

## TO LEAP

‘The Poet makes himself a *voyant*... let him die in his leaping through unheard-of and unnameable things... This is plain to me: I am a witness to the birth of my thought: I look at it, I listen to it: I draw a stroke of the bow: the symphony makes it stir in the depths, or comes with a leap on the stage...’<sup>1</sup>

‘Imagine closer the place where he lies. Within reason. To its form and dimensions a clue is given by the voice afar. Receding afar or there with abrupt saltation or resuming there after pause. From above and from all sides and levels with equal remoteness at its most remote.’<sup>2</sup>

‘“Because”, the connective in question, catapulted me out of one little act and into another. But I felt myself, most alive, most rapturous, in the gulf between. It became impossible to go from one act to another without uttering some connective linking the utterances of the acts. The connective succeeded in most cases in smothering the excruciation of the phantom leap from act to act all down the days of internment. Yet to go on to the next act is to abandon the one coming before, to spit on the little it has cheerfully and thanklessly procured of safety from the sound of time passing.’<sup>3</sup>

‘And still, all instinctive,  
that smile...  
Angel! oh, take it, pluck it, that small-flowered herb of  
healing!  
Get a vase to preserve it. Set it among those joys  
not yet open to us: in a graceful urn  
praise it, with florally soaring inscription:  
“Subrisio Saltat.”’<sup>4</sup>

### ***Salto Mortale* : a Daring, a Risky, a Mortal, Leap**

And over there - Art’s Body: sustained only as the destination aimed at and hoped for in the leaping that constitute performing... a Body thus simultaneously transcendent (in its ‘own’ elsewhere) and immanent (proximate and right there, almost touchable for the performer) to the leap of faith by which the performer re-animates it anew on each making towards...

But of course, art has no such ‘body’, cannot be ‘embodied’. To propose such a body would be an absurd conceit or, perhaps, a mere tactical strategy of a writing bereft of any possibility of a

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Rimbaud, ‘Lettre du Voyant’, quoted by Enid Peschel in her introduction to her translation of ‘A Season in Hell The Illuminations’ Oxford University, London, 1974, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Beckett, ‘Company’, John Calder, London, 1996, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Brodsky, ‘Circuits’, Begos and Rosenberg, New York, 1991, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, ‘Duino Elegies’, trans. by J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender, Chatto and Windus, London, 1981, from the fifth elegy, p. 59.

‘real’ contact with those ‘things’ it is attempting to grasp and offer up. And yet, and yet... faced with the troubling question of art’s possible difference, of whether the task faced by performing might be to find a way of embodying this difference in and as its gests... perhaps Art’s Body, can be drifted and drafted into writing as the unfigurable figure for that which performing seeks to join, to inject itself into, to become at one with, in its compulsive search for the differing that cuts art off, separates it, from all other (cultural) relations: to become, recalling Jarry, the exception to others’ rules. For the possibility of membership of this collective (body) is what keeps performing going in the face of its leaping’s inevitable, because performed outside the knowledge required for ascertainment of achievement, falling short. Well known to performing’s know-how as a Body lacking identity and a containing epiderm, let alone a knowable rule for entry or membership, all it can hope for is that its leap might just touch the Body’s outerness and be absorbed as a contribution to the sustenance of its recession. For the darkness, the felt ‘duende’, of its tantalising vagueness, is the threshold where thinking-remembering and the always unplaceable flows of felt embodiment may just meet in a passing-out of which some trace of the Body’s moving might just be deposited.

But can making-for-art still, under the extreme terms set for art’s appearance by techno-representation, hold to the possibility of art’s difference? Can Art’s Body, the Body-made-for by performers now, the Body to which they seek to affiliate, in spite of culture’s apparent recruitment, absorption, and management of their multiple gests, still manage to slip away to the elsewhere which it has always set up as its destination and from which the summons to respond, to leap into performing, seems to issue? If so, it is only by leaving its gests behind as remnants of its performing life. The residual hope of Art’s Body is vested in performing’s otherwise-commitment. Each performing event attempts to offer itself as a minuscule act of resuscitation, of life-support, for the disappearing Body that is never anywhere to be seen. Kept going (going away, always away...) by performing, it survives only as potential, in its virtuality, hazily and ambiguously imperceivable, as the outside of any cluster of real social relations. Its remnant gests, once appropriated and sent on their ways as culture’s representatives, will already have ended up now as ‘art-lite’. Whether anything of the Body’s ‘beyond’ (its preservation and transmission of art’s cata-DNA – its dissolution of all codes except that unfathomable discoding weakly directing its ‘own’ leaps), still defiantly uncodable in the face of culture’s cloning of it in its own image as the culture-heavy ‘art-lite’, can still be sensed and recovered by anyone other than leaping performers remains moot. For, to feel out this beyond from within the maw of appropriation, respondents would be required to give themselves up, to lose themselves to performing’s gested traces, by suspending the very appropriating knowledges and judgments through which culture has brought them to art(-lite) in the first place. The Body’s difference, its potential for otherwise-becoming, is lodged only in whatever traces of its own culture-and-representation-dissolving processes performing, in its mortal leaping, manages to secrete within its gests.

To share in this dissolution respondents have to expose themselves to, to take on, and participate in, their own downfall, their slide out of culture, no easy matter when the entire weight of cultural management of the arts is intent on pulling them back towards its own centering. Response thus has somehow to allow itself to be taken out, to acquiesce in its own decline of culture, through an active resuscitation of elements of performing. Challenged by the gest to search for that which left the performer with seemingly no choice but to make-towards-art, response has, paradoxically, to become passively active and *vice versa*.

Thus dependent on the inevitably uncertain vagaries of both performing and responding, where each is differently suborned by the seductive demands of the techno-representation machine,

where might this leave Art's Body, the Body aimed for in performing? This question, confronted on every performing occasion, is compounded (for this is performing's plight as tragic problem) by there being two bodies on the scene. All too close, and attaching itself to both Art's Body and to the cultural machine from which it is brought forth, is the second body-which-would-be-first: hard by, culture's progeny, is the by now bloated 'presence' of that other body, the doubling body sent forth by and on behalf of representation, the body-of-art *as it appears in culture* and on the latter's terms – 'art-lite', the essentially virtual body managed and set up for response. So it may be that performing's first perennial and unavoidable task, that which confronts the performer-as-tactician, is to try to ensure at least a partial separation from the culturally simulated parasitic shadowing non-identical twin - 'art-lite'. Every technically manipulated move of this bodiless conceptual body, now grossly larger than and engulfing its first-born but absolutely non-identical twin, is designed to keep it firmly in its culturally allocated place. For it is this stand-in, this fully lighted info-packed digitalised virtual body, that both shadows everything that the Body of poor weak Art does and ensures that it represents the latter to the culture as now, after all, a body of great strength and a perfect adjunct and auxiliary to culture's other fixed functions to be inter-mixed with them, and thus hybridised, according to organisational need.

Meanwhile, Art's 'real' (really imagined and felt for) Body, the Body of vital concern to performing ...discarnate...absolutely unseeable...receding... seemingly ungraspable and out of reach... sensed, each time just this once, only through one of the countless fragments of which it consists, as pure potential, still seems to each performer to be on its way over there, elsewhere, topographically unfixable and contoured, made-out, differently by every performer.

Yet, this Body's proximity... desired and hoped for as destination...close enough perhaps to convince oneself that one might, in performing's course, almost touch it... a touching with the faintest chance of absorption... of being imbibed by the Body, drawn into the company of its fragments... of becoming affined with them, and thus at one with it...

But how to open oneself to touching's possibility... to the outside chance of a passing glancing contact...? Only by saltation... by risking a leaping-without-end... only by giving oneself over to the vagaries of a whatever-saulting... saltating-for-art...

Yet such a 'leaping-without-end' is, of course, illusory for all leaping has to end, to land, to die. A leap, life as leaping, always knows that it is bound to and for its cessation. And that is why it is a mortal leap. If making-for-art, exercising its driving affinity, leaps outward toward Art's Body, it wants to do this through the absolute specificity of its grace, the charm that it hopes will let it live, however briefly (in the time of performing's passing away), a charmed life that ends with the performer's abandoning of the performance. Perhaps this is what Blanchot points to in what he calls 'the detour of grace' in which desiring links death with grace. The leaping it entails seems to manifest for Blanchot precisely that gift of freedom of which performing hopes it will become the grateful, and thus graceful, recipient:

"Grace does not save from death, but it effaces the mortal condemnation in making of the *saltus mortalis* - the bound without discretion and without precaution - the careless motion that concerns itself neither with condemnation nor with salvation, being the gift that has no weight and that is not weighed, gift of lightness, gift always light."<sup>5</sup>

Surely this bounding 'motion' beyond concern is a precise echo of, a rehearsal for, the saltation to which making-for-art seeks to give itself up?

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<sup>5</sup> Maurice Blanchot, 'The Step Not Beyond', State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992, p.25.

