

TO MOBILISE FOR DISLOCATION

‘... to try *for once* to lift the veil that keeps us in an obscurity we have not chosen.’ (Phillipe Sollers)¹

Performers making-toward-art know well enough that they are caught between the competitive performance (by measurable results) defining our everyday life and the performing – the shaping-forming journeying through their material attachments - that makes for art. Having to survive in the tensions of this interstice brings home to them their homelessness. Holding their know-how precariously together is their familiarity with being out of place (where place is made to coincide with ‘culture’) and out of time (where time coincides with the measuring out of working). Performing’s plight entails a confrontation and consequent coming to terms with this setting aside of the ordinary terms for recognising how one ‘is’ in place and time. For, to perform for art, to keep moving towards that which moves one when art is not here but beyond, requires precisely the questioning suspension of what we ordinarily take for granted about being right here now. But if art, the arts, are now mobilised by and for culture through its machinery, and if that culture is the active working out of techno-representation, then to perform for art’s beyond seems to call for a mobilisation that pulls both very differently and toward an elsewhere that the cultural machine simply cannot recognise (except possibly as threat...). For the question that performing has to put to itself will turn around how it can expose this, art’s, untimely displacement in what it leaves behind of its own journeying, its being-moved. Its project is to show, in its aligning of the material shapings which constitute its gest, how its thoughtful feelings for its circumstances moved it off and away.

Performing Under Aestheticising-Representation’s Technical Rule

At Bayreuth, on the brink of and easing the way for modernity’s eruptions, Wagner sought to mount events whose aspiration was to integrate the arts (sensual, visual, musical-aural, literary-dramatic-poetic...) within the singular performance – a *gesamtkunstwerk* – a total work of art. The medium-specific arts would collaborate and be intertwined in the generation of an event the experience of which would transcend that obtainable from any one of these on their own. Simultaneously looking backward (Teutonic myth, operatic form) and forward (his chromaticism already reaching beyond romanticism), the point of the performances was to hold to art while transcending the supposedly sensually distinct boundaries that kept the arts apart. Wrapped up in and dedicated to art, yet also a social-technical production (being absolutely dependent on the coordination of many tasks and a complex technical division of labour), Wagner’s productions already contained the seeds of their own appropriation and transformation. For in their aspirations for the performance of art as a multi-specialist spectacular event-project that took over, moved, all the senses, through their necessary reliance on technical functions and production values they pointed the way out of art beyond themselves towards the then nascent generalised aesthetics of the mass cultural spectacle to come.

Through the sequential but overlapping technical (mechanical, electric, electronic) revolutions in both the recording and, eventually, ‘instant’ transmission, moving images with

¹ Phillipe Sollers, ‘Writing and the Experience of Limits’, Columbia University, New York, 1983, p. 204.

sounds were rapidly absorbed into the machinery of industrial production. The emergent industrial agglomerate, combining the mass production and management of publicity, information, and entertainment, reconstituted the experience of space-time and thus the routine relations of everyday life. At the same time as they became critical resources in the control and management of the organisation of the relations of production and consumption, they also became the literal content of large stretches of work and leisure experience. Daily life was reconstituted around, traversed and saturated by, the industrial-scale processes of 'meaning-construction' and '-dissemination'. But in these processes 'meaning' is both something absolutely intangible, slipping away through all the attempts to net and fix it, and absolutely specific in its ties to the image-text-sound of particular contextually bound performances. We move between an infinity of endless interpretive activity, and the attachment to and attractions of particular medium-specific productions. These 'live' through their ways of languaging themselves, of drawing us into, seducing us with, their graphic-textual-aural play. Representation is the work of appropriating and managing the global spread and the smooth continuity of this penetrating flow. Very little escapes this managed flow. We 'occur' within its terms; it provides us with our means for meaning something, anything at all.

So Wagner's prototypical total-art-thing, a distinct art aiming to place itself in a tradition of the difference of singular performances, is endlessly reconstituted to meet, not the demands (the passionate thought) of performers, but the needs of a consumptive drive that maintains the culture of everyday life through a generalised aestheticisation. Powerless art is remaindered as a minor player to be utilised at will according to the needs of the drive to maintain consumption. In the sphere of media representation, this dynamic moves sequentially, according to technical innovations, through different dominant forms of entertainment and its complementary publicity machinery, each aiming to generate and sustain a mass market. From film, through television, to the continuous pluralising of digitised technology across all sites of entertainment and information-flow, the machinery of representation sets up and orders the real sensual textures of our routine relations with what 'means', and thus the terms of our interpretation of these. In this mass play (the 24-hour availability of multiple choice info-entertainment titled as 'telematics' by Derrida²) the arts are allocated tiny walk-on-walk-off parts. Their exposure, the gaps they fill, is entirely subservient to management needs of flow-maintenance in the interests of maximising audience numbers and the affirmation of taste.

But the 'point' of the flow under aestheticised representation is to get as close as possible to eliminating the gap between appearance and reality, to make reality coincide with what is made to appear on the machine's terms. What is consumed via this machinery is appearances, fully aestheticised appearances which consume us:

they are constituted as designed productions whose continuous surfacings have to attract and seduce, or at least hold, both for the time being (of each little event) and for the foreseeable future (programming's hoped-for longevity), the attention of all of us as receivers, as appearance-consumers. The constant renewal of consumption is managed in the conjunction of technoscientific innovation and design, where the latter includes all the activities (work) that shape the terms on which the things that we consume are made to appear. All appearing surfaces are pre-interpreted; they appear, cocooned by interested rhetorics (words-texts-sounds-imageings) positioned in programmes distributing their appealing summons. Everything is made to appear in the frames of productive designing that order and form the

² See Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, 'Echographies of Television', op. cit., especially Ch. 3.

emergence of things (the represented flow-through), the desirability of their ‘innovation’, through their styled and fashioned surfaces.

The play of aesthetics across these surfaces has, of course, nothing to do with the arts as they were reconstituted by the moderns. Under representation the work project of consumptive aesthetics is to try to reconstitute, without end, everyday life as nothing but attractive surfaces. Design tries to ensure that the surface of things secures our needed fascination; the attempt to spellbind us lies in the seamless inter-flowing textures through which these surfaces make their appearance. Posing no threat (except to spending limits), they make their little comforts and pleasures the backgrounds and foregrounds behind which troubles, disasters, pain, self-questioning, chaos, can, for much of our time, be obscured, or, at least placed at a comforting distance within and through the info-spectacle. ‘Aesthetics’ here thus names a compensatory realm where sensuous attractions are invested by representing rhetorics that seek either to defer the invasions of whatever might disturb, or to cushion us against their ‘effects’. Such sensuous reassurances are sent on their way, represented, precisely to ward off the very questions of otherness, beyond, lack, absence, *and of what ‘happens’ when we reach the threshold of the taken-for-granted and thus the possibility of becoming-differently.*

These are the very questions which the contemporary arts have consistently sought to engage and find ways of probing and celebrating in the wake of the moderns’ inaugurations. In spite of the near impossibility of sustaining these questions as the matter of making-for-art under the conditions of representation, would-be-performers have clung to this task in both hope and cheerful *angst*. Somehow they maintain a precarious but committed hold on the ‘festive desperation’ that for Hugo Ball provoked many Dada artists to extend their making into performance-events.³ In combining elements from across the arts (visual, musical, literal, theatrical...) and thus, in their boundary blurring, opening up new complex zones for art-making, such actions also made explicit, perhaps for the first time, art-making’s performative character under modernity: that art was the intervention in culture, the manifestation, of a specific kind of gesture whose very point was to show its difference, its otherness, to the kinds of performing which constituted the culture’s conventional fabric.

Occurring before the mass info-spectacle’s absorption and management of the arts’ daily life, the singular context-bound performings of Dada offered gests unattached to and beyond the control of any representing institutions. Not only did the very qualities of the gestures’ shaping and their performance context resist appropriation and reproduction, but the cultural machinery of aestheticised consumption was still in its nascency. It was still possible to hold to performing as an extra-institutional gesture, a specific kind of positioning resisting cooptation into the routine conventions of working and consuming. The ‘festive’ was by definition outside the dialectical opposition of ‘work’ and ‘leisure’. Defined both by their lightness (humour being a key component) and their context-specificity, the gests offered a mode of ‘play(ing)’ that could not be simply incorporated into conventions of entertainment that defined the culture’s provision for leisure.

But could art’s ‘festive desperation’, its celebratory self-expulsion, find, make, and sustain any foot-hold, any region, within the new technologies that dramatically reconstituted culture’s transformation under the emergent mass aesthetics? *Only, perhaps, by accepting an inevitable hybridity.* The reproductive technologies of the mass media, now geared entirely to

³ For a lively account of Ball’s Dada activities see Hans Richter, ‘Dada’, Thames and Hudson, London, 1965.

the needs of maintaining the telematic flows of info-entertainment, can find no place for art-as-art; art-things only appear in conjunction with something else. Inserted here and there within the telematic flows they are subjected to and represented through the production values and conventions that maintain the flow. These multiple required affiliations and combinations inevitably frame performing and its gestures within entertainment's pleasure streams; *the challenge for making is how to conceal, camouflage, something, however tiny, of art's otherness within productions organised around the dissemination of entertainment's reassurance and comforting pleasures.*

Thus, as the inheritor and potential developer of the Wagnerian *gesamtkunstwerk*, but operating on a site of industrial mass production, film could only distance itself from the demands and conventions of the mass entertainment market by occasionally secreting glimpses, tiny eruptions, of art within its entertaining vehicles. In thrall to Hollywood's mass reproduction of popular fictions, to its demand for investment returns, and to the scale of the socio-technical machinery of filmic representation, film, except on the smallest of scales, can only hint at its possibilities as art. As potential 'auteurs' (artists...), film directors, working within the mass production system of film-as-entertainment, are compromised by the competing interests responsible for the routine operation of the machinery of production (the technical and social division of labour required to 'produce', 'market' and 'see' a film). When seeking some affiliation for their film with art's celebratory self-questioning (its limits and imagined 'world-space'), hoping to produce a film that might display this 'medium' as the vehicle for a *gesamtkunstwerk*, directing condemns itself in advance to, at the least, hybridity, and, for the most part, art-free banality. The arts' challenge to film-production under the control of industrialised mass entertainment has been that of a double game where something of art's subversion of conventions of perception and meaning can be inserted into the syntax of film without destroying entertainment's textured illusions. Directors of films participating in and aimed at the mass film market, if they hope to be taken at least in part as would-be artists, have to so manipulate the film's montage (its syntactic structuring of our experience of its timing, the movie's movement) that the double game of entertainment and art might just be sustained. Under the constrictions of capital and industrial technics, a compromised poetic may be able to survive and surface occasionally (interrupt the smooth surface of entertainment), but only within a convincing display of the seemingly seamless flow of the skilfully wrought popular film fiction; the construction of 'story' through the tensions and catharses of a seductive narrative (one that plays on the established conventions of 'what attracts') has to have absolute priority to secure popular appeal (essential distribution for return on the capital outlay on production).

Any rupturing syncope, probing in the film's passing the limits of what film might 'be' and 'do', dissolves (however temporarily) a film's time-line, its story-driven trajectory. It is the gesture that seeks to affiliate the film briefly with art's becoming-other, its withdrawal from the accepted certainties of filmic production. Such occasional affiliations, unsettling but fleeting interruptions destroying the grounds of conventional viewing, are all that can be achieved within the film of industrialised entertainment. And this is hardly surprising given the film industry's exemplary role in the emergence and continuing metamorphosis of the info-spectacle. As long as 'filming' was tied to the material specificity of a length of 'film' that, through the light-chemical interaction, bore a sequence of analogical images and synchronised sounds, its potential for the mass production of recorded ('filmed') vehicles for the entertainment industry defined its cultural use. Film's semiotic gesture, the meaning-making performance of its extraordinary cross-sensual combinations, remained geared not to a *gesamtkunstwerk* but entirely to the generation of a *total-culture-work* that required a

complex of site-specificity, projection machinery and available electric current for its playback. It could afford to toy with art occasionally knowing that the latter's 'effects' would be completely subsumed (and thus lost...) within the brilliantly controlled and calculated encasing cathartic flows. Very few directors working within the film-as-entertainment industry can be cited whose films have met at least some of the demands of corporate film-making (chance of return on capital investment at base) while beginning to explore film's possibilities for art; however surreptitiously, they found idiosyncratic ways of probing some of the medium's limits (turning film out of its conventional usage to 'movie us' through a dissolution of time as we think we 'know' it), while simultaneously accepting them (aiming to reach a (minor) mass audience via distribution through the commercial cinema network).⁴

Such makers survived within the corporate nexus only by making things that satisfied sufficient criteria of marketability (adherence to the spectacular 'story' conventions) to enable them to maintain, however precariously, a 'working' relation to the industry. Some, like Welles with revenue from his advertising work, managed to establish partially alternative means of financing their personal projects. But even these had to conform sufficiently to the requirements of the guessed potential mass market to be accepted within the industry's networks of distribution and display. In this double game of hybrid construction the 'art moments' both wound and suture a film's syntax; they continue to live by and thus celebrate the very thing that they, in passing, turn inside out. In effect they operate something like a *'samizdat'* of the surface which, while ironising their own participation in the system, passes the 'censors' (the spectacle-managers) *because the industry at large is unthreatened by such gestures*. Operating through Marcuse's 'repressive tolerance' (a tolerance that embraces the global pornographic industry because of its profitability), it enables the spectacle to embrace such gestures as displays of its own 'liberal-capitalist' 'generosity' (self-interest).

