specifically for Louis as 'fellow' poet) to the breathed letter(s) or phoneme(s). With the resource of dictionary definitions at hand and to aid this

¹² See the selected correspondence between Pound and Zukofsky, 'Pound/Zukofsky', New Directions, New York, 1987.

¹³ 'Catullus', trans. by Celia and Louis Zukofsky, Cape Goliard, London, 1969, this is a dual language edition without pagination; the citations here are thus indicated by the Roman numerals marking their agreed place in the Catullus oeuvre. The sequence is also available in English alone in, Louis Zukofsky, 'Complete Short Poetry', Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, London, '97.

breath-work, Zukofsky thus effects a practical (recalling Celan) ‘breath-turn’ and re-writes Catullus by literally re-sounding his poems in an American-English that is often locally vernacular (just as Catullus’s language was similarly responsive to local idioms).

In the earlier renderings of this long sequence, translation and transliteration are fairly evenly balanced. But, from number sixteen on it is as if Zukofsky finds his nerve and verve and allows the sounding to pull the verses along. With confidence in his ‘new medium’ established, the transliterative dominates and the lines are breathed into a strange amalgam of worldliness and para-practice. The resulting confrontation with language’s possibilities and traps entwine profundity, hilarity, self-mocking, and the rhythmically deft. An astute musicality drives the verses on and seems to call for a kind of speed-reading in order to enter into its peculiar effects. Zukofsky’s canny eye-ear combinations find frequent opportunities to turn the Latin originals into wry questions and comments on what might be ‘going on’ poetically and linguistically in his own idiosyncratic transference (and perhaps in *poiesis* more generally).

A broad hint of what was to come in the Catullus project is offered in a poem included in a sequence preceding ‘Catullus’. In ‘After I’s (1961-64)’¹⁴ Zukofsky takes a tour through Greek, Latin, Italian, and American-English in pursuit of the etymological affiliations and affinities of the Latin for ‘woman’ – *mulier*. Crucial to his tactic is the way each language offers words that have homonyms in another language. Following the opening stanza introducing ‘mulier’, Zukofsky brings the homonym into play thus:

‘woman-
Latin
mens
sounds

other
sense
in
native

homonym-’¹⁵

The homonym’s sameness(sound)-difference(meaning) leaves us suspended in the gap between languages, while simultaneously opening onto the complex resources (within each language) it offers to poetics.

As the Catullus project gets under way we begin to see that, for Zukofsky, every phoneme, word, phrase, in the original text is treatable through its re-sounding as a potential homonym – as a homophone with dual allegiance: each can be taken as performing *simultaneously* in both Latin and English. Sometimes the differences of felt sense will be subtle, slight, and closely related to the dictionary meaning of the original, and sometimes extremely distant. But, whatever each poem seems to assert about the relation between original and the transliterated rendering, *the weight given to the homophone sets forth a foundationless ‘third’ poetic language-plane that runs in between Latin and English*. Cast into and trying to survive within this homonymically formed in-between, each reader has to take responsibility for their

¹⁴ This poem is also included in, ‘Louis Zukofsky: Complete Short Poetry’, op.cit., p. 234.

¹⁵ Ibid.

own (re-)sounding-out of the almost-transliteration. And, in re-living, re-animating, this very process readers are drawn (or not...) into the vertigo-spacing which is the very possibility of poetising. For this is where *poiesis* risks and chances itself to perform and unfold its own potential significance.

Perhaps something of the flavour of Zukofsky's transliterative drive and its effects can be gained from the following extracts in which the poet turns the transliteration back upon his own practice. From a plurality of such reflexive gestures this selection displays both Zukofsky's *witz*, verbal deftness and acute awareness of the strangeness of the move from one language to another *however it is accomplished*. And it is precisely in and as this move across the empty divide, the 'fault' line (the 'fault' for which no-one is responsible), that the inventive energy of *poiesis*, of art's performing, situates itself. In this project it displays exactly Zukofsky's commitment to follow *to the letter* the implications of Pound's injunction to artists to 'Make it New', for what emerges is just that. In these extracts Catullus's originals, available in Guy Lee's dual-language edition of his translations, are followed by Zukofsky's renderings, after which Lee's translation of the same passage is appended for comparison. Whatever their 'significance' within each poem as a whole, the selected quotes also double as Zukofsky's often wry self-comments on his own re-sounding practice. Throughout the sequence Zukofsky invents ways of making his 'translations' comment on their transliterative performance, thus 'distancing' himself obliquely from his own conversions by this reflexive turn.

Line 5 in XXII reads: 'perscripta, nec sicut fit in palimpsesto

Relata: ...'

from which Zukofsky derives:

'Poor script, eh? not so it fit incest in palimpsest –
reallotted: ...'

and Lee translates as,

'He's written out, and not on palimpsest
Like most folk - ...'¹⁶

Zukofsky puts the question of his 'script's' status to himself and the poem and to readers. And perhaps he invites us to consider whether his and the script's relation to the 'palimpsest' (the effaced original of Catullus) is an incestuous re-fit ('fit', 'reallotted'). Zukofsky also implies the 'wider' question of whether all poems, all gests, are not in some sense 'incestuous' in the way they insert themselves into 'art' through their erotic relation to other gests (those whose seductive ways they may borrow from and which require makers to try to join themselves to and with them). We are pulled into the questions and dilemmas of all translating: just how 'close', intimate, is the relation between original and its rendered transfer? If all are necessary 'mis-fits', how might we 'choose' between them? Is the erotic also genetic, intra-familial?

Lines 6 and 7 of XXXIX: '... quicquid est, ubicumquest,
quodcumque agit, renidet. ...'

from which Zukofsky derives:

'... Quick wit test, you become quest,
code come quack it, he grins it.'

and Lee translates as,

'....Whatever's happening, wherever,

¹⁶ Guy Lee, 'Catullus, The Complete Poems', Oxford University, Oxford, 1998, p. 23.

However employed, he grins....¹⁷

Both writer and reader are caught up in a quest to ‘quack’ (both repeat and crack...) the poem’s, the transliterator’s, code. Lightness of response (the humour of ‘grins’) is dependent perhaps on the speed of the *witz* (‘wit test’) necessary for this code-(qu)cracking.

Lines 16 and 17 of L: ‘hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci,
ex quo perspiceres meum dolorum.’

from which Zukofsky derives:

‘joke again, friend: to be this poem’s fay key,
ask your perception mime my dolorous hymn.’

And Lee translates as,

‘I made this poem for you, the charmer,
So you could spot my trouble from it.’¹⁸

This is extracted from a poem dedicated to a fellow-poet, Licinius, that celebrates Catullus’s sleepless high spirits following their evening of playful versifying. Zukofsky’s rendering can thus be seen as Catullus’s invitation to Licinius to grasp the mood from the present poem. But simultaneously it performs an instruction to the reader to follow Zukofsky’s own practice in miming the original. The reader is invited to enter into the mood of rendering (‘to be this poem’s fay key’ (in which one can also hear ‘fake key’...)) by miming Zukofsky’s own transliterative gesture.

Lines 116 and 117 of LXIV: ‘.... Sed quid ego a primo digressus carmine plura
Commemorem, ut linquens genitoris filia vultum,’

from which Zukofsky derives:

‘ Said quit I go on primal digressions harmony plural
commemorate, what link wanes genitor is failing ‘ah would
whom’

and Lee translates as,

‘But why digressing further from my opening song
Remember how the daughter leaving her sire’s face,’¹⁹

While quitting the original through the rendering’s ‘primal digressions’ it simultaneously commemorates it by activating and re-inventing the plural harmony latent within it (the homophonic possibilities). But as even the poem’s link to its parent poem (‘genitor’) wanes, it leaves open, conditional, its resuscitation by a whoever-yet-to-come (‘ah would whom’).

Each of these short extracts also shows the necessity of the ‘almost’ as a prefix to ‘transliteration’. For it is clear that in constructing the new syntax some phonemes are omitted, some are modified, and some are added. For Zukofsky deliberate mis-taking, re-sounding by affinity and substitution, are essential to his transliterative rendering. It is a mis-taking that, passing by way of Celia’s translations, is required in order to set out this, his intra-linguistic no-man’s-land – an as yet unexplored language rift that cannot be colonised by any extant geo-culturally rooted language. It performs the link between source (that utterly idiosyncratic fusion of Catullus’s verses) and Zukofsky’s desire to write. This linking, a syntactic aligning, is the ex-tracting (drawing-out) of a singular rendering that is pitched, through the ‘almost-’, in between convention (the conventions of translation) and the unaccountable (Zukofsky’s re-sounding transliterative mutation). The fusion that is the text

¹⁷ Op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁸ Op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁹ Op. cit., p. 87.

thus effects and reveals his dual faithfulness to the demands of the source and to the difference of his erotic relation to language's gift of the musicality of poiesis.

Thus, Zukofsky approaches every poem in Catullus's oeuvre as if it had been written for a plurality of voices, only a few of which can be unlocked, released, through the procedures of conventional translation. In this re-allocation, re-al-locution, which occurs within the groundless (meaningless?) 'gap' between languages, the collection of poems is converted into something quite other than what the rule of commonsense interpretation and translation conventionally decrees. 'Catullus' becomes the medium through which Zukofsky exposes the difference of his own relation to sourcing. And it is a relation in which, for the poet, the hearing of voices (the reception of sounds, almost-words, words, phrases, idiosyncratic syntax) constitutes the emergence of poiesis. Courtesy of Catullus's unique facilitation, something comes through for Zukofsky *from an unplaceable elsewhere* that, bringing the maker-poet to the brink of writing, requires only an almost-translitative re-animation to get the poem, an art-thing-to-come, under way. And it may indeed be that the Zukofskys, by 'abusing their source with strategic intent' are, as Steiner proposes, 'hinting confusedly, at a theory of immediate universal understanding.'²⁰ But it is equally the case, surely, that only the peculiarity of Zukofsky's relation to his 'muse', his summons to poetise, could have generated and sustained the meticulously ordered language torrent whose particularity remains absolutely aside from, other to, any theoretical gathering. If, as Steiner also says, 'Repetition is the purest concentrate of translation'²¹, then to repeat 'freely' as Zukofsky does at the 'level' of sound in his almost-transliterations, is not only to pay homage to (and preserve) the original, but also to de-range (remembering Rimbaud), de-nature, and occult it, thus almost severing it from the context of its emergence. It makes it new by preserving the whole while carrying out an internal fracturing and dissolution of its bones, tissues and fluids, and re-fixing them according to a brazen mis-taking. This dissolves the balance between what Steiner calls the 'seizure and surrogation'²² of conventional translation and takes it beyond the latter's tolerance limits.