This motion to which making-for-art dedicates itself thus anticipates the movement that Art's Body, in the recession of its otherness, already is. In its disappearance beyond reach this Body, being nothing but a febrile tremulous ungatherable swarming, is no more nor less than a potential for movement, movement as ungraspable potential. It sustains itself, is sustained, only through the myriad performances it has absorbed, only as that which, on the move and thus permanently unsettled-unsettling, might move all those performers who, in seeking to put themselves in the way and sway of its swarming, manage to brush up against it. Those making-for-art know (as an intuitive knowing that 'founds' their know-how groundlessly) that the movement it offers will entail a mutation of their becoming. For, in their absorption into the beyond of art's swarming, culture will be drained out of them; thus withdrawn from culture, they become other to its givens, to what culture gave them as the condition and terms of their cultural identity, place and work. But they know (precisely as know-how) that the possibility of the touch, of performing and its gests being absorbed by Art's Body, is absolutely leap-dependent. They have to instigate, for each gest anew (each 'voice afar'), their idiosyncratic way of leaping-away in the full know-how that the coincidence of touch and absorption may not come about, that they and their gests may simply fall back, under the sway of culture's authority, into everydayness. And it is the performers-for-art themselves who, precisely in their gests and associated offerings (writings, words, 'talk'...), and aside from all alien analyses, show us the necessity of the leap and the real dilemmas of its challenge; they begin to guide us through the risks that constitute performing's own everyday life. Both the Blanchot citation and the quotations at the head of this chapter open onto, begin to expose, the challenge of performing as through and through saltatory.

Rimbaud saw that poets-artists had to become witnesses 'to the birth' of their thought, for the only way to the monstrous self-knowledge that is poetry's/art's condition is to seek, inspect, tempt, apprehend, and then cultivate one's 'soul'. Arriving at this 'unknown', precipitated the leap into and through its 'unheard-of and unnameable things'. The supine body from which the narratorial voice issues in Beckett's 'Company', listening in the dark for any sounds that will enable it, in its abjection, to 'place' itself, hears a 'voice afar'; it recedes 'afar' or is 'there with abrupt saltation'. From wherever it seems to issue, it is always where it is 'with equal remoteness at its most remote'. In the abruptness of its appearance, its leaping across, it is always uninvited and unplaceable. Trying to imagine the contours and composition of 'the place where he lies', the narratorial voice imagines it as a 'hemispherical chamber of generous diameter with ear dead centre.' The black humour of this 'dead' ear is complemented by guessing that the chamber's composition might be that of 'Black basalt'.<sup>6</sup> Not only does this dark matter contain both depth (bas) and height (alt), thus adding to the ear-and-voice's assessment of the place's dimensions (the diameter has already been estimated at 'some sixty feet!'), but it also echoes the leap in its repeat of 'salt'. It seems that the chamber where hearing-repeating-writing occurs, and thus where making-toward-art might come about, is other to any knowable, placeable, place. It is an elsewhere in which the very leaping abruption of the 'voice afar' provokes the narratorial ear-voice to multiple imaginings. Trying to make sense of its 'own' becoming through the 'company' that the other voice seems to offer, it labours 'in vain' at its 'fable', hearing 'how words are coming to an end' in the realisation of what it has always been: 'Alone'.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the most extraordinary quality of Michael Brodsky's writing projects (they seem to emerge as 'fictions' but fictions whose own becoming as such is precisely the writing's

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Beckett, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Beckett, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

constitutive question) is the way that, each time differently, something like the ‘telling’ of a ‘story’ is accomplished through a delirious undoing and exploration of what both ‘telling’ and ‘story’ have to rely on in order to be brought off. The undoing performed by the writing is simultaneously an egregiously baroque ex-tracting of ... something like a story, invariably from, seemingly, the most unlikely of materials. And because the undoing (the tearing apart) and the suturing (the stitch-up) are indistinguishable (languishing yet also determinedly pursuing their task in the very same words, phrases, sentences, spacings and punctuation), they make the reading – as the possibility of making sense, of following the ‘story’ – absolutely complicit in the project. Not that the reader can ever ‘know’ where s/he ‘is’ in the unfolding of this indivisible undoing-story... For it is exactly the ‘place’ of writing, and thus of ‘response’, that is at stake, recessive, disappearing, forever elusive, in the telling. Of course, in the process of undoing and re-assembling telling, Brodsky draws the writing through, situates it in between, the very relations that, in everyday life, we have to take for granted in order to keep going. His telling thus unfolds by suspending us between our reliance on the seeming givenness of ‘meaning’ in routine language use and the unstated implicit possibilities that all language use bears ‘within’ itself. The writings fixing his telling thus offer themselves as occasions in which the delirium entailed in making-for-art is exposed as that which they celebrate. But, simultaneously, the ‘life’ of this exposing unfolds through a pursuit, a rigorous teasing out, as the very ‘means’ of the telling, of the utterly ‘reasonable’ assumptions (about subjectivity, consciousness, language’s intertwinement with processes of reference/memory/sociality/play/humour/work-life relations...) that sustain just getting by in everyday life.<sup>8</sup> And what his interruptive dissections (the medical analogy is a continual reference point in his divagations around language’s wiles) make explicit is that *poiesis* as a sequencing process (in writing, as the setting down and spacing of lines) is absolutely dependent on, constituted in, its leaps. As broached in the above quotation, concerning the narrator’s reflection on a preceding ‘because’, the catapulting movement from act to act, from word to word, from mark to mark, from gap to gap, from whatever to whatever, however it may be disguised (by, for example, a connective’s ‘smothering’) is performed in a leap. Such leaping is of course a species-defining characteristic of the goats that, introduced by Brodsky in ‘Three Goat Songs’, expose the very act that the writing itself performs.

Unavoidably, then, making-toward-art and the gests it offers are in thrall to specific kinds of movement: they are ‘about’ moving and being moved in ways at variance with the movements through which the everyday world is secured. And so too is the reception of and response to art’s gests by its potential audiences. But, as I have tried to show, there is a hiatus, an irreconcilable gap, between the being-moved of performing and the being-moved of response. The entire point of performing is to try to find ways of fixing in the resulting gest the very terms, the embodied conditions, of movement that provoked and sustained the commitment to make-for-art. And this is done in the know-how that there is nothing, no alternative term(s), that could be substituted for the gest itself. Each performing seeks to set forth a one-off gest offering a doing-saying that is sufficient to itself. It wants to show what moved it to become what it ‘is’ – just this very unco-optable thing. And from its site (the elusive non-place of performing) it feels nothing else is necessary, it needs no addition, no supplement. Above all, while it is running its course, and then afterwards, when it has released its gest to its cultural fate, it neither wants nor needs any representative. It feels that each gest, in what it performs, tells itself, exposes itself, gives itself away, right there in and as the very ways that it aligns, lines up, its matters. Its very

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the very different modes and themes of his ‘telling’ in his ‘Dyad’, *Four Walls Eight Windows*, New York, 1989; ‘Three Goat Songs’, *Four Walls Eight Windows*, New York, 1991; ‘Southernmost and Other Stories’, *Four Walls Eight Windows*, New York, 1996; ‘We Can Report Them’, *Four Walls Eight Windows*, New York, 1999.

performing is a doing-showing of what it 'is' and why it was 'done' in that very way. Having 'said' what it wanted to 'say' it doesn't want anyone, any interest, standing in for it and presuming to speak-write in its stead, on its behalf. And yet the cultural 'life' (bare survival) of the arts now condemns it to this very fate, the machined mutation into 'art-lite'.

Everywhere performing and its gests are set up, sized up, spoken for, and sent on their way – represented - according to respondents' multiple interests and needs. Any gest's potential for moving others, its possible respondents, is dependent upon the pre-interpretations and appropriating activities that constitute the work of its primary respondent - the machinery of representation. Where and how it is placed and positioned (and thus valued), relative to both other art-gests as well as other very different activities (the getting-by of everyday life), set the terms for its significance and moving potential for its respondents-to-come. The quality of moving that any gest effects among its respondents can neither coincide with nor be mapped onto whatever movement performing put itself through and demanded of itself in the course of its making-for-art. The very strangeness of the movement demanded of the commitment to performing precludes its reconcilability or alignment with all the orders of response. Indeed this, in the end and the beginning, is its very point – to perform and show in and as its gest the difference between how art moves and the movements constituting all other modes of becoming. And this difference is vested absolutely in the fatefulness of an inexplicable break with the very 'things' and processes that, in holding everyday life together, enable us to bestow it with the semblance of a near sensible continuity (between things, times, relations... between this what-/when-/where-/how-ever and that what-/when-/where-/how-ever). It is performing's fate to have to try to maintain itself, to live on, to continue, through a reliance on precisely that moving which immediately scatters, or at the very least puts in question, all continuity...

In the fifth (actually the last to be written) of his ten 'Duino Elegies' Rilke takes Picasso's *Les Saltimbanques* (1905) as the occasion for a daring leap of his own - through memory, vision, and his elsewhere-voices – towards that 'ineffable spot'<sup>9</sup> (a place 'we know nothing about') where performing might just turn into art. Set in a landscape lacking all topographical markers, Picasso's figures provoke a poetic reverie which surely goes beyond the claim by Leishman and Spender that, for Rilke, the 'acrobats' symbolise 'human activity as a whole'.<sup>10</sup> For the 'salt-' in *saltimbanques* shows us that the figures are more than just 'acrobats'. The group of *saltimbanques* (with the exception of the seated woman to the lower right – a muse?) is painted, through the overlapping and touching of each member, as a single, seemingly still, separately standing, 'figure'; yet this figure performs, in the interplay of the hands, legs and feet, an extraordinary gestural ballet. With Picasso portraying himself as Harlequin, the poet Apollinaire appearing as a costumed jester, and a further figure being either Max Jacob or Andre Salmon (both poet-friends of Picasso), it seems indisputable that for both Picasso and, subsequently, Rilke, this performance, beyond some generalised human acrobatic activity, figures and enacts the artist-as-performer. Indeed Claude Simon, the wonderful French novelist, offers us this very image in his 'The Jardin des Plantes': 'Painting no longer as ascetism (Cézanne, Van Gogh) but as a challenge, as acrobatics, as tour de force (like those tumblers, those circus balancing acts he painted in his youth). Always landing on his feet.'<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the question beginning the fifth elegy ('But tell me, who *are* they, these travellers, even a little / more fleeting than we ourselves...'<sup>12</sup>) fixes them, these artists-as-performers, as

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> See their commentary on the fifth elegy, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Simon, 'The Jardin des Plantes', N. W. Press, Illinois, 2001, p. 175.