Caught up by the self-metamorphosing dynamic of the representing technologies, film's position within the info-spectacle has been relativised. Through the representing machine's post-digitised generation of new singular telematic products, the combination and intertwining of different media, with a consequent blurring of boundaries between them, is defined by an endless mutation. No longer the central contributor to the info-spectacle but continually re-combined with new representing technologies, film's digitised re-positioning (as no longer literally 'film' - something on a strip of film) displays the shifting significance of its performance for the culture in whose reconstitution it is a partial and diminishing

⁴ Although as film-respondents we can each construct our own list of spectacle-interrupting film- gestures that are produced within industrial cinema and made commercially available on sites of mass entertainment, I cite the following as film-makers who have managed to survive for extended periods in the abyss between industrial cinema and art while unexpectedly throwing that cinema ever so slightly out of joint and exposing some of film's other possibilities: Altman, Antonioni, Bresson, Bunuel, Chaplin, Coppola, Denis, Duras, Eisenstein, Godard, Herzog, Kitano, Kubrick, Kurosawa, Losey, Lynch, Mizoguchi, Murnau, Ozu, Renoir, Resnais, (S.) Ray, the Straubs, Syberberg, Tarkovsky, Truffaut, Varda, Vigo, Welles, Wenders... On the fringes of industrial cinema there are those such as, Davies, Greenaway, Hartley, and McQueen, for whom the point of film-making is, precisely in diverse ways, to take the medium beyond the limits set up for it by industrial cinema, to explore what, as the compression of different media, its movement through these media might do to our experience of being moved (out of time). However the control of the industry at the points of distribution severely limits the public availability of the films of 'independent' film-makers, while film-making approached as a potential 'medium' for art (Brakhage, Warhol, and many, many others) has subsisted almost entirely outside the machinery of industrial cinema. The digital revolution's displacement of film-as-material in the recording and reproduction of imageing-sounding has invited artists to explore the potential of post-film processes and machinery for their performing-visions. I consider implications of this revolution for making-for-art in greater depth in 'To Pass Through Technoscience on the Way to Art's Body' under the sub-heading 'Performing Reconstructs Medium as a Site of Multiplicity: the Challenge of Digital Composing'.

contributor. Traditionally organised around the demands for public entertainment, as a corporate enterprise it is now caught up in the shifting balance between public and domestic info-entertainment-and-marketing (24-hour globally-personal-computer-telematic-flows). The total-culture-work has to become something which can be marketed first of all as an object for personal consumption (now epitomised by the 'down-load'). This re-scaling and re-contexting of the telematic product defines the kind of contribution it makes, how it fits itself in as a complement, to the process of generalised aestheticisation. For the focus of the latter is always on and around an appeal to the personal consumer in her or his lived-but-machined pre-programmed (as much as machinically possible...) environment. The limited life of the spectacular public event (cinema, concert hall, theatre, park, street, stadium...), whilst it may retain some symbolic power, cedes priority to *the system's need to miniaturise the spectacle as a domesticatable personal consumable, something that we can all believe we 'own'*. In this corporate project the arts are insignificant, except as a mixed-bag of potential collectables and experiences that can be both adapted to the endless reconstruction of taste-as-need, and affiliated with (used as vehicles for) saleable associated 'goods' within the comfort zone of domesticity.

Under representation the gests can only emerge, appear, as 'the arts' things', forever set up, shaped, and sent on their way under the strict control of production and programming values. The programming and scheduling of the little 'events' of culture not only determines the terms on which 'the arts' things' are recognised and situated by recipients within their chains of personal consumption, but also re-forms the things' form, the forming within their performance. Each thing-as-gesture can only be received through the representing frame; this further exemplifies the collective generation of 'the art-thing', its being-produced through a network in which every performer is embedded. In arranging for the (occasional) appearance of an art-maker's gesture, the representing machinery re-forms its surfacing in its own image. It lives, survives, only in the mode and context of its representation, there to be received and perceived as a vehicle for the latter's self-sustenance. The machinery has to be seen to contain and frame everything 'cultural'. And, as everything *is* now culturalised, that has to be seen to include the arts.

Faced with the now permanent revolutionising of this machinery the common tendency among those who still seek to make-toward-art is to adapt to the emergent media-forms; the latter are treated as additional potential resources in the performing's development. But occasionally a maker-performer will, in the course and cause of art, take a 'technology' (a representing-machine function) beyond the conventions of representation for which it was designed and brought into use, and, leaping beyond its 'law', release an unprecedented 'thing'. The thing, in turn, precisely by throwing the tacitly accepted (tasteful) boundaries of a medium into disarray, opens up a medium's or media's possibilities, thus re-directing, however slightly, art's shape and making's trajectories. What is crucial is not the opening up of a new making-track to be followed by other makers, *but, rather, how the threshold-dissolving performance, embodied in the thing, re-forms art's relation to its context*. As a singular displacement of art's self-exposing, its posing of itself as culture's outside, the crystallised gesture reminds us that art's only point now is to strive to be irreconcilable, unassimilable. The performer's hope is that the gest, residue of the making, congeals and materialises (this constituting its offer to others) something of performing's outward-bound flight performance, its casting off and away of its self in its attempt at culture's beyond.

Thus the very processes of technical innovation that generate the sustaining machinery of representation do open up new possibilities for performing. But art (as opposed to

culturalised ‘art-lite’) can only be a possibility when performing finds ways of excising, prising, however briefly *in passim*, the technologies that have themselves been designed to meet the interests of the industrial production of entertainment. The ‘technical’ process has somehow to be twisted out of itself and mutated according to art’s otherwise project. And, because the technologies are so over-determined by the ‘needs’ they are set up to meet and the structures within which they are embedded, it is almost impossible for performing to completely suspend all their associations and affiliations; the latter are built-in and, being constitutive of a medium’s technical qualities and functions, cannot become subject to the demands of art alone. *They arrive absolutely saturated by the aesthetics, the representing work, that they are designed to perform throughout their operations.* Such aesthetics, their framing and shaping of a selective world-perception through the aesthetico-technico rules that enable their routine (electronic-mechanical) operation, constitute a challenging barrier to making-for-art. Somehow this taken-for-granted routine aesthetic has to either be dismantled, upset, or circumvented for there to be a possibility of art. Without some tactic for dispossessing the operation, taking away the ‘proper’ of its properties, for scattering its fixed (by design and programming) aesthetic, anything a performer does within the medium is held fast by the values of representation that come from outside art.

Photography attests to this. Since its emergence, the revolutionary mutations in image-reproduction still maintain and display the intimate ties between design-function and framing aesthetic. The dramatic technical innovations (from still to moving image, from black and white to colour, from silence to multi-sourced sound, from mechanical to electronic, from film to tape to disc (analogue to digital) to memory card, via holography and ‘reality-simulation’ via ‘virtuality’...) focus the question of image-production-and-re-production on the technical interrelating of light and speed around a perceived need for specific kinds of ‘accuracy’. Design decisions about how to routinely operationalise recording equipment were made according to the primary uses for which they were being developed. A supernaturalism emerged which was not only attuned to the registering of interactions of light and surfaces, but was also committed from the beginning, through the possibilities inherent in lens-engineering, to image-enhancement through magnification. The entire thrust of machine-image-recording was to go ever further beyond what the human eyes could see under ‘ordinary’ light conditions. The point of the technology has always been to displace, supplement, and thus transform the eyes and other organs because of their ‘limitations’: to make the invisible visible under a rule of a ‘faithfulness’ (accuracy) to whatever could be visually (re-)constituted as a ‘surface’ whose contours could then be recorded, initially on a two-dimensional surface and, subsequently, simulated in a three dimensional space in real time. In effect the now multi-form machined photographic-telematic operations have become prosthetics for human vision, for the way we more ‘nearly’ embody perceptions. We ‘see’ phenomena necessarily invisible to ‘the naked eye’, *but only on the aesthetic terms of the prosthetic machine.* In this elision of aesthetics and prosthetics the human-corporeal relation to its other(s) (‘becoming’, nature-culture, infinity...) is caught up in a seemingly unstoppable irreversible mutation, a becoming-inhuman, in which what we took as fundamental constituents of our corporeal-becoming are dissolved and displaced by machinic representatives. The technoscientific probing and registering of the very near and the very far, the minuscule and the gigantic-furthest, has gone beyond photography, which fixes the play of light’s surfacing, to construct ‘images’ through the transformation of ‘sense’-data (‘sensed’ only by the machinery’s sensors for re-constitution as ‘image’) into ‘signals’ (signs) generated by electronic machinery. What is ‘fixed’ and how it is then made to ‘appear’ is a machined construct that could not ‘exist’ in any other form (it simulates in summary forms (images) only its own operations).

Thus the ‘things’ and processes of ‘nature’ (living, life ‘itself’...) that are registered in this radically technicised environment are no longer simply ‘there’ in the ways we consider the things in the traditional photographic image to ‘have been there’. They are artifices of constructive technical work that, wherever it generates an ‘image’ of its probed ‘phenomena’, *forms them with a tacit aesthetic*. For this forming necessitates ways of positioning a spectator who can perceive, ‘see’, ‘read’ the image in a way which has to be reconciled with the limits of ‘ordinary’ seeing (the all-too-human vagaries of full-blooded eyesight). Distance (spacing, extent) has to be naturalised, made to seem ‘naturally’ accessible to our eyes, and this requires conventions operationalised through a machine’s designed transformations. In the reproduction of the traditional photograph a concept of ‘likeness’, resemblance by analogy, informed our model for judging and making sense of it. ‘Likeness’ was, is, assessed through a model that privileged ‘copying’ and analogises the photographic image to the retinal image registered in ‘consciousness’ through eyesight. Such a model may be interpretively extended to apply to the ‘images’ generated by, for example, radio and other wave signals, though no basis for a ‘likeness’-relation between ‘phenomena’ and ‘image’ can be sustained. The basis for the naturalist model and ‘likeness’ is removed by the machine’s real ‘material’ constructed and constructing qualities as responses to the requirements of the ‘rules’ for signal-transformation. The latter provide the conceptual ‘ground’ for the generation of the ‘materials’ which, eventually (though occurring in no humanly experienceable time at all), are transformed into a ‘readable-something’; the electronic data is turned into ‘seeable-readable’ terms on the ‘basis’ of a now languaged ‘as if’. The sleight-of-machine makes it appear ‘as if’ what the machine enables us to ‘see-read’ is really ‘there’ (at a precise distance from us in a ‘place’ whose defining coordinates can be measured and fixed by the designed productive machine): the machine’s ‘claim’ is that if we were able to get, to be, ‘there’, then this is what we would ‘see-read’ with our own eyes. Through this technical conversion into language-amenable terms the invisible-ineffable is ‘given’ (to us) to ‘read-see’, but only technically...for we never will be able to ‘be-there’.

With the benefit of hindsight it may be that the emergent imaging technologies now require us to reconsider the assumptions, the models, we have used in our interpretation and application of all forms of artificial image production (from the earliest pre-photographic printing, through film, to the constitutive techniques of contemporary physics and astronomy with their absolute reliance on machine-engineering). We can now see that, central to the drive and character of both industrial society and its aftermaths, the mechanical-electronic imagery is made to do its cultural work through specific aesthetic models built into the machine’s functioning that determine our relation to them, and thus to our ‘own’ embodied becoming.

Precisely because their constructive character is now explicit (exemplified in our routine acceptance of digitised imaging through a wide range of easily accessible machinery), we can more easily suspend our belief in and reliance on the analogical model of copying (mimesis). Through-and-through transformative, code-bound, and electronically dependent (no image without a constant supply of electrical power), such means of representation are revealed in a non-simple relation to the ‘phenomena’ they purport to ‘record’. *For the only (relatively) reliable claim to be made for these multi-mediatised percepts as they are made to appear, is that they are representatives of the machine’s functioning; they represent, are constructions of, its interests, the task it is set up to perform*. The images are not ‘like’ something else, some original of which they are second-order copies, they are world-

constructions *ab nihilo* that set forth ‘possible worlds’ according to the interests (specific kinds of knowledge for specific uses) embedded in the machine’s functioning.