But, precisely because '(w)e must not trust the translation whose words are entirely 'unbroken'²³, mis-taking is intrinsic to the practice of translation. And for every medium, how the break that each mis-take entails is sutured and splinted, how what is heard, what is brought across in the course of the performance-in-between, the very placeless place where there is no thing, will expose the absolute difference, the idiosyncratic remoteness (however close) of the transference. For what it exposes is not any representational work, in which a transferred sign stands in for, symbolises, something outside itself (meaning) but, depending on medium, the tracing words, coloured marks, lines, sounds, gestures, or any combination of these and others, as *first of all only themselves as exposings of their medium*. And it may be that if we follow Heidegger's response to the Stefan George poem 'Words', whose last stanza says,

'Where word breaks off no thing may be.'²⁴

then, we might catch a glimpse, an echo of language's granting gift, of what the tracings pass on across the gap. For Heidegger it is the poet's word that, inverting our commonsense of the representational relation between language, things, and performing within the gap, enacts the

²⁰ George Steiner, 'After Babel', Oxford University, Oxford, 1975, p. 352).

²¹ Op. cit., p. 390.

²² Op. cit., p. 379.

²³ Op. cit., p. 378.

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'On the Way To Language', op. cit., see pp. 139-158.

inauguration of things in their thingness. In this inversion things become, emerge, in and as the gift of a medium's specific language. The poet's, the maker's, hope is that what is sourced from 'over there', transferred in broken form across the gap where 'no thing may be', is re-set, re-formed, through almost-translitative surgery as an emergent new whole, a graft on to the body-poetic. A prosthetic perhaps...

This body-poetic gets close to the body-politic through the superficially very different take on transliteration in the poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson. Here Jamaican Creole speech is infused with the patterns and rhythms of particular areas of contemporary black popular music (such as dub and hip-hop), as well as street speech and standard English. Johnson effects a transposition from his aural sources to writing through an acutely responsive listening. He converts what he hears into a written vocabulary and syntax through inventing written phonetic equivalents for what he hears. The texts of his poems have to be re-sounded in reading through these transliterated 'equivalents', and this re-sounding has also to be responsive to the rhythmic patterns' musical affiliations (Johnson often performs his verse to the backing of a Dub band). He emphasises the importance of the verses' musical affinities in 'If I Woz a Tap-Natch Poet' (the title itself wryly raising the question for the reader of where to 'place' this poem and the others in the collection) where the following lines are repeated, with slight variations, three times,

'mi gat mi riddim
mi gat mi rime
mi gat mi ruff base line
mi gat mi own sense a time'²⁵

And already the homophones (gat, rime, ruff, base, a) suspend us between their present spelling, their conventional (dictionary) meaning, and their doubled standard and non-standard English alternatives (rhythm etc.). We have to hear the other through the transliteratively invented vocabulary. In 'Tings an Times' the third person voice,

'duped
doped
demaralised'²⁶

ponders on the outcomes of blacks' struggles for equality. The poem concludes with his (or her...possibly...) hearing two voices that, responding to 'his' musings call him back to reality and offer him, perhaps, a hope for the new life arising from the decay of the old one:

'him woz wandahrin pandahrin kansidahrin
wen him hear a vice like di win seh, cho
a jus tings an times
wandahs an sines
but noh gat mystic
be realistic
'an him hear a nix vice like di sea seh
sometimes di pungent owedah af decay
signal seh bran new life deh pan di way'²⁷

The instruction 'be realistic' is made to stand out as a performative precisely because it stands almost alone as a syntactically conventional phrase in standard English. But being 'realistic' linguistically, both for the character and the poet, is to find a way of showing and

²⁵ Linton Kwesi Johnson, 'Selected Poems', Penguin, London, 2006, p. 97.

²⁶ Op. cit., pp. 75-79.

²⁷ Op. cit., p. 79.

asserting the necessity of bringing the communal voices to text as a poetic-political intervention. Again the homophones point the way, for they set aside the meanings (wen, vice, win, tings, sines, bran, pan) of these words in standard English, and present them as transliteral corrections, equivalents of phonetically close but different words with quite other meanings (voice, wind, things, signs, brand, upon). The new written vocabulary becomes contestatory in its challenge to *read* the real cultural differences precisely, through the transliterative transformations it invents. But, essential to its tactic is the ‘almost-’ that interweaves the transliterations with standard English conventions of both syntax and vocabulary. The poem’s rhythmic patternings depend upon this interplay. What the transliterative invention performs, therefore, in Johnson’s poems is a dynamic of interruptions. The poems’ drive is achieved through continuity of fracturings, in which the ruptures suspend the reader (irrespective of cultural and linguistic affiliation) between irreconcilably different readings. Even the closest following of his phonetic substitutions, as guides to the lilt of Jamaican Creole, still leaves the sounding reader caught visually between the contradictory readings. This can only be partially resolved by coming down each time in favour of the substitutes’ intended references (hearing-reading ‘pandahrin as pondering, ‘vice’ as voice, and so on). In this writing the almost-transliteration strands us in between a range of cultural affiliations. Through its tactic the writer confronts us with the question of where we ‘stand’ in relation to the value-struggles over the possession of and by language.

Performing as Almost-Transliteration

Having, in the preceding detour, broached almost-transliteration as an intervention in poiesis that, aside from the conventions of translation, stakes and chances its trajectory to in-between processes of language conversion in its chosen medium, I now want to draw it back into the play of the question that prompted it: *what kind of performance across the arts characterises making-for-art?* How might performing be trying to mark itself off and out through the gestures that it offers?

I want to suggest that something approximating almost-transliteration is a defining constituent of making-for-art – *performing across the arts is necessarily almost-transliteration*. It occurs when the maker of a would-be-art-thing tries to respond to the previously explored ‘summons’, to the arrival of the matters that might be attributed to a summons’ ‘call’: the ‘whatever’ that ‘just comes’ from ‘elsewhere’ as unavoidable potential ‘material’ for the gest-to-come. Response to the strange synaesthetic ‘stuff’ that breaks through and fractures the continuities of routine perception and action entails a reception and re-forming of this ‘other’ matter. Taken together, as a receiving that is already a process of conversion, of mutation (from the re-ception of an in-cepting per-ception of an absolute exception, through a sequential re-con-ception, to a different now materialised ex-ception), they constitute performing as almost-transliteration.

For both phonetic and non-phonetic practices across the arts’ media, performing is the engagement of, a becoming engaged by, a peculiar and always specific kind of converting transfer: the transformation of whatever ‘materials’ come across to the performer that are felt to have, to be ac-cepted as, potentials for the performing. This medium-specific re-forming of the materials approximates to a transliteration. For what performers seek to hold on to in their chosen medium/media are the very ‘things’, the felt-perceived sensuous material-potential qualities (often glossed in words such as ‘image’, ‘figure’, ‘voice’, ‘phrase’, or ‘fantasy’), into and through which are fused that which appears to the receiver as ‘significant’ (though

not yet, for the most part, in an unequivocally transferable form), as promising itself as art-potential. And because art's possibility rests in its eventual display of its difference to everything else, its emergent gests have no 'meaning' (as 'art') aside from the ways their sensuously specific emergence shows, performs, this difference. The receptive perception of soundings, colourings, texturings, textings, whatever is corporeally borne - embodied either singly or in fused combinations - and resonates is taken as an appealing potential affiliate to the emergent gest-for-art in its difference-quest. Performing challenges itself to perform the conversion of these waved reverberations into something (the wave-particles that contribute to the emergent gest) that is a response by affinity, a felt and groped for 'almost-equivalent' (whose actual equivalence is ruled out by the necessity of its transliterative mutation), of that which is received from the unfixable 'elsewhere'.

This attempt to catch and draw the reverberated offerings into performing's play and, in the good faith of a conversion, *to hold to their passage as 'literally' as possible into the performing-medium*, constitutes making as the performance of almost-transliteration. It seeks to effect both the sensuous grasp of what is offered, *in advance of any fixable 'meaning' in an already familiar language*, and the conversion of this offering, its transliteration, into the distinctive 'linguaging' of the emergent performance. Performing is the turning-out of the 'one-off-almost-language' that is specific to it, this 'coming-language' whose limit and threshold is the gest itself. As suggested earlier, each gest's singular language, being peculiar to it, remains untranslatable into other languages. Indeed the gest emerging from this transliterative performance makes its 'case' as an art-candidate exactly to the extent that the converted reverberations disrupt all attempts to fix their 'meaning' in discourses external to them, to provide, in other words, relatively faithful unequivocal translations.

Across the arts, performers' common problem is how to shape what is received from an 'elsewhere' into something that does 'justice' to both the specificity of making's circumstances, and to their idiosyncratic but delirious involvement with their medium. This specificity has to be focussed on the peculiarities of their chosen medium. The challenge is to find ways of drawing their seduction by the free-play of particular art-things, into a generative relation with their emergent perception of art-making as a potential zone for their own performing-to-come. To energise the response to art's summons, performers' delirious trepidation and hope have somehow to be made to coalesce in the materials of their medium. While aspects of this meeting zone were explored in the earlier discussions that intertwined 'being-called' to making with the figuring of a 'muse' or unknowable sourcing, the real strangeness of this coalescence (how the transition occurs) was left on hold. Yet, if performing is an attempt to find out whether something-for-art can be drawn forth in that obscure region, where two 'beyonds' (of the self actively suspending itself into an active passivity and of art suspending culture) may just meet or collide, then it is the passage back and forth between these two that keeps open the possibility of art. Somehow, as and in the passing over, the performer's medium has to be brought directly into play. To be vivified in an emergent thing, the medium appropriates performers themselves in all their particularity. They become the bearers and conduits of their chosen medium. The gest is formed-through, per-formed, in their submission to what passes across the making-threshold; but simultaneously performers have to experience this as already on the way toward their medium. They have to grasp the 'otherwise' as if its only destiny was its appearance in their medium. Whatever is being transferred thus already begins to appear, shape up, come across as, an emerging materialisation of the 'language' of the maker's medium. The performer perceives and feels out the emerging gifted beyond, makes out its contours, however

imprecisely, as already more or less realising, materialising, itself in the medium specific language appropriate to the thing being made. Figuratively, the alien flow appropriates the performer as almost-already language-ready, as virtually, precipitately, ‘in’ the very language whose limits the performer ‘happens’ to be exploring, exploring with a view to ‘inhabiting’ it *just this once*. Whatever the rituals, and routines (including and allowing for unpredictable interruptions...) performers establish as constituents of their practice, whether extremely ‘disciplined’ (regular hours in the study/studio) or haphazard, that which may be borne across is seemingly forming itself in the very movement of its passage (flight and flow...) over in medium-media-specific language-approximate, language-appropriate, and virtually language-ready terms.