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., p. 55.

‘travellers’, and hence, homeless, placeless (a placelessness confirmed by the containing landscape’s lack of topographic markers). They are ‘wrung’ by a ‘never-contented will’, a will that is responsible for the bending, slinging, swinging, throwing and catching that constitute the ‘fleeting’, perhaps fugitive, character of their performance, their ‘everlasting upspringing’<sup>13</sup>. For Rilke, such upspringing is a leaping – saltation.

Later in the poem, as the quotation at this chapter’s head shows, Rilke, noting perhaps the enigmatic half-smile of the boy at the right-hand edge of the composite figure, offers the essence of this leaping-performing precisely in the performer’s ‘smile’. ‘Instinctive’, and thus possibly fixed, it is a smile that is necessarily ambiguous, for it has to hide the mixed emotions (the pain, the tears, the tingling anticipation) demanded by the act of performing, of leaping. Rilke proposes that his other voice, the angel, should preserve the smile (‘that small-flowered herb of healing’) in an urn (perhaps, suggest Leishman and Spender, the kind of jar that used to be displayed in a chemist’s window), there to be labelled “Subrisio Saltat.” – the dancer’s (or perhaps even the leaper’s) smile.<sup>14</sup> Thus preserved, this essence-of-leaping, this concealing smile, with its supposed healing properties, would seem to stand as art’s elusive (because ‘ineffable’) alchemical offer. And the ‘Saltat.’, presumably an abbreviation of ‘*saltatoris*’ - ‘the dancer’s’, marks the poem’s only littoral touching of, literal overlap with, Picasso’s ‘*Saltimbanques*’ painting, though the elegy does offer other images that memorialise Rilke’s affection for the street life of Paris where he may well have seen such performances himself. Crucially, the ‘Saltat.’ draws us back through dancing to the latter’s derivation from the past participle of the Latin verb ‘*salire*’ – to leap. The latter is also related to ‘salient’ – that which stands out, perhaps like the composite group in Picasso’s atopographical landscape whose only features, aside from the group, are the painted marks performing a featurelessness that persuades us to give almost all our attention to the figures. Dancing begins with, is thus sourced by and as, the leap out of everydayness. Wrung by a will that won’t let them be, a will whose violent effects have to be concealed behind an enigmatic smile, the performances of the *saltimbanques*, and thus those too of the painter and the poet, are defined by the leap. Making-for-art necessitates leaping. It has to begin, to keep going, and certainly to end in the movement and moment of the gest’s abandoning, with a mortal, a fateful, leap – a *salto mortale* - aside from any guarantee of a safe, let alone a ‘happy’, landing.

And maybe, from the standpoint of response, that is from the surrounding culture’s measured and commonsense assessment of anything which is other to it, we can note the resonance as near-echo, of mountebank in *saltimbanque*, of the quack who, mounting a bench or bank, seeks to persuade the gullible to buy his wonder remedy. The always encultured response to art’s gests and activities invariably starts from a predisposition to suspicion, scepticism, in the face of all such (possibly mountebank) leaping out of the very things (the taken-for-granted thoughts, words, actions, feelings) that maintain its necessarily unquestionable faith in its own continuity. After all, what kind of remedy to culture’s perennial ills could come from a jumping away that rests on faith (in art alone...) and fate? And culture’s doubt is likely to be reinforced when the leaping - whether onto a bank, a bench, another’s shoulders, or just, with bated breath, into the air, into the nothing of its hiatus, its cultural caesura - is performed by placeless ‘travellers’ whose elusive gests can’t be either simply reconciled with or traced back to the reassuring categories of a commonsense that never quite knows whether to trust them. Beginning in and from the distance of this doubting scepticism, culture then invents its own ‘reasons’ for the limited leaping its own machinery is programmed to enact in order to select out a small group of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., p. 59.

the abandoned gests. The latter then become the representatives that, in culture's name and under its firm control, constitute its very own 'art-lite'. In this take-over the fate of Art's Body is sealed as that which is kept at bay, elsewhere, deferred as that which must fend for itself as the deferred not-yet of an as yet unrealisable potential. Over there, it is maintained in its absencing, its fading recession, only by the assiduously attentive performers whose gests, making-leaping towards it in hope, may manage to touch and tincture it, a homeopathic tincturing that just about maintains it in its almost-disappearance, though still always 'there' folded into, im-plied, by, and for performing's leap.

To leap, then, is the inviting infinitive which offers making-toward-art the open context for its plural movement, the movement that simultaneously resuscitates and keeps itself in view of Art's Body. If the context-defining movement of performing is the necessary initiating leap out of everydayness toward and on behalf of art's difference, its subsequent moving is constituted by multiple leaps from and to different and always temporary regions of felt-thought, the transliterative junctions where a gest's medium-specific language(s) is (are) crystallised out of the unspeakable and speakable sourcings. This movement describes a constantly interrupted, abrupted, process of linking and aligning whose selected (much is cast aside along the way) residues together constitute the emerging gest. And it 'occurs' (without ever 'taking place') at unpredictable and unmeasurable speeds, from the seemingly instantaneous to the extremely (according to conventions of human time) slow.

On each performing occasion this passing along, this weaving-leaping through possibilities of some kind of languaging, finds itself on nothing but its own erotic attachment to the difference of the Body. Felt-for as its possible destination over there, this Body is only ever conceived right here in and as the 'midst' which in-forms performing's leaping-passing. Out of this midst the gest is the gathering of multiple leaps into something like a togetherness, a languaging of elements that could only come together in this singular trajectory of leaps. Their alignment only emerges as such, exposes itself as nothing but itself, and perhaps can thus be felt out by others as a possible composition, in performing's eventual abandonment of the gest. For performing, the determining 'point' of its aligning is to have hung on, in the face of multiple distractions and pressures, to the possibility of art's difference. If its gathering-together has aligned a singular syntax that begins to withdraw others from their immersion in everydayness so much the better! But performers' taking up of art's challenge is not driven by a need to generate a unified gest, some 'thing' that can be given an understandable identity that is placeable within existing narratives, for that is the business of the aestheticising machine. Rather what holds performers to the challenge is their overwhelming (always only for the time being, a time being that may end at any moment) need to try to make their living-on coincide with the difference that art might just make to everyday life, and specifically to their own becoming. And for them this difference is utterly leap-dependent. It is the strange satisfactions of leaping's conjunctive disjunctions, its syntactical movement, that keeps them in the grip of and pledged to art.

### **Celan's 'Meridian': Performing's Fragmented Syntactic**

This movement, sometimes gathered as *poiesis*, is the activity that possesses performing in its making-for-Art's-Body, a Body that only emerges as the moving that it 'is' in performing's leaping course, a Body felt for in the pointing-towards that each leap figures. Perhaps, as performers themselves are necessarily the only reliable guides to this course, we can be guided towards leaping's necessity and diversity by one such performer - Paul Celan. In his reading of Celan's poetry Ziarek notes that Heidegger, with whom Celan had a troubling meeting (responded to in his poem 'Todtnauberg'), defined poetry (*Dichtung*) as an '*Ur-sprung*' - 'the



originating leap into language' - that opens a way to language through a distancing.<sup>15</sup> It is this leaping-distancing that is performing's very movement. Through it Celan instigates his probings of performing's region in poems which are offered as possible terms for entering and engaging the ambiguous intricacies of its 'topology'. It is, of course, a ruleless region where the only 'rule' to follow is that which, each time differently, guides the searching feeling-out for the exceptional, for the affinities revealed in a gest's alignments that might just ensure its idiosyncrasy, its difference. The virtue of Celan's exposure of what this feeling-out has to take on lies in his opening out both of that with which the movement of each making-towards has to come to terms in trying to make its own path, and of how this moving gets under and sustains its way through these terms. To reiterate the field-defining circumstance for making-towards-art now: how to survive, to live on as performer, while held fast in the machinations of a culture unable to move beyond the disastrous consequences of its aestheticised politics. Whilst defined, generated, by his own singular circumstances within this disaster, Celan's allusive exploratory suggestions articulate both the challenge faced by performing and pointers to ways of taking on this challenge.