In this constitution of something from nothing (or, if not ‘nothing’, then only ‘signals’/waved electric charges) they may seem to be close kin of the modern arts. Yet they are held absolutely apart by the driving forces of the interests that are invested in and underpin every process of the machine’s functioning. For, whereas art’s something-from-nothing is generated in the hope of moving the performer and others out of culture for art’s sake, the machine functions to constitute materials that affirm and help to secure and reinforce the culture’s self-guiding dynamic of instrumental calculation. In the context of image construction and dissemination it is clearly in the interests of machine designers and managers (the maintenance of the info-spectacle and the primacy of technoscience in the development of productive forces) to hold to the aesthetic model of the ‘copy’, of the machine as ‘imitator’ of ‘life’ and ‘nature’, while effectively engaged in the very process of abolishing them.

But for those making-toward-art, performing’s movement is driven by forces and concerns eschewing all such aesthetics. In exploring machines’ ‘art-potential’, performers’ guiding question is whether a machine can be turned aside from its conventional functioning and directed into art’s region. The only concern would be with the possibility of constituting a particular something that held to art’s difference by revealing and disquieting the unique properties of the machine itself: to be nothing but art while revealing and exploring the peculiarities that separate the machine’s representing mode(s) from all others. The challenge is to find out if (and, if so, to make patent, to ex-pose) the machine has poetic potential. But the machine would be challenged to ‘show’ this while suspending all those aspects of its operational life that are already in hock to a pre-existing aesthetic and extra-art demands (use, representation). *Performing thus needs to get the machine to the point where it gives itself away to art by constituting something that shows nothing but art’s difference. It has to be turned towards giving up the smooth functioning that defines its life under technical representation and made to stammer itself out of itself off and away towards Art’s Body.* Faced with the inordinate power of the machinery, performing’s absolutely ‘practical’ question is whether the machinery can be put ‘to work’ against ‘work’ (the work of representation) and traduced into functioning ‘against’ itself, for art’s sake alone. It has to explore whether this mutation into weakness and worklessness can be brought about without importing into any resulting gest the very practical interests (politico-economic) that are the precise ‘reason’ for the machine’s emergence and the specificities of its construction. Unless the would-be artist can divert the machine from its constructive use-functions (its subservience to power – to specific controlling interests), performing can generate only hybrids (on the machine’s terms).

The forbidding disadvantage of particular technologies for performing lies precisely in the rigidities of their design-for-use, their in-built aesthetic. This is what performing has to both betray and suspend to avoid being complicit with the interests that fixed the technology’s place, its representing work. It needs to turn its performance for culture according to a means-ends calculus of effectivity (reproduction-without-end), into a performance-for-elsewhere through an alienation from any alliance with the powers such calculations serve. And the problem art faces in trying to shape this extreme performance is culture’s own appropriative drive. For it is the point of the means of representation to gather up everything that appears and turn it to cultural use, to transform it into a moment of the info-spectacle’s ‘forward’ dynamic, a passing display of the range of its own appropriative powers. Excelling in producing hybrids (for sale...), it sees the arts as occasions for testing out and constantly

‘improving’ its own combinatory powers. Art is the challenge at culture’s margins that may unpredictably provoke the latter into the endless recuperation of art’s things as no longer marginal.

Confronted by the thrust and massivity of culture’s representing machinery under the shadow of modernity’s dark light, what seems to animate performing is the drive to find ways of assembling, modes of performing, that treat the very assembling itself as the performance of a resistance. Performing’s perennial stake is the preservation of the conditions under which it might just be able to hold to and pursue the questioning of itself and art, itself as art (possibly), for this is now art’s only chance. Risking appropriation at every turn, the questioning unavoidably has to engage the conventions of representation (the organisational placing of every art-thing within an established aesthetic) that set the context for performing’s daily life. The challenge is to preserve traces in the gest of how it strove to elude the conventions, to find and slip away through the chinks in the everyday’s armour. It is this that constitutes the particularity of each making, the gest’s otherwise difference.

Responding to its all too real circumstances, performing’s project becomes the tracking-down, the finding and holding on to, ways, lines, trajectories, ‘outwards’. Performers rivet themselves to this out-lining. Aside from, in advance of, all aesthetics, it is what they perform for themselves on the way toward art which, ever elusive, remains over there. At the end of the lining, abandoned by the performer, its legacy is a materialised gest saturated with an embedded gesture compounding languaging and feeling. It bears a perceptible, potentially sharable but still latent ‘performance’ awaiting re-animation.

It is thus hardly surprising that the arts, in the wake of modernity, have, along with everything else, been caught up within and borne along by the dynamic of a machinery of technical innovation whose mutations of everyday life are definitive of the passage of modernity itself. If art in the past has been a site which both explored and just about held its ground-outside within a general but slow and scattered, as yet unsystematised, field of representation, then the emergence of a systematic representation, grounding itself in the alliance of capital, a calculative knowledge project, and instrumental application (technoscience) geared to reproduction-of-the-same as the means for framing everyday life, has confronted the arts with their life-threatening challenge. Survival as art (rather than ‘art-lite’ ...) has defined the arts’ own daily life as the focus of utterly irreconcilable demands. Above all it has required an endless struggling engagement with the interests embedded within and controlling the machinery of representation. Performing begins and ends in the ways it is caught within the ceaseless drive of this machinery. Trapped within the fold between art and ‘art-lite’, it is condemned to vacillate between incommensurable visions of performance, of how the energy of its visceral thought is to be directed through its performing activities. All performing that is, eventually, corralled by culture on representation’s behalf will, in the end, be assessed according to an accounting calculus – how far it contributes to sustaining and expanding the machinery of technical innovation under capital’s rule.

But for the performer still essaying to make-toward-art, the ‘value’ (immeasurable, but ‘felt’ in a feeling compromised and matched by a knowledge of its own inevitable falling-short, its failure...⁵) of a performing will lie in its precipitation, however slight and brief, of traces of

⁵ For an elaboration of performing’s relation to ‘failure’ see the discussion in ‘To Leap Fictively...’ of William Gaddis’s writing.

performing's leap beyond; they will drift as spoor of its necessary self-exile, its migration-in-the-midst, in the course of its commitment to try, still, to become as and for art. Whatever virtue such performing might have may perhaps be found in the traces' very slightness, their near-invisibility, the rarity of their glimpses and interruptions, for, in the very weakness that they may somehow still manage to insert into the gaps (few and far between) in culture's powered bindings, they might just remind us of the place in which culture has trapped all of us. They will be pointing to the permanent gigantic work-project required to sustain culture in the face of its others, others striving perennially to take it out of itself and elsewhere.

Drawn along in the shadow of technoscience's exorbitant re-shaping and possessing of our routine becoming, its literal out-of-this-world effects via simulation and virtuality, performing does inescapably participate in its transformations. And seen from the response side, from techno-aesthetics and prosthetics, it is a work-site for generating performances whose 'values' are to be assessed according to critical positions and criteria compatible with and confirmatory of the culture's trajectory. The 'critical voice', so crucial to the routine functioning of the aestheticising machinery, reconstructs and places the arts' gests in ways which reconcile them to the conventions of 'work' as assessable measurable performance. Energies embedded in the gests are taken as displays of a search, assumed by aesthetics to be common to both makers and critics, for 'meaning', for enhancing the commonsense world, as if art and its critique were fundamentally complementary partners in a joint project of cultural confirmation, as if performing and its analysis shared and responded to the same energised desires, *as if, in effect, they were in the end' at one' in a common working search for living conditions grounded in critical but positive (about itself...) reason.*

But if making-for-art, however much it is fixed, placed and shaped by the technoscientific productive drive (by everything that might in an alternative discourse have been described as the 'forces of production', especially the 'level' of and commitment to technological 'development'), is driven, at least in part, by the desire to become-different(ly) aside from the productive-consumptive cycle, then we need to search for the ways this desire surfaces practically, in and as the performing. For the nascent affective intensities and curiosities that grow eventually into the urge to try for oneself to make for art's always elusive site, are indentured and answer to an utterly different summons. Quite aside from everything that has just been considered through the awesome machinery of the, now digitised, programmed appropriation of making-toward-art and its gests, performing persists. It trusts the possibility of its survival to its offer of ways of relating to materials that are incomprehensible to the machinery of representation. For *what it exposes is an erotics of giving up: it gives itself up to whatever it is in its materials that matters to it.* It tries to figure this out through a diminuendo-in-weakness that separates it at every turn from representation's calculative mastery.

Tracking Otherness by Way of Materials

In performing's setting forth on the track of its own becoming, everything turns on the qualities of the maker's thralldom to whatever comes to pass as 'materials'. The performer is consumed by the matter of performing a 'showing', a 'monstrance', that assembles a spreading-out of what it is about her/his relation to the materials that make every combination of these materials' qualities unavoidable on each occasion of making. And the materials, finally illimitable and unlistable – because lacking in the boundaries demanded by concepts and names – include everything that moves the maker to transform an insatiable loving curiosity-beyond-reason about (some) art-things into a response to a summons to pursue a line of likewise-performing. Once under way, this line, idiosyncratic to each making pursuit,

is moved along through chosen and chance meetings with what will turn out to have been ‘materials’ (from a provocative word, colour patch, sound, view, touch, scent, thought, reverie, perception, memory, and so on and on...) – always unknowable in advance. Naturally these include the utterly personal ‘know-how’ won from the affectionate relations generated in the course of numerous attempts at ‘trying one’s hand’ with a medium’s, media’s, conventional materials. But this emergent unruly know-how, *because it is itself the very thing being explored and put into question*, can never be seen as a matter of technical command, as if performing’s line were a matter of applying a technique to materials independent of its own emergence.

Rather, each almost traceable line finds its way and moves itself through a ‘series’ (though one lacking any organising ‘formula’) of elements, separate isolatable ‘things’, that only form a ‘line’, become somehow continuous, inter-connected, in the ways the performer, and eventually, hopefully, respondents, make the connections between them, put them together in and as their being taken over by the lining. For the conjoining that performs this lining-up effects links in the ways it leaps across (without aforethought) the gaps, the abysses, the boundaries and thresholds between the elements. *Lining lives by generating the illusion of attachment in which everything is conjoined*. The little spatio-temporal gaps and boundaries separating the elements are taken, are experienced, as suturings that effect the line’s movement along, of being moved by the thing in the lining-conjoining. The quality of the performer’s enraptured movement (a mobilising for art’s dislocation), as it conjoins across the absences, constitutes the possibility of the gest’s emergence as art in a respondent’s seduced attention.

For the performer this is the outcome of the unending struggle between the clashing intensities to which ‘the self’ (as multiple) is subject in its giving itself away. The line is constituted in the dynamoless dynamic (it happens at immeasurable speeds, from the instantaneous to the arhythmic infinitely slow) between a self-less unbecoming and self-recuperations. The peculiarities of each performer’s, each gest’s, lining, formed in advance of any knowledge, is what rivets the maker, what she/he cannot avoid. And it is also what, with respondents’ necessary collusion, may just seduce, ravish, move them to its own beyond, its taking its medium-and-thing-specific language(s) beyond where they believed it and they could go. This ‘beyond’ is precisely an exile from the everyday life, the productive-consumptive time, of the technoscientific culture. It seems to gather its energy from no place, no ‘where’ that might be identifiable with the representing drive. Indeed it seems rather to move, to get under way, through something which is difficult to reconcile with the sense and the force of what we routinely recognise as the ‘energy’ that is generated, controlled and applied in the service of power(s), of powering ourselves. Rather what animates performing almost appears to mock the ‘energy’ that maintains the instrumental drive, for, so unpredictable are its coursing and effects, that apparently the tiniest shift can generate the profoundest conjunctions, while immense effort sustained over long periods may, in spite of the highest hopes and commitments, result in something without value (as art...).