From the obscurity of the unplaceable sourcings, ‘matters’ start ‘arriving’ almost seeming to ‘know’ what is required of them. To receive the offer while trying to remain faithful to the sourcing and its terms (the perceived feelings permeating the transportation), the performer effects an excising translation that cuts out and releases the still partially opaque ‘terms’ from the flow, turning them into shapes and sequences appropriate to their insertion in the emerging gest. As a kind of tensed ground preparing the site for arrival of the as-yet-unknowns, the state of receptivity primes itself with its own language-know-how - its feeling for the *witz* of its native (culturally rooted but idiosyncratically inflected by each maker alone) medium. Irrespective of its medium, performing primes itself to be ready to transliterate what comes across to it. That is, its final translating conversion – how it gets hold of and delivers the offering to itself, seeks to remain as ‘close’ as it can to the feelings experienced in the offer’s emergence; it tries to be as ‘literal’ as it can be in turning the matters ‘out’ into its ‘own’ almost-language. It tries to stick to the ‘letter’ of the offer. In whatever way the sourcing is perceived and figured, whether as an imaging, a sounding, as texting, as touching, as scenting-tasting, or any synaesthetic or multi-combine of these, *the offerings have to be transliterated*. ‘Literal’ faithfulness to the perceiving experiences seeks to hold on to the specific sensuous qualities of its being-massaged across – how it feels to receive it as an entrant pulsing over toward the receiver’s idiosyncratically accented medium-specific language. To take it ‘as it comes’, the translating conversion needs to make its substitutions as literally proximate as possible, for art’s possibility lies in the splits between the strangeness of the offering and the ordinariness of the sense-making conventions with which they are perforce received and re-sited (in and as the emergent gest). The idiom that the conversion, hopefully, generates as its ‘own’ inflected relation to its language medium, emerges precisely in and as this idiosyncratic almost-transliteration.

The qualifying ‘almost-’ is necessary because, unlike conventional translation of a given known but ‘foreign’ text/speech, whose grammar, syntax and vocabulary have already been brought to book, the offer grasped by the maker comes from no such knowable language. Rather in its movement across, it is still only, inchoately, on the way to (the maker’s specific inflection of) language. It is in the process of formation but *not yet there*. This ‘not-yet’ is what calls for the transliteration as the mode of final delivery and its idiomatic transforming release into what is ‘appropriate’ - that is ‘right’, ‘proper’ – to this gest at this ‘moment’ of its emergence. As it takes on a ‘life of its own’ in the performing, it begins to set the terms of a dialogue with the offer- from-beyond. Once under way, the emerging gest, in its turn, influences the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of the transliteration. It has begun to provide a welcoming resting-place (though not yet quite a secure ‘home’...) – companionship - for the recent foreign arrivals, the uncanny comings, that, now, through their almost-transliteration, are keeping the coming would-be-art gest going and on its way.

What almost-transliteration contributes to the performance is the idiosyncratic release of materials that would otherwise fall just short of accessibility, locked into still wandering unboundaried feeling-thought complexes. It excises and metamorphoses them from their pre-medium ceaseless flowing into medium-compatible form without, hopefully, excessive loss of the sensuous art-potential energies, shapes, and resonances that drove them over and brought them to the medium's brink, to art's threshold: this is the sensuous equivalent of the 'same sound', a sounding in advance of meaning, sought for, listened out for, in the phonetic transliteration performed in Zukofsky's 'Catullus' poems. It hopes to effect an as yet ungroundable first-time figuring that somehow retains, keeps faith with and carries over, and thus effectively 'repeats', something that has not yet 'happened', not taken place: these (re-)figurings are the very things that might just keep art, through the specificity of each gest's 'just this once almost-language', to one side of 'meaning', of 'commonsense', of lived 'life'.

When performers do discuss their relation to the uncanniness of the otherwise materials, they are inevitably condemned to using the figurative means, the tropes, of ordinary language which are necessarily aside from and after the transmission. In such post- or extra-performance formulations they are not, of course, offered in the maker's medium-specific idiom but in the terms of a quasi-observer looking at the process from an external distanced vantage point commensurate with commonsense. Almost inevitably these are formed as apparently perceptible 'images' that, however opaque their context, work to turn the sourcing into terms compatible with the already known; they participate in the latter by sharing the kind of contours, whether fantastic or naturalistic, for which commonsense provides a resource of figures, tropes, and textual-rhetorical gambits. Thus in his 'Conversation in the Mountains' Paul Celan offers us 'Klein' and 'Gross' (surrogates perhaps for the poet's 'I' and 'you' ...) who have movable veils hanging behind their eyes that catch the images that appear to them:

'No sooner does an image enter than it gets caught in the web,
and a thread starts spinning, spinning itself around the image, a
veil-thread; spins itself around the image and begets a child, half-
image, half-veil.'²⁸

They are up there standing on a mountain road among the silent stones 'and the silence no silence at all,' there where,

'(N)o word has come to an end and no phrase, it is nothing but a
pause, an empty space between the words, a blank – you see all
the syllables stand around, waiting.'²⁹

However embedded and elusive these figures may appear they are not offered in the compacted diction, the near-untranslatable compounding conjunctives and disjunctives of Celan's later poetry. Image, veil, thread, spinning, child, blank, even the syllables standing around (stone-like perhaps), are all figures whose affinities, familiar to us from other prose contexts, enable us to just about accommodate them to more familiar interpretations of what 'might be going on'. We can understand this interpreting, even though we may experience what does 'go on' in the poems themselves as irreconcilable with the interpretive shelters and comforts available to us commonsensically. Perhaps this is because Celan strove in his poems to stay as close as possible transliteratively to the zone of the sounding images as they came over to him, sounded him out. In order to catch the obscurity of the world, the occult real

²⁸ Paul Celan, 'Collected Prose', op. c. it., p. 18.

²⁹ Op. cit., p. 19.

which is perhaps his prime subject matter, Celan had to find ways of rendering his experience of this (his and our) world-before-sense. He tries to sound this world over to us at the brink of hearability knowing all along (this is his know-how) that this world refuses us the ease of translation and some definitive move into sense. To be proximate to it he goes through and just beyond transliteration. From within their near parallel movement but still disjuncted from the world, Celan's poems, aural witnesses of 'our' occult world, perform an out-sounding relation to it. To begin to real-ise, to experience, his words as image-bearers (or even meaning-bearers) we have to try to follow, to re-construct, this out-sounding for ourselves. But of course written to be sounded out in German, they resist as their defiant performance of poetry's very *credo*, translation into the sounds, the different phonetic groupings, patterns and rhythms of all other phonetic languages.

This, then, is the paradox within which every art medium challenges both makers and respondents to survive, to go on making-toward-art. It is staked out by makers on the very terrain (one that gives way, collapses, as soon as it is treated as *terra firma*) from which 'good' (common-)sense has been evacuated by the disturbing intensities to which the art-thing is a response. Each thing declares, on its maker's behalf, that 'this is the only way I could turn the specificity of what touched me from over there into something resembling a language. It may look as if I have rendered it in a language with which you are already familiar, but don't be taken in by appearances. I am untranslatable. You cannot draw me over to where you stand without losing me entirely. To approach the site of my emergence you'll have to suspend the meanings you assume we share and search through the peculiarly inflected renderings of my breathings, soundings, gesturings, markings, colourings, shapings (and so on...). Only then might you begin to experience something akin to the combination of my transmuting move out of asocial obscurity and the intensity of my refusal to be appropriated by words of 'good' sense.'

Of course performers across the contemporary arts, schooled in both 'critical' self-analysis-and-reflection and in negotiating their ways through the organisation of art's representation, are invariably highly articulate about their performing. It is a pre-condition of performing now to develop persuasive narratives about its trajectory, substance and art-affiliations. But the iteration and elaboration of such stories perform a kind of work quite separate from the life of their gests. They are 'about' the construction of networks of relations through which makers try to sustain their practice. Far from being 'theories of practice' they are rhetorical moves in the politics of everyday survival, hopefully persuasive attempts to insulate a space-time context for continued making. No matter how 'conceptually supported' these extra-performing articulations are (from casual conversations through to group manifestoes and conceptually intricate statements) they do not draw us into the gap between sourcing and an emergent gest. It is precisely in the movement across the gap that the particularity of an untranslatable experience is (almost-)transliterated into the becoming-language of an idiom. That it never does quite become, coincide with, the language with which we are familiar in commonsense, is a mark of the (hopefully) seductive challenge of its idiosyncrasy: it retains intransigent untranslatable elements that differentiate art's sourcing from everything else.

Thus even where performers have articulated a coherent and hopeful 'philosophy-metaphysics' delineating what they see as the defining contours of their performing's space-time, such self-contexting, however 'helpful' it may seem to be to both performers and potential respondents, misses absolutely the transliterative performance through which each gest makes its way out. Self-contexting does play a crucial role in the 'politics' of art's

representation through the ways it participates in and is put to use by a range of interests, for it opens directly onto the functional discourses of art's reception and consequent placement. And, because they often seem to reveal aspects of performers' 'intentions', they make themselves easily assimilable by the discourses of knowledge and commonsense for which 'intention' (and its derivative - 'motive') is a basic taken for granted term in accounting for 'action(s)'. For example, the play of 'ideas' across the extraordinarily broad spectrum of approaches to late-modern (post-classical...) musical composition and performance has embraced irreconcilable differences about music's 'being' and possibilities – what it 'is' and might 'become'. The exploration and formulation of 'grounding' ideas ('art-as-research'?) set up radically divergent alternations between, for example, celebration of the aleatory or determinism, strict serialism or open-form (including performers' improvised contributions), music's material resources grounded in sounding as smooth continua or pitch division, use of acoustic instruments or electronic sound sources, 'noise' as a musical resource or reliance on conventional musical instruments alone, western (essentially the dodecaphonic scale) or non-western scales and instruments, together with multiple combinations of all these and others.