I have already explored in 'To Perform' some of the implications of Celan's terse description of the contemporary seismic shift experienced by *poiesis*, by performing-toward-art, from imposition to self-exposure. This is the shift necessitated precisely by the disaster. And this becoming-patent, the laying bare of itself aside from any claim to authority (and thus mastery), is the groundless condition within which performing has to come to terms with its lot. It can only get under way, be on its way toward art through the disaster as an exposition of its abjection, on condition that it disables, suspends, precisely those interests that would keep it in thrall to culture. In effect, this is the defining condition, the unavoidable circumstance, with which making-for-art has to come to terms. And 'circumstances', that which everywhere stand around one and hem one in, are precisely what Celan confronts and responds to in writing out, in his poems and his prose, his path toward art. Prime among these circumstances are those through which the terrestrial and other people are turned towards and perhaps into art's possibility – language and words:

' – you see all the syllables stand around, waiting.'<sup>16</sup>

For Celan, a Romanian Jew by birth self-exiled in Paris, this circumstance was, above all, the language of his formal and familial education - German. As himself an extensive translator of others' writings, Celan would certainly have appreciated the love devoted to the subsequent translation of his own writing (for example, into English). He 'knew' that translation was both necessary and impossible for,

'Poetry is by necessity a unique instance of language.'<sup>17</sup>

And the virtue of translation, recalling the earlier remarks relating it to transliteration as the performing process, is that it offers a kind of model for response to art's gests that is aside from the negative distancing of evaluative critique and analytical 'academic' work, as well as the appropriating concerns of the machinery of aesthetic representation. For it lives by a devoted attention to its object and the languaging of its translated reception. Faced with the untranslatable, translation thus has to pass, at least in part, by way of a transliteration of absences, barely hearable sounds, imperceptible images, suggestive but unfixable associations, into the receiving language. For its delight in what it is taking on is motivated by its need to acknowledge and hold to, to do 'justice' and to pay homage to, this very uniqueness by a falling short, a short-fall that is singular in its turn. And this singularity is similarly circumstance-

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<sup>15</sup> Krysztof Ziarek, 'Inflected Language : toward a Hermeneutics of nearness', State University of New York, Albany, 1994, p.138.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Celan, 'Collected Prose', op. cit., p.19.

<sup>17</sup> op. cit., p. 23.

dependent. By listening attentively to the unspeakable, the unsounded, the unwritten, carried by the poem, translation tries to respond by offering, not a claimed 'equivalent', but a loving rejoinder that is true to the translator's own felt circumstances. In a note on translation Pessoa goes even further, invoking both plagiarism and parody as intrinsic to the translation of poetry and fiction:

'... a translation is only a plagiarism in the author's name... translation is a serious parody in another language. The mental processes involved in parodying well are the same as those involved in translating competently. In both cases there is an adaptation to the spirit of the author for a purpose the author did not have.'<sup>18</sup>

In his acutely attentive and appreciative introduction to his translation of Celan's 'Snow Part', Ian Fairley shows both that, for Celan, 'circumstance is everywhere' and that 'Snow Part' itself is 'a volume dark with circumstance' in which 'reference' is 'vitality a re-articulation both of German speech and writing, and of Jewish-German memory and experience, making for a poetry that is at once dark and lucid, dark and legible.'<sup>19</sup> And he offers Celan's own comment on translating from the latter's notes for his 'Meridian' speech:

'...in the poem, words mean to be untranslatable,' (yet) 'there is no word which, when spoken, will not contain its translated meaning.'<sup>20</sup>

Somehow, in its being spoken (and silently so in reading), the word sounds out, resounds internally as it were, with what it associates over to its responding language. Of course this is dependent in turn on the acuteness of the translator's affective attention, phonic sensitivities and research diligence. Fairley's translations offer themselves as markers of what a poem might deserve and hope for when brought to the threshold of another language.<sup>21</sup>

If self-exposure reveals itself in the midst of, and thus has to take on, specific (invariably troubling) circumstances, then, for Celan, performing's responsive movement is set under way by 'attention', a particular kind of attention in which, as I noted earlier, he echoed Malebranche in figuring it as 'the natural prayer of the soul'.<sup>22</sup> Its particularity lies in its having to be paid to 'all that it [the poem, the emergent gest] encounters', all the circumstances standing around it; and attending to the 'tremors and hints' of the circumstances is dependent not on the 'ever more precise instruments' for aiding perception, but on 'a kind of concentration mindful of all our dates'.<sup>23</sup> Being so 'mindful' is to attend precisely to the specificity of the 'now' of encountering, and thus to mortality and finitude, to the tension that defines each of our passings through an all too present tensing. Such concentration attends, not to time's passing, but to the vitality that is our passing away in the midst of encountering. And what does art require of this attention? A certain estrangement that enables a setting free, a release from what keeps one in step with what one encounters (and how one perceives these) into a certain stepping aside, a release that may require turns, inversions...

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<sup>18</sup> 'The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa', edited and translated by Richard Zenith, Grove, New York, 2001, p.222.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Celan, 'Snow Part', trans. by Ian Fairley, Carcanet, Manchester, 2007, pp. xiv, xv.

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit. p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Similar deeply affectionate reflective 'conversations' with Celan's poetry can be found in the introductions to other translated selections. See for example, M. Hamburger, 'Paul Celan : Selected Poems', op. cit.; J. Felstiner, 'Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan', Norton, New York, 2001; Pierre Joris, 'Paul Celan : Selections', University of California, Berkeley, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> See Waldrop, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Reflecting in his ‘Meridian’ speech on Buchner’s *Lenz*, for whom ‘it sometimes bothered him that he could not walk on his head’, Celan notes that, one ‘who walks on his head sees the sky below as an abyss’. And this abyssal seeing, this radical inversion, is accompanied for art’s sake by the *Atemwende* that we encountered earlier – the breath-turn, in which performing turns its being-breathed back through itself, attends, as it were, to the syncopations of its sounding and being sounded out. Of course these inversions generate strange gests because they are irreconcilable with everyday perception and its use of language (language perceived as some thing to be used). Performing becomes a search for the ‘open, empty, free spaces’ where, in its conversation with what it encounters, it can, through its inversions, begin to show their strangeness; encountering in this way becomes an engagement of what has not yet been seen, of what commonsense cannot see about itself. Celan offers this searching as ‘topological research... But in the light of what is still to be searched for: in a u-topian light.’<sup>24</sup> And the lines that result from following and searching this moving path - *under this strange light* - seek to offer a ‘kind of homecoming’; they are ‘outlines for existence perhaps, for projecting ourselves into the search for ourselves...’<sup>25</sup> It is in and as this out-lining that Celan finds performing’s path and names it as a *meridian*.<sup>26</sup>

A meridian, circular and terrestrial, seems to describe a smooth line, a going around, a single arcing leap, that aims for and ends at the same point from which it set off. Yet this end (when and where the performer abandons the gest), only comes after a temporal journey, an absolute dis-location, in the course of which its starting point has become utterly unrecognisable. For its turning round and through itself under inversion’s instruction arrives ‘back’ not when or where it started, but at a u-topic de-temporal elsewhere-elsewhen. Moreover this meridian line, this out-lining, named as performing’s path, is anything but smoothly unbroken; it may only appear as such retrospectively. For the turning that moves through itself does so only through its encounters along the way with the resistances of others and terrestrial-cultural circumstances. And these encounters provoke detours, asides, reversals, struggles, interruptions, hiatuses, delays, abandonments and re-starts. Performing’s endless aligning, the putting together of something that retrospectively looks like a line, a path of passage through, may, by the moment of its abandonment, have accomplished a certain general circularity, a meridian, *but its circling is entirely the outcome of a sequence of fragmentations*. The eventual appearance of something like a meridian is a result of performing’s leaps from fragment to fragment.

For what it faces endlessly in its composing, is the problem of aligning incommensurables, of putting foreign bodies into relation with each other, of creating affinities by forced contact between ‘things’ previously unconnectable – conjunctive-disjunctions. The constituents of this aligning performance thus effect a sequence of riftings. Performing’s passage constitutes itself as a series of absolute interruptions between regional encounters from each of whose thresholds it has to leap. It moves from region to region with what it has managed to gather and transliterate into its emergent gest-specific language. But because the zone towards which it leaps is, each time, a foreign territory, unknowable in advance, its movement is made up by abruption, the chancy casting across absences. All it carries with it is what it has already transliterated and begun to assemble through a still tentative syntactic. By the chance outcomes of such leaps between potential sites of exploration, performing accomplishes something like a meridian. Each meridian (a performing’s summaried linkings) is constituted in and as this multiple leaping through unanticipatable regions, blindly across abyssal absences, and landing where it can unbeknownst. Thus, when Celan writes of the meridian as the ‘connective which, like the poem,

<sup>24</sup> Op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., p. 55.

leads to encounters' and which is 'as immaterial as language' (and which for him 'serenely crosses even the tropics')<sup>27</sup> we can hazard that this is an ideal-typical circle nowhere found in performing's reality; it points us, perhaps, towards what performing sees of its journey in the backward glance that recurs in the moment of its completion and gest abandonment – something like an almost smooth (hence the 'serenely'), but still peculiar, exceptional, syntax that nevertheless, it hopes, preserves sufficient strangeness to enable it to resist, for the time being at least, incorporation into the receiving culture's grasping grammars.

The gest is, then, in the end (that is, in its abandonment by its performer), itself the exposure in and as a compressed figuring, of this larger connective, this possible meridian. Whereas performing, in the hot-and-cold of its febrile movement, could only get to the possible 'serenity' of this compression by going through the turmoil of continuous breakdown, fracturing and risked leapings. Irrespective of medium (and thus of the language-mix in play in and specific to each performing), leaps thus constitute the connectives that, in their being-aligned, assemble something like a gathering-together, a more-or-less-syntax that may allow others to then draw the gest back into the interpretive world of the everyday and towards the possibility of an imposed identity. But all that is already beyond performers' interests and out of their hands. For, just as Celan outlines, they are, by then, already into the next fragmented sequence of leaping alignments, there to take on yet again self-exposure under encountered circumstances, concentrated attention, the date's tensing, inversion's demands, and the estranging leaped meridian-forming connectives summoned from over there by Art's ever-disappearing Body.