Perhaps, then, the terminology used to account for the effort required to sustain the commonsense world cannot be simply transferred to the processes constituting performing. For the performance of the aligning conjoining gestures, out of which gests may emerge, seems to rely on sourcings whose origins and movements cannot be plotted within our spatio-temporal conventions and coordinations. Marked by uncertainty, identity and boundary lack, they cannot be located and channelled by the familiar means of controlled power sources, of energy as it is routinely generated and expended in the accomplishment of

everyday tasks (getting by). It is as if, rather, potential gests emerge out of a conglomeration (each performance requiring a different mix) of immiscible discharges whose movements cannot be gathered and coordinated within some independent whole space-time, some unifying energy flow. The only ‘thing’ holding them ‘together’(loosely...) is the performing itself. This conjoining of gestures in which space and time are put out of joint, actively disjointed, may be made up of trajectories whose infinitely variable speeds and directions, in their vacillating, drifting, surging, collapsing, scattering, concentrating looseness, cannot be brought under some overarching whole that is exterior to the activities of the performance. It seems that the ‘necessities’ a performance is indebted to during its chancy outing have already sealed them off in advance from all attempts at interpretive recovery, let alone recuperation into explanatory frameworks. We are left with nothing but the bare alignments which, in the very ways they are conjoined, display their performance as a pre-emptive self-interpretation. As an inexplicable array of relations between dispositions, dis-positives (the tendency or inclination of each ‘element’, where ‘element’ cannot be taken as some simple positive, for it has to include thresholds, absences, gaps, spacings, wavings...), the gest, in and through its alignments, interprets itself. It takes, moves, us through itself in ways which induce and provoke (or not) the attribution of extreme (because out of any place) modes of valuing.

If the aligning of the dis-positives is constituted through qualitatively different movements coming from ‘all over the place’, from no-place, this does indeed direct us away from taking performing as the outcome of a singular form and source of energy (as well as allied terms that have already been brought into play in the present writing, such as ‘force’, ‘charge’, and ‘drive’...). Rather, making-toward-art offers itself through multiple discharges whose movements cannot be gathered around a single powered source that drives out its centrifugal charging lines. For each performance that which emerges out of the aligning gestures is a trajectory that tries to reconcile, *just this once*, in a way peculiar to each thing, discharges which, if taken by themselves, would appear to be utterly incompatible. A gest holds itself together as a vibrant tension through conjoinings that perform the continuous back-and-forth of self-reference. Drawing on multiple modes of association and connection (projection, recollection, repetition, echo, harmony, conflict, consonance, dissonance, and so on) the gest turns constantly around, in and through itself. Isn’t this precisely the draw of its aligning – what, in its after-life, may just draw into its play, hold, seduce, and move would-be respondents?

If we have been enthralled by it, given ourselves up to it, this is because its perversely aligned discharges have persuaded us, seemingly in no time at all, that some ‘thing’, some gesture, is holding them together in a tentative coherence which we ourselves are re-creating as our relationship to it. This is its self-interpretation, the way it just about holds itself ‘together’ at the edge of continuity, in spite and in the face of the incompatibles that it aligns. Thus the forming within performing seems to both issue from disparate discharges and be what holds their traces and deposits in some kind of alignment for that time-being which is peculiar to each gest. But if it is the disparates which mark, line, the trajectory of the performance, it would seem to be difficult, misguided even, to try to fix the alignments within some sense of a whole, a unity. Perhaps each trajectory as performance is no more than a fragile series of multiple discharges emerging from an open zone that has not yet been shaped into a single energy source from which power can be extracted to be put to other uses.

Approached from within the gestures that they embed, it is as if art’s gests take us ‘back’, off, to an elsewhere in which there are only diffused energies that mingle and meander without

ever congealing into some singular ‘force’ amenable to a transformer’s conversion of it into a steady stream. *This unboundaryable zone is assembled only as a play of disparates which, in the unpredictability of their playing, outlaw power.* It is the other to what power needs in order to establish the force of its constructive-destructive work. Groundless, unsettling, it is where performing tries to break through to as the coursing of its unceasing search for its own animation before, in advance of, the Law. To perform in the shadow of art is to effect a series of gestures that might just enable both the drift into and through this ‘before’, and the recovery of remnants of its discharges. Without labouring the language analogy, and irrespective of art-medium, the gestures that draw out and conjoin these remnants into a series (what comes to be recognised as a *gest*) *may be said to shape their performance syntactically, but through a syntax that, being performance-(gest)specific, cannot be transferred to anything else, to a subsequent gest or to some other non-art site.*

Performing as a Syntaxer : Mallarmé’s Legacy

In the emergence of the distinctive modern vision of what performing might become, how it might come at last into its own, it is Mallarmé who realises that it is syntax that defines his relation to his writing and the becoming of his performance. Mallarmé, as a key constituter of the possibility of a modern ‘vision’, offers us the term which marks precisely what it is that draws makers into and rivets them to the trajectories of their making lives.

In ‘The Double Session’⁶ Derrida considers Mallarmé’s writing on mime and, quoting from a letter by Mallarmé commenting on the relation between his writing and the space of the page, he notes a word he had ‘never encountered anywhere else, not even in Mallarmé: syntaxer [*syntaxier*, Fr.]’; Mallarmé writes,

‘If one obeys the invitation proffered by the wide white space expressly left at the top of the page as if to mark a separation from everything, the already read elsewhere, if one approaches with a new, virgin soul, one then comes to realise that I am profoundly and scrupulously a syntaxer...’

The ‘profoundly and scrupulously’ confirm the importance of this realisation to Mallarmé. Obeying the invitation of that white (‘empty’?) space between the upper edge of the page and that lower inset indent, where a writing might get under way, meant *accepting the white page’s separation from everything preceding and outside it.* Writing (and every making-toward-art that confronts that ‘white’ – blank – space that also takes over the performer’s time...) required one to suspend tradition and commonsense (the ‘already read elsewhere’) and begin anew. But the beginning again from nothing (the ‘virgin soul’) occurred as a distinct activity – that of a ‘syntaxer’. With this word Mallarmé takes us to the bareness of making, what it begins and ends with in trying make patent, to ex-*pose*, art’s pledge.

But, by proposing his making in this open and unqualified form, Mallarmé gives himself (and thus every performer across the arts) the greatest freedom. For syntax names no more and no less than the bare connecting of linguistic units - the placing of at least two such units in a relation as the means for feeling out and constituting a felt-sense and its breakdown or absence: conjoining – the junction, within a limited space and across a specific time-span, of, between, ‘units’ (letters, words, gaps, every medium-specific or media-shared form of shaping, marking, punctuating, a spacing-timing region, and functioning to hold them in a relation of potential felt-for-otherwise-significance). Yet every relating, every conjoining, constitutes, begins in and as, a tension, a challenge, precisely because the ‘units’ (the

⁶ See, Jacques Derrida, ‘Dissemination’, Athlone, London, p. 180.

dispositives...) are set apart, separated spatially and temporally. The making of some kind of 'sense' is thus necessarily sensuous (though this is routinely ignored, since, in everyday life, we take almost all connections absolutely for granted) because a charge, a feeling for, a reaching out to and grasping the purport of the apart-ment-that-binds, is necessary for something like 'a sense' to emerge. We feel out the gaps and our way across them. It is precisely what goes on in this apart-ment that seizes the would-be-artists, drives them to a distraction out of which some discharging gestures may emerge as tentative conjunctions – syntactic abutments. In the beginning and the end, each performer-as-syntaxer does no more and no less than set forth such conjoinings as residues of a scrupulous attempt to locate their own 'profound' unspeakable depth, knowing always that the depth of the latter can only be shown at and as surfaces, as surfacing sensuous alignments. Such conjunctions are what surfaces as the performance's only possibility.

In realising the gesture of conjoining as the fundamental constituting motif of his own making Mallarmé has simultaneously offered us performing's defining gesture across the emergent modern arts. In this very realisation, art-making is pared down to the self-referential movement of conjoining one dispositive with another for its own sake, to show, in the end, nothing but itself: this relating is performing's *telos*. Any 'whole' that appears to have been constructed, no matter how seemingly complex, is nothing more than the aligning-relating of its inclined dispositives. Any moving 'effect' that is attributed to a thing as its 'achievement', occurs precisely in the ways that each little conjunction is accomplished, passed through as a feeling-for across the disjunctive gap. Borne along and suspended within and through the multiple of the gaps and junctions (everywhere borders, tangential contacts, thresholds, proximities, barriers...) that constitute a gest's syntax, we are, if lucky, carried up and off to an elsewhere that is art's only pledge. Every would-be-artist, then, a syntaxer...

Or, perhaps, now that we are under the inescapable shadow of pan-representation, a syntactician... For performers, in their heightened awareness of making's current plight, know only too well that their struggle to hold to, to stay with, art's little conjunctions in order to keep the trajectory alive (the liveliness necessary for sur-vival), has simultaneously to struggle with a tactics of avoidance, a tactics that will entail putting together lines that effect an avoiding and thus perform a syntactics of avoidance. Making-for, -toward, -art has to stay scrupulously with its unbeknownst sourcings, while also seeking for ways of aligning these that might resist for as long as possible the appropriating embraces of the representing machinery. Irrespective of medium, the maker-as-syntactician has to combine the celebration of conjoining with a hoped-for deferral of representation. *But this cannot be a resistance fuelled by power. Rather, to be true to art's eschewing of power's means, it has to come from and show art's weak-becoming.* The gest's point is to show in its bare necessities, its syntax, that its aligning of dispartes makes no claim to effectivity in this world precisely because it is involved in planing out of this world. It hopes always to avoid for as long as possible any accommodation with effective power, with all-too-worldly needs.

This is, perhaps, what Beckett was referring to when he used the term 'syntax of weakness' in a comment on a writer's search for 'adequate form'.⁷ And, in his acutely perceptive and engaging consideration of Beckett's own syntax as it conjoiningly takes on 'clichés and other forms of life in death', Ricks emphasises a crucial distinction. It is not, he suggests, that weakness is an attribute, a condition, of Beckett's writing:

'It is not that such syntax is weak; rather, that it is a 'syntax

⁷ See C. Ricks, 'Beckett's Dying Words', Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 82-83.

of weakness', pressing on, unable to relinquish its perseverance and to arrive at severance.'⁸

And it might be that this syntax of weakness, into which a performer falls, emerges in modernity's wake as contemporary performing's faltering disintegrating trajectory. It keeps going somehow under its own duress, precisely because of a certain condition that Beckett himself noted, in his dialogues with Georges Duthuit of 1949 concerning three painters, Tal Coat, André Masson, and Bram Van Velde. Beckett inches his way around his own dream of an art that turns 'in disgust' from,

'the plane of the feasible...weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing, of going a little further along a dreary road.'⁹

Finding Tal Coat and Masson still bound to this plane, still (Masson) breathing 'the same possessiveness as the notebooks of Leonardo'¹⁰, he dreams towards 'an art unresentful of its insuperable indigence and too proud for the farce of giving and receiving.'¹¹ For, aside from the possessiveness that binds the giving and receiving (of things), he describes a performing situation of one 'who is helpless, cannot act, in the event cannot paint, since he is obliged to paint.'¹², yet obliged by nothing, certainly not, it seems, by some irrecusable desire to express. If painting has so far acted within the 'domain of the feasible' in order, under 'the common anxiety to express as much as possible', the 'little' or the 'much' that there was to express (as 'truly... finely as possible'), then through the tentatively firm absurdity (self-admitted) of his syntax of weakness, he draws us towards van Velde's 'inexpressiveness'¹³; through Van Velde, and undoubtedly journeying around his 'own' writing selves, he ventures a sense-(lessness) of painting that is 'bereft ... of occasion.'¹⁴ Noting that, for the artist 'obsessed with his expressive vocation, anything and everything is doomed to become occasion'¹⁵, everything, anything, is, as it were, justifiable as an occasion for relating the artist expressively to her/his world and situation (context); the history of painting has, for Beckett, been this 'estheticised automatism.'¹⁶ For him, van Velde is the first to desist from this, 'the first to submit wholly to the incoercible absence of relation ... the first to admit that to be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail, that failure is his world and the shrink from it desertion, art and craft, good housekeeping, living.'¹⁷ We must indeed be indebted to Van Velde for providing Beckett with the occasion to tease out, with whatever self-ironic circumlocutions (goaded by Duthuit...), this reflexive revelation of performing's (still, now) plight. Beginning and ending as failure, indigent (but aside from possessiveness), helpless (outside of any necessary relation), the performer is nevertheless obliged to perform. Barely borne along, just about surfacing, through its own emergent but inexplicable syntax of weakness, what might issue from such performing is (and this is perhaps performing's only and last hope) something unrecognisable, something that 'seems to have nothing to do with art.'¹⁸ And yet, being obligated only to art might just, in the surfacing of its gesture, reveal the strange ligature (that 'is' the performance of an ob-ligat-ion) that could bind it to nothing else: obliged to make toward art's 'over-there' (the outside of expressive representation)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Samuel Beckett, 'Proust and 3 dialogues with Georges Duthuit', Calder and Boyars, London, 1970, p. 103.

¹⁰ Op. cit., p. 112.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Op. cit., p. 119.

¹³ Op. cit., p. 120.

¹⁴ Op. cit., p. 121.

¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 124.

¹⁶ Op., cit., p. 125.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Op. cit., p. 126.

because ‘over-here’ the powerful machinations of representation preserve the habits of self-expression as art’s only way.