But what the polemical articulations of ideas across these often widely divergent positions cannot do is account for the two different but hopefully complementary transforming movements on the one hand, from the conceptual abstractions permeating performing's context to the engagement and selection of specific materials (sounds, instruments, forms of notation/instruction), and, on the other, from performing's inchoate welling up in its thought-felt pre-form pre-position to composing's formal notation (the 'score' as a set of 'instructions' to potential performers), its idiomatic rendering of sounds-to-come. Irrespective of the ways composers figure their sourcings in phonetic language (as, say, 'images', resonance, possible sound sequences, harmonic blocks, and so on), the issue, as in all the arts, is how composing-as-performance shapes (transliterates) and sets out the unique qualities of the sourcing experience. For this is accomplished in the very movement of transforming them, hopefully, into a set of instructions for performers. Transliteration is this attempt to bring off a literal extraction of the experience of 'origin'.

As performance it wants to stay as close as possible to the experience while drawing it out *in a totally different medium*. The effort demands faithfulness to sourcing. Such 'faith' is perhaps what Zukofsky calls 'sincerity':

'In sincerity shapes appear concomitants of word combinations, precursors of (if there is continuance) completed sound or structure, melody or form. Writing occurs which is the detail, not mirage, of seeing, of thinking with the things as they exist, and of directing them along a line of melody: shapes suggest themselves, and the mind senses and receives awareness.'³⁰

And, knowing that for the poet, for himself, the ear-eye relation has a certain primacy, he finds sincerity operating synaesthetically:

'He looks, so to speak, into his ear as he does at the same time into his heart and his intellect. His ear is sincere, if his words convey his awareness of the range of differences and subtleties of duration.'³¹

³⁰ Louis Zukofsky, 'Prepositions', University of California, London, 1981, p. 12.

³¹ Op. cit., p. 23.

Transliterating occurs, then, in the transition from the ‘detail... of seeing’ and ‘of thinking with the things’; it is what effects the concomitance of ‘shapes’ and ‘word combinations’. And in this transition lies the entire hazard of art’s hopeful performing. For this striving to be faithful is exactly what makes the performing an always precarious balancing act. In transliterating from the as yet unnamable unspeakable but absolutely specific vagueness of the originating impulses, the performer can never ‘know’ whether the attempted faithfulness has resulted in a gest that will render elements of ‘origin’, of sourcing’s quirky flows, in an almost sharable form.

Whenever performing tries to context itself in a relation to art, it has to convince itself unequivocally that such a sharable near-transliteration is not only possible but is also the deep and surface ‘reason’ for the making itself. This self-convincing is necessary precisely because the activity, into which the impulse-to-art has plunged it, is this transliterative performance that turns the not-quite-and-more-than-language of complex imagining into a thing that might just be assimilated with the ‘recognised’ languages of art. If translation names what is effected in the movement from one presumed knowable language to another, then performing for art has to be both other and more than translation in its absolute commitment to what the imagination is offered and draws forth from its beyond. For in imagination’s movement, its erupting scattering, phonetic language is only one of the multiple felt resources which it traverses.

The turning performing effects on art’s behalf passes in and out of language(s) in the course of responding to the multiple. Its eventual idiom is nothing more than its attempt to hold to, to stay true to, the qualities of the sourcing in the very process of metamorphosing them, and thus adapting them to something akin to art’s languages. Through its almost-transliteration the metamorphosis generates what it claims as faithful renderings into an idiom which might just be sharable. But it ‘knows’ that this claim is beyond judgment and evaluation, for its (un-)equivalences and approximations are the only traces, the only ‘evidence’, remaining from making’s response to its summons. While both transliteration and translation may seem to rely implicitly on a model of representation as ‘correspondence’ through copying, miming, or mapping, in art’s case the latter can provide no ground for judgment, as the thing-gest is all we have. Art does not represent.

We have to take it (or leave it) on trust. And it trusts us, in hope, to do this trusting. Indeed there is nothing outside the gest’s texturing. It is not making claims about anything outside its own activity. And it trusts us to recognise this and in this trusting to make the most of the little that it can offer. For what it makes evident, finally – this is its ‘evidence’ – is that *it bears witness to nothing outside its own performing on the way to and through affinity with art. This is what it ex-poses.*

And such ex-posing was precisely what Jarry’s *’Pataphysique* performed in its interruption of the conventions of continuity between phonetic languages. As a potential project, *’Pataphysique* made explicit the unavoidable centrality to performing of the problem of translation. Its own interruptive response to translation performed and exemplified the pointing towards and nascent opening out of a possible trajectory for all following making-for-art.

The very unpronounceability of *’Pataphysique* has already confronted us with the paradoxes and undecidables hedging in all *translation* between knowable languages. Both in its spacing

(including the provoking recalcitrant punctuation mark) and its sounding (the homonyms' layering) it confounded any unequivocal transfer of 'meaning' from French into, say, English. In this case no translation could guarantee to have found decidable equivalences that could with confidence carry over the tensions of both the allusions and the aporia compacted into the original. Even the apparently minor change involved in translating *'Pataphysique* as 'pataphysics preserves the reference to the science of physics at the expense of the English meaning of 'physique'. Without entering into the complexities of competing theories of translation-practice it seems that when the text to be translated is treated as a vehicle of 'meanings'/signifieds beyond or 'outside' the sequencing of its specific words, then translation passes over the loss of the latter with relative equanimity. In changing both sequence (including spacing) and word-specificity (and thus how the text might be sounded), a translation will sound completely different in its new language. This is seen as a necessary cost of trying to establish an equivalent 'meaning' in the new language. The crucial issue is the 'externality' of the assumed more or less common 'meaning' to the specific words of both languages. But, in contrast, for phonetic writing-speaking transliteration transposes by remaining as faithful as it can to how the original sounds. To preserve the sounding it tries to offer phonetic equivalents which carry over the original's resonances and timbres. If, in this literal sounding it also bears something of the original's allusions (significations) so much the better! And, as noted, this is much more likely to occur when the different languages share some common etymological roots.

For transliteration hazards and hopes that it may just be able to hold on to a thing's essential idiosyncrasy in the course of the transposition. It wants to collapse, perhaps, some sense into sounding in spite of the move to its new language site. Of course transposition in music occurs invariably within the same language and effects only a change in pitch in which the original sound/composition is placed into a different key. The changed new pitch position may be so 'close' to the original (merely a semi-tone higher or lower as the nearest intervals in the tuning conventions of western music) as to be unnoticeable except to those with 'perfect pitch'. In spite of subtle differences in the resonances of different keys, to untrained musical 'ears' transposition makes little difference to the aural reception of a performance, for, in ordinary musical transposition, apart from this pitch shift, melody, harmony, and performance instructions remain the same; in such transposition the 'integrity' of a composer's intention – how a composition is to be sounded – can be preserved almost intact. Thus transposition in music is only a first step on the way towards the transformative gesture that transliteration performs. The processes of both musical composition and improvisation are confronted by the challenge of developing a distinctive idiom displaying its musical affinities by a sounding-re-ordering. It re-positions itself in relation to extant musical languages and idioms through how it relates the complex of musical materials comprising its repertoire (sounding processes) to whatever emerges in its responsive attention to its summons. Most of the 'content' of such emergent phenomena will be experienced in terms that are outside both phonetic and formal musical languages. Even where a source may seem to be 'natural', as in Messiaen's response to bird-song, the near-translitative composing performance, while remaining faithful to such 'song's' particulars, has to be radically transformative in the gest it offers. For it severs itself from nature in its articulation of a sounding idiom twisted into being out of both the conventions and the open possibilities of musical languages. In Messiaen's case this transliteration is also filtered through his intense religiosity.³²

³² I treat aspects of Messiaen's music and its relation to making-for-art in 'To Sound Out Music's...'

Likewise in the visual arts, though always in modes unique to each sub-medium (via the journey, say, from drawing, via installation, to film and digitised imaging), the complexity of perceived sourcing necessitates faithful near-transliteration of many elements of experiences other than just ocular 'seeing'. 'Seeing' is re-formed as the conduit through which are squeezed and inter-laced a complex of diffused perceptions and feelings experienced by makers in the course of their explorations of summons and sourcing. Given that there is no common medium-specific language for rendering, say, the unique combination of perception, memory, and emotion through which every individual may trace their life course, the challenge to performing is to generate almost-transliterations which are felt to be true to both the specific complexity of the perception and the materials through which this is transmuted. Precisely because the experience of the impulsive sourcing is idiosyncratically beyond any knowable 'language', there is no question of rendering 'likeness' through a pre-existing and thus shared vocabulary and syntax of marks, colours, or shapes (and so on...). On each occasion of making, makers seek to transliterate the literal specificity of the experience into, primarily, visual terms through turning out a one-off performance. This makes for somewhere close to the accepted conventions, the 'known', appreciated, medium-specific languages which drew the performer into performing in the first place, but a somewhere felt out on its own terms *as if for the first time*. In order to twist and turn the particularity into and through performing's visual know-how, the shaping that constitutes the performing entails a selecting, compacting, reduction-extension, a paring down and elaboration, so that, hopefully, all that remains is a faithful near-transliteration of the felt perception-complex that demanded this gesture alone: this emerging partially syntaxed vocabulary, seductive but as yet unreadable, and nothing more. Performing seeks to compose that idiom which is specific to the sourcing experience, in the hope that it might just attach it to art, others willing.

Thus, for Louise Bourgeois the sourcing energising much of her making continually recurs on troubling childhood memories of family relations and their containing domestic spaces. The resulting gestures (sculptures, installations, drawings, paintings), filtered through the know-how of her shifting exploratory intimacies with materials and her attachments to other artists' things (Munch, Bacon, surrealism), aim for an 'intimist' idiom that roams through a before-hand region of experience (before marriage, before life in America).³³ Her gestures are thus necessarily 'abstract' in their compacting of emotive experiences through memory:

'Being an intimist, my motivation is not to communicate...
I want to have total recall and control of the past (41)... for me,
producing sculpture is an exorcism (31)... Inspiration? It seems
to me that art is created with a capacity for feeling, for
processing pain, and expressing experience and memory (40) ...
I am never literal, never realistic. What we see is very abstract
(75)... What is important to me is the recall... Recall is a scientific
word, I allow myself controlled recall. I can say what I feel,
what I recall. The fight is a kind of articulation. When it is
successful I am liberated. (87)'³⁴

The very complexity of what is recalled requires abstraction for its transmutation into visual tactile terms. In this articulation the literalism of copying, miming and reflecting is set aside. For what has to be brought across, transliterated in its particularity, is that as yet unsayable

³³ See Paul Gardner, 'Louise Bourgeois', Universe Publishing, New York, 1994, p. 21.