Leaping's deposits thus form the sequencing, a gathering through alignment, of the possible relations that this 'becoming-syntax' (until it has been grasped as such it remains as still on the way towards a syntax) names. This syntax constitutes performing's attempt, in and as its abandoned gest, to reach out for and towards Art's Body and, in the same wayward movement to reach towards potential respondents. In it art, *poiesis*, is offered as '*s'expose*'. But, precisely because of the singularity of the circumstances of its emergence, and because its very possibility of touching Art's Body depends upon its having leaped out of culture, it has to be approached, attended to, in its necessary foreignness, its aspirant singularity. Its 'point' has to be its achievement as an exception, its differentiation as a singular eventing of a one-off untranslatable 'language', one that is 'unhomely', for, inexistent outside each gest, it overlaps with no pre-existing 'home' (a known language) for an already existing constituency of perceivers as speaking-hearing-viewing-reading-writing responders. Yet, amazingly, courtesy of its perceptible feelable syntactic relations, it appears and offers itself as if it were already part of, a contribution to and a member of, an embracing recognisable language (for example, English, or dodecaphonic music, or gestural abstract expressionism, or Laban notation, or concrete poetry, or whatever some gathering aesthetic practice (culturally situated and with its own interests, conceptual or otherwise) may have grouped together through supposedly common language conventions and components) of which it could be taken as an example, a representative.

It may even be that all of its initially perceptible components appear to be already members of just such a common language (familiar words of the English or any other 'natural' language for example). However, what might just put the accomplished gest on the way toward art, what will constitute it as an exception in the foreignness of its singularity, is the relation between its components. The untranslatable one-off language that its performing has essayed is disposed across, lodged in and as, the singular syntax, the aligning of elements in the fixity of their

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<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., pp. 54 – 55.

relations - that which, 'in between' the components (the perceptible materialised letters, words, punctuation marks, sounds, notation marks, colour patches/lines, shaped materials, moving or still bodies/images, lights, electronically sustained images/sounds, positioned instruments/players/actors, machines, and so forth) holds them both together and apart, just this once in this unique way.

Of course the material components are the very 'stuff', the perceptible surface 'content', of the gest. But its exceptional language is to be 'found' (or not...) in the 'gaps' between them, at the 'edges' that constitute the thresholds where they meet with, butt up against, overlap, cut across, each other. It is 'in', as, these 'gaps' that the gest is held together as the accomplishment of its relations. And it is these relations, in their hoped-for singularity, that carry it towards, make it a possible candidate for assimilation by, Art's Body. Irrespective of medium/media, in every gest each such relating across a gap, each performance of a juxtaposing that is simultaneously a bringing together and a holding apart of two (or more) edges, boundaries, or barriers, no matter how small or seemingly trivial the juxtaposing may appear to be, is accomplished by a leap. And it is precisely those gaps and joinings, necessarily taken for granted in our everyday engagement, *our use*, of a medium and its languages, that provoke the greatest attention among performers, for performing toward art entails an entirely different relation to its materials than that of 'use'. As the elsewhere of utility, of functionality, the interest in and attachments to such materials generate an affectively thoughtful exploration of their potential (for art, as possible prostheses for Art's Body). In making-toward-art everything that is involved in aligning, in joining one (or more) thing to another, can be, perhaps has to be, in question, though the ensuing questioning is entirely aside from any conceptualising or calculative project. For performing knows, in the strange intimacy of its know-how, that *the gest's possibility as art rests on nothing other than these alignments*. In becoming-art everything turns on the conjunction, on what is implied, folded into, all the gaps across which the performer and, eventually, each respondent, has to leap in order to effect relations, connections, resonances, affinities – a possible syntax in and as these relating. In even the smallest conjuncting words (for example, in the relating of one letter 't' to another, in the aligning of this 'a' and 'd' that), the association of the letters occurs, however subliminally and seemingly smoothly and effortlessly, through leaping.

For performing, committing itself to make for art alone, the very point of this relating, this leaping-conjoining, is to distill and instill its 'own' (after all, this is what possesses it – not what it possesses...) idiosyncratic intensities of felt-thought into the conjunctions. It is in and as this zone of relating that the simultaneity of conjuncting and disjuncting is set forth as the in-between movement of making-for-art. The meeting of elements (as conjunctions or disjunctions or as both...) is what bears the intensities and, when taken together in their alignment, they bear (or not...) the gest towards Art's Body. For the performer they are the very 'joints', the connective 'tissues' and 'fluids', for the Body-to-come.

Once under way, all a gest's emergent relations are subject to attention's intense scrutiny, a scrutiny that is simultaneously trying to feel its way out toward, align itself with, Art-over-there. Nothing can be taken for granted, for there is no way-marked path or route towards the latter's Body. Each of performing's alignments, as a new foray, has to constitute a, its, singular path *as if it had never done this before*; each move (leap) in this path formation, this way-ward moving, sets down a syntactic bringing-into-almost-contact (akin to the hyphen...), a conjoining-disjoining, specific to the singularity of just this gest. For performers it is the when-and-where of the merging of feeling and thought. And that is why the acute attention brought to bear on each of these crucial relating is the site of both delight, angst, despair and loss. It is where

performers' savings and losses are brought off. Losing may entail the pain, however temporary, of casting aside that in which the performer had made huge investments of felt-thought-time (the paint scraped off the canvas, the erased words, sounds, gestures, materials thrown away – wasted).

But the possibility of a gest's singularity, of its becoming neither more nor less than this one-off-for-art, depends on just this self-initiation, this dynamic of acceptance and loss. It relies on the performer's emergent faith and trust in the 'rightness' (the intuited appropriateness) of their felt-for needs of Art. For performers, then, it is the qualities of their investment in and experiencing of such leaping alignments that define the pledge, the promise, and thus the rewards and troubles, of performing's movement. What they 'put into' leaping, what it may take for them to accomplish each leap in the grip of the always strange tense mood combinations that describe performing's arcing across the gaps (sometimes in 'no time at all', while sometimes it seems to take 'forever' to feel out the 'right' mark, sound, space...), are their reason-beyond-reason for performing. And because this entails, achieves, a kind of encrypting (being a result of the transliteration of something from almost nothing, from that which is not-a-thing, into a possible languaging), only certain traces, perhaps a very small selection, of this experiential quality will be perceptible-feelable for, proto-languaged/syntaxed over to, subsequent others, for the possible respondents-to-come.

Yet the gest's mute appeal, as the possible exception for art that might draw potential respondents into its orbit, is vested in nothing other than the aligning of these leaps. Together these alignments, separating themselves off from the culture they seek to escape, are pledged to stand syn-tactically as the performer's reaching out towards art. But the gest that they compose has, in the same movement, to try to offer itself as if it were already a part of Art's Body, functioning according to the latter's needs. For, of course, the performer has had to strive to make the gest appear *as if it were already a sustaining component of the Body*, as if it were an upshot of some privileged 'knowledge', peculiar to the performer, of what the Body really needed at this very juncture for its resuscitation and maintenance. Performing has to try to show, to reveal in the gest, itself as the expert 'insider' already making-for-art from within its Body. And, in the face of Art's representation by the intermediary of culture's aestheticising machinery, the need to take responsibility for that Body, to show that the care for the latter is the responsibility solely of performers, is now intrinsic to performings's plight. This responsibility is always to try to enact, perform and expose Art's real possibility, its 'actual potential' now, as a response to the real conditions, the surrounding penetrating circumstances facing performing. While heading for Art, it thus turns back towards the culture it is forever in the process of leaving and tries to perform as if it were already looking back from within the Body, as if it were already an accredited functioning Body-part, a fitted prosthesis, as if the Body itself had already granted performing the responsibility to help in its own endless resuscitation. It is thus condemned to trying to show Art's real possibility while caught in the tension of this finally suspended leap: still only going towards that which it has to try to display as the destination it has already reached.

Performing's contemporary plight, the terms on which it exposes itself, is thus to know that the fate, the fatal destination, of this 'as if' of its performing (being made 'as if' judgment had already been passed upon it, 'as if' it were already a functioning Body part), is partially, perhaps crucially, dependent upon the subsequent judgment of the cultural aestheticising machine. It knows that, following the contextually specific whim of the latter's judgment, it either will or will not have been recruited to art-lite - an ephemeral virtual body but a body exuding the power that surrounds it – while Art's weak Body, entirely dependent upon the 'life-support machine'

generated in performers' willed gestures, remains resolutely elsewhere, over there. Yet without the institutional recruitment to art-lite a gest's chances of living-on, of being celebrated by other performers as a true prosthesis of Art's always ailing (for performers) Body, are slight. For the machine controls the archive that houses what the responding culture, including performers-to-come, counts as 'art'. Performers now can only leap towards their vision of Art's Body by way of art-lite. Their leap takes off from the edge of art-lite (known and documented) towards the unknown of Art's Body-to-come. But they have only been able to arrive at this edge after a most rigorous feeling out, testing, selection, and then living with, developing intense relations with, gests drawn almost exclusively from art-lite's collection.

Each performer's entirely idiosyncratic selection from the collection, the gests that will not let them go and with which they insist on having troublingly intense relations, leaves them teetering on this edge but desperate to strike out for *the very Body they are themselves continuously re-assembling*. And being 'over there', always beyond where we and performers now are ('right here' immersed in and pinned down by the technical demands of a use-culture), it is, of course, a groundless Body, a Body for which there can never be any secure foundations, any resting place. It is in this very groundlessness that performing and Art's Body coincide. For, as we have seen, the endlessly disrupted wandering journey that, at its end in the remaindered gest, defines performing's meridian, ends up not at some finally discovered and indisputable 'origin', not at a firm foundation that situated its 'real' beginning, but at a threshold of abandonment that is neither in nor out of culture. This is where the gest, together with the world it encloses in its singular proto-language, is left hanging, abandoned to its fate.