But if, in scouring scrupulously, profoundly, the undeniability of their obligation to art, performers do stumble across their own zones of failure, that which they simply cannot get past, then art, art alone (not the performers themselves...) might just, briefly, become the beneficiary. Performers persevere because they cannot help themselves. Yet performing is not a symptom of some troubling X outside itself. It is not (quite...) a pathology; it is not a condition requiring help (remedial, therapeutic) of any kind. For if performing’s weakness is that it ‘cannot arrive at severance’¹⁹, cannot stop, cannot help (itself), *then this eternal non-arrival, this falling short of severance is precisely its way of becoming, its mode of survival, of getting by. It never can arrive.* It never can get to that point where it could say, ‘at last I’ve fulfilled my obligation and succeeded in reaching my destination, the place where art and I elide. I’m no longer obligated to art, for it and I are at one. Now finally I can sever all connections with the struggling performer I used to be, the one who, as Gaddis puts it, could always ‘do more.’’²⁰

Could this intertwining of non-arrival and perseverance be because what art requires of performing is always to perform as a lost case, lost cause, to show both that it is beyond (free of) help, while being responsible (only partially so, as art itself must take some of the rap...) for its own helplessness? In realising itself through performing, the tentative but immovable obligation to art sets out on this strange journey, a skittering halting this-way-that-way trajectory of little and big breaks (a syntax of syncopes) for which there is neither cure (there being no ‘problem’ only the perennial trouble of beginning again and again under failure’s auspices) nor cease (the obligated perseverance, in its ontological weakness, being exactly lacking in the strength to stop): *only just making-out, weakly, regardless of whatever.*

And yet even this making-out by way of weakness, this exploratory syntax trying to search out the terms of its own inability to stop, has no option but to recognise the penetrating framings, fixings, and re-routings to which representation subjects it. Of necessity the syntaxer becomes the syntactician of weakness, though always in the know-how that the syntactics cannot take on the power of representation. For performing can never be a matter of confronting power with power. All it can do is set forth, in the front and back yards of the representing machinery’s territory, gestures that seek to lay bare the very thing that representation lacks, that in the face of which it remains (however briefly while it waits for its technicians to judge the possibility of converting it into an ‘expressive whole’) non-plussed: *a concatenation of alignments which, in its syntactical vagaries, are completely unusable, irreconcilable with power’s need to endow everything with the same singular energy that keeps it charged up and going forward in control, everything under its thumb.* Syntactically, performing’s only hope and obligation is to conjoin, through its scrupulous and profound attention, the disparate discharges that come to it *from the other side of any intention.* The point (and thus art’s point) of these aligned but aloof remnants is to resist for as long as possible, through the useless incertitude of their conjunctions, any collapse into the ‘one’ of an expressive identity. For it is precisely the latter that are immediately put to work by the representing machine in the service of its own unifying interests (the systematic interrelated representation of everything for the power enabled by coherence).

¹⁹ Op. cit., p. 83.

²⁰ William Gaddis, ‘Agapē Agape’, op. cit., p. 95.

Of course we are all too familiar, and contemporary performers are resigned to this from the outset of their performing, with the combination of exorbitant technical skills and world-vision that ensures representation's (relatively) smooth functioning. Appropriated and then disposed, through either assimilation or rejection, gests survive (or not) on terms that have nothing to do with the defining gestures of their previous performing 'life'. Performing's experience of its obligation to itself and art, through the 'how' of its alignments, is simply irrelevant to its gests' after-lives. Once abandoned by its performer, each thing's occult status as an alignment of gestures in advance of any social attribution of significance or value, is overthrown and substituted by the allocation of an identity and a possible potency of 'meaning'. Severed from the sites of performing, the gests' effective, literal, biography, and thus their emergent cultural identity, starts from the initiating point of their reception. And their subsequent fate within the circuitry of meaning and value will depend precisely on whether this transformation from alignments into a 'one' provides possibilities for meaning within existing response networks – the aesthetics of tradition-construction. The finding and showing of such potential (power) is a function of representing interests, of the critical (conceptual-technical value-construction) terms in which these interests are maintained and developed. As always it is a matter of the coinage of common use, of conversion into a specific kind of use-value, a coinage of energy extraction and application. Presented with the perennial short-fall of the abandoned declining discharges, the alchemical technicians of representation are challenged to convert, to congeal these into singular nuggets compatible with their finely tuned conceptualising engines.

Faced with an alignment of gestures, a syntax of weakness, whose very point is to be the other of all codings, the alchemists impose, through their constructive skills, a primary code. This becomes the syntax's unifying 'cultural' meaning, thus mutating performing's entropic discharges into representation's base fuel. For what the machine needs without end is a constant fuel supply to maintain the drive of its consumptive-production. It has to turn everything into the same kind of stuff – conceptualised whole-objects with attractively coherent surfaces. This is the awesome unavoidable conversion machine faced by the maker-as-syntactician. The challenge is how to respond, as simultaneously performer and gest-offerer, to now being suspended, drawn out, between two worlds of performance, two modes of becoming-as-performance. For if art since modernity has been the attempt to perform, and show in its performing, its difference to every other way of relating to world, self and other(s), it has to do this in a world dedicated to and largely constituted by a very different sense of performance, a sense that makes the evaluation of performing a calculative matter of the triangulation between place, time, and work.

Under technoscience the rule for performing is that of parsimony, that of achieving the highest output for the least expenditure of energy: relating means to ends through the precise measurable costings of all alternatives and possibilities, followed by the rigorous organisation and monitoring of all work, all effort expended in operationalising the means. This model for action now tacitly informs all activities in everyday life under techno-capitalism; whilst measurable or adequate information may simply not be available to us in routine assessments of the relation between means, and between means and ends, instrumental reasoning is, nevertheless, the tacit model guiding actions across the spectrum of our activities. 'Weighing up' defines our decision-making and underwrites our actions; it is how we justify them.

To be suspended between performing's two irreconcilable ways of becoming is thus to live through an extreme tension. Committed to art as the region of incalculability would-be-performers try to assemble conjunctive sequences, syntaxes, aside from all instrumental

calculation. Becoming receptive to chance interruptions, to fragmented trains of felt-thought, to calls from elsewhere, to reverie, to wandering attention, to acutely focussed attention, to provocations of other art-things, to arcane obsessions and memories, necessitates a suspension of the pressing instrumental demands of everyday life. Yet for such assemblages to surface within that same everyday life, to break through the latter's self-protective sealants and establish, however briefly, a site for their performance, requires performers' immersion and participation in representation's complex calculative programme. There are no representation-free sites. To make for art simultaneously, unavoidably, requires an active engagement of representation's frames and transmuting operations. It necessitates both accepting the loss of the things to a cultural machinery divorced from the experiences, commitments and interests of performing, and some, perhaps extensive, participation in the instrumental relations through which gests are placed and circulate. There is no 'where' art can go in order to avoid representation.

Every 'where' is constructed and represented 'for' us through the extraordinary interlocking little machines (electro-mechanico-bio-linguistico-socio-culturo-machines...), whose point is to operationalise and render instantly perceptible and accessible the awesome seductions of applied powers, powers developed in the service of specific interests. As far as these interests are concerned art and its things can never be other than possible means for their own maintenance. And the world-in-common, generated and sustained through the instrumentalism of representation, now shows itself in the formless form of the info-spectacle. Nobody 'owns' this, but its operative machinery places and possesses all of us. Just getting by requires us to try to subordinate what we may still regard as our 'private' 'personal' and perhaps unknowable regions, our hopes and desires, to the machineries rendering everything as revealable and public. Everything is taken as a potentially accessible surface that must be revealed in the interests of (technical – for application and use) knowledge. These constituted surfaces now 'exist' in order to be illuminated by the machinery's harshly interested light, whose aim is to reveal the surface of everything and everything represented *as nothing but its revealed surfaces*. Through the audacity of its panoply of machines, representation plugs us into itself without cease.

Caught up in this performative drive, having to adjust to the realities of its routine organisation in order to find sites for its own exposure, performing, called to explore and show the possibility of becoming-other, can only try to expose and offer itself in and as the difference of its 'otherwise-performances', performings that have to lead a multiple life. Incorporated into the representing machinery they appear inevitably to serve its interests. Yet the possibility of their secreting otherwise-gestures depends on their effecting a certain withdrawal. Placed alongside and having to circulate among representation's excess of surfaces, the surfaces of the arts' gests have to be up-front. They have to attract while simultaneously throwing respondents out of representation's grip, either by holding something back or revealing their attractions as janus-faced, as disquietingly double, multiple. Such gests can be seductively troubling in the ways they draw us in only to turn us aside into an elsewhere outside comprehension's comforts. In their becoming-double they, hopefully (for hope is intrinsic to their project), passively resist being appropriated and re-distributed by a calculative coding seeking voraciously to fix them in a relation to everything else within its representing frame.

The only slight advantage that such gests may have lies in the recessive bareness of their 'art-content', for it is barely perceptible, and thus largely unnoticeable, according to the interests of the surrounding culture's routine and pressing concerns. Appearing to be inconsequential

for these concerns in their eschewal of power, they risk instant recuperation by representation's technicians. Yet almost by default, by the supple inertia of their withholding, rather than any defiance, they 'take on' representation. Having bared themselves to draw respondents into their conjunctions, something within the gesturing, something perhaps in the in-between (that gap where the conjunction, becoming disjunction, failing to take place, thus allows a swarming irreconcilable multiple to enter), then prevents any resolution of their syntax into a friendly reassuring whole. Is this in-between the un-siting of site, the else-'where' of art's moving, how it moves us? Does everything turn for art on what goes on across the gaps, the joins whose syntactics hold their elements apart, on the gestures that, seductively, it tries to solicit into making a connection?

Certainly performing's processes focus inescapably and most intensely on the how of conjunction, the forming gesture in which their medium's elemental materials are aligned and brought into a possible relation. Following the earlier lead via Mallarmé, syntax, despite its affiliations with linguistic practice, may direct us most concisely into performing's minimally necessary gesture. Irrespective of medium, every would-be-art-gest emerges from the arranging gestures that form the relations between its constituents. Unaccountably and multipli-generated from seemingly irreconcilable and recondite sources, each gest is unique (*and thus a law unto itself*). Its micro- and macro-relations, perceptible syntactic 'levels', emerge from the finally unaccountable and untraceable affective commitment to performing. This exposes and disposes itself throughout the gest by seeking temporary resolutions (the conjunctive disjunctions) between the chance and the motivated discharges to which the maker is prey. Each gest is eventually abandoned as a collage of syntactic relations when the maker realises the irresolvability of the play between chance and revision, between the accidental emergings from nowhere and the 'polishings' of a passionate but context-bound reasoning. Each gest sets forth a one-off world, a spacing-timing, whose congealing *is* the near-syntactic, the weakness-potential of its connectings, that delivers its almost-a-language.

It is this 'how' of making's syntactic conjoinings that provides for the possible differentiation of a gest-for-art from other cultural things, for it is they that display the maker's immovable relation to traditions of making-for-art (rather than, say, for entertainment, politics, religion, or whatever...). Performing takes on its own becoming as a specifically situated, circumstance-bound performance, a space-place time-tied relation, exactly in the ways that it fixes relations between its elements. This fixing is performing's attempt to expose art's 'self' (its emergence-potential): through each gest performing exposes itself as just this one-off fixed gathered collecting of possible connections, within which it hopes art is somewhere about, very proximate. Conjoining is thus what consumes performers; it is why they devote themselves to art. For their know-how (in advance of any knowledge, knowing-how to be before any law except that of this emerging gest) tells them that they will lose themselves to a possibility of art in their being moved by something unnamable across the gaps. Out of this movement in all its ambivalent idiosyncrasy, its being peculiarly theirs and not-theirs, a gest-for-art might just emerge. But the confirmation of this hope can only come about when a responding other is thrown out of everyday alignments and into art's elsewhere in the course of being moved across the gaps by a gests' elemental conjunctions. This response cannot be a repeat of the performer's own gestures but is more like the performance of a transliteration.²¹

Each gest exposes itself in and as a syntactical gathering. This ensemble seems to be the performance of something-like-a-language. It appears to be indebted to and to share elements

²¹ For an elaborated sense of transliteration with examples refer back to the discussion in 'To Gest'.