³⁴ Op. cit., pagination as indicated within the quoted extracts.

amalgam of feeling-perception-thought that constitutes the process of recalling. What emerges is indeed literal but simultaneously unnatural and a-cultural. It sidles up to and hovers at language's threshold, but calls across through its affinities with selected visual syntaxes. The literality is vested in the particularity of each performance; it makes the claim that what is felt can indeed be 'said', literally, in and as the gest ('... I can say what I feel...'). But we 'know' that, first and last, it remains an almost-transliteration. For the performer's entire project rests upon the conviction that the recalled feeling-complex is already experienced as a virtual-, an almost-language (the maker's to-be-realised idiom). It is both all too familiar and simultaneously foreign to the ways of commonsensencing. Yet it arrives in a way that already seems to lend, to offer, itself to the needs of performing: suddenly it is here waiting for release, for rendering, via transliteration, into its real literal surrogate – the emergence of an idiomatic gest hoping to be gathered into art's languages. It is the very singularity of the idiomatic that holds on to the foreignness of the materials offering themselves to transliteration.

Painting Suffused by Visual Telematics : Dumas, Luc Tuymans

For those performers trying to hold to the possibility of painting's survival, the defining circumstance of the performing context is the unavoidable suffusion of every sphere of daily life by machined visual imagery. We learn what seeing 'is' through the all-pervading representing processes of the information-spectacle. Our passage within and through, but not out of, the flow of image-infused sense-in-common is mapped, programmed and borne along by the multiple modes of machined imagery. We are multipli-constituted, -transmitted, and -archived as images. It is a form of represented 'dwelling' to which we are condemned and, as such, is the unavoidable back- and fore-ground, the phantasmagoric terrain, across which painting has to feel its way. In trying to persist within this suffusion all painting is now, directly or obliquely, performing in response to the terms of this visual telematics. Sometimes, as with the gests of the following two painters, performing begins with and explores its response to aspects of the machined imagery itself. As prime constituents of everyday perception, taken for granted sources of information about the look of the (represented) world, performers' felt response to such images and the processes of their construction may become the unavoidable materials for their almost-transliteration. But, approached as candidate motifs, it may be that painting's very point and challenge is to take them out of themselves, to take them out of representation to its elsewhere. In order to seek out its own elsewhere, painting's almost-transliteration may have to involve a turning of representation out of itself, a kind of going-back-through, a de-creative undoing and re-doing, on behalf of what only painting might still be able to remind us about.

Such a turn away from our enforced 'dwelling' occurs, differently, in the paintings of Marlene Dumas³⁵ and Luc Tuymans³⁶, where the making of 'meaning' (that within which we dwell routinely, thoughtlessly (always relatively...)) through machine-generated imagery offers itself as a site for different modes of painterly de-creation. For Dumas it entails a kind of working against oneself. This working-against takes on the declining of meaning, a move perhaps towards a blankness, a non-event, in which there is just enough movement to support a decline.

³⁵ See, for example, 'Marlene Dumas', Phaidon, London, 1999, for a range of writings about and reproductions of her gests.

³⁶ See, for example, 'Luc Tuymans', Phaidon, London, 1996. For a comparison with another contemporary painter who also uses photographs as source materials see too, 'Guy Van Bossche White Out', Muhka Museum, Antwerp, 2002, which contains a fine contexting essay by Jon Thompson in the course of which the issue of painting's necessary 'translation' of the photograph is raised (p. 33).

And yet some (strong but hidden) version of the need to paint is preserved: a pointless compulsion, a force that has nowhere to arrive at. The trajectories (echoing though not miming Picabia's moves through and out of Dada) seem to lack specific attachments to moments, sites, figures, affiliations, within painting's tradition.

In Dumas's gests (and frequently too in those of Luc Tuymans (he also draws on other modes of representation such as illustration)) the allegorical turn seems closely bound to the use of the photograph as source, as motif/material to which the painting is a response. Many of the paintings begin with and from photographs, their movements involving both an acceptance and a rejection (or at the very least a moving away from). And yet this does not feel like a dialogue or a contest with photography; rather the photograph, directly or indirectly, is the essential condition of the painting. If we now live with photographs then the experience of that living must be taken on.

In Dumas' painting the photographic sources show the ways the journey entails a turning back from representing reproductions to something else, towards perhaps a release of the photographic image, a freeing on behalf of something else. To allegorise photography, or at least our taken for granted relation to its conventions of representation and our uses of these, Dumas needs to paint the photograph without its tell-tale signs; the image becomes an object for a particular kind of transformation: the cut of distancing cuts us off from the photograph's 'givens'. Taking the photographic image (its procedures, its objects) to a new, now painterly, site entails a refusal, a skirting, of the connections to what we conventionally take painting (and photography) to be 'about'.

Both artists love painting, yes, its openness, its flow, its uncertainties, its ability to withdraw from definition, its visceral-visual attractions, yet this love is placed in the service of, tasked on behalf of, that which its now conditioning-defining medium (photography, film, video) has confronted it with. What propels the artist(s) seems to be the possibility of an expansion and multiplication of desires - a going beyond but through photography by finding and showing the ambiguities of the ways photography sets up, represents, its imagery. Photography's site (its interests, its investments) is displaced by painting's transformations. We are offered the loss, disappearance, of photography without mourning: the paintings are both for and against it. They could not exist without it: they need it in order to take painting elsewhere.

If, since its emergence, photography has challenged and problematised painting's figuring activity (its always indirect relation with mimesis and its move out of representation) and has, under modernity, been one of the goads contributing to the multiplication of modes of performance in the conventionally understood 'visual' arts and a relative retreat from painting, then Dumas and Luc Tuymans perform, each distinctively, a different movement, not as a restoration of how painting 'was', but an affirmation of its peculiar pledge in the face of and despite the ubiquity and awesome 'powers' of machined representation. *Painting keeps going, makes a come-back even, on other terms*. In this painting, which retains photography only in order to lose, to undermine (our confidence in) it by searching out and transliterating something in it which is aside from representation, we are faced with the perverse melancholy (a not-quite-melancholy) of allegory without any mourning.

The paintings' surfaces are always doubled in offering us both the photograph-as-origin and painting's elsewhere that could not be shown without the photograph. Painting here circles round its object, the photograph, and tries to retake it. By declining the gaze at 'the world' and

substituting the photograph for 'the world' (the world as endless becoming), the artist looks at the photograph (its limits, its lacks, its inertness, its machined emergence from representation) and tries to see through it via the elsewhere of painting. In these paintings this elsewhere is often approached through extant ways of making painting. In their haptic modes they often seem to make reference to 'expressionism' (e.g. through distortions, exaggerations, the non-naturalistic use of colour) while declining the meanings we attach to expressionist modes.

The blankness, inertness, of the photograph is derived from the machine system which generates it and sets up the absolute distance of its images as memory traces; it offers us only possible chains of metonymic associations with their own emotions arising as asides from the image. This inertness seems to preclude the gaze, to make it redundant. Because it is only a mark of, a memorial to, a past time, a lost present that never was fixable, the photograph gives nothing back. In these paintings it is, perhaps, precisely this nothing which they take as their precondition, their focus and their topic. Exhausted, drained, in the look, the photograph is offered as a candidate for a peculiar resuscitation, but only on painting's terms. Painting wants to restore the possibility of the gaze to the photograph, but only through painting; the paintings seem to be saying, 'if you want to find anything more in the photograph you will only find it through gazing at the painting from it'. And simultaneously painting wants to offer something else to painting, and thus to the carnal gaze, by taking as its object that which could only come from photography. It wants to go beyond photography for painting, but only by passing through it and transliterating its not yet accepted offer.

So this painting begins with and from photography's obscene offer: what the machine makes available as residues of light on surfaces is the making public, the turning to the outside, the unfolding, of everything. As Walter Benjamin showed, photography's probe turns everything into surface, pure surface - it eradicates the private, the hidden, and makes us aware of everything. It proposes that everything can (will) be, should be, represented. And it does this through an absolutely bland matter-of-factness, saying 'this is the way things were when the shutter clicked.' But what happens when photography is deprived of this? Perhaps the authority of its radical empiricism is undermined (however slightly). The flow of painting may just, sometimes, by-pass, side-step, the inertness of its obscenities, an inertness whose take-it-or-leave-it character shows no desire for or interest in any engagement of otherness. In contrast, the painting performance strives to take itself and us to the brink, to the threshold that opens onto its Other. It searches for the relation which might allow its real life to begin.

But in that painting where photography becomes the object through which the break-out into otherness might be sought, photography's lonely lost machined surfaces are at risk of displacement. Painting here wants to turn photography out of itself and into something else, into an elsewhere, through painting-as-solvent. Painting's congealing flows are turned into corrosives that re-site and re-fix elsewhere that which the developer's fixative had so seemingly unequivocally left us with.

Do these paintings thus require us to ask what the limits and achievements of photography are in the course of trying to come to terms with what might be 'going on' in this reversing process in which the photograph is un-fixed, drawn out of its defining processes of development? Can painting effect the return of the gaze to images that were only looked at (as photographs)? In what ways might this painting take us somewhere different to the diverse sites already established by painters painting with-and-against photography (such as Bacon (discussed

shortly), Hamilton, Close, Morley, Richter), divert us from painting that, in a range of bravura ways, outdoes photography, onto painting planes that show the void in simulation?

Approaching these gests as allegorically driven immediately raises the question of whether they can hold us, in and as our gaze, by the ambiguity of their doubleness. Is what may fascinate and trouble us their ability to be both photographs-seen-through-painting and, 'simultaneously' (though we may doubt, recalling Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit alternation, whether this doubling could ever be an all-at-once), independent paintings? Are we, as gazers, un-sited (and, fleetingly perhaps, unsighted) in this simultaneity, especially as in Dumas' case, where the imagery circles around a specific sub-set of possible contents - faces, bodies - whose photographic 'life' we thought we understood? Is some kind of gaze restored to the model? Is the loss of information which photography experiences at the hands of this painting (dispensing with one kind of surface detail) replaced by something that both holds the image as photograph while turning it into something else (something soliciting a desire for elsewhere rather than the provocation of 'just looking')? Does it make us re-experience the photograph on painting's terms? In what state does it leave the photograph, its claims, its interests and its effect (on us)? Above all, does it re-animate painting?