### **Twombly's Offer: Performing as Anabasis**

Perhaps it is this fate, the placelessness of performing's wandering journey as constitutive of its plight, towards which Cy Twombly gestures in his 'Anabasis' sculpture (1980) and subsequent drawing (1983).<sup>28</sup> The sculpture's very still (plinthed) horseless vehicle, unable to move because its 'wheels' are mired in solidified plaster, suggests the chariot-form that Twombly has pointed towards in a range of three-dimensional pieces. But the title – 'Anabasis' – draws us beyond the chariot (one of the earliest multi-functional vehicular transporters (for ceremonial/warfare/ordinary carriage/racing-playing-entertaining use – thus from terror to delight)) towards the movement which the sculpture in its literal fixity cannot itself perform. Indeed in critical discourse 'anabasis' is used as an occasional trope to describe a text's movement towards a climax.

But Twombly's later coloured drawing on paper offers us something much more specific. For the title-word itself is written across the top of the drawing in the bold capitals of Greek script. It thus hints at its other-langued strangeness in the delta-shaped 'A's', while underneath it in fainter lettering is the name of the author 'XENOPHON'; beneath this name is Twombly's characteristic inscription of the date of the drawing itself. Below these inscriptions is the drawing of a spoked 'circle' that is partially obliterated by the overpainting of a horizontally slashed dense scribble whose lines and flecks were made rapidly with a paint-stick and, possibly, fingers. Largely bunched on the left side of the 'circle'/'wheel', some of the marks of this scribble suggest a leftward movement, as if the 'circle-wheel', though firmly fixed, like the sculpture's 'wheels', into its place in the gest, is forever on its way (back – towards what?) out of the drawing.

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<sup>28</sup> For a photograph of the sculpture see, Katharina Schmidt, 'CY TWOMBLY The sculpture', Kunstmuseum, Basel, 2000, p. 56, and for a reproduction of the drawing see, 'Cy Twombly - fifty years of works on paper', Serpentine Gallery, London, 2004, no. 49.

As in so many of his gests, both his paintings/drawings and his ‘sculptures’ (but *are* they ‘sculptures’ – this opening of the question of ‘sculpture’ is surely one of their crucial gestures), this drawing confronts us with the relations between the inscriptions, which have to be read, to be sounded out silently to ourselves in their reading, and the accompanying figuration, which cannot be so sounded. The drawing draws us into its specific play across the ‘edges’ of writing and drawing-colouring, stranding us and itself within the tensions of this in-between. It is where we and it are at risk, for the back-and-forth leaps that it requires, between inscription and imagery, can generate no resolution. Held fast at and in this juncture we experience, perhaps, the inherent but unplaceable ties between writing-sounding (the heard ‘line’) and imaging-seeing (the seen ‘figure’). We are agitatedly adrift in the transliterative, for the written texts operate as images by their provocations while the figurings cannot but generate fragmented narratives through reverie and memory. Writing (and thus sounding-out/hearing) thus seems to merge with figuring (the grasp of seeing) while, in and as the drawing, being simultaneously separate. In the very proximity of the juncture, the conjunctive-disjunction, we lose ourselves to art; the alignings, provided we risk ourselves to the leaps through the contractions of our lived space-time, withdraw us towards Art’s elsewhere Body. In his insistent return to such juxtapositions (inscribing and imaging) Twombly offers us Art as the performance of the exposing of just this irresolution. At the least, he implies, he invites us to engage with, the possibility that precisely this – the intertwining of letters and figurings – is always a co-constitution of Art’s Body as the embodiment of Language: Art’s plight – its promise and its fate – is to explore the terms of its survival in this split.

But in its particulars Twombly’s ‘Anabasis’ drawing guides us through the irresolution into other constituents of Art’s elsewhere. For the coupling of the title with the name of the writer Xenophon (born around 430 B.C. and died around 357 B.C.) and the inscription of the drawing’s own date not only reminds us of Celan’s insistence on the life-defining importance of ‘all our dates’, but also requires us to leap back and forth over two and a half millennia. ‘Anabasis’ is the title of Xenophon’s own account of a fated military campaign into Asia Minor led by Cyrus the Younger (note the graphic-aural affinity of the two Cy’s...), for which he himself ended up as leader after the latter’s death at the battle of Cunaxa (a now lost town, but estimated to have been situated some thirty to fifty miles from Baghdad...). We do not need to credit Twombly with Cassandra foresight to recognise the drawing’s oblique comment on the eternal repetition of military disasters (all campaigning as the bearing of disaster for some). The remains of Cyrus’s raggle-taggle mercenary army of Greek troops were left to beat a long and meandering retreat from their lost position in the wide plains between the Tigris and Euphrates. It is this meander that forms the theme of Xenophon’s own seven volume ‘Anabasis’ (meaning in this context a ‘march up’, an ‘up-country expedition’). This describes the disintegration of a campaign, a march that began on the up and that spiralled down into an interminable return journey of skirmishing, plunder and escape, eventually under Xenophon’s generalship. Perhaps then, apart from the implication of the imminent threat of disaster hanging over all such forced-march campaigning, what Twombly also offers us through the drawing’s specific juxtapositions is a figuring of Art itself as just such a wandering, a para-campaigning without any goal other than the wandering itself, the very substance of which provides the ‘material’ for the activities of performing. The drawing, as a performing towards Art through its re-memorising juxtapositions, elides the problem of making for Art now with his figured recall of a long-lost (three-millennial) disastrous but survivable - for Xenophon lived to tell the tale which Twombly lived to re-figure - wandering.

And, in its specific figuration, the drawing itself offers us just this connection, for its ‘wheel’, recalling Celan’s figure for the journey of poesis, *offers us a sketched meridian too*. Within its



roughly drawn ‘circle’, both beneath and overlapping the rudimentary ‘spokes’, is a near-continuous but partially obliterated spiralling line that overlaps the circle’s edge at several points. Smudges of colour suggest that in these (still) ‘movements’ blood is being flung off. As is frequently the case in Twombly’s drawings and paintings, the texts and imagery are suspended in the paper’s almost ‘blank’ rectangle without any other reference to the marks’ context. The flat depthless but implied infinite ‘space’ (the space-time of endless historicising and of eternity), within which the figuration is floated, is interrupted only by the slightest of smudges and, possibly, erasures. In the very slightness of its compactions it manages to implicate, to invite us to not only overlap, two seemingly very different cultures (ancient Greece and the contemporary world), but to feel out in this overlapping the incessant way (the meandering spiralling fractured meridian) that a gest-for-art has to move in insisting on the co-primacy of its own date.

Of course Xenophon was all too literally in the wars, but Twombly here turns this right around and inside out to show making-for-art *as war by quite other means* – performing’s gest, the figuring out and the uttering of the utterly weak, as an ‘up country’ meandering campaign that can never ‘know’ in its wandering exactly where it is going, where (or, indeed, if) it will ‘end up’. And all that remains of this ‘anabasis’ is a gest that, abandoned in its self-exposed weakness, performs finally (but unceasingly) the slightest, that is the most compressed, gesture of love (for Art) that he could manage on that very date (‘nov. 20 83’). And, akin to war-as-expedition though with an utterly different destination, in the end, at the moment of its abandonment to its fate, the gest in its self-exposure offers us Art as entirely illegitimate, outside any law other than that of its forced charge towards otherness. Even its ‘meridian’ is recognisable as such only after the event; neither the direction of performing’s weak charge nor the elements through which it passed in its being drawn on ‘around’ and through its region, could have been nor can be gathered under any ‘law’ outside their own accomplishment. This exemplary lawlessness, Jarry’s exception, constitutes the potential of performing-as-wandering aside from all the activities we gather as and under ‘knowledges’: an up-country out-of-town bound-to-fail digressive egress that tries to follow only the exigency of Art.

And if we perform further cuts that Twombly’s drawing lays itself open to, and thus invites, we can read-hear, in the inscription of the campaigning writer’s name, another transliteration of Art’s way through, its relation to, its languaging media. For ‘Xenophon’ compounds ‘xeno’ (that which is foreign or a guest) and ‘phon’ (a sound, perhaps of a voice): the writer’s very name simultaneously performs what the drawing is ‘doing’ and offers a surrogate name for the the artist-performer, as s/he whose task it is to be the maker of the foreign-sounding, the bringer of another, perhaps altogether unfamiliar, tongue. Further, ‘anabasis’ itself, in a homonymic doubling which confirms the delight of ‘*Pataphysique*’ in just such unanticipatable exceptions, is offered by Pliny in its transition from Greek into Latin as an alternative name for the cryptogamous plant ‘equisetum’ – one of the earliest plant families (dating from the early Carboniferous period some 350 million years ago) whose contemporary vernacular name is ‘horsetail’. Botanical nature, so often figured in its seasons across Twombly’s sculpture, photography and painting-drawing (witnessed and re-invigorated in the huge ‘flower’ paintings of his own ‘autumn’), thus makes its appearance indirectly in this gest, through an apposite name for a plant that (enjoyed by children for this very reason) increases itself, ‘marches up’, by means of detachable sections. ‘Horsetail’ thus lodges its very viability and longevity, its long-term survival strength vested in a short-term weakness, in a process of growth by self-

fragmentation: in-forming itself through a conjunctive-disjunction, the plant keeps going by interrupting itself in its very stemming-forth – just like art?<sup>29</sup>

Performing thus accomplishes something like a meridian in bringing to a close the twists, turns and multiple leaps of its own ‘*anabasis*’.<sup>30</sup> The decreative point or ‘moment’ is nothing other than this suspended, still, leaping.<sup>31</sup> Indeed Celan’s poem ‘Anabasis’<sup>32</sup> makes this very connection in figuring the anabasis’s movement of ‘Upward’ (*Hinauf*) and ‘Back’ (*Zurück*) as entailing ‘breath reflexes leaping’ (*hüpfenden* – the motion of a hopping, bounding, skipping, or leaping – is translated by Hamburger precisely as a ‘leaping’); its surface-syntax performs an anabasis’s disrupted jolting movements (its halts, interruptions, its chaotic stuttering speeds) through its various stammered repetitions, word-compounds, broken rhythms, and mixture of very brief and extended sentences (could Twombly have read Celan’s poem...?). So, at its closure, performing’s passage out-and-back - its wandering halting journey across its distinctive wildernesses - encloses and exposes through its aligning of fragments, an out-lining which is henceforth offered as a findable syntax-to-come. It exposes itself as a syntax to be felt for and traced out, engaged as performing’s own life-line cast out towards Art’s singular (that is, singular to each performer and performing occasion) Body. And the point of its exposing is to make seductively patent the potential of its pledge to respondents to be an occasion for their own leaping withdrawal from culture via its to-be-decrypted syntax, its singular way towards Art’s Body. But it is necessary, perhaps, to remind ourselves of the difficulty of such leaping-out-and-beyond now. For we are cultured through to the bone (almost...), permeated by that which, being both the vehicle and material content of our everyday living, it is not easy to slough off in any attempted leaping.