of a language, or languages, with which we are familiar. Yet being singular (a one-off that is complete (finished) without being a ‘whole’), it has set out, exhausted, everything it needed: *it offers itself as just this one-off possible language - a unique alignment of syntax peculiar to and thus defining itself as no more than this very one-off (an extract ‘now’ from a singular language-to-come)*. As such a one-off it thus starts out in untranslatability, in advance of and beyond translation. It cannot be represented as just what it is, a gest-for-art in its difference, in any other terms, in a language that is already common to some assumed language-community (of either everyday life or, for example, of aesthetic technicians). All that is left to every respondent is to transliterate a gest’s conjunctions into their ‘own’ idiosyncratic terms, to find a ‘way’ with and through the thing that re-constitutes the conjunctions as if they emerged from and rested above their own singular way (toning, rhythming, vibrating, selecting, and so on) in language. Each relation to the gest has to be via this transliteration, an utterly singular alignment drawn forth by this gest alone on this occasion. A respondent’s relation, moved along by the gest’s seductions, caught up by its tensions, is its transliteration into an equally idiosyncratic response, one dependent on the coming together of the unique thing with each respondent’s similarly unique and situated experiences. Responding is the transliteration (or not...) of the thing into a gest-for-art. If the gest is lucky, the peculiar relating (carrying-back) that is transliteration’s twisting of translation draws it out of its tentative hopeful groping-towards-art and confirms, endows, it as such. In the current context, of art’s entwinement with techno-representation in spite of itself, it is likely that this groping-towards will, in the strangeness of its aligning, be a staggering halting stuttering²² self-fragmenting that finds it hard to hang together. *It will be a syntax collapsing at the edge of syntactic.*

Performing as and for Movement

What is generated in each respondent’s relating, then, is not the gest’s ‘meaning’, but, rather, a re-alignment, a transformative shift, in the respondent’s becoming in which the latter is drawn towards a becoming-other, -others. The difference a gest-for-art might just make through its moving occurs precisely in the ways it draws respondents into a syntactical re-alignment, a throwing out-of-joint of one’s ordinary taken for granted conjunctions and an elsewhere-re-forming. In the course of discovering a gest’s specificity, engaged, gripped, respondents reconstitute themselves as now, *just for this time being*, Art’s little bodies, bodies succumbing to Art’s Body. In recognising something as a gest-for-art through this syntactic movement (dis-connection and re-connection) of their own becoming(-other), respondents are simultaneously incorporated by Art as its temporary subjects. All too briefly, fleetingly, they are ‘for’ nothing but art, supported only in and by its conjunctive disjunctions.

Becoming a respondent, then, is to be mobilised and taken over by a transliteration, the discovery of a frail syntax that gestures towards the peculiar elsewhere of its possible origin. Specific to each gest-respondent relation, the ‘almost-language’, the swarming multiple nameless generator of its peculiar syntax, is the ‘where’ above which a respondent and art hover in a mutual becoming aside from culture and community.

For both performers and respondents the gest’s emergence out of its performing turns on the bridging holding time of conjoining. The gest’s moving potential is secreted in the ways that the syntactic relations are brought forth. Whatever moves one to perform-toward-art, or to respond-toward-art, generates performances that are this attentive joining of elements. It is in and as the accomplishment of these transitions that the elements, gaps (gaps opening onto

²² Performing as a ‘stuttering-stammering’ is explored further in ‘To Sound Out...’.

surrounding spaces), boundaries and thresholds that fix their relation are constituted. And this being-moved, this altered becoming, is art's very point: no movement, no art. But the qualities of this art-provoked movement, as a gesture-outside yet right here where different ways of becoming are traced, are what establishes art's distinctive fragile and temporary region. This region persists only for the duration that one (performer or respondent) is in the grip of the gesture. For performers the possible emergence of the performative gesture seems to demand their perseverance with the irreconcilable. The hope to congeal that which cannot be reconciled with other modes of becoming is carried in their joinings. They are carried along by a different movement, a being-moved that, while it may be akin to everyday relations, performs a disconcerting dislocation from all that. For every attempt to find its driving source fails. While passing through, via, the conjunctions, it seems to come from no 'where' and thus to be 'about' something else entirely. For it registers itself as a falling away from everything that holds one in place, everything that confirms one's identity and guarantees one's continuity with and useful attachments to what surrounds.

So this mobilisation simultaneously effects a de-mobilisation. For, in getting under way with the thing, both performers and respondents are demobbed from the conventions of movement that keep us going in daily life. If effectively demobbed, one is out of it, out of the habitual attachments. Serving no purpose other than art's irreconcilability, the movement seems to embody precisely these felt discharges which are anathema to the thoughtfully charged and directed expenditures that keep commonsense activities on track and at work. Turned aside from the managed release of carefully stored energies that serve purposes of routine control and influence (over material things, energies, muscles, other people, memories, ideas, languages, symbols affections, and so on), the one is cast into the chaotic play of multiple discharges. Selective but unaccountable choices, acceptances, and directings from this multiple generate something that may eventually be grasped as an art-gest. In thrall to this general demobilisation from reasonable controls, performing falls under the sway of discharges from which it begins to string together relations *that hover over no known ground, serve no 'purpose' other than an unformulable necessarily vague hope for art's dislocative offering*. Vacillating between unwilling acceptance and a paranoically directed and fixed will, performing courses untraceably through a chaos of syncopations out of which the syntactic gathering of each thing may just emerge. And respondents, seduced by something in this gathering, transliterate their own own ways around the gathering conjunctions.

Once again, from the crucible out of which modernity's arts have flowed, it is Mallarmé who shows us that it is what goes on in the spaces, at the conjoinings, between a gest's moving particles that effects movement. For poetry and literature it is words (and the unboundaried collection of vocalisations and sounds together with attempts to engraph these not-word signifiers), themselves already the precisely spaced conjunctions of letters and punctuating marks, that compel movement through their very difference:

‘The pure work implies the disappearance of the poet as speaker, yielding his initiative to words, which are mobilised by the shock of their difference;...’²³

That the letter is the elementary particle, the condition of literature's possibility, is emphasised by Mallarmé in his comments on the relation between the book's search for mobility and the letter:

‘The book, which is a total expansion of the letter, must find its mobility in the letter; and in its spaciousness must est-

²³ Stephane Mallarmé, ‘Selected Poetry and Prose’, New Directions, New York, 1982, p. 75.

abish some nameless system of relationships which will embrace and strengthen fiction.²⁴

Following Mallarmé, then, in his display of the key to the modern commitment, an emergent gest can only achieve the mobility it is searching for by striving to create the conditions for a dislocating shock, between its least marks. *Mobility is rendered in the conjunctive gap*. Thus it seems that, for Mallarmé, it is the letter that stores the energy that is only discharged in the in-between of one letter's relation to another. Across the arts the relating of each medium's elemental markers is the gapless gap where mobilisation gets under way; if performers and respondents are moved then this moving begins precisely through what 'happens' between a gest's elemental details. Of course there are many other possible sites, relations, that can be articulated theoretically as 'structurally' crucial for our felt response to an art-thing. These will depend on each theory's specific interest and unifying frame. They are, in any case, all post-hoc paraphrastic responses to the organised chaos of the maker's syncopated gesturing which culminates in the emergence and abandonment of some kind of gest. In this gest's constitution there is no pre-structure that can account for the sequence of gesture-embedding marks that make up the thing abandoned. Elaboration after the gesture's eventing is generated, as I have consistently emphasised, out of quite different interests to those charging the activity of performing.

So, in order for the art-thing to get going, Mallarmé offers us elementals, mobilisation and shock. It is this shock discharged by a non-thing, the literal absence that conjunctive relating is, that is the generator of every other form of movement. Tremors running through, leaping across, the gest's fabric and that seem to define the quality of performers' and respondents' different journeys through the gest (and which may be theorised by aestheticians as functions of a thing's 'structure'), are dependent upon elemental conjunctions. For the performer it is these, and not some abstract sense of a gest's supposed 'totality', that enforce perseverance. And it is a perverse perseverance that arises out of the strange attachment of performers to their sourcing, the matterings that have to be transliterated into something like a language. The syntactic aligning that transliteration performs is perverse in that it cannot be accounted for by anything outside itself; its movement and its being moved is a turning-back-and-through itself, an arhythmic shuttling back and forth across its 'own' alignments that remain to the end (to its abandonment by the performer) wide open for revision, for realignment. It is precisely these tiniest, seemingly most 'trivial', of 'details' (perhaps no 'larger' than a letter/dot/dash/brush-mark/note/gap or pause...) over which performers agonise continually in the course of composing. For them the fate, and certainly the issue of when a gest is to be abandoned to this fate, may turn upon the disposition of a single such 'element'.

For, under the harsh light of the know how of failure, all alignment-acceptance (the decision to move on) is self-begrudging; it knows it could always do more, do 'better'. Performers' connecting activity, the assembling of a gest, keeps going until their weakness is exhausted (giving way to other voices...) and they gather sufficient strength to abandon it to its fate. In art's case, shock, the being-thrown out of place-time, that 'goes on' in the passage across the in-betweens holding the differences together and apart, is the disturbance animating performing's gestures. The de-energising judder experienced in the in-betweens effects the de-willing, the becoming-will-less or less-willing, that art requires of both performer and, eventually, respondents. It is what keeps them persevering, unable (for the time being, always only for the time being) to stop, to resist the pull of the dislocating conjunctions.

²⁴ Op. cit., p. 82.

This mobilisation is, thus, unequivocally a turning away from any application of the gest to some purpose outside itself, aside from its becoming-other. This is the ‘purity’ that is one of Mallarmé’s legacies to the vision firing modernity’s emergent arts and that still lures performers to their fateful conjunction with art. A performer’s hope is to experience and fix the terms of its possible generation in others of the mobilisation that occurs in and for art alone. Marked, like everything else, by their spatio-temporal (and thus socio-psychic) location, caught up in relations beyond their control, the hope embedded in the gests is nevertheless that their little shocks will set respondents aside from the controlling markers and boundaries of everyday experience. Just as, indeed, the performer, caught up in performing’s syncopated gestures, was elsewhere, somewhere other than the knowable or known.

A condition of this elsewhere that would seem critical for severing the links between the personal and the known, between the everyday world’s knowing centred subjects and their knowledges, is also offered by Mallarmé. Extending his remarks on the book’s de-personalised condition to all the arts draws us into a defining constituent of the modern vision of making:

‘The Book... is obligated by some struggle, to shake off the bulk of the moment. Not personalised, the volume, from which one is separated as the author, does not demand any reader approach it. You should know that as such, without any human accessories, it happens alone; made, being. The hidden meaning stirs, and lays out a choir of pages.’²⁵

This anticipated Celan’s displacement of ‘*s’impose*’ by ‘*s’expose*’. Simultaneously cut off from the author as some authoritative controlling source and from respondents by making no aimed demands, the gest remains ‘there’ in its own elsewhere, on its own. It is for a no-one-in-particular and, simultaneously, for any one who is prepared to give themselves over to its many. Certainly it is no longer for the performer who has finished with it and abandoned it to its fate. Through this self-exposure of its having-been-performed-for-art, the most its past-performance can offer is an open invitation to re-animate its alignings. But, to take up the invitation, respondents have to want to risk and trust themselves to a going-towards something unknowable, something that may lack the comforting and pleasurable reassurances of surface attractions. Having sought to put itself outside, or, at the very least, at the threshold between culture and its other, the would-be-art-gest hardly expects a warm and welcoming mass response. In its eschewal of the known, in choosing not to respond to the interests of specific audiences, in being uncompromisingly for itself and art, it makes no appeal. In its distinctly unappealing offer it requires something out of the ordinary from respondents. They have to want to be put out of joint, out of place, out of sorts, in order to conjoin themselves to the thing’s perverse separateness. Such a desire for displacement among potential respondents is not to be explained by some reductive psychic mechanism, but, rather, is a manifestation of an already fractured relation to the conventions of culture, an altered, hower slightly, mode of becoming, of getting through everydayness.

Though calling, offered, to no-one, no group, in particular, the gest’s mute reserve appeals to those for whom routine becoming is already somewhat in question. Art’s gests provide occasions for a celebratory exploration of respondents’ nascent (or already emergent) disjunctive relation to the insistence of culture’s routine self-reproduction through the now

²⁵ Op. cit., p. 80.

inordinate weight and power of its representing machinery. To be receptive is to hope for a disturbance made pleasurable by the safe-keeping through which the gest repays the trust placed in it by respondents. The safety net provided by the gest is an effect of its becoming elsewhere; because it is not of this world but constitutes its 'own' (art's) world, its disturbances, its challenges, can be accepted, explored, and rehearsed aside from the all too pressing threats of the powers enforcing and defining everyday relations. While requiring and enabling this self-splitting scatter of the whole solidly cultured subject – both performer and respondent – the gest simultaneously frames itself as a support for this dislocated fractured subjectivity. In becoming this temporally displaced other, the scattered fragments of the 'one' are held up within the sequential movement through the gest's aligning, spacing, sounding, gestures.