By painting in-between (in between photography and painting) these paintings sometimes seem to de-ontologise both photography and painting by refusing precedence to either. They open the photographic image to chance through the always open and uncertain 'effects' of painting's surface life, while tying painting to the closures of the photograph, and in so doing they withhold any judgment as to which might have some 'final' precedence. They thus toy with both, becoming a kind of play, developing a playful relation with both, hoping, perhaps to de-porno the porno, to tease the obscene out of itself. This play is crucially dependent on eroticising the surface (in contrast to the dead surface of the photograph). Unlike the photograph's external light source, Dumas' paintings seem to search for their own inner light, their 'somewhere-else' that is not dependent upon a machined trace of a passing light condition. In her large watercolours, for example, the bodies' surfaces become transparent without showing us any interior; the body's folds are flattened out through the layered transparency of the water-colours. We are offered a free play of the surface as a partial undoing of photography's hold over us. This is the eroticisation of painting and not the obscuring of the body .

Luc Tuymans' relation to the photograph constitutes a different trajectory, although it is avowedly bound up with allegory. Writing of his painting 'Gas Chamber', he says that the "...picture, its aesthetic character, is the disguise of something that is absolutely inaccessible if it is not disguised."³⁷ The painting seeks to show us something the only possibility of whose emergence is that it be hidden, disguised. It has to do this by going through, using as a model, a photograph whose very banality is its lie – through the inertness of its details it refuses us the very thing that the room is. In its inevitable aestheticising of the photo's image the painting has somehow both to show us this lie and point beyond it without ever seeming to claim that it could show us the room. The photo's banal meanings must be both preserved and transcended without this transcendence ever being able to stand somewhere else apart from the photo. *Painting becomes a practice of disguising or camouflaging in order that we see it precisely as camouflage, because glimpsing the camouflage is the only way of approaching what can never be shown.*

³⁷ Op. cit., p. 133.

An image that starts as a certain plenitude, is moved away from its 'one' (its unity), towards understatement, the far edge of understatement, as a principled drive, the very point of the painting. Here putting on the paint is a taking away from the image (an irony always and necessarily unsure of its own limits, of when to stop) in order to say/show less. But this less is not the less of minimalism where less was intended to show more. It is rather the less of less. In order to show how images are already disguises without our ever coming to terms with this, painting has to make less of the image, to take it close to a (the?) meaning -less. What is thus drained away from the image (usually photographic but sometimes an illustration) is not so much 'meaning' but life/becoming. The 'life' of the source image, how it becomes and secures itself as a 'one', is taken away from it - it becomes unsupportable. It thus fends us off, denies us access on the terms which we typically take for granted with photographs. The painter sites himself as accessory after the fact to inexpressibility, unrepresentability: the disaster cannot be shown - *all that can be shown is the failure to show, the impossibility of any standing in for.*³⁸

Less-painting - necessary failure - in the face of the disastrous. But then perhaps everything that the painter addresses is shown as part of the disaster, our disastrous thralldom to representation. The painter condemns her/himself and painting to an interminable repetition of the disastrous shortcomings of painting-as-showing. For the painting is also deprived of the subject-who-paints: Luc Tuymans' paintings deny their relation to an original, an originating, subject who would be validated and marked out by the painting. Thus, in those paintings in which mirrors are objects of his and our gaze, he confronts himself and us with both how a 'subject' can look at 'itself' and with what might be 'going on' in the space between the seeing subject and its reflection. In 'Mirror 1' (1992) the reflected subject is trapped behind the glass surface and what lies 'on' it. The surface 'realities' (drops of water or toothpaste) interrupt, and thus defer forever, any chance of a reflected 'whole' subject. The painting offers instead a not-yet-subject, some 'thing' without what Blanchot calls 'hope of unity', that which remains 'barely divided'.³⁹ What 'one' (I) sees is a self that is in the process of being un-selfed, turned out of its self, a becoming-ungraspable dissolving self. And perhaps we are witnesses, too, as belated participants in this very process, to the painter's active dissolution of the singularity of his own gaze. We are offered a muddied imaging that holds the 'one' apart from its one-self. Painting transliterates the mirror as a veiling - not a revealing - thus bringing to a close the mirror stage of subjectivity.

Yet, it is as if this active lacking (painting as the doing of lack) of the subject, offered in and as the inexpressivity and apparent 'neutrality' of Luc Tuymans' paintings, is, at the same time, and in spite of this painting-defining activity, an active lack-ing that does manage to show the absent subject almost by default. Luc Tuymans somehow is there in the making as a pleasing of himself. He talks for example about the erotic quality of painting wet in wet; but what he seems to leave is not so much a mark as a mask.

To hide something is the precise opposite of what we have always taken 'authentic' painting to be - disclosure. And the paradox and problem of painting for Luc Tuymans turn on whether an apparently disclosing medium of surfaces can make disguise and masking its subject matter. How could we, or he, 'know' this, for successful disguise hides itself? We are confronted by painted surfaces, still seductive through their quirky palette and curious juxtapositions, seeking

³⁸ Further aspects of this failure are discussed by Ulrich Looek; see particularly, 'Luc Tuymans', op. cit., pp. 48-51.

³⁹ M. Blanchot, in the chapter 'Idle Speech' in 'Friendship', op. cit., p. 122.

to show in and as their 'whatness' (the constructed images) an absence; what has to be absent is the unrepresentable event (the eventless event). What is left is a painted image that can offer only the tragedy of its own falling short of ever bearing witness: interminable resemblance whose claim to resemblance collapses in the face of the recession beyond perception of any 'thing' that might be located as the original model, motif, subject. Transliteration reveals the vacuity of resemblance, of representation as a miming of the supposed 'real'. Maybe on these terms, then, the only event for which a painting could hope might, recalling Beckett, be the eventing of the recognition of necessary failure evoked in and as the viewing of the painting: the 'showing' of the impossibility of adequate (just) showing, of bearing witness, and certainly, thus, of the standing-in-for that defines representation. Perhaps such gestures do indeed release just those feelings of lack and melancholy typically associated with allegory. The artist Ian Kiaer notes Luc Tuymans' use of the term 'historical forgery' almost 'as a strategy' that freed him from responding 'to the immediate past as it had been presented'; this enables him to 'imagine, pretend even, an alternative.'⁴⁰ Making-for-art here, disabling representation, relates to history indirectly. It approaches events through detours that, by a deliberate and necessary falling short, invites us to treat bearing witness itself as always already imbued with and dependent upon imagination.

This sense of making-for-art's suspicious relation to the constructive work of representation (how we produce history as a form and site of 'knowledge') seems to be reinforced by Luc Tuymans' treatment of his subject matter as 'memory' - the already lost, retainable in image only as lost, lacking. The lot of painting here is recognition and recalling of the absence, the falling-short: acceptance of the loss of the richness of plenitude that is then echoed, carried through (and thus idiosyncratically echoing concerns of *Arte Povera*) in the 'poverty' (always, in painting's case and given paint's seemingly inherent seductive quality, relative) of the surface. The surface is estranged from being/becoming without yet quite becoming nothing. It poses questions about remainders: what remains to us, to him, to painting? What might painting do to one side of the authentic disclosure ... only display the 'truth' of 'to fail, and fail again...'?

As allegory art cannot present the hidden, it can only point to, pull us towards the hiding (place) by its own very indirection - it is condemned to off-putting. It has to begin by acknowledging painting's (art's) smallness and weakness (Beckett again...). No more talk about powerful paintings. And yet the off-putting (Luc Tuymans' paintings for example) draws us towards it and then holds us at bay, infinitely; it forbids our entering into, being with(in), it. What fascinates is precisely this withdrawal.

By not being 'bad' painting (authentically bad by deliberately overturning Romantic-Modernist conceptions of the beautiful surface), but by being weak, offering their insignificance, their abjection in the face of the unreachable, their pathos engages us. We may approach in the hope of catching something vital but are drawn into an endless loop of absence and withholding, invited to share the mourning. And yet, and yet... the paintings are, precisely, painted; as such they condemn themselves to share in the delight of emergence of the something-that-comes-from-nothing, the erotics of the wet in wet, the surprise of the 'one-off' (each painting being outside any whole, an essential fragment that will never be quite fitted in anywhere), the *witz*-ful irony of the downgrading (simultaneously de-grading and up-lifting?) and the dissolving (dissolute?) almost- transliteration of the photograph into painting. Performing takes on, tries to show itself, through its almost-transliteration, as the equivalent for the feelings provoked by the

⁴⁰ Ian Kiaer, 'Endless House Projects', The British School at Rome, Rome, 2005, p. 23.

essential falling short to which both photograph and painting condemn themselves (but differently).

Almost-transliteration Confronts Machined Appropriation

Across each of the arts this conviction about ‘near-equivalence’ - equivalence condemned to an essential falling-short - establishes its own medium-appropriate terms. On each performing-occasion every performer seeks to effect and show a double liaison: firstly, a liaison of proximate ‘equivalence’ with the sourcing material experienced as almost-already (my-idiomatic) language, and secondly, a liaison of seduction by and affinity with other makers’ specific gests whose own idioms have been accepted as constituents of their medium’s language (its ever-open range of accents, inflections, dialects). Almost-transliteration is the way makers seek to bring off this double liaison. In each direction the reach is toward the drawing-forth of a sharable ‘something’ that takes the materialising of an idiom reaching toward art’s languaging-to-come as its real hope, possibility, challenge and only condition. Every performance tries to effect the coalescence of the return journeys from each direction as their attempted reconciliation. Whether their idioms remain in the occult, unsharable zone from which they started out (either lying in wait as a ghostly barely-seen unrecognisable presence, or noticed but rejected for membership by the critique and taste operatives) depends on their access to and reception by the appropriating machinery of representation.

To achieve something more than the maker’s private sense of affinity with and attachment to art as a still open outside gathering, makers have to convince the gate-keepers, and subsequently all potential interested respondents, that their gests are reconcilable with the languages of art, both as they already exist and in the places allocated for its managed staging. For this is where makers’ commitment to ‘equivalence’ is infiltrated and invaded by the machinery of aesthetic judgment and placement. Such assessments of ‘value’ control the means of access to ‘membership’ (being gathered up to formally ‘count’ in the handing on of a codified ‘tradition’) and thus the terms on which making and its gests might become culturally accredited objects. They are made on the basis both of the taken for granted knowledges of the organisations’ managing aesthetics (recognising, accounting for, valuing), but also of the latter’s continuously developing strategies for positioning and sending gests on their way within the representing media’s current terms of hybrid aestheticisation. A gest has to be fitted into both the surrounding intertwined programming of leisure through entertainment and heritage, and the transformation of the arts into ‘knowledge’ by the academy and media machinery in their responsibilities for the management of culture’s diffusion. Gests float or sink in the fissures between these alternating, sometimes competing, but increasingly complexly intertwined interests.