Whilst some are naturally endowed leapers and others enhance their latent leaping abilities through special practice and training (fleas, grass-hoppers (in which we can certainly hear performers as Joyce’s grace-hoppers), panthers, goats, gymnasts, long-jumpers, balletomanes, parachutists...) geared to specific challenging situations, most of us remain outside leaping’s possibilities. We simply do not see the need for it. Nor do we recognise that, in just getting on with our everyday lives, we are already most accomplished leapers, that this very unrecognised leaping is exactly what enables us to get by. It is only when, for example, the general representation at work in our routine relations is treated as a mystery, when our passage through whatever-medium or -media (the languages of living) is approached as an open and infinitely intractable question, that we may come to recognise this passage as fundamentally leap-dependent. But it takes an interruption, a suspension, of culture’s hold over us to initiate the very leap towards that (non-)place (commonsense’s threshold) from which we might just begin to see the ubiquity of leaping in culture’s routine maintenance. And art’s possibility begins in the ‘gap’ that this interruptive suspension opens. It is from there that performing’s double turn, simultaneously towards Art’s Body and back towards the culture-in-suspension, effects its

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<sup>29</sup> And, displaying further affinities with the movement performing undertakes in its struggle to get beyond culture in making for art, we can note that the ‘anabasis’ is a genus of acanthopterygian fishes that are known for their ability to leave their ordinary medium, water, and to walk up trees in search of prey.

<sup>30</sup> Writing of the poet’s search for ‘Real depth’ and such writing’s up and down journey between surface and depth, Christopher Middleton notes the resulting ‘disconcerted diction’ which ‘gainsays... prevailing poetic norms’ and is the mark of this ‘Real’. He proposes this journey as the poem’s ‘real *anabasis*’. See his ‘Jackdaw Jiving’, Op. cit., p. 170.

<sup>31</sup> Recalling the earlier discussion via Carson and Agamben, we can conjoin Twombly’s anabasis, Celan’s meridian and Weil’s decreation as all brought into play in and as the course of performing’s outward and backward leaping; the *caesurae* thus mark the fixed sequence of abyssal suspensions that leaping accomplishes in the course of its halting return. It is a journey-by-splitting that strives to keep yes and no permanently unsplit.

<sup>32</sup> See ‘Paul Celan : Selected Poems’, ed. Michael Hamburger, Penguin, London, 1996, pp.202-203.

singularly attentive vigilance. In accomplishing and holding itself up in its own suspended leap it strays away from clock-time and, through its de- and ac-celeration of the things and processes of culture, finds leaping everywhere present. It finds the world of commonsense as nothing other than a construction by leaping. Once this finding becomes intrinsic to its know-how, it provides performing, in conjunction with the summons from Art's Body, with the materials for its gest-making.

Every disjunctive-conjunctive 'move' it makes in its aligning of one 'thing' (mark, sound, figure-element, grain, lump, cut, performance-gesture, instruction (a note, a gesture, an emphasis, a vocal/instrumental inflection)) with another, its temporal-spatial juxtaposition with another such element, is effected in and as a leaping. Such leaping may, of course, be more or less 'recognisable' for those subsequently responding to the offered gests. In the subtleties of its accentuations and smoothings performing's itinerary through such constructive leaping may be barely perceptible. Yet all performing's aligning – its composing activity – however continuously 'integrated' it may appear, is achieved through a succession of leaps, some 'huge' and some 'minuscule' (these very terms seem to imply, of course, sizes and distances that can be 'measured'...). The possible attractions of the gest's syntax, its rhythming, the vibrations of one's passage through its conjoined materials, may just seem to hint, for some respondents at least, at the promise of a redemptive euphoria through a temporary escape into an unknowable elsewhere. But approaching performing and its gest in this way confronts us with the question of whether it is possible to show, to write about, this continuous leaping without reducing it to either a 'mechanical' (solvable/explicable by some kind of technical training) or 'conceptual' (made meaningful within some unifying theoretical structure) 'problem'. For, for performers, it is precisely not that kind of 'problem'. Rather, performing, in and through its gests, exposes itself as a 'becoming' by leapings whose unplaceability and suspension of identity (ambiguity... retreat... disappearance... re-appearance... becoming-other...), while tied absolutely to circumstance and date, are nevertheless singular and unrepeatable. The 'point' of the leaps is precisely the making of a singular difference in and as the gest that 'is' only as this very 'unassimilable something'. It seeks to effect its gap, aside from all typifying and generalising work, in a making-movement that tries to bring itself off, to expose itself, as nothing but a making-for-art. The difference it has to make is to expose this separation and detachment from every other making mode in the very ways it interrupts, leaps away from, the sense-making, the rule-guided perceptive orderings of the everyday world.

### **J. H. Prynne and the Conjunctive-Disjunction of *Poiesis*, Memory, and Technoscience**

The chapter on wasting was headed by a quotation from a poem by J.H.Prynne, for whom the question of poetry's (and thus art's) relation to its current unique circumstance requires performing to take on, to interrupt, those organising charges that shape time as we 'know' and live it prosaically. For him poetry (art) is challenged to turn its languaging through the powering forces (now capitalised technoscience) that effectively (routinely for us) set the terms of how we relate to each other and to our material becoming. For Prynne, enacting this turn has entailed a *poiesis* that makes its way through many resources. But he frequently takes on the discourses in which modernity's constructive knowledges represent their work (conceptualisation – theorising and empirical reportage – as the display of a specific relation to language and thus to the 'matters' that constitute their topics). What Prynne frequently returns to in his probing of poetry's limits is the ways technoscience's physico-chemico-bio-'matters' routinely constitute the operational terms of our terrestrial becoming, of our relation to each other and to the inorganic and organic materials and processes of 'nature'. Poetry becomes a site for engaging these constitutive discourses and their terms and leading them away from their entrapment into quite different language zones. They become occasions for poetry to negotiate distinctive

responses to the triangulation of language, materiality and social becoming, and to offer other ways of relating. And in this re-siting of *poiesis* aside from, but in a provoked and provoking relation to the writing-out of knowledges, the question of poetry's, and thus our, relation to time emerges as an abiding concern. For one of the challenging questions that recurs across his writing and is directly opened up in an early sequence of poems<sup>33</sup> is the way that the 'physical' processes of geological and other forms of transformation may be filtered unbeknownst into the textures of memory and everyday life. Such filtering and its effects are quite beside the point of technoscientific knowledge production. At the least his poems challenge us to move out of conventions of understanding of both historical succession and our relation to the material conditions and processes through whose throes we pass. For, in this very passing through, they may be entering and shaping the fabric of our becoming in ways which we are quite unable to recognise if we hold fast to the knowledge conventions of everyday life.

In 'The Glacial Question, Unsolved' Prynne takes us back to a period of geological, meteorological, and organic transformation that is beyond our conventional memoration – the Ice Age – and writes in the possibility that the changes have become defining elements, *effectively still active*, in our own becoming. The marks of the ice's drifting retreat across the changed landscape are signs of a world in which

'The striations are part of the  
heart's desire...'<sup>34</sup>

and where too,

'...the sentiment  
of "cliffs" is the weathered stump of a feeling  
into the worst climate of all.'<sup>35</sup>

Evidence of the drama of the Ice Age's literal upheavings is the deposited moraine that

'... runs axial to the Finchley Road'<sup>36</sup>

and this moraine, as material left behind by the retreating glaciation, seems to anticipate what the second half of the poem is drawing us towards. For 'the litter of "surface"' across which we move is now offered as informing the grammar of our own history:

'... As the roads  
run dripping across this, the rhythm  
is the declension of history.'<sup>37</sup>

And it is we who are left behind on what the ice has smoothed out:

'... We are rocked  
in this hollow...'<sup>38</sup>

In the homonym 'rocked' we are both on the move and moved about in this terrestrial 'hollow' (both a curved concavity and an emptiness) but, simultaneously, no different to the inorganic terrestrial materials themselves in being subject to the same devastating forces. Indeed the intertwining of geology with human concerns is frequently recalled in a recurrent word-image across Prynne's poems (as it is too for Celan) - 'stone(s)' - whose many appearances may serve to nudge readers back towards his founding concerns. But this poem challenges us to site ourselves within the question of the continued working out of the as yet unfinished Pleistocene Epoch. It concludes by inviting us to consider ourselves as, in effect, lateral moraine of this still moving period:

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<sup>33</sup> See 'The White Stones' from 1969, pp. 37 – 126, in J.H. Prynne, 'Poems', op. cit..