Being moved by the thing in the course of performing and responding can only occur through the intense absorption required by moving's double quality. For the subject, borne away from itself by the gest's disjunctive alignments, participates in its own undoing through its riveted attention to those very details, to what might just be waved between the elementary particles. And, maybe in subsequent concentrated reveries, the primary alignments are used in the constitution of other dimensions and modes for the gest (levels, stratifications, sites, processes, internal and external associations, and so on). After performers have abandoned it each gest has as many lives as there are absorbed respondents. Though barely perceptible socially, because of its attempted withdrawal from culture, each gest's weak faltering seduction is a mute plea to respondents to give it the benefit of the doubt; its only hope is that they will share enough of both its own disaffection with the commonsense world and its affection for art to lose themselves briefly to its estranging in-betweens. The gest thus comes into its own in and as the sequencing of its syntactical alignments in both enabling this loss and providing supporting substitutions. Performed in the hope of displaying and thus sharing art's plight, this loss and support are the gest's sole responsibility.

Mallarmé's rupture, though apparently specific to those arts engaging written and spoken language, inaugurated making across the arts as the performing of a specific gesture – the attempt to perform the 'pure work'. Within this performance zone the emerging modern arts slowly began to realise their common project of self-exposure: *to expose, through and as its gestures, the self not of the individual performer, but of an art taking itself as its profoundly disturbing but joyfully passionate question*. And this question has presented performers, irrespective of medium, with the irresolvable tension of how to hold to and live on in the no-space-no-time between two primacies: their medium's materials and the latter's significations, between matter(s) and felt-sense (embodied-becoming). Caught up, in ever more complex ways, in the radically self-revolutionary technical and instrumental culture that positions and represents them, their maintenance of this Mallarméan extremity has remained under permanent threat. Performing condemns itself to a life of endless contortion, of sliding out of any one's grasp, of slipping away, of avoidance, all the while confronting one (as a potential respondent) with a paradoxical invitational gesture.

Yet the necessity of struggling to find ways of committing to this gestural zone in the face of all capital (representing and appropriating *technē*) has continued to animate much performing across the arts. And this is in spite of the arts being framed, made 'meaningful', by critical and academic rhetorics that seek to reconcile them to thought outside themselves, to paradigms arising from the interests of other practices. Given the latter's specific kind of knowledge commitments (including their struggles for their own institutional legitimacy and stability), and their relative power in relation to the arts, it is hardly surprising that

performing now faces the most intransigent challenges. For, in a culture whose mutational dynamic is grounded in absolutely specific technical knowledges, to insist on trying to hold to performative reiterations of art's defining and defying rupture routinely, and paradoxically, courts both dismissive derision and baroque appropriation. This is the permanent discomfort, to put it at its mildest, of offering gestures for Nothing in a culture whose only 'end' is projected in the endless nothingness of the technical capitalisation of everything.

In such a world performers' insistent exercise of the freedom to probe for art's ever receding and always obscure extremities, can only hope that some of its gestures will occasionally break through the surfaces of representation. And, because response to art's gesticulations, the e-ventings of art, occurs in each respondent's recreative transliterative alignments (even those constituted as social events in public settings like the so-called 'performing arts'), such breakthroughs and their moving provocations happen almost exclusively to individual respondents, rather than to groups or conglomerates. The collective euphoria of an audience response to, say a dance, dramatic, or musical performance, hides the multiple differences of felt response. There is no way of registering movements of 'individual' becoming. Individual attention and absorption complete the circle of solitude.

This is the defining character of art's gesticulations as they continue to arc across modernity's superficially changing self-representing surfaces. Their staying powerlessness and the charms of their discharging weakness still do mark the obscure importance of the arts as performers, perhaps the last, of a trust in and hope for the possibility of otherness. Long before the emergence of the info-spectacle, Mallarmé saw the threat to art posed by mundane representation, as exemplified in his own socio-historical context by 'the press' ('The newspaper is the sea; literature flows into it at will.'²⁶). Although the subsequent institutional history of modernity seems, according to the interests of knowledge-makers and analysts, to have generated a mutation into its own post-life or -lives, the continuing relevance of the modern arts' ruptures and revelations (exemplified by Mallarmé's own interruptive gestures) is affirmed in multiple ways by artists themselves.

Performing to Challenge Itself : Sollers Extends Mallarmé's 'Fiction'

In the very period when theorists began to diagnose modernity's demise, Sollers, writing out of and re-writing fictive traditions, re-affirms the continuing vitality of the moderns' inaugurative visions and performances. Interweaving, among others, the practices of Dante, Sade, Lautréamont, Bataille, Artaud, and Mallarmé, he offers the latter's use of 'fiction' as the key to gathering the arts of modernity around a common project. Hardly surprising for a writer-novelist, one might think, but his proposals may be extendable and relevant to all sites of contemporary art-making.

In literature the challenge to the writing-performance is to take 'writing' (and thus reading) as itself in question. Sollers suggests that, despite the 'progress' of knowledge-discourses, including those that specifically take language and its functioning as their 'object of knowledge', *we still don't 'know' what it is 'to write' and 'to read'* (note the infinitives...). The arts' possibilities reside in the absence of knowledge-grounded answers to such questions, for they inevitably put (our) becoming into question. The infinitives point to para-ontological questions that haunt and infect all making-toward-art precisely because they are already outside the frames of technical-knowledges. The unavoidable questions for each performing occasion concern its relation to the emergent specific materials that supposedly

²⁶ Op. cit., p. 81.

define each medium, for performers lose themselves in the play between the materials' facticity and their sense.

Caught up within this play, the challenge is to explore the process through which these peculiarities can be brought into a relation with art's demand for nothing less than its difference. In the throes of such self-questioning, performing in each medium emerges (as I have tried to emphasise by sheer repetition!) as both a 'making-for' and a 'making-toward' its own distinguishing fiction; the telos of this 'making-for', what it commits itself to, is an alignment with and 'in' art. This is the hope of its projecting. And we 'know' now that the moderns' intense probing of medium-specificity has drawn performers into an active blurring of media boundaries, into the possibilities of cross-media transfer, collaboration, and combination. Such gestures, echoing and re-siting the activities of the Dada artists, explicitly propose all 'making' as performance. This emergence of the paramountcy of performing as the generation and offering of a specific kind of gesture, certainly allows for and opens up the possibility of gathering all the arts under the common project of 'Fiction'. Elaborating Mallarmé's understanding of the relation between 'Fiction' and 'Culture' by intertwining it with political economy, Sollers nevertheless writes toward, writes for, writing's (art's) independence.²⁷ If, as I have insistently tried to show, the current dominant form of the relation between 'culture' and 'political economy', its means for self-perpetuation, is the representation of everything in and as the info-spectacle, then Sollers' diagnosis *from within writing* of the challenges to writing are germane to the plight of all the arts. For he poses the question of what it might be to try to hold to writing's independence as a performer responsive to the current cultural fate of language and thus of our becoming in and through it.

In the context of the relation between literature and art the challenge for Sollers is to become a 'scriptor', a writer that writes writing out in order to arrive (this, at least, is art's hope) at the 'consciousness of writing'.²⁸ This might just emerge through what Mallarmé calls the 'reciprocal contamination of the work and the means',²⁹ where 'that which speaks is writing itself'³⁰. And, guaranteed by the idiosyncratic syntax that defines each scriptor, the latter effects a 'reversal that consists in *not expressing* ...'³¹. Countering, unmasking the 'expressive economy', the scriptor seeks 'the point where what counts is no longer *me*, but rather my language.'³² Sollers re-discovers in Mallarmé, at the inception of modernity, this non-expressivity (precisely a counter to the aesthetic discourses' endless reiteration of a unified subject's self-expression as the motivation for the modern arts' performings). The challenge confronting the scriptor is 'the ineluctable process that makes every one of our gestures a *written act*, the very fiction and reality of our existence.'³³

Thus through the infinite interrogation that constitutes scripting, fiction (literature becoming art through scripting) passes through a 'reversal that places it in another dimension, where, in a slight yet nonetheless decisive withdrawal, it lets itself be seen and understood as it sees and understands itself.'³⁴ Because its goal, its point, is not 'constitution of objects, but a ciphered relation', its continual probing of itself as the process of language's gesturing of

²⁷ See Phillipe Sollers, 'Writing and the Experience of Limits', op. cit. See particularly pp. 80-85.

²⁸ Op. cit., p. 74.

²⁹ Ibid., as quoted by Sollers.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Op. cit., p. 73.

³² Op. cit., p. 74.

³³ Op. cit., p. 202.

³⁴ Op. cit., p. 200.

itself (language gesturing itself *out* through the scriptor), writing must ‘tell what it does even as it does it.’³⁵ What might just be opened out in this process, each time differently according to a scriptor’s specific prosody, is the impersonality of the play of language.³⁶ This play is inaugurated for Sollers in Mallarmé’s *‘Un Coup de dés’* in which the question faced and posed by writing is no longer that of transcribing a meaning but ‘the virtually spontaneous upheaval of the written surface ... an active inscription in the process of forging its own course; no longer the truth or secret of one person alone, the usual humanist reference, but nonpersonal literality in a world based on a dice throw.’³⁷

In Mallarmé’s ‘new topology’, the sentence, the conventional site of our surface securities in the routine exchange of meanings, is ‘(s)ubjected to an atomic disintegration and dissemination, to an incessant effervescence, is thus presented as the most complex of organisms, as the summation of all complexity ... - the figure and limit of the world – henceforth manifest imbrication, of chance, play, and the thinking in which “man” produces himself.’³⁸ In this newly emergent and self-expanding writing-region, the book’s three-dimensionality is made explicit through the writing-spacing that plays with, slides across, the blanks and folds in which it is suspended and hidden. From that moment on the book is drawn inextricably into the theatre, onto the stage. It installs itself into and as performance. At the intersection of the Theatre and the Book is the Dance, and we may assume, knowing Mallarmé’s responses to it, Mime also. For Mallarmé the gestures specific to each medium (‘pure rhythmic motifs of being’³⁹) perform a writing. Running through the arts’ media, animating them, bearing and gathering them, in writing differences, is a ‘fundamental fiction’; this Fiction, poetry, operates ‘at the convergence of the other arts, emerging from and governing them.’⁴⁰ Such underwriting is the orchestration of myths that, perhaps, stand in for the absent One Language – language itself - which the innumerable multiple tongues, scripts, seem to imply but are eternally denied. This play of myths is the absolutely impersonal Theatre towards which the gestures of art are aiming. The implicit drama, in which it is we that are being played out unceasingly, is the ‘unconscious functioning of language’ (the ineffable One Language that can only be gestured toward through a fragment of one of its multiple off-springs)⁴¹. Art’s gesticulations, precisely by being not-of-this-world, are the only occasions, cuts, where, following it out of this world, we find ourselves opened to and moved by its obscure discharges, by its sourcing of ourselves, of the multiple sites of our felt-thoughts. To experience, to go through, language by means of art’s gesticulations may thus be to confront that unnamable, unplaceable boundary between the emergence of a languaged (symbolic) subjectivity and the chora of drives explored by Kristeva through ‘abjection’: the infamy of the in-fans, of what goes on before primal repression, explorable, metaphorisable, only through rhythm and song.⁴²

But of course language’s unconscious, precisely in (in-)forming us without our knowing it, is what ‘contains’ the possibility of all the arts and not just those written and verbal arts of letters in their spacing-timing. For this unconscious must include the in-folding of everything upon which language draws in its sounding-aligning- surfacings. This is why Mallarmé’s

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ See op. cit., p. 77.

³⁷ Op. cit., pp. 78-79.

³⁸ Op. cit., p. 79.

³⁹ Mallarmé quoted by Sollers, op. cit., p. 83.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Op. cit., p. 84.

⁴² See Julia Kristeva, op. cit.

Fiction can be seen to encompass all the arts, for etymologically Fiction has no intrinsic ties to the letter, being a derivative of *'fingere'* – to fashion, shape, form, frame. Indeed, a *'fictor'* was a maker who fused the imaginary with matter, one who worked solid materials (clay, wax, wood...) to produce images, statuary, offering-cakes for religious ceremonies...

Closer in the gestures and attention required to the visual, tactile, and performing than to the literary arts, Fiction thus opens a region of sub-cription, of the underwriting of writing, perhaps of the non-place where Derrida's grammatological 'trace' never quite presents itself. Sculpting, music-making (composition/performance), mime, dance, theatre, and their current combinations and amalgamations are the colonisers of this sub-scriptive zone. Through its relation to materials, Fiction roots the per-forming of forming in the body's shaping possibilities, among which the letter and the phoneme eventually effect certain privileged displacements. But the embodiment, the engagement of themselves as mattering matters, intrinsic to other arts – painting (and its recent mechanical-electronic image-substitutions and alternatives), object-making, all the 'performing arts' - reminds us of language's, and thus of writing's, inextricable intimacy with our corporeality. In the pre-linguistic zone of language's 'unconscious', which the arts take as their 'medium' and their exploratory 'subject-matter' (the subject condemned to mattering, always, everywhere...the techno-dreams of our weightless inter-planetary transfer notwithstanding), birth-death, the emergence-disappearance of the body that is only passing through, constitute the unavoidable 'substance' of the arts' probings. What they explore and bring to form under modernity's faulty lighting systems are pre-conceptions of the life of all the things that together generate our conceptions – the pre-positions of our positings, our self-positionings, the what-and-how of our routine self-conceivings.