In the afterwards of our modernisms, making-towards-art knows only too well that this in-between is its unavoidable destination. The apparent permanence of this fate now challenges making to explore and experiment with ways for surviving its permeation by the interests of cultural (and thus, always working through ‘culture’, of institutional-corporate-state-) power. Performing becomes an attempt to reconcile two simultaneous requirements. It is condemned to sustain its search for and its attempt to deliver its proximate ‘equivalents’ (the almost-transliterations that act as faithful proxies for the not-quite-sayable sourcings) alongside its tactical engagement of the terms of its appropriation. A critical constituent of performers’ know-how now is their idiosyncratic circumstantially specific knowledge and understanding of the latter. Such know-how unavoidably enters into making’s attempts to keep its

performance going at all costs. The primacy given to the almost-equivalents generated out of sourcing's summons has to pass, at least in part, by way of tactics. Performing's course is defined by how this conjunctive-disjunction shapes it. As long as it retains even the smallest sense of its hoped-for placement – how and where it might appear – every gest is the marked outcome of this condemnation.

Performing can only hold to its over-riding commitment to art's still (just) open possibility by incorporating tactics that contribute to its shaping of its gest. The proxy that almost-transliteration seeks to deliver is inflected by, turned toward and through, the real conditions (the maker's perceived circumstances) of art's representation. And makers are themselves co-recipients of, co-participants in, the working out of this representation. They have come to art in part through the processes of representation, even though in that very journey something in art's excessive qualities began to tantalise and withdraw them from representation's authority. Irrespective of the sourcings' qualities and performing's efforts to turn toward and hold to an elsewhere for art (an otherness aside from culture), actual performance is inevitably saturated by and thus has to grapple with the all too literal but very powerful seductive flows of cultural representation. The latter's routine working out demands that performing be engaged in endless conversations (with itself and others) about the terms of its appearance. These are conversations whose terms are set and controlled by interests unmoved by art's plight.

Thus the possibilities for any gest to transcend the 'moment' of its emergence (the end of performing), to live-on, to have a 'cultural life', are vested in the ways almost-transliteration becomes entangled with the forces of representation. Whether such living-on is able to secrete anything of art's so weak charge in the face of its enculturation may turn on the performance's tactics for intertwining almost-transliteration with the languages and ontologies of commonsense (the very taken-for-granted world that art-making attempts to leap away from in its otherwise-search). Can performing resist calculation and find ways of turning commonsense out of itself whilst itself entangled by and within them?

Whether and how art might retain traces of its 'as such' – its being only for art-as-other – in spite of and in the face (teeth) of representation may still turn on the possibilities left to its weak force. Might this attract precisely because of its attempted turn away from calculation while stuck fast in the very midst of the latter? From within the midst of an active sharing of culture's dense flows (crucially, the capital-information combine) making is challenged to wrest and preserve fragments of art's occult. It has to cling to the hope that its attempts to generate tension between its proxies for equivalence and the routine cultural conventions for the arts, *within which it too is an active participant*, can foster a receptivity quite aside from the terms of its actual institutional placement. Can its weakness, its unforcing (the incalculability of its almost chargeless driving off-and-away), become a site for an alternative gathering, a gathering in and of difference? Can it still be the occasion of (as it was here and there in the bursting forth of our moderns) a turn towards that-which-is-not-yet?

Retaining something of this pledge may depend on how performing's gests manage to protect, encrypt perhaps, the weakness of a letting-become. For almost-transliteration is the bearing, the carrying across, of such a drift into the (only) just-different. The pathetic smallness of the nano-movement such gests may still offer to the concentrated receptivity of rapt (and enwrapped) attention attests precisely to what is now left to performing. Almost-transliteration can only hope that, despite its inevitable convolution with tactics and

calculation, this minuscule's potential for difference has been preserved in the tensions of its compacted transference. Which is where the 'almost-' and its hyphen may be making their contribution...

In the preceding introduction of transliteration, the 'almost' has been prefixed to show that the transfer (whilst figuratively proximate according to the maker's profound commitment to the necessity of transfer's faithfulness) from sourcing, to performing, to gests, though closely parallel in both spirit and practice to conventional usage of transliteration, could not be contained by it. Emphasis has to be placed on the sensual multiplicity of sourcing's offerings for much of which there could be no literal equivalent language (phonic or otherwise) in a performer's medium/media, even though performers might experience the offerings as already on the way toward, as 'virtually' within, the specific idiosyncratic language that was about to overtake them.

Almost-Transliteration and Translation

In other words the claim to 'equivalence', and thus to the faithfulness (truth-to-experience) of the transfer, could not be underpinned, guaranteed, by any independent *analogical* sense of the transfer as a process of copying, miming, or directly corresponding. The transfer might, for example, engage the movement and changes required in generating a performance and its gest in which synaesthetic experiences were translated into the terms of a medium-specific language. In such cases the 'faithfulness' of the rendering might rather have to be addressed through, say, shared qualities of 'feeling' generated across the different senses. However the use of almost-transliteration in considering the transfer from sourcing to medium is itself a particular variant of the general process of translation. And the movement of translation, as itself a process of substitution, is unavoidably caught up in the play of representation. It has to negotiate its way through and out of its saturation by the means of commonsense figuration and rhetoric. Any transferring movement from one language to another is ordered through explicit and implicit criteria flowing from each translation's purpose. For the goal determines the hierarchy of concerns that directs the process of selecting substitutions. In conventional translation of spoken or written non-art texts, bearing perhaps, information, instruction or opinion, the goal is equivalent *meaning*. The meaning of the original is established as unequivocally as possible and the 'nearest' equivalents (words, phrases, syntax construction) in the language of reception are substituted. All languages are treated as near neighbours, the assumption being that each is constituted by a similar 'dictionary' of words, phrases, constructions, grammars and syntaxes, of more or less 'identical' meaning, enabling an almost-common sense to be transferred between them without significant loss or gain – supposedly sufficient 'for all practical purposes'.

But art's gests present an utterly different challenge because they are themselves, and especially so since the modern movements, challenging, making problematic, the very processes of languaging and transferring within which they are performed. The condition of all makers' entry into art is dependent upon their developing making-idioms whose distinction lies in their unique (one-off) relation to the languages already constituting their performing medium. An idiom is what emerges from the ways a maker both allows something (the whatever-sourcing) to play with and through her/him, and cajoles the encasing language in its entirety into showing itself, however slightly, differently. Performers hope that their gests, in turning and being turned by language through and just beyond itself and themselves, will reveal new possibilities for felt-thought, for a sharable becoming-to-come. The gests make themselves felt precisely in their 'ability' to move attentive recipients

out of the conventional practices through which commonsense routinely maintains the fabric of everyday life, its more-or-less-the-sameness, as an unbreachable enfolding. And this 'elsewhere' opened up by idiom is generated in each gest's unique intertwining, interflexing, of its languaging gests for which there can be, by definition, no already existing equivalents. *As the unprecedented they emerge in and as their untranslatability.* But the facticity of the emergent gest, as it enters the *agora* (the public arena where opinion and calculation coalesce to produce a market of 'values'), seems by the very openness of its ex-posure, to offer an invitation to translate, to try to find ways of aligning it with, while allowing it to challenge, the very felt-thought which has brought us to its brink, prepared to test its mute appeal (the appeal for attention that lies in between its articulated joinings, in the pulsing and coursing and syncopating of its rhythms drawing us into and through it). This is when some kind of adaptive translation begins to occur as the act of receptive, attentively seduced, response.

Every attentive engagement of an art gest, in being taken over (moved, seduced, gripped by its particularity), is simultaneously challenged both to suspend specific assumptions about the quality of its relation to art's things, and to try to readjust its felt frame of references, its open desire to take on art's offerings, so that the particularity can be enfolded there. Art's cultural life turns on the multiplicity of such tiny acts of translation in which its gests are continuously affiliated and re-aligned through such adjustments. But, as I have continually emphasised, this plural translating activity now occurs within a complex context of the management of art's appearances. It is almost impossible now for a would-be-art-gest to make its appearance unheralded by some representing activity outside itself. Its various handlers work strenuously, though not necessarily in complementary ways, to try to over-determine its fate. Through its necessary dependence on the machinery of representation every gest is elaborately pre-interpreted. The terms of its appearance have been prepared well in advance through the manipulation of the contexts of its surfacing and movement across cultural sites. Respondents' translations occur courtesy of the professional aestheticians' reception committees. Permeated and surrounded by texts (spoken and written) from many discourses, the arts' gests come to their potential wider audiences as word-contained things. Knowing more or less what to expect of them the tendency of respondents' engagement (relation-as-translation) is surely to use the contextual pre-interpretation as a guide, a set of instructions or opening gambits, for approaching the things. Surely too it is very hard for any art gest to maintain its ability to surprise, disturb, interrupt, the reception process under such conditions of pre-interpretation.

Itself challenged to challenge, but only able to send forth its things in a context where the parameters of representation are controlled by other interests, making may be goaded into diversionary tactics of obstruction, obliquity, secretion and encryption. It is drawn into a double game of both openness and subterfuge in the cause of self-protection. Caught between the challenge of its inner compulsion and that of the managed context of its appearance, making's own struggle may thus turn on how it moves between up-front declaration and withholding reserve. Its '*s'expose*' may be complicated by its intrication of withdrawal and a certain blankness. And where the latter is in play it may 'up' the threat of its own rejection. In challenging respondents to try to come to terms with the limits of untranslatability by occulting its languages (the play of its almost-transliteration) it risks falling out of representation; it puts itself at risk of disappearance. Where respondents hold onto a gest's unavoidable pre-interpretations as the frame and horizon of their own active attention, their responses will remain broadly within the parameters set by the aesthetic managers. Their relation will be one of mundane translation, for the gest appears as an already interpreted text

whose medium-specific language requires nothing more than a transfer of the pre-interpretations into the familiar terms and accents of the respondent's own vernacular. Representation's goal is for respondents to share in the gest's appearance enclosing 'meaning' – its art-historical and thus cultural 'place', significance, and value, as set out in its pre-interpretations. In these circumstances translating becomes academic; it is scholarship-dependent – the disruptive promise of almost-transliteration is stymied by too much knowledge (of the 'wrong' kind).