<sup>34</sup> Op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

‘We know this, we are what it leaves:  
the Pleistocene is our current sense, and  
what in sentiment we are, we are, we  
are, the coast, a line or sequence, the  
cut back down, to the shore.’<sup>39</sup>

In this identification of us as the remains, left-overs, perhaps even the waste matters, of a still active Pleistocene movement (the ‘surface’ activities symptomatic of much deeper, distant, and inexplicably chaotic forces...), the poem thus emphasises ‘sentiment’ as both what we are and that part of our being as what the Pleistocene has marked. And sentiment can be mapped over art’s, over poetry’s, zone too, just as the last lines themselves show and perform. For the insistent syncopes of the rhythmic repetition of ‘we are’ take us right up to the very matters of *poiesis* itself in its sequencing of ‘line’ (another recurrent Prynne-word...), ‘sequence’ itself, and ‘the cut back down’ (the caesura and versing/turning that defines poetry’s aligning descent, its short cuts, down the page). Syntactic alignment here becomes simultaneously the poem’s topic and its necessary resource in a thoughtfully provocative rhythmised fusing of landscape, us, and poetic ‘means’. Our little leaps across these drop us, at the end, into the poem’s paradoxical proposal. For perhaps the concluding ‘shore’, marking the coast-line that ‘we are’, points to the threshold, the zone without identity - being neither the sea nor the land but partaking of both - where we Pleistocenians and poetry are now beached. Surely our being rocked still ‘in this hollow’ holds us up as subject to other relations with passing than that inexorably worked out in the additive linearity of time’s tensed movement?

This suspension of the calculative time of our routine rationalities is differently affirmed in Prynne’s ‘*The Plant Time Manifold Transcripts*’ of 1972<sup>40</sup>. This text is offered in the parodic prose form of a transcript of the proceedings of the ‘London PTM Conference... dominated by a paper on “Palaeomnemonic Resonance”’, delivered by Professor Quondam Lichen<sup>41</sup>! Through the playfully serious parodying of the reporting of a disintegrating debate about scientific research into processes of change in plant-life (and specifically the plant as a tube in which time flows simultaneously in two directions – to the future through the shoot and to the past (geological memory) through the root), Prynne complements the earlier focus on the relation between geological transformation and memoration. Except that here it seems to be a question of the relative independence of plant-memory (‘intracellular’) and the ‘identifiable flux rhythms in the external environment’ (the twenty-four hour diurnal cycle, including life/death through the difference between ‘*stopping*’ and ‘*stopping dead*’<sup>42</sup>). As in the earlier poem, it is epochal passing, beyond the historicising of human memory, that is critical in the supposed scientific investigation into ‘periodic oscillation as the basis for rhythmic behaviour patterns in many plant systems’. What has to be applied is ‘correction for epoch’<sup>43</sup>. Plant (‘bean’) and tense (‘been’ and ‘willbeen’) become interchangeable, fusable, as the text itself oscillates between the seemingly technical discourse of scientific reportage of plant life-growth processes and the ‘meshwork of willbeen functioning’. In her ‘informal speculation’ ‘Dr. M. Gale’ (*myrica gale* is the bog myrtle...) proposes this ‘meshwork’ (poetry-as-meshwork?) as the site of a ‘double reverse

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Op. cit., pp. 233-242. For a commentary on this that examines the specific scientific textual resources brought into play by Prynne see Justin Katko, ‘Relativistic Phytosophy: Towards a Commentary on “*The Plant Time Manifold Transcripts*”’ in, ‘Glossator’, vol. 2, ed. R. Dobran, Op. cit. For an exploration of the relations between Prynne’s poetic as a field or zone of ‘Between’ and neurology see the rich resources opened out in Michael Stone-Richards’ paper, ‘The time of the subject in the neurological field’, in the same volume, pp.149 – 244.

<sup>41</sup> Op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>42</sup> Op. cit., p. 239.

<sup>43</sup> Op. cit., p. 234.

backflow'; it is the plant's 'dream membrane'<sup>44</sup> (doubtless the same cross-over threshold as that of memory and thus of *poiesis*...!) In toying with science, with language, with poetic possibility, and thus with us, Prynne here invites us to teeter on this threshold-in-common and to consider memory's elusive and seemingly tense-free (or tense-collapsing) drift across all sites of our becoming. Poetry is offered as an opening up, an exposing, through a remembering of our epochal (Pleistocenian) and material origins, of that which, defining us, we could not have known and yet to which we owe an unpayable debt. The implication surely is that this is the (dream-?)membrane where *poiesis* seeks to make its way towards art. At this juncture clock-time is set aside and the wavering of the incalculable, the absolute vagueness of the epochal, is exposed as the condition of our be-coming-going.

This vagueness, experienced now most explicitly perhaps in the course of our relation to performing and its gests, is at its most recognisable when it is in a conjunctive-disjunctive relation, a relation of extreme tension, with the calculative violence of the technoscientific. And this is something that we Pleistocenians are all too familiar with, for we have been cast up and off as the by-products, lateral moraine, of the now planetary and ever more forcefully violent heat-and-light-seeking project. For us, as experienced through the routines and conventions of everyday life, this project's epochal culmination is to be found in the drive to generate and control a distributable sharable charge of electronic 'power' through combustion. This project represents us. It is what fixes us, pins us down, puts us in 'our' place, as just such represented becomings. But, simultaneously, it allows us the illusion that it is we who are doing the representing, that we are actively in control of the work of representation rather than its ruined cast-offs.

Perhaps we are encouraged into the comfort of this illusion by the apparently simple, and by now utterly taken-for-granted and assumed absolutely necessary, 'thereness' of such power's availability at the casual flick of a switch or touch of a 'button'. The conviction about necessity has entailed the construction and maintenance of systems of socio-technical relations, modes of living-on, that allow us to deny the pathic quality of the destruction that necessarily accompanies the drive to combust for power's sake. Indeed our very representation of 'subjectivity', of what we 'are' and might 'become' and 'do' as 'subjects', fuses such becoming with, grounds it in, self-willing power. To which we see no alternative precisely because our 'seeing' (and its languaging) itself epitomises and enacts this empowering. As fuelled becomings we live on at, represent ourselves as, the conjunction of mattering, combustion, and sociality.

And, condemned to share absolutely these modes of living-on, the performances that constitute making-toward-art have, somehow, to take on this conjunction of representation, mattering and combustion as it is sustained in and through specific social relations and processes. This is their, as it is also all of ours too, defining circumstance. In these after-hours of our receding modernity it is the framing that sets up the terms of the when and where of performing's living on, of Celan's 'all our dates'. Either explicitly, obliquely, or by default, performing's responses to the unavoidable impact of the 'givens' of its circumstances are what emerge in and as its gests. Performing tries to figure these as singularities that will make manifest the specificities of each performer's relations to their spiralling circling, always with others, around and through their situations. Each performance is indexical - it is tied to the context of its emergence, to its situation. And making this manifest, as each gest's 'point', is the challenge that performing faces. For the specificity that, hopefully, constitutes the response, in setting its sights on art's distant swarming, has to be vested in and attempt to live-on through and as its alterity. However

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<sup>44</sup> Op. cit., p. 238.

it makes its way in the languages of its chosen medium, its task is to make this 'way' otherwise, as an untranslatable singularity that stands alone. This is what saltation, the leaping away from culture's grip (the contextual 'givens'), intends and reaches out for. As we have seen with Prynne's writing, *poiesis* can, through its otherwise singularities, disclose ways of attending to circumstance and plight that move us to different sites of experiencing, of 'feeling-knowing-differently', where, aside from all conceptual-technical knowledges, we are withdrawn from the cultural givens defining the contours of everyday life - the givens and contours of extreme techno-representation.

In the (umbral) light of what I have drawn, very selectively, out of Prynne's poetics, I want to explore how this leaping might be revealing itself in the ways a range of performers, drawn from literature, the visual arts and music, explicitly situate their gests in the midst, in the face, and in spite, of the continually unfolding and enfolding crisis of representation, in the course of trying to hold to art's possibility. Feeling their ways around the machinations and complexities of representation's merging with the calculative and its real machinery, they confront and begin to grope their way around some of the paradoxes of performing's contemporary plight. In making this machinery the focus of their performing, their gests make explicit the challenge making-for-art faces in risking itself to an attempted leap away from and out of this 'midst'. Perhaps these too brief 'case studies' (I do not want to reduce them to being 'examples' of some generalisable project) may show, precisely by their singular displays of a languaging that moves away from its everyday moorings,<sup>45</sup> what holding to art's 'otherwise' has to come to terms with if it is to make the tiniest of rents in techno-representation's enwrapping textures. For the leap's possibility is solely dependent on, it is borne off and away on, the singular language that flows out through the hole cut by itself in the seemingly all-suffusing and -containing languages constituting commonsense.

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<sup>45</sup> However, that all such movement may be simultaneously held back (being indexically context-bound), and thus live on only in the conjunctive-disjunction of an insoluble tension, is pointed to in John Ashbery's wonderful oxymoronic 'the mooring of starting out', from the last line of his poem 'Soonest Mended' and that he also took as the title for a collection of his poems. See John Ashbery, 'The Mooring of Starting Out', Harper Collins, New York, 1997, and at p. 233.