And, because art's difference emerges through the insistent passion, its unnerving discharges moving its performance to try to show that difference, this very performing, through its material embodiments and processes, has no option but to be its own 'first' subject matter. Transubstantially and briefly taken over by an impassioned maker, Art's Body, being in that brief period alone situationally specific – context-and-biography-bound – is driven each time, as the point of its absolutely a-theoretical reflexivity, to make gests that, in their difference, may offer opportunities for engaging art's otherness, for Fiction as becoming-other, as, precisely, 'over there'. Art's pre-conceivings, literally incomprehensible, may just carry us across into the unsayable through the provocations of their unique 'sayings', their sub-scriptions of the still ineffable.

However, although inassimilable by commonsense reasoning, art's pre-conceivings, its sub-scriptions, are nevertheless, Sollers proposes in his reading of Lautréamont, a 'form of *complete* reasoning'.⁴³ Re-inscribing Lautréamont's impersonal poetics as the 'science' of a 'corrective apparatus', he seeks to generate the latter as a textual practice (i.e. as writing) that activates 'a space that *knows no contrary*'.⁴⁴ Such a space is surely that of Mallarmé's Fiction, of each art-medium/media as a specific zone of sub-cription. Art's elsewhere is neither a positive nor a negative to some opposing polar site. In the difference of its dis-establishing it sets itself aside. Its gests effect endless replacements, each time differently, of representation. They surround representation, hem it into its own reproductive processes, while simultaneously showing themselves as its encompassing outside; it is perhaps in this very surrounding, however loose and drifting, of culture that art becomes such a 'complete

⁴³ Op. cit., p. 170.

⁴⁴ Op. cit., p. 171.

reasoning'. Art's resulting sub-subscriptions (Sollers calls them 'transfinite texts') are extramural, outside the spectacular info-city, and, in offering respondents openings into the processes of their own becoming (sub-scripting), are heading-and-bodying off and away.

If we substitute the fictive gestures of all the arts for Sollers' 'to write' and 'writing', his words point to the hope they seek to perform and show, to the always unreasonable 'reason' for their insistent struggle towards their elsewhere:

'To write, to make writing appear, is not to dispose of a privileged knowledge; it is to try to discover what everyone knows and no one can say. It is, perhaps, to try *for once* to lift the veil that keeps us in an obscurity we have not chosen.'⁴⁵

We know only too well (don't we?) that we are obscure beings-becomings, mystified by the tragi-comedy of our appearance-disappearance. We are also all too familiar now (aren't we?) with the paradoxical complexity of that obscurity. For we are unavoidably swept along and endlessly re-modelled (as both 'real' things and possibilities) by the calculative drive of capitalism's home-grown machinery (simultaneously forming and shattering its (our) world) for the applied representation and control of everything. The knowledges of technoscience permeating and shaping our everydayness (both how we become 'subjects' and what we are 'subjected' to), veil us from other possibilities of becoming. That is why 'to write', 'to art', 'to fiction', seek to slip through representation's nets (to escape from 'to represent') and let us experience our obscurity *from somewhere else altogether*, a somewhere where different relations to our complexity, aside from the forcefully repressive frame of instrumental calculation, can be tried out, rehearsed, performed. This is the privilege for which Fiction takes responsibility and seeks to enact. Its 'cata-knowledge', the unsayable know-how that cannot be countenanced under calculative reason, begins in its acknowledgement that the discharges to which it is subject, enact the force of 'play', a force that 'presents itself as continual excess.'⁴⁶

Yet the 'play' offered here, as what enraptures performing and to which it is responsive and responsible, is not a de-formed 'negative' caught under the heel of and thus defined, contained, by the 'positive' of 'work'. This is play that, in opening out art's zone, confirms, as offered earlier, the latter as an aside to contradiction, and thus independent of all polarities (of thoughts, logics, sciences, social practices...). The guarantee of this is 'play's' absolute collusion with chance. For its excess, its toying with and being toyed by extremity, is the continual, though not necessarily continuous, upheaval of the spontaneous, of accident, of all the ruptures that we gather as the beyond of necessity, the contingent event unmarked by a beginning or an end. Fiction, art, puts all its faith and hope in that which has always already severed itself from anything which could carry the remotest trace of assurance, of promise, back to that faith. Perversely, this is the very thingless-thing that performing celebrates as it sets off, in all its profoundly severe perseverance, to play itself. It is also anathema to calculation and the ordering of culture.

Perhaps this can alert us to all the warning signs that mark performing's paths within representation. For under the latter's rule the task of the machinery that mounts and sustains art as 'art' and integrates it into the info-spectacle, is to ensure the arts' continuous 'presence'

⁴⁵ Op. cit., p. 204.

⁴⁶ Op. cit., p. 201.

(as representatives) and availability. In the interests of guaranteeing the trouble-free appearance of a routine supply of ‘goods’ (fully institutionally accredited, aestheticised, and thus paradoxically partially anaesthetised thing-performances) the strict conditions of a rational production line have to be set in place and enforced at every juncture. Such necessities demand that the spontaneous, the rupture, the indeterminate, the vague – all the boundaryless events we gather under ‘chance’ – be reduced to an absolutely marginal role in the production of art’s representation. Facing these demands and pressures as routine features of performing’s situation, it is all too easy for performers to follow the requirements of the production apparatus, to adapt and perform according to its necessities, rather than risking everything to the very little that might just emerge (or not) from play’s excesses. Under a culture of production, performing’s arhythmic rhythms, constitutionally and randomly syncopated, have to be regularised and re-composed according to interests alien to what animates making – the strange combination of the passion for art, know-how, and the making-subject’s giving itself up to play’s contingencies (accepting in this giving up that nothing, rather than Nothing, might happen).

The very institutional structures whose economy (life) depends on their ensuring a continuous flow of recruits for art-as-production and its markets, ground themselves on their ability to turn play inside out, to transmute it into certificated worth. In this assertion of the work-play dialectic play is necessarily represented as a secondary and derivative response, both negative to but *less than* work. To effect a profound cut between play and work on art’s behalf, to take play back towards art-as-other, to be perverse enough to try to hold to the challenges of art’s difference in the face of the political economy of aesthetics, is the greatest challenge performers face. Yet, in spite of subsequent exorbitant changes in socio-technical relations, this moderns-bequeathed legacy still defines art’s plight: art, in pledging itself to make for play’s difference on its own, stakes itself on and to the moneyless unaccountable value of the rupture with whatever passes for culture. For culture prides itself precisely on the endless development and practical application of its extraordinary skills in appropriating, neutering, suborning, and placing within its apparatus any and every rupture which might threaten, however slightly, the hegemony of its own boundary-maintenance. If performing’s point is to stand by its commitment to art’s difference, then holding to it, trying to carry it out (snapping a cultural bind), always entails the disturbance and pain of a rupture. For culture’s entire productive drive is straining in the opposite direction. Cultural custodians, aestheticians included, dedicate themselves to hauling back in and fixing up places within the ever-expanding classifying representing schemes, for whatever strains to be off and away – out of it.

Perhaps, then, the gestures constituted in the course of performing somehow have to find ways of holding in reserve remnants and traces of their difference in the face of this now all too obvious appropriating placement. The know-how that reaches out to shape the possibility of difference confronts itself simultaneously with its own commonsense knowledge of making’s real situation. This self-interpretation arises routinely in the course of performers’ necessary relations with the appropriating and placing machinery; the latter’s informal contractual terms for gest-acceptance may appear superficially innocuous, but the power relations are all too explicit: once they are gathered within representation performing and its gests undergo a mutation that determines how and where they make their cultural appearances. For neophyte makers, for whom initial institutional representation may seem to be the essential condition for maintaining their making life, the middle to long term consequences of this mutation (the construction of the symbolic cocoon within which they

are set up and sent off along representation's fateful channels) may be entirely unanticipatable.

In attempting still to hold to the passion for performing and the moderns' life-defining legacy, seeking through this to risk and limit itself to '*s'expose*', performing soon discovers that it and its gests are subjected to the multiple exposures of others. The subsequent positionings and re-positionings such exposures effect are generated by authoritative interests entirely alien to making's ways. Reliant upon and seeking to maintain itself in the most intimate but unformulable relation with, to use Kristeva's terms, the 'semiotic chora' (the body's context-bound musicating rhythms, the eruptions of memory, and the unconscious language-before-language), performing is violently transposed into the 'symbolic', the public realm of complexly organised discourses competing among themselves for control of culture's defining myths. Once caught up in representation performing cannot return to some assumed lost innocence.

For, after all, this is now how art-as-'art' 'works', how it is put to work, on 'all' our behalves.

Unavoidably this symbolic recasting of performers and gests itself becomes a routine, taken-for-granted, constituent of performers' lives. Co-optation by the info-spectacle, participation in its competitive struggles, not only makes demands of performers but, through the provision of material and symbolic resources, subtly reconstructs the plane of performing. And because they require a constant address of tactics, of how to construct pathways through the real tensions of surviving as a performer, the gests emerging from the irreconcilable contradictions now gripping and driving performing on, are indelibly marked by this struggle. Reflexively attentive and responsive to the multiple conflicting relations that set up performing's situation, how could performers possibly prevent their gests becoming hybrids?

Each composed gest surfaces in and as the compressed traces of the multiple that always characterises performing in its formation. Gathered together as 'just this gest', they constitute the offered gest that emerges as the response to the irrecusable but heterogenous pressures (pressures coming from all over the place without any unifying demand other than that of representation). The kinds of symbolic unity dispensed by diagnostic aesthetic discourses emerge out of their own constitutive need to 'find' coherence; their defining interest is in generating specific kinds of formal knowledge. They fail to touch performing's plight, which is precisely and always a question of what fragments, if any, it might be able to promise of and to art, given that the latter has already been appropriated and sent on its way by competing interests. Unified (aestheticised) forms arise only when making sets aside the moderns' legacy.

But, elsewhere, Art-as-Fiction (the fiction that is the real in its instant disappearance now) requires that its gests are constituted precisely as felt responses to the specific differences of the performer's ever-mutating situation. And, essentially, the rhythm that is this situation's continuous ravelling-unravelling, is constituted in the chance eruptions which, dissolving commonsense, completely re-define that very situation *as now Fictionable*. To perform within conventions of inherited forms, languages, and processes, is to avoid the always insoluble challenges of engaging (out-manoeuvring, out-writing, out-wit(z)(t)ing, out-composing, out-painting, out-forging, out-dancing, out-pouching⁴⁷, and thus, in sum (gathering all these and others), **out-performing**) exactly why and how the permanent crisis that is (each) one's current becoming, drives one toward art's infinitely elusive elsewhere. For performing is

⁴⁷ If you will allow me this Michael Brodsky favourite...

(isn't it...?) now the one homeless home left to us, an edgeless regioning, *where what might just still occur is a restless errancy.*

This is what marks it out as the eruption of nothing but turning-points, conjoinings, disjoinings, tangents, clashes, near-and-far misses, vagues, and absolute accidents. Art-consumed performers quickly get to 'know' (it is basic to their know-how) that the little planes of seeming tranquility, the syntactic conjunctives-disjunctives, constituting the gests they abandon and offer to others, emerge from the ceaseless crisis that is making's way of being-aside from reason. The motion of performing's dynamic, the surge and disappearance of its turning points, is chance-dependent. Both the 'whether' and the 'whatever' (the 'if', the 'when', the 'where', and the 'how') of eruption are unanticipatable, as indeed is the outcome of performers' efforts to turn these eruptions into something that might, just, sometime, somewhere, be gathered as a gest-for-art.

Irrespective of medium, what matters, literally, in the ways each performance traduces its materials into mattering, is mobilisation - performing's movement, its self-syncoating rhythmic arhythmia. And the challenge still is how to perform a recuperative transformation, a transliteration, of this movement, this almost- rhythming, that holds to its pledge to try to make for art alone, to show its difference. But its know-how now surely has to include a realisation that its situation condemns it to a perennial falling short, to the necessary failure so precisely articulated by Beckett. For it knows that the gesture-for-art, bodied forth in and as its gest, can only point to the 'over-there' of art's separation through spoor it has tried to secrete, in moments of hopeful distraction, in the gest. What's left of and to the gest is this gesturing. Whether it bears us into art's proximity through our attentive self-fragmentation is the open question it abandons to us aside from all institutions.