Almost nothing in the context of a gest's appearance prepares respondents to either try to develop a relation to it through a quest to feel for and tease out in an almost-transliteration something of the transformative charge that drew the performer from sourcing through performing to the gest. That performers might be making, gesting, at least in part, in the hope that their gest might, haltingly, provoke others to participate in, to feel out, however indirectly, some of their performing processes, is of no concern to those who organise the contexts of the arts' reception. That the point of art's gests might be to offer the possibility of a real movement of becoming, to throw us out of ourselves through showing a different way of relating to the world and inviting its almost-de-and-re-creation, cannot be countenanced by knowledge-guided frameworks. For the latter's very point is the confirmation of the authority of their own interpretive work. Facing the institutional requirement to 'place' a gest through a search for its meaning, to share in its culturally accredited typicality, respondents are radically inhibited from plunging themselves into the peculiarities of almost-transliteration. Interpretation (translation of the professionals' discourses into the personal vernacular) is no preparation for the leap out of the taken for granted perceptual judgments into the unchartable vagaries of a gest's region. In the latter, under the guidance of the gest's tutelary but strange eye and its felt tracings out of the surrounding darkness, the search for that idiomatic response peculiar to each gest and respondent, might just get under way. To open up and set forth one's own unique terms of response to an art gest requires a kind of playful invention that risks, as makers themselves know only too well, coming back with nothing. Gests call to respondents to search for their own almost-equivalences. These might just be the meeting threshold, always parlous, where respondents can discover, through their emerging affinity for a gest's idiom, that movement out of culture's binds and into the peculiarity of their 'own' other(s) – their becoming dis-cultured courtesy of art's undoing.

In order to consider what performing now faces, its current plight, I am treating translation, then, as the general interpretive process that, for both makers and respondents, orders the context of art and its gest. In contrast, almost-transliteration, seemingly a minor arcane variant within translation, draws us into the play of makers' sourcing and performing, as well as their hopes for response. What is crucial for making, then, what opens onto its plight, is the difference that moving from the general conventions of translation into almost-transliteration makes to the kind of life (survival, living-on) which performing for art and its emergent gests can now hope for and expect. Makers perform a transforming transfer of multiple sourcing materials into a gest that is shaped *as if it is on the way towards a one-off language, a language sufficient to but exhausted by and in each gest: a singular idiom*. This transferral is performed as if it were already translation between known languages (this is its 'almost'). Yet the sourcing is the not-yet of a languaging, a coming-to-language, the still inchoate of a multiplicity outside of any whole, only fragments of which may emerge in the terms of extant languages. The multiple, demanding a deliverance from its obscurity, summons a performing that undertakes the language-shaping activity. But it begins as a disjunction, a perverse tenuous coalescence whose idiomatic fusings hover on the outside of any known language

and thus of cultural membership. Performers' feeling for and belief in their truth-to-sourcing, the essential condition for the emergence of an idiom, cannot know (this is performing's bittersweet taste) if it will be absorbed into typicality. Nor can performers know when they abandon their emergent gests to their cultural fate whether the singularity of their idioms will be drawn (translated) into either the virtuosic technical discourses of the aesthetic managers or, subsequently, into the diverse discourses of the general culture (with the hybrids of info-entertainment leading the way).

Drifting through the holes that sourcing corrodes in language's edging conventions, performing, by its transliterative conversions, brings its offerings back up to language's threshold. As idiom the gest remains right there, aside from meaning. Neither the performance nor the resulting gest seek to be additive contributions to the existing bodies of knowledge and opinion. They are not at the threshold in order to be absorbed as known, and thus reliably assuring, contributions (informants) into the body of positive meanings, there to be endlessly circulated and moved around the hybridising culture according to organisational needs. Though, of course, all this and more may indeed be their official fate.

Rather they are there, they hope, as reminders and remainders, one-off fragments, to try, through the dissipating current of their weak force, to show and hold to an unabsorbable otherness. Once sent forth they can, of course, do nothing about the endless interpretive work that seeks to corral them firmly within the knowable familiar. They can only hope that whatever 'it is' that makes their idiom 'what it is', the trace of its difference, remains held back, in between and aside from all the gathering subduing strategies of interpretation. Their 'almost' is what might still just about manage to keep something in reserve, in spite of their routine placement and manipulation by other interests. It is precisely a gest's internal play, how it has tried to find and display ways of keeping the untranslatable 'alive' (but perhaps only cryogenically so...) in its interweavings with the translatable, that will decide its fate. To remain 'other' its reserve has to inertly impede all attempts to recuperate it and give it an unequivocal place within the culture's knowledge archives. Yet this very reserve may also be the reason (its very intransigence) for its being ignored or cast out as cultural detritus, of no 'value' as a knowable additive to the cultural body.

If respondents' 'access' to the play of the arts' gests is made possible by their interpretive work in transferring them into the liveliness of their own feeling-thinking, and if performers' relations with their sourced materials entail a range of translating modes, then it seems that translation is an essential constituent of art's emergence and life. The varying dynamics of translation shape the practical processes through which something possibly recognisable as an art-thing might emerge, come into representation and be sent off and away. But, as already noted, the model of general translation, in which meaning is transferred from one known language into another (as if it were an object independent of the very languages constituting it), through the substitution of the linguistic materials of the receiving language, cannot provide for the performer's transfer through idiomatic substitutions of sourcing's not-yet-language into an art-medium's potential language. The drawing of something across the divide, the vacuum, between language's absence and language, transforms translation into a different practice. For this transferral is also a metamorphosis in which the unheard, unseen, untouched 'fragments' of not-yet (perhaps not yet even fragments...) are turned idiomatically, and enigmatically, into potential language, a language-in-waiting.

In being moved across the divide at language's threshold, this turning out, that has yet to reach culture, constitutes the tracing of difference, of the peculiarity of art's offering. It is the bringing forth of something not from nothing but from an inchoate other which, despite all our attempts to pin it down, regionalise, codify and theorise it into being, remains stubbornly, obscurely, ungraspably, elsewhere. Indeed, citing it as an 'it' is, to reiterate, already to have lapsed into a grammatical and representing convention that seems to endow 'it' with the presence of an identifiable 'object' or 'construct'. Yet in the moment-space of its delivery, its breaking through, to the maker, though as the outside of identity it remains entirely provisional, it is simultaneously all too real, indubitable. For performers the pressing force of this 'reality' is what demands and directs their attempts to generate its 'equivalent', to turn it out into a paradoxically 'absolutely different' that has to 'resemble', be as 'like' as possible, to the 'it' that is not(-yet). Just as Derrida showed in drawing out the implications of Mallarmé's 'mime' writings, performing enacts, through its drive to make an 'equivalent', a kind of primary 'copying'. For there is no original model 'there' to copy, only placeless urgings whose metamorphosing transfer nevertheless generates something unprecedented, the one-off idiom that 'arises' in the non-gap between culture's (language's) outer edge, its outside-surfacing, and the inchoate in its infinite disappearing.

By drawing us (makers and respondents) into this gap, this fault-line, and persuading us to hover there, performing and its gests confront us with this split within translation and within ourselves. We take on art's gests only in and through this split. And its effects spread across and infiltrate all the sites of performing where translation between languages is even a partial constituent. Thus, whether approached from the side of either the differently engaged attention of performers or respondents, the emergence and contexting of art's gests is dependent upon the mode of translation's implication. And, through this implication, we can see that art is entwined with language from its beginnings, in whatever way we take these latter. Somehow its welling up and surfacing, its need to find a way (an idiom) through which it might offer itself, senses that this way will indeed be courtesy of language. Language taken, perhaps, via Derrida's term – archē-writing - as the non-positive trace of difference, is what provides for the utterly private to emerge as an idiomatic engagement of language. In making for and toward art, performers, drawn on by the latter's weak force, are already shaping up to and making themselves ready for the transferring break-through into something-like-(a)-language. Performing, via its erotic relation to a medium, wants language and art to emerge simultaneously as a togetherness-in-difference. In this way the gest, while adapting itself to and aligning itself with language's ordinary life and usage, seeks, through the difference by which it makes its way into language and the world, to move language itself out of itself, to reshape it however slightly. And it knows that its only possible way of doing this is through its idiomatic re-writing of language's possibilities.

In the very process of transferring its equivalents performing thus seeks to effect and make its gest the bearer of a double difference: firstly, in making the break-through into language, its proximate equivalents are utterly different to the multiple whose transfer it is effecting, and secondly, its idiomatic gathering of these para-equivalents confronts language with and challenges it (and thus us) to accommodate its own difference. The carrying over that defines translation is thus a strange in-mixing of irreconcilables. The relation between before and after, effected by the performing's transfers and crytallised in the seeming coherence, the apparent completeness, of its emerging gest's internal relations, is nevertheless thus accomplishable only through leaps across unbridgeable divides. In the very process of taking on language, and thus seeming to head for the reassurance of its supporting structures, its

metamorphoses rest on nothing more than these unsupportable bridging leaps. The passage through translation via the peculiar inflection of transliteration sets up art's gests as a strange amalgam of structured security courtesy of language, and the obscure precariousness of its absolutely groundless shapings.

In the tension of this double mode of languaging and its withdrawal, transliterative translation opens onto the disquieting region in which both performing and responding have to make their ways. And tracing some of these moves draws us into the challenges faced by performing under the technoscientific rule of electronically machined representation. For the latter sets up the structures and processes through whose radical translations the fate of art's gests, their placement, value, and subsequent history, is now determined. Because of its tense doubled relation to language, performing's pledge to itself is to make towards an idiom in which something 'essential' is held in reserve. But this something is exactly that which it does not know about itself, what it cannot recognise in the course of performing. It is what performing hopes will remain in the thing when the latter has been finished with: an idiomatic singularity secreting itself within the gest, even as the latter engages and is pulled into representation. Opening and offering itself to others and thus to its possible and hoped for assimilation into Art's Body, it gives part of itself over to representation. It shares itself out between what is and what is not derived from a language-in-common. Its becoming-cultural depends on how the challenges of this strange forced mixing are received by the gate-keepers at the entry check-points. Partially readable but simultaneously obscure, it cannot know in advance whether the singularity of its peculiar amalgam will seduce the boundary-patrollers into attempting translating reconciliations across its internal divisions and interruptions, or whether its idiomatic take on its medium's language(s) is a fatal wound, a self-harm that keeps it out of circulation.

This is how performing is plighted to abandon its residues-as-gests. They are left in the infinitive of the interstice, to gest, between culture and Art's Body, awaiting some kind of mobilisation and a tense. What their surfacings openly secrete (*s'expose*) is the possibility of such movement to come which can only come about in the course of a de-cryption from their not-quite-languages. Scarred with embedded traces of the performances from which they have been freed, the gests can only be separated from their infinitive through a rescue that seeks to retrieve the potential for a movement through the passage that they bear, that they are. They have laid trails along and through which the sympathetic re-activator might just pass by way of the *poiesis* that performing hopes to have set forth as their offer - to become on the way to Art's Body.

